Trade, its History, and its Influence in Civilization.

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The history of trade is the history of civilization and perhaps there is no one factor in the progress of the world that has contributed more to the growth and culture of humanity than trade. At first this may seem a broad statement but when one considers the various ways in which this factor has aided in the progress of the world one can not doubt the above statement.

In primitive society land, labor and capital the three great factors of civilization were all in the hands of the same person. Each individual produced what he consumed, he cought his own fish, raised his own grain, ground his own flour and hunted his own game. There was no intercourse between men. Each man considered every other man if not his enemy at least not his friend, so when men came in contact with each other if not engaged in actual conflict, they were timid and suspicious of each others actions and motives.

Gradully men began to learn that it was better to fallow a particular occupation. That is they found that the division of labor increased the dexterity of the workingman, saved much time that would be lost by changing occupations, gave to men a larger number of occupations from which to choose, as a result the person best adopted to a particular pursuit would be found in the right place consequently all his energy both physical and mental would be concentrated upon some special thing. This has often lead to some invention that has stimulated that particular industry and the sudden progress of the industry has achieved for the inventor great wealth and fame.

Applying this principle we find that at a very early period some men become fishers, some hunters, some agriculturalists and other took up other occupations. The fishermen would exchange their surplus fish for agriculturalist's grain or hunters game, so an exchange of goods took place. Here we have the first production of commodity, the beginning of trade and also the first demand for a market.

With the beginning of trade came the difficulty of finding a market. The fisherman for example found difficulty in finding a man who had some desirable commodity and at the same time was willing to exchange it for fish, so it become necessary to go out side the immediate community to find market and this brought about primitive transportation, first men carried burdens on their backs but soon animals were domesticated and made beasts of burden. This primitive exportation and impartation brought men into contact with each other, ideas were exchanged, new ideas brought forth and the providence of man's mind began to broden.

When trade was once fairly begun it increased in an enormous ratio. Different nations have different sources of wealth. Some countries have fertile lands, well watered and a climate favorable to the growth of vegetable and animal products. Other countries have poor soil, rugged mountains rendering it unsuitable for cultivation but beneath its surface may lie vast resources of minerals and in its gorges and valleys may be dense forests. Some countries are rich in furs, fish and amber and other countries have other sources of wealth. Now the surplus of each of these countries finds market in the others to the profit of all.

For the last forty centuries the greatest commercial route of the world has been from India through the Persian Gulf and the Euphrates or by the Red Sea to the Mediterranean and thence through its waters westward. Along this commercial highway sprang up the most wealthy and powerful nations of antiquity. Their cities were opulent. Their inhabitance the most cultured and on the highest plane of life of any in the world.

The center of commerce has moved from the East toward the West. Phenicia a small country on the Eastern coast of the Mediterranean then controlled the commerce of the world. Her ships sailed Eastward and brought from India carpets and precious stones. She carried on an extensive trade with Egypt forcing many of her cities into great commercial centers. Alexandria especially become very famous as a commercial seat. Her commerce with Arabia was considerable. Turning Westward her ships explored the coasts and islands of the Mediterranean founding colonies wherever she went and exchanging her manufactured products for raw materials which were carried to her leading commercial centers Tyre and Sidon. In the eleventh century B.C. she discovered Spain which brought to her a new source of wealth and it is possible that her vessels sailed into the Atlantic and visited the British Islands.

About the seventh century B.C. Carthage, a city founded sometime previous by the Phenicians become distinguished for her commerce. The Carthaginians were descendents of the Phenicians and Carthage inherited the trade of Tyre and Sidon. This people extended greatly the routes of commerce; they sailed into the Atlantic ocean, turning North to Britain for minerals and into the Baltic region for furs fish and amber, turning South they sailed along the Western coast of Africa, around the Cape of Good Hope into the Indian Ocean. On land their caravans penetrated into the interior of Africa.

The Greeks at an early period showed signs of considerable commercial skill. Some of their states carried on an extensive trade. Later they inherited the trade of the Carthaginians and became the leading commercial nation. While Greece probably excelled in her art and literary genius, neverless her manufactures and commerce were second to non. She founded colonies in Italy, Northern Africa, Asia Minor and in other countries especially those along the Black and Mediterranean seas, She carried on the external commerce of these countries and in many cases the internal commerce as well. Corinth, Massilia and Athens were her chief commercial ports.

When Rome became the rulling power of the world, she also became the first commercial nation. The Romans were not a commercial people in the most comprehensive sense of the term, yet neverless they extended the routes of commerce into all their conquored countries and trade grew and flourished until the fall of the Western Empire.

After the fall of Rome in 476 A.D. trade declined.

All exchange of commodities was in the hands of traveling merchants who were scattered throughout Europe and the adjacent countries. There was no distinguished commercial centers.

About the year 1000 A.D. Italy became mistress of the sea; Venice, Florence and Genoa were the principal commercial seats. The former was particullary renowned for trade. Her commerce was unsurpassed for centuries. After the discovery of the Cape Route to India Venetion commerce diminished and that of the Dutch become unparalled.

During this time the Hanseatic League, which consisted of the largest marine cities of Europe was organized. It controlled the world's commerce until the "Thirty Years War" in Germany. At that time the organization was broken up and each nation was left to battle for itself in the mad struggle for commercial supremacy. England being a wealthy nation and having an uncommonly good geographical situation eventually won, and from the seventeenth century to the present day she has never been excelled by any nation in commerce. She has founded colonies all over the world to aid in the extension of her trade, London the world's metropolis and Liverpool its principal commercial center have found in it a source of much opulence.

So far we have given a very brief outline of the history of trade, we shall next consider it as a civilizing factor. The progress of mankind and the development of trade have gone hand-in-hand, their periods of growth perfection and decay have been simultaneous.

One of the first things that trade envolved was a medium of exchange. Barter was too inconvenient to facilitate commerce. Then came the shells and the skins; in the pastorial stage domestic animals; in the agricultural stage grain and vegetable products and later the metals came in general use, iron filled this long felt want in Spartain commerce; copper had the same function among the ancient Greeks, tin among the Britains and gold and silver among all civilized nations.

Our manufactures have been revolutionized in order to turn out commodities enough to supply our rapid increasing demands. For example our cotton industry has by various inventions, among which are the "Cotton Gin" and the "Power Loom", been developed from an insignificant industry to one of the greatest importance and what is true of the cotton industry is true of other industries. Invention after invention has been made in every line, improved machinery has been introduced on every hand and today our perfect factory far excells anything ever dreamed or conceived of by the ancient man.

Passing rapidly over this phase of the subject we see we have moved forward with irresistible force, we see steamboats ploughing the mighty deep carrying goods from shore to shore; we see rail roads girding continents with iron bands carrying freight from place to place; we see great networks of telegraph and telephone wires for the facilitation of trade and we see cables linking continents for the same purpose.

This increased commercial intercourse has brought about an exchange of ideas, it has aided in the further division of labor and it has always been a great stimulus to navigation and exploration. When production was increased and the known markets were supplied it became desirable that new markets should be opened up. We see countries offering inducements to navigators and explorers to search for new lands, also inducements to men to establish colonies and these countries frequently waged war in their attempt to secure market in which to sell their surplus products. We see navigators and explorers penetrating unknown waters in search of new lands and commercial passages. In such an attempt, Diaz discovered the Cape of Good Hope, Vasco-de-Gama crossed the Indian Ocean to India, Columbus discovered America, Vasco-di-Gama discovered the new Cape Route to India and Magellan circumnavigated the globe. Thus commercial explorations lead to the discovery of the real size of the world which cleared up many mysteries.

The old Static theory of the universe expounded by Ptolemy could not stand. The theory that the earth was the center of the universe surrounded by concentric spheres of glass with stars stuck on was abanded. "Copernicus put forth his theory that, instead of being the center of the universe, around which the whole heavens revolved, the solid earth was but a satellite in motion around the central sun". Bacon, Newton and others followed with their philosophy and all this was largely due to the stimulus through commerce.

Commercial intercourse has given a stimulus to learning. It has furnished ideas for the poet and inspired the prose writer. It has brought all nations into contact with each other and by it they have became dependent on each other for the satisfaction of a large portion of their wants. It has brought the different languages into touch with each other and the learning of the nations that have shared in this great commercial intercourse has been consolidated into one universal knowledge. The civilization and the learning of the North has become similar to that of the South, the

East became acquainted with the West and vica versa.

Thus trade has became the mighty power that propells the wheel of human progress. What wonderful effects it has brought about! Who shall lightly estimate its effect on human advancement? Who shall predict its effect on future civilization?

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