

GREAT  
EXPLORERS BEFORE COLUMBUS.

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A PAPER READ BEFORE  
THE  
Literary and Historical Society, Quebec,

FEBRUARY 2nd, 1883,

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JOHN READY, F. R. S. C.

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QUEBEC:  
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## GREAT EXPLORERS BEFORE COLUMBUS.

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I have undertaken to deal very briefly with a single feature of human progress, that which has to do with the growth of man's knowledge of the earth which he inhabits. Our great inter-oceanic highway will hardly have reached completion when the nations will be preparing to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the discovery of this continent by Columbus. That great event was so unlooked for, was attended with circumstances so strange and romantic, and was destined to exert so marked an influence on the human race, that it has, to some extent, overshadowed the hardly less praiseworthy explorations of earlier navigators. Even for the honor of that service to mankind which has rendered his name illustrious, there are claimants who preceded him by centuries, while others sought by an eastward, what his studies prompted him to seek by a westward, course. The spread of geographical knowledge was, indeed, more gradual than has been generally supposed and, in order to indicate the steps by which it advanced, it may be well to give a brief sketch of the progress of discovery from the earliest times to the 12th century. I will then consider more at length the voyagers who preceded Columbus in the four centuries of which the last was distinguished by his own great triumph.

The earliest description that has come down to us of the distribution of mankind over the face of the earth is that of the 10th chapter of Genesis. It contains, as Professor Rawlinson tells us, "an account of the nations with which the Jews, at the date of its composition, had some acquaintance." Eastward, those nations did not extend beyond the

Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf; westward, the Adriatic seems to have been their limit; they ranged as far north as a short distance beyond the northern shore of the Euxine, while southward they covered the Peninsula of Arabia and the Nile country to nearly opposite the Strait of Babelmandeb. Compared with the world as it is known to us to-day, that of the writer in Genesis was exceedingly limited. Nevertheless, he indicates the beginnings of that westward movement, which was, ages afterwards, to re-settle this great continent, and the ethnic affinities which he implies correspond with those which modern research has revealed. To what extent the rest of the world was peopled at that time we can only conjecture from what it had come to be at a later period, but that there were other nations besides those mentioned in existence then, it is reasonable to conclude. The record, says Canon Rawlinson, "does not set up to be, and it certainly is not complete. It is a genealogical arrangement of the races best known to Moses and to those for whom he wrote, not a scientific scheme embracing all the tribes and nations existing in the world at the time." We may, therefore, infer, that exploration had already made considerable progress. Among the nations mentioned are some of those which contributed to make up the great Aryan race to which we belong. The migration which was to plant the agents of civilization in India and Iran, and along the shores of the Mediterranean, and thence to the Atlantic, the North Sea and the Baltic, had already begun. It would be out of place in such a paper as this to touch on such a vexed question of ethnology as the limits of the Hamites and the Shemites. The admission, just quoted, of Canon Rawlinson, certainly simplifies the matter, and allows some claims of science without offence to those of Scripture. It would be interesting to inquire from what beginnings and by what processes the human race came to be thus spread over the earth's surface. Where was man's earliest home? Various

answers have been given to this question. Some have fixed upon Central Asia, others have raised up from the ocean's depths the buried continent of Lemuria, in the Indian Ocean. In his "Preadamites," Dr. Winchell gives a chart of the progressive dispersion of mankind from this supposed primitive centre. In his "Island Life," Mr. Wallace has set himself strongly in opposition to this theory, though he admits that there is ground for believing that some large islands—as large as Madagascar, perhaps—once existed in the designated locality. More summarily he dismisses the "Atlantis" theory, on which Mr. Ignatius Donnelly has written what is, at least, an entertaining book. We can, even without asking for any modification of the continents as they exist, imagine the fathers of mankind pushing farther east or farther west, as their necessities urged them, first on foot, then on horse-back or in wagons, and finally in the rude boats of primitive construction. Next neighbors, and probably akin by blood, as they were by tongue, to those for whom the record in Genesis was primarily written, were the foremost of ancient explorers and colonizers. Long before Athens had a name, the Phœnicians were a nation of skilled mechanics, of merchant princes, and had learned to give permanence to their thoughts by writing. Unhappily their literature has perished, and even of their language only a few scattered fragments have survived. Tyre was a strong city in Joshua's time. The cunning work of the Sidonians is frequently referred to by Homer, and in both sacred and profane history and poetry the skill and daring of the early Phœnician navigators are abundantly attested. If we comprise under the same category them and the Carthaginians, the portion of the globe traversed by or known to that hardy and enterprising race was of no small extent, even according to modern ideas. We know that ages before the Christian era they had made their way to Britain and to the Baltic, and that they acted

as carriers westward of the fabrics and products of the far East is sufficiently established. Xenophon commends the proficiency to which they had brought the art of shipbuilding, and their orderly arrangement of tackle and cargo. There is reason to believe that the Phœnicians knew more of distant regions than they pretended, having concealed their discoveries lest others should compete with them in trade and rob them of their profits. Even the argument that they were not unaware of the existence of this continent has some support. Dr. Daniel Wilson, in a paper read before the American Association, at Montreal, says that "at periods, probably wide apart, races from the Old World have reached the shores of the American continent and planted there the germs of later tribes," and in his inaugural address to the English Literature Section of the Royal Society of Canada, he says that "there seems nothing improbable in the assumption that the more ancient voyagers from the Mediterranean, who claimed to have circumnavigated Africa and were familiar with the islands of the Atlantic, may have found their way to the great continent which lay beyond." One of the most interesting records of the exploring experiences of ancient navigators is the "Voyage of Hanno," the authenticity of which Heeren sees no good reason why any one should doubt. It is extant in a translation supposed to have been made by some Greek merchant from the original Punic. Hanno's expedition is thought to have taken place about 500 B. C. in the most flourishing days of the Carthaginian Republic. Setting out with 60 ships and 30,000 men and women, after two days' sail beyond the Pillars of Hercules, he came to a place where the city Thymiaterium was founded. Passing many wondrous scenes and seeing elephants and other wild animals, they came to the river Lixus, on the banks of which a tribe of shepherds fed their flocks, and from them they obtained interpreters. At the mouth of another river



they saw crocodiles and hippopotami. At Cerne they were as far from the Straits as the latter were from Carthage. Passing some mountainous regions where fires were continually burning, including the Chariot of the Gods, they reached the Southern Horn, where they fell in with an extraordinary tribe of savage people, all hairy, and whom the interpreters called Gorillas. They succeeded in capturing three of them, but they proved so fierce and dangerous that it was necessary to kill them. They then flayed them and brought their skins to Carthage. At this point, their provisions having failed them, the voyagers were compelled to return. Time will not permit me to say anything of the various comments that have been written on Hanno's narrative. Suffice it to say that, in Heeren's opinion, the Southern Horn was the mouth of the Gambia, and the West Horn, that of the Senegal. The hot region of which Hanno speaks would then be the country which we know as Senegambia. Nor would that be surprising, as Herodotus states that the Carthaginians had regular intercourse with the natives of the Gold Coast. Dr. Thiercelin is of opinion that the Boobies of Fernando Po are descendants of the Punic settlers. In the Canary Islands Phœnician remains have been found, and possibly they had also visited Madeira. M. Paul Gaffarel thinks that the Cassiterides were not the Scilly Isles, as generally supposed, but the Azores, and he argues the point with considerable research and skill. The claim brought forward on behalf of the Phœnicians of having discovered America has also been ably maintained by the same writer. Even if we set aside this claim, which they never made themselves, and that of their circumnavigation of Africa (which seems to be proved by the very assertion (Herod: IV. 42) which made the ancients discredit it—that of their having the sun on their right hand during a portion of their course,) it must be acknowledged that great Rome's great rivals had a geogra-

phical knowledge which was by no means contemptible, even according to our modern ideas. It is a pity that we have not the account of Himilco's explorations of the western Coasts of Europe, though a good deal of it has been preserved in the *Ora Maritima* of Festus Avienus.

The progress of archeologic and philologic research is every day revealing new facts as to hitherto undreamed of relations between ancient peoples widely severed. Chinese porcelain has been found in Egyptian tombs. Professor Sayce has shown that the culture of the Babylonians, including the art of writing, had been communicated to the Hittites, and by them to the people of Asia Minor long before the introduction there of the Phœnician or Greek alphabet. The still more extraordinary discovery of a connection between the most ancient literature of China and that of the Turanian founders of Babylon has been made quite recently. For nearly 3,000 years Chinese scholars had tried in vain to solve the problem of the origin and authorship of the *Yih King*, but it was not until the Akkadian Syllabaries, brought from Babylonia by the late George Smyth, had been thoroughly studied by Western scholars that the secret was revealed and the affinity between the written characters of Babylon and China was made clear. Thus also is a civilization accounted for which has for milleniums been a puzzle even to those who possessed it and which was already in a stage of considerable advancement when their far-off forefathers first set foot in China. (London Quarterly, July, 1882). This is only one of the wondrous conquests which philology has made, when wielded by men of patience and insight.

The progress of navigation among the Greeks is fairly indicated in their history and traditions. The story of the Argonauts is a romanced narrative of the adventures of men who were pirates rather than colonizers or traders. Coming down to Homer, the question arises whether he tells us all

he knew of the world or has disguised his knowledge for poetic purposes. Professor Virchow, following Dr. Schliemann, thinks it impossible for the *Iliad* to have been written by a man who had not been in the country which it describes. Mr. Gladstone divides the region which Homer mentions into countries apprehended by Phœnician report and countries known by experience. He also classes the Homeric geography as inner—confined to the Greek Peninsula and Islands—and outer—the wonderland bounded by the river Okeanos, with its eternal flux and reflux around the abode of man. From the days of Homer to those of Herodotus the Greeks had greatly extended their range both of knowledge and influence. They had pushed their colonial enterprise to the mouth of the Don on the shores of the Palus Mœotis and westward to the Golfe du Lion, while Sardinia, Sicily, Italy and Africa had received the impress of their civilization. The young man who, in the middle of the 5th Century, unrolled the volume of his travels at the great Olympic festival, in the presence of his assembled compatriots, addressed hearers not quite strangers to the remotest countries which he described. The world, as conceived by Herodotus, comprised less than the half of Europe, about a fifth of Asia, and about a quarter of Africa—a considerable enlargement on that of Homer. He gives hints, moreover, which, if logically followed up, would lead to still further extension, for in almost every direction, the bounding lines are undefined. These lines included in the east the region of the Punjaub or five tributaries of the Indus, which had been explored by Scylax of Caryanda; westward, they touched the Pyrenees and the Atlantic, where Herodotus speaks of the Celts and Iberian Cynesians as having their abode. In the days of Eratosthenes, who died towards the close of the second century, these limits had been pushed back considerably—India being known as far as its southern extremity while

much additional light had been cast on the northern portions of Europe. Among those to whom this added knowledge was due may be mentioned Xenophon, Pytheas, Ctesias, Aristotle and Nearchus, the admiral of Alexander the Great. Xenophon cleared up the obscurity that hung over regions partially known before his time. Aristotle dealt with the earth as a naturalist, rather than a geographer. Of Ctesias little has come down to us and for that we are mainly indebted to the diligent ecclesiastical diplomatist, Photius. He was a pretentious writer and it is doubtful whether his experience was as comprehensive as his imagination. Whether by travel or by inquiry, he had, however, added some interesting contributions to the sum of Greek knowledge concerning the East, especially India, in those times. His account of the *fauna* and *flora* of the peninsula was largely mingled with fable, and his jealous detraction of the works of his predecessors would hardly add to our respect for his character. Pytheas has an interest for us as being what now-a-days would be termed a Frenchman. He was a native of the Greek colony of Massilia, then renowned for its learning and enterprise. In the latter part of the 4th Century B. C. he sailed through the columns of Hercules and turned northwards past the coast of Spain and France until he reached Britain, which he was the first Greek to explore. He proceeded thence to the Baltic, passing, on his way, a region which he called Thule and which some suppose to be Jutland. Then retracing his course, he arrived at the mouth of the Rhine, where he became acquainted with a German nation called the Osthiones, that is, Ost-wohner, or dwellers in the east. Having coasted along till he came to another river, he ascended it and thus made his way back overland to Massilia.

Alexander the Great's expedition to Asia inaugurated a new era in geographical discovery, making the Greeks acquainted with countries and nations previously known

to them only by hearsay. Arrian, Quintus Curtius and Plutarch (as well as other writers), have left us complete accounts of his conquests and their results on the countries which he invaded. He went no farther eastward than the Hyphasis, but he there formed a project which tended to add considerably to the knowledge of Asia already acquired. He sent a great armada down the Indus and the explorers reached the Ocean after a voyage of nine months. There they observed what to them was the mystery of the tides, and the King was so pleased with the success that had been achieved that he formed another scheme which was to have a survey made of the entire coast from the mouth of the Indus to that of the Euphrates. While others recoiled from so arduous a task, Nearchus undertook it, and after seven months, reached the Persian Gulf.

From Alexander to Julius Cæsar is a natural transition. During the interval Roman conquest had carried on the work begun by the Phœnicians and continued by the Greeks. Cæsar's Commentaries, supplemented by the works of Tacitus, a century and a-half later, present pictures of the ancestors of the three most civilized nations of Europe, of which it would not be easy to over-estimate the value. But, as yet, we see little extension of the boundaries of the known world. Barely contemporary with Cæsar was the Greek geographer, Strabo, whose account of the world of his age is one of the treasures of the past which have escaped the ravages of time. His work contains a careful summing-up of all the geographical knowledge which had been won by former explorers and commentators. The historians proper, both Greek and Latin, necessarily treat largely of geographical subjects and the works of such writers as Pausanias, Pliny and Dionysius of Halicarnassus are also valuable from the same point of view. The poets have also thrown considerable light on the geographical discoveries of the ancients. Pomponius Mela, a Spaniard, who in the reigns of

Caligula and Claudius, wrote a treatise on geography, customs and manners, gives descriptions of Europe, Asia and Africa, which are not without interest. There is a passage in Scipio's Dream, in which Cicero gives a general view of the earth as known in his day, which seems in certain respects to anticipate some discoveries generally attributed to later investigation. He makes Africanus speak of the small portion of the earth that is inhabited, and also of the Antipodes who dwell on the other side of it. After comparing the inhabited earth to a small island in the midst of the ocean, he asks whether the fame of any European is likely to cross the Caucasus or the Ganges, or whether the people of the distant East or West or South will ever hear the name of even the most illustrious Roman.

The names of Africanus, the elder and the younger, and of Cicero, who has thus brought them together in his philosophic fancy, have, far in excess of the hopes of any of them, long since transcended those barriers of fame which the great orator and statesman thought impassable. Though many generations had still to come and go before those obstacles which furnished Cicero with his illustration of the fleeting nature of fame were so surmounted as to allow of easy intercourse between those on either side, even in Ptolemy's map of the world, we can see signs of the coming dawn, which should disclose the vast East to the wondering, West. It looked as if the prophecy of the chorus in Seneca's *Medea* of the time when there should be no more limit to men's knowledge of the earth, were already on the way to fulfilment, as if, before the Roman Empire began its decline, its proud rulers were to have a glimpse of that mighty world, which had not been included in their own *orbis terrarum*. It is, perhaps, an indication of the wider views so characteristic of Christianity, which embraced in its reconciling and redeeming mission, not one great conquering people, but "all people that on earth do dwell," that in

the second century, Pausanias published his itinerary or travellers' guide to ancient Greece. It was from Christian missionaries that the Romans were first to learn the lesson that the nations beyond the confines of their power had their part in the scheme of existence and were worthy of study and consideration. They had grown accustomed, as Gibbon says, to "confound the Roman monarchy with the globe of the earth," but were now to learn what they should afterwards acutely feel, the importance of races whom they had scornfully ignored. Before the close of the second century, zealous missionaries had preached the Gospel, not only in every province of the Empire, but in many of the remote regions beyond it. The tradition that St. Thomas evangelized a part of India, is well known. The native Christians of Malabar firmly believed it when they were first visited by the Portuguese. More authentic is the record of the establishment of Christianity in the Chinese Province of Shensi, by the Nestorians, as attested by the Sigaufu tablet, discovered in 1625. The Rev. Wells Williams, who lectured in Montreal a few years ago, and who spent much of his life in China, has no doubt of its genuineness. Arnobius, who wrote in the beginning of the third century, mentions the Seres among those who had, in part, accepted Christianity in his time. The monks who brought the eggs of the silkworm to Constantinople in the middle of the sixth century, had long resided in China, and, as Mr. Williams says, it is reasonable to suppose that they were not the first or the only ones who went thither to preach the Gospel. On the other hand, let us see whether the Chinese had been doing anything to overcome the barriers that separated them from the western world. It is certain that the Greeks took the name (*ser*) for silkworm from the Chinese name for the same useful insect. How did it reach them? Nearchus, already mentioned, is the first to speak of the Seric stuffs of India and of the people of the Seres. It is thought that

the Princes of the House of Tsin extended their sway to Central Asia, and that thus the trade was carried in caravans to the countries along the Oxus. Those who acted as carriers seem to have kept the secret of the manufacture, if they knew it, to themselves, for the Romans, though they made abundant use of silk, long continued ignorant of it. In the early silk-trade, it is not likely that there was any contact between the Chinese and the Occidentals. The commodity passed, probably, through many successive hands, before it reached those who were to wear it. In the year 140 B.C., an emperor of the Han dynasty sent a general with an army into Central Asia, and the general wrote a description on his return of all the countries and people that he had seen. This is known from Chinese sources. After that, for 120 years, the trade route remained open, until the turbulent Huingnu, who, in later centuries, were to turn their strength against Europe, succeeded in closing it. But never, at any time, had the traffic come further west than the Caspian. There it was taken up by Turkees and western merchants, who acted as middlemen.

The day was to come when pure curiosity to know more of the western nations was to impel an ardent disciple of Buddha (or Confucius,) to turn his steps westward. It was towards the end of the 4th century that Fa-Hian, a monk, accompanied by a few of his brethren, started on a journey over the hills and far away to the lands of the setting sun. They crossed the desert, which Marco Polo was to traverse 800 years later, passed through the country of the Ouigours, the Khanates where the Czar now reigns, through Afghanistan, through the Punjab and a great part of India. From the continent they sailed to Ceylon, of which Jamboulos, the Greek merchant (mentioned in Tzetzes) had already written an account in his Book of Wonders. From there they went to Java, where they stayed five months, and thence they returned home by way of Canton and Nankin.



It was of such religious knowledge as would confirm him in his faith that Ha-Hian was mostly in quest, and he was greatly pleased with ceremonies and other signs of piety which he witnessed among the people with whom he became acquainted.

A still more interesting Chinese traveller was he who, in the fifth century of our era, discovered Fou Sang which, if we can credit some learned inquirers, was neither more nor less than the continent of America. The story has been translated from the Chinese annals of Li Xen by M. de Guignes and is to the effect that a Buddhist priest of China discovered a country called Fou Sang, the description of which, in several particulars, is applicable to the western portion of this continent. The mention of horses is hardly consistent, however, with the natural history of North America at that period, which was too late for Mr. Huxley's pliohippus and too early for the introduction of its descendants by Europeans. The narrative is important, nevertheless, as indicating the enlightened curiosity and exploring enterprise of the Chinese of that time.

The name of Cosmas Indicopleustes bears evidence of the growing interest which western nations were taking in the great peninsula whose inhabitants are now our own fellow-subjects. He was an Egyptian merchant who traded to India by the way of the Red Sea, and who after an active life spent in commercial pursuits, retired to a monastery and amused himself by writing out his theories and experiences. His *Topographia Christiana*, though it contains a good deal of nonsense, is not without value. He tried to prove that the earth was a vast oblong plain, surrounded by the ocean. While its weight presses it downward the fiery forces within tend to raise it up and thus it is kept suspended *in vacuo*. Beyond the circumambient ocean to the east man was created and there was the paradise of gladness where men dwelt before the Flood: after that event Noah

and his Sons were borne in the ark to the earth which we now inhabit. Mr. Ignatius Donnelly, in his "Atlantis," cites Cosmas as making the Deluge begin from the west in support of the reality of Plato's story in the *Timæus*. Notwithstanding his odd notions, Cosmas gives some valuable information concerning the natural history of the countries that he visited, especially India and Ceylon.

Besides missions and commerce, a new force began now to impel men to travel—the veneration for shrines and holy places. Among those who made the tour of the Holy Land and left an exact account of what they saw was Arculphus, a French Bishop, who in the seventh century, visited Jerusalem and the other scenes in Palestine made dear to the heart of the Christian by hallowed associations. His narrative has a special value as shewing at least the antiquity of the location of places mentioned in the Gospel record, still revered by pious pilgrims of all denominations. He also visited and described Damascus, Tyre, Jaffa, Alexandria and Constantinople. Another pilgrim of less exalted rank but no less interest, though he wrote no book, was Godric, the Hermit, whose story is so delightfully told by Charles Kingsley. Having been a merchant-sailor for sixteen years, and prospered in his career, he began to think that there were other things than money-making to live for. So, having worshipped at the shrines of St. Andrew and St. Cuthbert of Farne, and still yearning for the blessedness of a soul at peace with God and with itself, he took the Cross and started for Jerusalem, facing difficulties incredible, but managing at last to reach his destination. He made his way home by Spain, so as to visit the sanctuary of St. James of Compostella. Then he settled down as a hermit at Finchale, near Durham. His pilgrimage took place several centuries after Arculph's, but another Englishman, named Willibald, a member of a wealthy family, made the same journey in the 7th century. It would be out of place in paper like the

present to say anything of the wonderful voyage of St. Bréndan to the Land of Promise. Though generally regarded as an allegory, it had, no doubt, some basis in fact and, at any rate, it marks the impulse for pilgrimage and exploration which had begun to have such fruitful results. With St. Brendan sailed St. Malo, who gave his name to that French seaport which was destined in after times to send forth so many valiant voyagers and discoverers and among them our own Jacques Cartier.

The rise of Mohammedanism, with its wars of religious and material conquest, could not fail, directly and indirectly, to stimulate inter-communication among the nations of the world. It was a mission of the sword and, as such, had a remarkable success. But, while the sword was doing its work, the arts of peace were not forgotten. In the sixth century there was a brisk commerce between China and Arabia. Haroun Al Raschid not only corresponded with Charlemagne but carried on trade with the Coreans whose ports have only lately, not without trouble and even bloodshed, been reopened to the world. "A thousand years," Mr. Griffis tells us, "before Perry sailed for the Tycoon's capital, the subjects of Haroun Al Raschid traded with the Coreans, bringing to Bagdad and Damascus pearls, gold, jewelled ornaments, saddles, porcelain and drugs from Shinra," (an ancient state in Corea). Chinese merchants came as far as the Persian Gulf where they were met by Arabs from Muscat and Syria. It is thought that in that way Mohammedanism was introduced into China and it is stated by those who have given attention to the subject that to this day the Arab origin of the Chinese Moslem can be detected in their faces and forms. In the middle of the eighth century an alliance existed between the Emperor of China and the Caliph of Bagdad and the former was even supplied with soldiers by the latter, during his conflict with a rebel general. When the war was over, the victorious Arab

troops were allotted land and allowed to settle in the Empire. But not only did the disciples of the Prophet thus extend the boundaries of geographical knowledge by war and trade; they also furnished the world with some diligent explorers. Of these one of the most noted is Soleyman, a merchant of Bassora, on the Persian Gulf, who, in the middle of the ninth century, travelled over a great part of the East. Of the story of his voyages part was written by himself, the remainder by a geographer named Abouzeyd Hassan. Their combined narrative treats of the Chinese, the Hindoos and of a portion of the African continent. Still more famous was Ibn Batuta or Abd Allah el Lawati, a native of Tangier in Morocco, who, in the beginning of the second quarter of the fourteenth century, started out on a tour over a great portion of the then known world. Like a true Mussulman, he began his explorations by a pilgrimage to Mecca, which he reached by way of Alexandria a Cairo. Having ascended the Nile as far as Nubia, he was prevented by disturbances which had just broken out from proceeding further in that direction. He, therefore, made for Asia Minor, visiting by the way all the sacred places in Palestine, as well as Tyre, Tiberias and Damascus. At this last named city he saw with veneration the stone which preserved the imprint of Moses' footstep. Bassora, Shiraz, Bagdad, Tabreez, Medina and Mecca then in succession received the pilgrim. Meeting at the Holy City thousands of his fellow-worshippers, he had no difficulty in forming a party which was made up of merchants to accompany him in his peregrinations. Their first exploration was through Arabia Felix. From there they crossed over to Abyssinia, whence they entered the country of the Berbers. In one of their towns, Makdisbu, a kind of primitive civilization was observed, and some of the better class of the people were epicures in their way. Proceeding along the coast our travellers arrived at Zanzibar, where having

staid some time, they made their way along southern Arabia to Ormuz on the Persian Gulf. From there, after passing through Persia, Ibn Batuta made a second pilgrimage to Mecca. Then he again visited the Nile region, from which he passed through Syria, touching at Jerusalem, Tripoli, and other cities, to Anatolia. At Erzeroum he saw an aerolite that weighed 620 lbs. Crossing the Black Sea, he landed in the Crimea, reached the city of Astrakhan at the mouth of the Volga, where the Tartar King was then passing the winter. The princess, his wife, daughter of the Greek Emperor, being about to make the journey to Constantinople, Ibn Batuta was asked to be her escort, a charge which he gallantly accepted. On the way the august party was guarded by 5000 men, who carried a mosque which could be set up at every stage. At the Byzantine capital, Ibn Batuta was received with much distinction and he took advantage of his position to make himself acquainted with all points of interest and to gather all possible information. Afterwards he re-traversed the desert to Chorasm, to Bokhara, to Balkh, and at every stage in his wanderings he saw the traces of the devastating march of Barbarian conquerors. Having arrived at Herat, he conceived the project of visiting the farthest East. At Delhi, he was appointed ambassador to the Emperor of China, but, as we shall presently be accompanying another traveller in the same direction, perhaps we had better take leave of the enterprising Ibn Batuta at this point, merely adding that he reached the distant city to which he was commissioned and went even as far as the Great Wall, having on the journey visited Ceylon, Sumatra and a number of other places of interest. In 1348, we find him once more at Mecca and in the following year, he returned to Tangier. But not to rest—he had enjoyed the charm of travel so long that repose was a burden to him. So he set out anew and penetrated to the heart of Africa, traversing the desert of

Sahara and sojourning for a time in the great trading city of Timbuctoo. In 1353, 29 years after his first departure from Tangier, Ibn Batuta settled at Fez, in the dominions of the Emperor of Morocco, having won by his untiring energy and enlightened curiosity, the merited reputation of one of the greatest explorers of the middle ages.

If the Mohammedans had their distinguished traveller in Ibn Batuta, the Jews had one scarcely less illustrious (especially as he lived two centuries earlier,) in the well known Benjamin of Tudela. He was the son of a rabbi, who dwelt in the kingdom of Navarre, at that time the home of many members of his scattered race. He did not venture so far eastward as Ibn Batuta, but he left a full account of whatever was worthy of note in what he saw and, some say, in what he did not see. While Gibbon, though severally criticizing the relations which pass under Benjamin's name, sees no reason to doubt their genuineness, Dean Milman questions their reality and is inclined to regard them as mere compilations. At the same time it is acknowledged that the writings which bear his name give a picture of the civilized world in the 12th century which is of considerable value to the historian. As he made it a matter of solemn duty to inquire particularly wherever he went into the condition of his co-nationalists, they are especially important as a contribution to medieval Jewish history. It is quite possible that he travelled just enough to make a basis for the narrative which he supplemented with the aid of books—a plan which he has certainly not been alone in adopting.

Among those whom affairs of state led some distance eastward may be mentioned Photius, a man of note both in literary and ecclesiastical annals. He employed the years of his diplomatic exile at Bagdad, not so much in describing the scenes or persons by whom he was surrounded, as in rescuing from oblivion many writings of the

ancients which, but for him, would have passed wholly out of memory. Whatever may have been his offences as a churchman, for this service to literature, he deserves to be had in grateful remembrance. But the days were approaching when the kindly relations of which Charlemagne's correspondence and the mission of Photius give evidence were to be changed for a struggle in which the Cross and the Crescent should meet as deadly foes, and Western Christendom, stirred by a common impulse, should move eastward to rescue the Holy Land and the shrines of the Faith from the occupation of scornful infidels. That the Crusaders were not without their influence on the progress of exploration by giving intensity to the spirit which, in those ages, entered so largely into it, cannot be denied. Robertson thinks, indeed, that their effect on trade was injurious and temporarily it may have been so. But any sentiment which impels men to do great things whether for the love of religion or for the glory which they may bring, must ultimately stimulate every kind of human endeavor. Religion, chivalry and commerce were often combined, indeed, in impelling men to undertake enterprises attended with danger as well as with profit and honour. Milman tells us that the "silks, jewels, spices, paper and other products of the east were brought home from Palestine by the pious but not unworldly merchants of Venice, Pisa, Marseilles and even of France and Germany."

If time permitted, some reference might be made to the deeds of the adventurous Norsemen and especially to their voyages to Iceland, Greenland and the New World. I may, however, before proceeding, pause just a moment to mention a recent valuable addition that has been made to the already important manuscript collection of this Society. Dr. Marsden has received from the venerable Mr. Henderson, of Megantic, his admirable contribution to the litera-

ture of exploration entitled "The Discovery of America by the Icelanders." Following the argument of Rafn, in his "Antiquitates Americanæ," Mr. Henderson urges that the men who, pushing on from conquest to conquest, had in turn discovered the Ferroe Isles, Iceland and Greenland (not to speak of other discoveries in other directions,) were just the men from whom such an exploit as the discovery of America might have been expected. The subject is one of exceeding interest and Mr. Henderson has treated it with ability, skill and judgment. We might also consider the claims to a previous discovery of these shores by the Irish, as set down in the saga of Aré Marsson and maintained with considerable ability by M. Beauvois. The energetic conquests of Jean de Bethencourt among the Canary Islands also belong to this branch of exploring enterprise. But Atlantic exploration is a subject by itself and is associated with Columbus and his successors, rather than with the old-world explorers who did their own useful work before him.

With your permission, then, we will again turn our attention Eastward. The most remarkable of the great explorers, whose researches in the eastern hemisphere, did so much to prepare the way for the opening up to the nations of Europe of this continent, were Carpini (with Stephen of Bohemia,) Rubruquis and Marco Polo.

Carpini was born at Perugia in Italy towards the close of the twelfth century. The task for which he was selected by Pope Innocent IV was one of much delicacy and not a little danger. It was no less than to bear an embassy to the formidable Mongol emperor, the successor of Zengis Khan. It took Carpini and his party some time to reach even the beginning of the Mongol dominions, although they then extended as far westward as the Dnieper. They were then in the country of the Comans, where they were presented to Prince Bathy. The papal briefs were present-



ed to this vice-roy in Slavonic, Arabic and Tartar. Having read the documents, Bathy ordered the ambassadors to start at once for Caracorum. The journey was a rapid one—the horses being changed six times a day. The country through which they passed was almost a desert, sparsely inhabited by tribes whom the Mongols had conquered and enslaved. Having traversed Turkestan, they came to Kara-Kithay where the governor received them with due honor and gave them what he considered suitable entertainment. They then continued their journey through a cold, mountainous region and at last on the 22nd of July, 1245, they reached the environs of the royal city. The emperor had just died and the election of his successor had not yet taken place. The empress-dowager meanwhile acting as regent, it was to Her Majesty the ambassadors were presented. They saw a countless multitude of princes and dukes on horse-back occupying all the surrounding heights. Every day they appeared in a different garb, sometimes in white and purple, sometimes in scarlet and white, and so on. On the harness of some of the horses there was silver valued at twenty marks. A month passed before the heir was proclaimed emperor, and the mission of Carpini and Jean de Boheme began to come to an end. It brought them little profit, except the experience which it gave them of strange scenes and people, and the renown and promotion which it won for them on their return. After their presentation to the newly enthroned emperor, they were detained for a month, getting no satisfaction and but poor fare and treatment. They were not even allowed the privilege of entering Caracorum. Finally, they were haughtily dismissed with a letter which bore the impress of a scornful fatalism, as though Okkaday and Kuyuk, his successor, were God's servants, whose duty it was to command while other men, including the Pope and all Christian princes, were obliged upon to obey. Possibly, the fact that His Holiness, either

forgetting the eastern custom of sending gifts or not deeming its observance necessary, had sent no present with his ambassadors, may have affected both the treatment of Carpini and the tone of the reply. His mission gained for Carpini the archbishopric of Antivari and the fame of a great traveller.

Some years later, DeRubruquis, a Belgian, was despatched on a similar mission, at the command of St. Louis of France. He had the privilege, which had been denied to Carpini, of being admitted into Caracorum. The city, as Gibbon tells us, contained two streets, the one of Chinese mechanics, the other of Mohammedan traders, and several places of religious worship—a Nestorian Church, two mosques, and twelve temples of various idols. Rubruquis found there a countryman of his own, by name Boucher, who had made for the Khan, a silver tree, supported by four lions and ejecting four different liquors. Abulghazi, a Tartar writer, whose manuscript was discovered by some Russians, mentions the painters of Cathay.

We now come to a traveller—one of the most distinguished in the annals of exploration—Marco Polo. Though his great name is generally more associated with commercial than with religious motives, it was to the latter that he, too, owed his first start in the career in which he was destined to become so successful. He came of an adventurous race—originally of Dalmatia. His father, Niccolo and his uncle, Matteo, merchant-princes of Venice, had established a branch house at Constantinople, while their brother Andrea managed another business in the Crimea. From there they had reached by the Volga the camp of the Mongol prince of that time and had disposed of some of their more valuable wares. A war breaking out, they left the camp for Bokhara where they lived three years. They were then engaged by the followers of Hoolagoo, the conqueror of Persia, to accompany them to the Court of Kublai

Khan. The great emperor received them hospitably and, having already learned the Tartar tongue, they were able to converse with their royal entertainer, who was just then thinking of sending an embassy to His Holiness.

They took their leave of the great Khan in 1266, accompanied by one of the Emperor's suite named Cogatal. The latter falling ill, they had to make their way home alone, and it was not till after three years that they reached Armenia. Arriving at Acre, they heard of the death of Pope Clement IV, but they were well received by the legate, Tebaldo, who, being soon after elected Clement's successor, gave a reply to Kublai and commissioned two monks to accompany the Polo brothers. During his long previous absence, Niccolo's wife had died, having given birth to a son. This son, now about 17 years old, was the celebrated Marco, who began his career by going with his father and uncle on their important embassy. To give any thing like a satisfactory sketch of Marco's career would require a paper and a pretty long one to itself and, as my purpose is to indicate the general course of discovery, not to give the lives of discoverers, I must be exceedingly brief. It is almost needless to say that doubt has been cast upon the accounts which Marco Polo has left of his travels, as well as upon those of his predecessors. But if he did not witness all that he recounts, he tells us himself that he heard it from persons of credit. If, moreover, some persons have pronounced him untrustworthy, others, quite as capable of judging as to his veracity, have cleared him of the imputation. He was not a man of science and is not to be criticized as though he professed in all that he wrote to make an exact scientific statement. He made his few notes, probably, in haste, as he had leisure, and dictated, for the most part, from memory, to his chosen amanuensis, the narrative which bears his name. Under such circumstances perfect accuracy is not to be looked for. It is enough that his

story is in the main true and, in no case, written intentionally to deceive. As Robertson points out, it is to his credit that those who knew most placed most confidence in his relations, and to him Columbus owed it, in a great measure, that he discovered the New World. To-day, when the remotest parts of the earth are practically within hearing distance of each other, when it is a small thing to make the tour of half the Globe, and not an uncommon thing to circumnavigate it, Polo's marvels have lost their charm of novelty. It is only as marking an important stage in the progress of geographical science that his account of his travels is interesting to us. He traversed great parts of China, Tartary, Hindostan, he describes the city of Peking which he calls Cambalu, he visited Ceylon, Java, Sumatra, and he was aware of the existence of Japan. At a time when the notion which prevailed of the earth's dimensions were most indefinite, it was no inconsiderable gain to real knowledge to add so many vast regions, so many large islands, so many oceans and seas to the map of the world, to double its known extent. That he was a man of quick observation and able to describe intelligibly what passed before him is shown by the fact that the history of Kublai's triumph, as recorded by him, is pronounced correct by those who have had the opportunity of examining the native annals of China. His ability and resource are proved by his long run of success under trying circumstances. His skill in adapting himself to his surroundings is made evident by his having been elected to fill a high office at Chehkiang, which he held for three years—the only civil office, Mr. Wells Williams says, ever held in China by a European, at least until within the last 30 years. He must also have understood Chinese to administer the affairs of his governorship, though some have jealously denied it. The three Polo were altogether 24 years in the East, and when they returned home, they were so changed

in appearance that they had some difficulty in convincing their friends that they were really themselves. The story runs that, in order to show how prosperous they had been, they gave a public feast, in which they appeared in rich apparel, the suits being arranged one over another so that, disrobing in succession, they appeared in turn in crimson satin, in damask and in velvet, and that they then produced the rags in which they had reached home, but these too disguised, so that, being ripped open, they exhibited a profusion of diamonds and all precious stones and jewels. Persons of all ranks than flocked around them and so accustomed had Marco become to the use of the term million, then not so common in Europe as it is to-day, that they dubbed him Messir Millioni.

Contemporary with Marco Polo, was an Armenian Prince, named Haitho, who paid a visit to the grand Khan on a matter of tribute. Monte Corvo or Corvino, a distinguished missionary, was born in Apulia in 1247, and in 1288 was sent to Tartary by Pope Nicholas IV. In 1291 he arrived in India where he remained for a year, preaching and baptizing such of the natives as received his message. He then set out for Cathay, where he was kindly received by the Khan. He built a church at Cambalu, that is, Pekin. Clement V., made him Archbishop of Tartary and sent him seven men to serve under him as suffragans. Both he and Marco Polo make mention of Prester John, an alleged Christian prince generally located in Central Asia, but whom the Portuguese claimed to have traced to Abyssinia. When the extent to which Christianity prevailed in the middle ages, among the Tartar tribes—"one of the most curious questions" as Milman says, "in Oriental history"—is remembered, the existence of such a potentate is not impossible. Some of the Nestorian priests said he was Jung Khan, a Tartar chief in the Karacorum range who was slain by Zenghis Khan in 1202. Mosheim thinks he may have been one of

the Nestorians themselves who, by his influence over his converts, raised himself or was raised by them to the throne. Others, set him down as the Grand Lama of Tibet, and Gibbon deems the story partly due to a mistaken notion as to the Lama's creed and functions, and the probability of Christianity having been professed by some of the Khans and hordes of the Mongols. One of the latest of many writers on the subject regards Prester John as a Khan of the Keraites. (Howorth's *History of the Mongols*). There is no more interesting chapter in human history than the record of Christian missions in Tartary and China, but it is a topic which my time will only allow me to indicate. (See *Lettres Edifiantes, Annales de la Foi*, Purchas's *Pilgrims* and also (especially for "Prester John") Baring-Gould's *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*). Oderic, a friar has left a journal of his mission work in which he tells of the efforts at evangelization of the Nestorians and others who had preceded him. What strikes one as most remarkable in connection with these apostolic labors is the toleration (so much in contrast with the wild habits generally ascribed to chiefs and people) with which they often met the advances of the strangers. The following quotation from Corvino's account of his missionary life will give some idea of the spirit by which he and his brethern were actuated, and of the content with which they bore the privations of an exile which to the wordly would have been intolerable. "It is now," he says in his diary, "twelve years since I have heard any news from the West. I am become old and grey-headed but it is rather through labors and tribulations than through age, for I am only fifty-eight years old. I have learned the Tartar language and literature, into which I have translated the whole New Testament and the Psalms of David, and have caused them to be transcribed with the utmost care. I write and read and preach openly and freely the testimony of the law of Christ."

Sir John Mandeville is the great English traveller who took up the work of exploration soon after the Polo family left off. He set out on his travels in the year 1322, and, according to his own account, visited Tartary, Persia, Armenia, Libya, Chaldaea, India, greater and less, and the Islands around it, Amazonia and Ethiopia. After an absence of thirty years and more, he returned home, "distressing rheumatic gouts fixing the end of his labour against his will." His book was approved by the Pope, and he turned it first from latin into French and then again into English, "that every man of my nation may understand it." Sir John wrote his book chiefly for the convenience of pilgrims going to the Holy Land, to which it is a sort of traveller's guide with full descriptions of all the holy places. Like Marco Polo, he tells both of what he saw and of what others told him that they had seen. Some of his tales reached him, no doubt, as the elder Disraeli suggests, from the Arabian story-teller. While absent, he served under the Sultan of Babylon (Cairo) and the Khan of Cathay. The former offered the valiant knight his daughter and a province of his domain, but Mandeville would not accept the conditions, one of which was that he should forswear his faith. His good service won him, however, what he much prized, admittance to the holy places at Jerusalem. It is a strange and wonderful world to which he introduced his readers, and his book soon became the rage all over Europe. Talking trees and ladies transformed to dragonesses and people with only one leg whose locomotion was as that of a hoop are only a few of the marvellous phenomena which he relates. When Galland published his *Contes Arabes* in the beginning of the last century, the source of many of the *mirabilia* of medieval travellers was discovered, for it is now known that the *Thousand and one Nights*, were in existence (in a form which has, however, been considerably modified) as early as the 10th century. As to his real travels, it has

been observed that Sir John Mandeville's narrative (especially touching the far East) resembles that of Odoric, already mentioned, to such a degree that some think they must have travelled together. It is also noteworthy that Odoric's book was written some twenty years before Sir John's and some critics have been cruel enough to ask whether he saw more of India or Cathay than what he found in the pages of the Lombard Friar. Yet, notwithstanding all the suspicion of which he has been the object, impartial examination has redounded to the great traveller's credit and placed him, before the world as a man of true worth, honest and clear-sighted, and only credulous after the fashion of his times.

Between the days when Sir John Mandeville was the standard author of travels to all that could read or listen in Western civilization and the present, when we, who live in a world of which he did not dream, hear daily what is happening in a farther East than that to which he ventured, there is a suggestive contrast. To fill up the interval, to recount the progress of exploration and discovery from then till now, to cross the Atlantic with Columbus and his successors, to accompany Vasco de Gama around the Cape of Storms, to sail with Jacques-Cartier up the St. Lawrence, to follow on the track of La Salle and Iberville, to go with Frobisher and Hudson, and Franklin and Kane to the frozen North, with Tasman, Van Dieman and Cook to seek a new world in southern seas, to dare with Ross and Wilkes antarctic dangers, to penetrate with Speke and Burton, with Baker and Livingstone, to the heart of Africa,—that is a task which we cannot now attempt. To even mention the noble multitude of great names which mark the steps in that progress would be a *magnum opus*. Even if we were to confine ourselves to a single province of exploring enterprise, such as that which has illustrated our own continent, or even our own Dominion, there would



be ample material, in the merest sketch, for a lecture of no moderate length. And yet the work of exploration is, after all, but well begun. The world has slowly unfolded its dimensions and various qualities to many generations of seekers. But, though we know its extent and can parcel it out by names, how much of it is still unconquered by civilization, of how much of it are the characteristics only matter for conjecture. And never in the whole range of geographic development were so many engaged in "Voyage and travail," as Sir John Mandeville named it, than in this, our age, when lands and nations far apart in space have been drawn so close by the railway and the telegraph, and a better feeling of man's relations to man. The modern explorer has advantages and manifold appliances to further his aims, which his predecessor in the middle ages had to do without; and it is when we think of the difficulties and retarding drawbacks and dangers which those old heroes, among them that travel by land and water, had to encounter—difficulties and drawbacks so great that we still pray weekly for those who have to contend with them—it is then that we are conscious of the great debt of gratitude which we owe to them, without whose valiant dutifulness we should not be either what or where we are.\*

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\* The important discoveries of Covilham and B. Diaz would have been included in my sketch, only that the careers of both those brave explorers, though beginning before, ended several years after, the date (1492) on which I had fixed as my limit.—J. R.