

## BOOK XXI

—*Docuit quæ maximus Atlas.*—VIRGIL, *Aeneid.*

OF LAWS IN RELATION TO COMMERCE, CON-  
SIDERED IN THE REVOLUTIONS IT HAS MET  
WITH IN THE WORLD

### I.—*Some general Considerations*

**T**HOUGH commerce be subject to great revolutions, yet it is possible that certain physical causes, as the quality of the soil, or the climate, may fix its nature forever.

We at present carry on the trade of the Indies merely by means of the silver which we send thither. The Romans carried annually thither about fifty millions of sesterces;<sup>a</sup> and this silver, as ours is at present, was exchanged for merchandise, which was brought to the West. Every nation that ever traded to the Indies has constantly carried bullion and brought merchandise in return.<sup>b</sup>

It is nature itself that produces this effect. The Indians have their hearts adapted to their manner of living. Our luxury cannot be theirs; nor theirs our wants. Their climate demands and permits hardly anything which comes from ours. They go in a great measure naked; such clothes as they have the country itself furnishes; and their religion, which is deeply rooted, gives them an aversion for those things that serve for our nourishment. They want, therefore, nothing but our bullion to serve as the medium of value; and for this they give us merchandise in return, with which the frugality of the people and the nature of the country furnish them in great abundance. Those ancient authors who have mentioned the Indies describe them just as we now find them, as to their policy, customs, and manners.<sup>c</sup> The Indies have ever been the same Indies they

<sup>a</sup> Pliny, lib. VI. cap. xxiii.

<sup>b</sup> See Pausanias, "Laconia," sine III. cap. xii.

<sup>c</sup> See Pliny, book VI. chap. xix., and Strabo, book XV.



are at present; and in every period of time those who traded with that country carried specie thither and brought none in return.

2.—*Of the People of Africa*

The greatest part of the people on the coast of Africa are savages and barbarians. The principal reason, I believe, of this is, because the small countries capable of being inhabited are separated from each other by large and almost uninhabitable tracts of land. They are without industry or arts. They have gold in abundance, which they receive immediately from the hand of nature. Every civilized state is, therefore, in a condition to traffic with them to advantage, by raising their esteem for things of no value, and receiving a very high price in return.

3.—*That the Wants of the People in the South are different from those of the North*

In Europe there is a kind of balance between the southern and northern nations. The first have every convenience of life, and few of its wants: the last have many wants, and few conveniences. To one nature has given much, and demands but little; to the other she has given but little, and demands a great deal. The equilibrium is maintained by the laziness of the southern nations, and by the industry and activity which she has given to those in the North. The latter are obliged to undergo excessive labor, without which they would want everything, and degenerate into barbarians. This has neutralized slavery to the people of the south: as they can easily dispense with riches, they can more easily dispense with liberty. But the people of the North have need of liberty, for this can best procure them the means of satisfying all those wants which they have received from nature. The people of the North, then, are in a forced state, if they are not either free or barbarians. Almost all the people of the South are, in some measure, in a state of violence, if they are not slaves.

4.—*The principal Difference between the Commerce of the Ancients and the Moderns*

The world has found itself, from time to time, in different situations; by which the face of commerce has been altered. The trade of Europe is, at present, carried on principally from the north to the south; and the difference of climate is the cause that the several nations have great occasion for the merchandise of each other. For example, the liquors of the south, which are carried to the north, form a commerce little known to the ancients. Thus the burden of vessels, which was formerly computed by measures of corn, is at present determined by tuns of liquor.

The ancient commerce, so far as it is known to us, was carried on from one port in the Mediterranean to another; and was almost wholly confined to the South. Now the people of the same climate, having nearly the same things of their own, have not the same need of trading amongst themselves as with those of a different climate. The commerce of Europe was, therefore, formerly less extended than at present.

This does not at all contradict what I have said of our commerce to the Indies: for here the prodigious difference of climate destroys all relation between their wants and ours.

5.—*Other Differences*

Commerce is sometimes destroyed by conquerors, sometimes cramped by monarchs; it traverses the earth, flies from the places where it is oppressed, and stays where it has liberty to breathe: it reigns at present where nothing was formerly to be seen but deserts, seas, and rocks; and where it once reigned now there are only deserts.

To see Colchis in its present situation, which is no more than a vast forest, where the people are every day diminishing, and only defend their liberty to sell themselves by piecemeal to the Turks and Persians, one could never imagine that this country had ever, in the time of the Romans, been full of cities where commerce convened all the nations of the world. We find no monument of these facts in the country itself; there are no traces of them, except in Pliny<sup>d</sup> and Strabo.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>d</sup> Lib. VI.

<sup>e</sup> Lib. XI.



The history of commerce is that of the communication of people. Their numerous defeats, and the flux and reflux of populations and devastations, here form the most extraordinary events.

6.—*Of the Commerce of the Ancients*

The immense treasures of Semiramis,<sup>f</sup> which could not be acquired in a day, give us reason to believe that the Assyrians themselves had pillaged other rich nations, as other nations afterwards pillaged them.

The effect of commerce is riches; the consequence of riches, luxury; and that of luxury the perfection of arts. We find that the arts were carried to great perfection in the time of Semiramis; <sup>g</sup> which is a sufficient indication that a considerable commerce was then established.

In the empires of Asia there was a great commerce of luxury. The history of luxury would make a fine part of that of commerce. The luxury of the Persians was that of the Medes, as the luxury of the Medes was that of the Assyrians.

Great revolutions have happened in Asia. The northeast parts of Persia, viz., Hyrcania, Margiana, Bactria, etc., were formerly full of flourishing cities,<sup>h</sup> which are now no more; and the north of this empire,<sup>i</sup> that is, the isthmus which separates the Caspian and the Euxine Seas, was covered with cities and nations, which are now destroyed.

Eratosthenes and Aristobulus <sup>j</sup> learned from Patroclus <sup>k</sup> that the merchandise of India passed by the Oxus into the sea of Pontus. Marcus Varro <sup>l</sup> tells us that at the time when Pompey commanded against Mithridates, they were informed that people went in seven days from India to the country of the Bactrians, and to the River Icarus, which falls into the Oxus; that by this method they were able to bring the merchandise of India across the Caspian Sea, and to enter the mouth of Cyrus; whence it was only five days' passage to the Phasis, a river that discharges itself into the Euxine Sea. There is no doubt but it was by the nations inhabiting these several countries that the

<sup>f</sup> Diodorus, lib. II.

<sup>g</sup> Ibid.

<sup>h</sup> Pliny, lib. VI. cap. xvi., and Strabo, lib. XI.

<sup>i</sup> Strabo, lib. XI.

<sup>j</sup> Ibid.

<sup>k</sup> The authority of Patroclus is of great weight, as appears from a passage in Strabo, lib. II.

<sup>l</sup> Pliny, lib. VI. cap. xvii. See also Strabo, lib. XI., upon the passage by which the merchandise was conveyed from the Phasis to the Cyrus.

great empires of the Assyrians, Medes, and Persians had communication with the most distant parts of the east and west.

An entire stop is now put to this communication. All these countries have been laid waste by the Tartars,<sup>m</sup> and are still infested by this destructive nation. The Oxus no longer runs into the Caspian Sea; the Tartars, for some private reasons, have changed its course, and it now loses itself in the barren sands.<sup>n</sup>

The Jaxartes, which was formerly a barrier between the polite and barbarous nations, has had its course turned in the same manner by the Tartars, and it no longer empties itself into the sea.<sup>o</sup>

Seleucus Nicator formed the project of joining the Euxine to the Caspian Sea.<sup>p</sup> This project, which would have greatly facilitated the commerce of those days, vanished at his death.<sup>q</sup> We are not certain it could have been executed in the isthmus which separates the two seas. This country is at present very little known, it is depopulated, and full of forests; however, water is not wanting, for an infinite number of rivers roll into it from Mount Caucasus; but as this mountain forms the north of the isthmus, and extends like two arms <sup>r</sup> towards the south, it would have been a grand obstacle to such an enterprise, especially in those times, when they had not the art of making sluices.

It may be imagined that Seleucus would have joined the two seas in the very place where Peter I has since joined them; that is, in that neck of land where the Tanais approaches the Volga; but the north of the Caspian Sea was not then discovered.

While the empires of Asia enjoyed the commerce of luxury, the Tyrians had the commerce of economy, which they extended throughout the world. Bochart has employed the first book of his "Canaan" in enumerating all the colonies which they sent into all the countries bordering upon the sea; they passed the pillars of Hercules, and made establishments on the coasts of the ocean.<sup>s</sup>

<sup>m</sup> There must have been very great changes in that country since the time of Ptolemy, who gives us an account of so many rivers that empty themselves into the east side of the Caspian Sea. In the Czar's chart we find only the river of Astrabat; in that of M. Bathalsi there is none at all.

<sup>n</sup> See Jenkinson's account of this, in

the "Collection of Voyages to the North," vol. iv.

<sup>o</sup> I am disposed to think that thence the Lake Aral was formed.

<sup>p</sup> Claudius Cæsar, in Plin. lib. VI. cap. xi.

<sup>q</sup> He was slain by Ptolemy Ceraunus.

<sup>r</sup> See Strabo, lib. XI.

<sup>s</sup> They founded Tartessus, and made a settlement at Cadiz.



In those times their pilots were obliged to follow the coasts, which were, if I may so express myself, their compass. Voyages were long and painful. The laborious voyage of Ulysses has been the fruitful subject of the finest poem in the world, next to that which alone has the preference.

The little knowledge which the greatest part of the world had of those who were far distant from them favored the nations engaged in the economical commerce. They managed trade with as much obscurity as they pleased; they had all the advantages which the most intelligent nations could take over the most ignorant.

The Egyptians—a people who by their religion and their manners were averse to all communication with strangers—had scarcely at that time any foreign trade. They enjoyed a fruitful soil and great plenty. Their country was the Japan of those times; it possessed everything within itself.

So little jealous were these people of commerce, that they left that of the Red Sea to all the petty nations that had any harbors in it. Here they suffered the Idumeans, the Syrians, and the Jews to have fleets. Solomon employed in this navigation the Tyrians, who knew those seas.<sup>†</sup>

Josephus <sup>‡</sup> says that this nation, being entirely employed in agriculture, knew little of navigation: the Jews, therefore, traded only occasionally in the Red Sea. They took from the Idumeans Eloth and Eziongeber, from whom they received this commerce; they lost these two cities, and with them lost this commerce.

It was not so with the Phœnicians: theirs was not a commerce of luxury; nor was their trade owing to conquest; their frugality, their abilities, their industry, their perils, and the hardships they suffered, rendered them necessary to all the nations of the world.

Before Alexander, the people bordering on the Red Sea traded only in this sea, and in that of Africa. The astonishment which filled the globe at the discovery of the Indian Sea, under that conqueror, is a sufficient proof of this. I have observed <sup>‡</sup> that bullion was always carried to the Indies, and never any brought thence; now the Jewish fleets, which brought gold

<sup>†</sup> 1 Kings ix.; 2 Chron. viii.  
<sup>‡</sup> Against Appian.

<sup>‡</sup> Chap. 1 of this book.

and silver by the way of the Red Sea, returned from Africa, and not from the Indies.<sup>w</sup>

Besides, this navigation was made on the eastern coast of Africa; for the state of navigation at that time is a convincing proof that they did not sail to a very distant shore.

I am not ignorant that the fleets of Solomon and Jehoshaphat returned only every three years; but I do not see that the time taken up in the voyage is any proof of the greatness of the distance.

Pliny and Strabo inform us that the junks of India and the Red Sea were twenty days in performing a voyage which a Greek or Roman vessel would accomplish in seven.<sup>x</sup> In this proportion, a voyage of one year, made by the fleets of Greece or Rome, would take very nearly three when performed by those of Solomon.

Two ships of unequal swiftness do not perform their voyage in a time proportionate to their swiftness. Slowness is frequently the cause of much greater slowness. When it becomes necessary to follow the coast, and to be incessantly in a different position, when they must wait for a fair wind to get out of a gulf, and for another to proceed, a good sailor takes the advantage of every favorable moment, while the other still continues in a difficult situation, and waits many days for another change.

The slowness of the Indian vessels, which in an equal time could make but the third of the way of those of the Greeks and Romans, may be explained by what we every day see in our modern navigation. The Indian vessels, which were built with a kind of sea-rushes, drew less water than those of Greece and Rome, which were of wood and joined with iron.

We may compare these Indian vessels to those at present made use of in ports of little depth of water. Such are those of Venice, and even of all Italy in general, <sup>y</sup> of the Baltic, and of the province of Holland.<sup>z</sup> Their ships, which ought to be able to go in and out of port, are built round and broad at the bottom; while those of other nations, who have good harbors,

<sup>w</sup> The proportion between gold and silver, as settled in Europe, may sometimes render it profitable to take gold instead of silver into the East Indies; but the advantage is very trifling.

<sup>x</sup> See Pliny, lib. VI. cap. xxii., and Strabo, lib. XV.

<sup>y</sup> They are mostly shallow; but Sicily has excellent ports.

<sup>z</sup> I say the province of Holland; for the ports of Zealand are deep enough.



are formed to sink deep into the water. This mechanism renders these last-mentioned vessels able to sail much nearer the wind; while the first can hardly sail, except the wind be nearly in the poop. A ship that sinks deep into the water sails towards the same side with almost every wind; this proceeds from the resistance which the vessel, while driven by the wind, meets with from the water, from which it receives a strong support; and from the length of the vessel which presents its side to the wind, while, from the form of the helm, the prow is turned to the point proposed; so that she can sail very near the wind, or, in other words, very near the point whence the wind blows. But when the hull is round and broad at the bottom, and consequently draws little water, it no longer finds this steady support; the wind drives the vessel, which is incapable of resistance, and can run them but with a small variation from the point opposite to the wind. Whence it follows, that broad-bottomed vessels are longer in performing voyages.

1. They lose much time in waiting for the wind, especially if they are obliged frequently to change their course. 2. They sail much slower, because not having a proper support from a depth of water, they cannot carry so much sail. If this be the case at a time when the arts are everywhere known, at a time when art corrects the defects of nature, and even of art itself; if at this time, I say, we find this difference, how great must that have been in the navigation of the ancients?

I cannot yet leave this subject. The Indian vessels were small, and those of the Greeks and Romans, if we except those machines built for ostentation, much less than ours. Now, the smaller the vessel the greater danger it encounters from foul weather. A tempest that would swallow up a small vessel would only make a large one roll. The more one body surpasses another in size, the more its surface is relatively small. Whence it follows, that in a small ship there is a less proportion, that is, a greater difference in respect to the surface of the vessel, compared with the weight or lading she can carry, than in a large one. We know that it is a pretty general practice to make the weight of the lading equal to that of half the water the vessel could contain. Suppose a vessel will contain eight hundred tons, her lading then must be four hundred; and that of a vessel which would hold but four hundred tons of water

would be two hundred tons. Thus the largeness of the first ship will be to the weight she carries as 8 to 4, and that of the second as 4 to 2. Let us suppose, then, that the surface of the greater is to the surface of the smaller as 8 to 6; the surface of the latter will be to her weight as 6 to 2,<sup>a</sup> while the surface of the former will be to her weight only as 8 to 4. Therefore, as the winds and waves act only upon the surface, the large vessel will, by her weight, resist their impetuosity much more than the small.

#### 7.—Of the Commerce of the Greeks

The first Greeks were all pirates. Minos, who enjoyed the empire of the sea, was only more successful, perhaps, than others in piracy; for his maritime dominion extended no farther than round his own isle. But when the Greeks became a great people, the Athenians obtained the real dominion of the sea; because this trading and victorious nation gave laws to the most potent monarch of that time,<sup>b</sup> and humbled the maritime powers of Syria, of the isle of Cyprus, and Phœnicia.

But this Athenian lordship of the sea deserves to be more particularly mentioned. "Athens," says Xenophon,<sup>c</sup> "rules the sea; but as the country of Attica is joined to the continent, it is ravaged by enemies while the Athenians are engaged in distant expeditions. Their leaders suffer their lands to be destroyed, and secure their wealth by sending it to some island. The populace, who are not possessed of lands, have no uneasiness. But if the Athenians inhabited an island, and, beside this, enjoyed the empire of the sea, they would, so long as they were possessed of these advantages, be able to annoy others, and at the same time to be out of all danger of being annoyed." One would imagine that Xenophon was speaking of England.

The Athenians, a people whose heads were filled with ambitious projects; the Athenians, who augmented their jealousy instead of increasing their influence; who were more attentive to extend their maritime empire than to enjoy it; whose political government was such that the common people distributed the public revenues among themselves, while the rich were in a state of oppression; the Athenians, I say, did not carry on so

<sup>a</sup> That is, to compare magnitudes of the same kind, the action or pressure of the fluid upon the ship will be to the resistance of the same ship as, etc.

<sup>b</sup> The King of Persia.  
<sup>c</sup> On the Athenian Republic."



extensive a commerce as might be expected from the produce of their mines, from the multitude of their slaves, from the number of their seamen, from their influence over the cities of Greece, and, above all, from the excellent institutions of Solon. Their trade was almost wholly confined to Greece and to the Euxine Sea, whence they drew their subsistence.

Corinth was admirably situated; it separated two seas, and opened and shut the Peloponnesus; it was the key of Greece, and a city of the greatest importance, at a time when the people of Greece were a world, and the cities of Greece nations. Its trade was more extensive than that of Athens, having a port to receive the merchandise of Asia, and another that of Italy; for the great difficulties which attended the doubling Cape Malea, where the meeting of opposite winds causes shipwrecks,<sup>d</sup> induced every one to go to Corinth, and they could even convey their vessels over land from one sea to the other. Never was there a city in which the works of art were carried to so high a degree of perfection. But here religion finished the corruption which their opulence began. They erected a temple to Venus, in which more than a thousand courtesans were consecrated to that deity; from this seminary came the greatest part of those celebrated beauties whose history Athenæus has presumed to commit to writing.

It seems that in Homer's time the opulence of Greece centred in Rhodes, Corinth, and Orchomenus; "Jupiter," he says, "loved the Rhodians, and made them a very wealthy nation."<sup>e</sup> On Corinth he bestows the epithet of rich.<sup>f</sup> In like manner, when he speaks of cities that have plenty of gold, he mentions Orchomenus, to which he joins Thebes in Egypt. Rhodes and Corinth preserved their power; but Orchomenus lost hers. The situation of Orchomenus in the neighborhood of the Hellespont, the Propontis, and the Euxine Sea makes us naturally imagine that she was indebted for her opulence to a trade along that maritime coast, which had given rise to the fable of the golden fleece; and, indeed, the name of Minyeios has been given to Orchomenus as well as to the Argonauts.<sup>g</sup> But these seas becoming afterwards more frequented, the Greeks planted along the coasts a greater number of colonies, which traded

<sup>d</sup> See Strabo, lib. VIII.  
<sup>e</sup> "Iliad," lib. II.

<sup>f</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>g</sup> Strabo, lib. IX. p. 914.

with the barbarous nations and at the same time preserved an intercourse with their mother country. In consequence of this, Orchomenus began to decline till at length it was lost in the crowd of the other cities of Greece.

Before Homer's time the Greeks had scarcely any trade but among themselves, and with a few barbarous nations; in proportion, however, as they formed new colonies, they extended their dominion. Greece was a large peninsula, the capes of which seemed to have kept off the seas, while its gulfs opened on all sides to receive them. If we cast an eye on Greece, we shall find, in a pretty compact country, a considerable extent of sea-coast. Her innumerable colonies formed an immense circle round her; and there she beheld, in some measure, the whole civilized world. Did she penetrate into Sicily and Italy, she formed new nations. Did she navigate towards the sea of Pontus, the coast of Asia Minor, or that of Africa, she acted in the same manner. Her cities increased in prosperity in proportion as they happened to have new people in their neighborhood. And what was extremely beautiful, she was surrounded on every side with a prodigious number of islands, drawn, as it were, in a line of circumvallation.

What a source of prosperity must Greece have found in those games with which she entertained, in some measure, the whole globe; in those temples, to which all the kings of the earth sent their offerings; in those festivals, at which such a concourse of people used to assemble from all parts; in those oracles, to which the attention of all mankind was directed; and, in short, in that exquisite taste for the polite arts, which she carried to such a height that to expect ever to surpass her would be only betraying our ignorance!

#### 8.—Of Alexander: his Conquests

Four great events happened in the reign of Alexander which entirely changed the face of commerce: the taking of Tyre, the conquest of Egypt, that likewise of the Indies, and the discovery of the sea which lies south of that country.

The Empire of Persia extended to the Indus.<sup>h</sup> Darius, long before Alexander, had sent some vessels, which sailed down this river, and passed even into the Red Sea.<sup>i</sup> How then were the

<sup>h</sup> Strabo, lib. XV.

<sup>i</sup> Herodotus, in "Melpomene."



Greeks the first who traded with the Indies by the south? Had not the Persians done this before? Did they make no advantage of seas which were so near them, of the very seas that washed their coasts? Alexander, it is true, conquered the Indies; but was it necessary for him to conquer a country in order to trade with it? This is what I shall now examine.

Ariana,<sup>j</sup> which extended from the Persian Gulf as far as the Indus, and from the South Sea to the mountains of Paropamisus, depended, indeed, in some measure, on the Empire of Persia; but in the southern part it was barren, scorched, rude, and uncultivated.<sup>k</sup> Tradition relates<sup>l</sup> that the armies of Semiramis and Cyrus perished in these deserts; and Alexander, who caused his fleet to follow him, could not avoid losing in this place a great part of his army. The Persians left the whole coast to the Ichthyophagi,<sup>m</sup> the Oritæ, and other barbarous nations. Besides, the Persians were no great sailors,<sup>n</sup> and their very religion debarred them from entertaining any such notion as that of a maritime commerce. The voyage undertaken by Darius's direction upon the Indus and the Indian Sea proceeded rather from the capriciousness of a prince vainly ambitious of showing his power than from any settled regular project. It was attended with no consequence either to the advantage of commerce or of navigation. They emerged from their ignorance only to plunge into it again.

Besides, it was a received opinion<sup>o</sup> before the expedition of Alexander that the southern parts of India were uninhabitable.<sup>p</sup> This proceeded from a tradition that Semiramis<sup>q</sup> had brought back thence only twenty men, and Cyrus but seven.

Alexander entered by the north. His design was to march towards the east; but having found a part of the south full of great nations, cities, and rivers, he attempted to conquer it, and succeeded.

He then formed a design of uniting the Indies to the Western nations by a maritime commerce, as he had already united them by the colonies he had established by land.

<sup>j</sup> Strabo, lib. XV.  
<sup>k</sup> Pliny says, "Ariana regio ambusta fervoribus, desertisque circumdata." ("Nat. Hist." VI. cap. xxiii.)—Ed.  
<sup>l</sup> Strabo, lib. XV.  
<sup>m</sup> Pliny, lib. VI. cap. xxiii.; Strabo, lib. XV.  
<sup>n</sup> They sailed not upon the rivers, lest they should defile the elements (Hyde's "Religion of the Persians"). Even to

this day they have no maritime commerce. Those who take to the sea are treated by them as atheists.  
<sup>o</sup> Strabo, lib. XV.  
<sup>p</sup> Herodotus (in "Melpomene") says that Darius conquered the Indies; this must be understood only to mean Ariana; and even this was only an ideal conquest.  
<sup>q</sup> Strabo, lib. XV.

He ordered a fleet to be built on the Hydaspes, then fell down that river, entered the Indus, and sailed even to its mouth. He left his army and his fleet at Patala, went himself with a few vessels to view the sea, and marked the places where he would have ports to be opened and arsenals erected. Upon his return from Patala he separated the fleet, and took the route by land, for the mutual support of fleet and army. The fleet followed the coast from the Indus along the banks of the country of the Oritæ, of the Ichthyophagi, of Carmania, and Persia. He caused wells to be dug, built cities, and would not suffer the Ichthyophagi to live on fish,<sup>r</sup> being desirous of having the borders of the sea inhabited by civilized nations. Nearchus and Onesecritus wrote a journal of this voyage, which was performed in ten months. They arrived at Susa, where they found Alexander, who gave an entertainment to his whole army.

This prince had founded Alexandria, with a view of securing his conquest of Egypt; this was a key to open it, in the very place where the kings his predecessors had a key to shut it;<sup>s</sup> and he had not the least thought of a commerce of which the discovery of the Indian Sea could alone give him the idea.

It even seems that after his discovery he had no new design in regard to Alexandria. He had, indeed, a general scheme of opening a trade between the East Indies and the western parts of his empire; but as for the project of conducting this commerce through Egypt, his knowledge was too imperfect to be able to form any such design. It is true he had seen the Indus, he had seen the Nile, but he knew nothing of the Arabian seas between the two rivers. Scarcely had he returned from India when he fitted out new fleets, and navigated on the Euleus,<sup>t</sup> the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the ocean; he removed the cataracts, with which the Persians had encumbered those rivers; and he discovered that the Persian Gulf was a branch of the main sea. But as he went to view this sea<sup>u</sup> in the same

<sup>r</sup> This cannot be understood of all the Ichthyophagi, who inhabited a coast of ten thousand furlongs in extent. How was it possible for Alexander to have maintained them? How could he command their submission? This can be only understood of some particular tribes. Nearchus, in his book "Rerum Indicarum," says that at the extremity of this coast, on the side of Persia, he had found some people who were less Ichthyophagi than the others. I should

think that Alexander's prohibition related to these people, or to some other tribe still more bordering on Persia.  
<sup>s</sup> Alexandria was founded on a flat shore, called Rhacotis, where, in ancient times, the kings had kept a garrison to prevent all strangers, and more particularly the Greeks, from entering the country.—Pliny, lib. VI. cap. x.; Strabo, lib. XVIII.  
<sup>t</sup> Arrian, "de expedit. Alexandri," lib. VII.  
<sup>u</sup> Ibid.



manner as he had done in respect to that of India; as he caused a port to be opened for a thousand ships, and arsenals to be erected at Babylon; as he sent five hundred talents into Phœnicia and Syria, to draw mariners into this service whom he intended to distribute in the colonies along the coast; in fine, as he caused immense works to be erected on the Euphrates, and the other rivers of Assyria, there could be no doubt but he designed to carry on the commerce of India by the way of Babylon and the Persian Gulf.

There are some who pretend that Alexander wanted to subdue Arabia,<sup>v</sup> and had formed a design to make it the seat of his empire: but how could he have pitched upon a place with which he was entirely unacquainted?<sup>w</sup> Besides, of all countries, this would have been the most inconvenient to him; for it would have separated him from the rest of his empire. The Caliphs, who made distant conquests, soon withdrew from Arabia to reside elsewhere.

9.—*Of the Commerce of the Grecian Kings after the Death of Alexander*

At the time when Alexander made the conquest of Egypt, they had but a very imperfect idea of the Red Sea, and none at all of the ocean, which, joining this sea, on one side washes the coast of Africa, and on the other that of Arabia; nay, they thought it impossible to sail round the peninsula of Arabia. They who attempted it on each side had relinquished their design. "How is it possible," said they,<sup>x</sup> "to navigate to the southern coast of Arabia, when Cambyses's army, which traversed it on the north side, almost entirely perished; and the forces which Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, sent to the assistance of Seleucus Nicator at Babylon, underwent incredible hardships, and, upon account of the heat, could march only in the night?"

The Persians were entire strangers to navigation. When they had subdued Egypt, they introduced the same spirit into that country as prevailed in Persia: hence, so great was the supineness of the Persians in this respect, that the Grecian kings found them quite strangers, not only to the commerce of

<sup>v</sup> Strabo, lib. VI., towards the end.  
<sup>w</sup> Seeing Babylon overflowed, he looked upon the neighboring country of Arabia as an island.—Aristob. in Strabo, lib. XVI.  
<sup>x</sup> See the book "Rerum Indicarum."

the Tyrians, Idumeans, and the Jews on the ocean, but even to the navigation of the Red Sea. I am apt to think that the destruction of the first Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, together with the subversion of several petty nations and towns bordering on the Red Sea, had obliterated all their former knowledge of commerce.

Egypt, at the time of the Persian monarchy, did not front the Red Sea; it contained only that long narrow neck of land which the Nile covers with its inundations, and is inclosed on both sides by a chain of mountains.<sup>y</sup> They were, therefore, under the necessity of making a second discovery of the ocean and the Red Sea; and this discovery engaged the curiosity of the Grecian monarchs.

They ascended the Nile, and hunted after elephants in the countries situated between that river and the sea; by this progression they traced the sea-coast; and as the discoveries were made by the Greeks, the names are all Grecian, and the temples are consecrated to Greek divinities.<sup>z</sup>

The Greeks settled in Egypt were able to command a most extensive commerce; they were masters of all the harbors on the Red Sea; Tyre, the rival of every trading nation, was no more; they were not constrained by the ancient superstitions<sup>a</sup> of the country; in short, Egypt had become the centre of the world.

The kings of Syria left the commerce of the south to those of Egypt, and attached themselves only to the northern trade, which was carried on by means of the Oxus and the Caspian Sea. They then imagined that this sea was part of the Northern Ocean;<sup>b</sup> and Alexander,<sup>c</sup> some time before his death, had fitted out a fleet<sup>d</sup> in order to discover whether it communicated with the ocean by the Euxine Sea, or some other eastern sea towards India. After him, Seleucus and Antiochus applied themselves to make discoveries in it, with particular attention; and with this view they scoured it with their fleets.<sup>e</sup> That part which Seleucus surveyed was called the Seleucidian Sea; that

<sup>y</sup> Strabo, lib. XVI.      <sup>z</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>a</sup> These gave them an aversion to strangers.  
<sup>b</sup> It is true that Strabo, Pomponius Mela, and Pliny believed the Caspian a part of the Northern Ocean, while their predecessors Diodorus, Aristotle, and Herodotus were correct in their surmises that it was an isolated sea.—Ed.  
<sup>c</sup> Pliny, lib. II. cap. lxxvii., and lib. VI. cap. ix. and xii., and Strabo, lib. XI.; Arrian, "de expedit. Alexandri," lib. III. p. 74. and lib. V. p. 104.  
<sup>d</sup> Arrian, "de expedit. Alexandri," lib. VII.  
<sup>e</sup> Pliny, lib. II. cap. lxiv.



which Antiochus discovered received the name of the Sea of Antiochus. Attentive to the projects they might have formed on that side, they neglected the seas on the south; whether it was that the Ptolemies, by means of their fleets on the Red Sea, had already become the masters of it, or that they discovered an invincible aversion in the Persians against engaging in maritime affairs. The southern coasts of Persia supplied them with no seamen; there had been none in those parts, except towards the latter end of Alexander's reign. But the Egyptian kings, being masters of the Isle of Cyprus, of Phœnicia, and of a great number of towns on the coast of Asia Minor, were possessed of all sorts of conveniences for undertaking maritime expeditions. They had no occasion to force; they had only to follow the genius and bent of their subjects.

I am surprised, I confess, at the obstinacy with which the ancients believed that the Caspian Sea was a part of the ocean. The expeditions of Alexander, of the kings of Syria, of the Parthians and the Romans, could not make them change their sentiments; notwithstanding these nations described the Caspian Sea with wonderful exactness: but men are generally tenacious of their errors. When only the south of this sea was known, it was at first taken for the ocean; in proportion as they advanced along the banks of the northern coast, instead of imagining it a great lake, they still believed it to be the ocean, that here made a sort of bay: surveying the coast, their discoveries never went eastward beyond the Jaxartes, nor westward farther than the extremity of Albania. The sea towards the north was shallow, and, of course, very unfit for navigation.<sup>f</sup> Hence it was that they always looked upon this as the ocean.

The land army of Alexander had been on the east only as far as the Hypanis, which is the last of those rivers that fall into the Indus: thus the first trade which the Greeks carried on with the Indies was confined to a very small part of the country. Seleucus Nicator penetrated as far as the Ganges, and thereby discovered the sea into which this river falls, that is to say, the Bay of Bengal.<sup>g</sup> The moderns discover countries by voyages at sea; the ancients discovered seas by conquests at land.

Strabo,<sup>h</sup> notwithstanding the testimony of Apollodorus,

<sup>f</sup> See the Czar's Chart.

<sup>g</sup> Pliny, lib. VI. cap. xvii.

<sup>h</sup> Lib. XV.

seems to doubt whether the Grecian kings of Bactria proceeded farther than Seleucus and Alexander.<sup>i</sup> Were it even true that they went no farther to the east than Seleucus, yet they went farther towards the south; they discovered Siger, and the ports on the coast of Malabar, which gave rise to the navigation I am going to mention.<sup>j</sup>

Pliny informs us that the navigation of the Indies was successively carried on in three different ways.<sup>k</sup> At first they sailed from the Cape of Siagre to the island of Patalena, which is at the mouth of the Indus. This we find was the course that Alexander's fleet steered to the Indies. They took afterwards a shorter and more certain course, by sailing from the same cape or promontory to Siger: <sup>l</sup> this can be no other than the kingdom of Siger mentioned by Strabo,<sup>m</sup> and discovered by the Grecian kings of Bactria. Pliny, by saying that this way was shorter than the other, can mean only that the voyage was made in less time: for, as Siger was discovered by the kings of Bactria, it must have been farther than the Indus: by this passage they must, therefore, have avoided the winding of certain coasts, and taken advantage of particular winds. The merchants at last took a third way; they sailed to Canes, or Ocelis, ports situated at the entrance of the Red Sea; whence by a west wind they arrived at Muziris, the first staple town of the Indies, and thence to the other ports. Here we see that instead of sailing to the mouth of the Red Sea as far as Siagre, by coasting Arabia Felix to the northeast, they steered directly from west to east, from one side to the other, by means of the monsoons, whose regular course they discovered by sailing in these latitudes. The ancients never lost sight of the coasts, except when they took advantage of these and the trade winds, which were to them a kind of compass.<sup>n</sup>

Pliny <sup>o</sup> says that they set sail for the Indies in the middle of summer and returned towards the end of December, or in the beginning of January. This is entirely conformable to our naval journals. In that part of the Indian Ocean which is between the Peninsula of Africa, and that on this side the Ganges,

<sup>i</sup> Apollonius Adrumatinus in Strabo, lib. II.

<sup>j</sup> The Macedonians of Bactria, India, and Ariana, having separated themselves from Syria, formed a great state.

<sup>k</sup> Lib. VI. cap. xxiii.

<sup>l</sup> Pliny, lib. VI. cap. xxiii.

<sup>m</sup> Lib. XI. "Sigertidis regnum."

<sup>n</sup> The monsoons blow part of the year from one quarter, and part from another; the trade winds blow the whole year round from the same quarter.

<sup>o</sup> Lib. VI. cap. xxiii.