

In the east.
afterwards, when the
discovery of



In the history of modern Europe we can trace the same close connection between commerce and civilisation. Manufactures, arts and sciences began to flourish in the small republics of Italy in the Middle Ages, when they secured by their favourable position the monopoly of the trade with India and the East. Afterwards, when the discovery of the route to India by the Cape of Good Hope opened up the eastern seas to Portugal, Holland and England, these countries made great progress in civilisation.

At this time Scotland was a poor and backward country torn by internal dissensions, which allowed little time for the cultivation of the arts of peace. By the union she obtained a share in the commerce of England with the Old and New World; and, being thereby enabled to devote to manufactures and trade the energies that had formerly been wasted in savage civil wars, immediately took a high rank among the most progressive nations. If we turn to other continents, we find commerce still acting as the pioneer of civilisation. It is chiefly due to commercial enterprise that America was discovered, and that the great continent of the West, most of which was formerly occupied by savages, came to rival the older civilisation of Europe. In Asia, commerce with Europe has introduced western ideas and western inventions into India and Japan, and has even done something to urge the great empire of China into the path of progress. If we ask how commerce, the ruling principle of which is not benevolence but self-interest, has done so much to ameliorate the condition of mankind all over the world, the question is not very difficult to answer. If a country has no commerce, the inhabitants have to live on the products of the soil, and the rich, having nothing else to

do with their wealth, spend it upon bands of warlike retainers, by whose help they engage in war with their rivals.

But when traders introduce the products of distant countries, the wealth of the country can be used in a way more satisfactory to its possessors, who soon acquire a taste for foreign luxury and refinement. In order to have the means of gratifying this taste, they do all they can to utilise the productive powers of their own country, and in this way agriculture is improved and new industries are started, some of which are rendered possible by the importation of foreign materials. Thus it was impossible for England to engage in the manufacture of cotton and silk, until these materials were imported from the distant shores of India and America. When commerce is well established in a country, large fortunes are made and the merchant princes encourage by their patronage every kind of refined luxury.

Some of the members of their families, who have no occasion to work for their living, form a leisure class and devote their energies to literature and science. The progress of knowledge is still further stimulated by the communication of ideas between different parts of the world. English merchants introduce European ideas into India, China, and Japan, and bring back to their native country knowledge of Oriental literature and art. The communication of ideas brought about by international commerce explains to a large extent the rapid progress of modern invention. Gunpowder, printing, and the magnetic compass are said to have been invented in China many centuries before they were known in Europe; but owing to want of intercourse with the outer world, China kept her great inventions to herself and failed to recognise their immense importance. Had the knowledge of

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these discoveries been rapidly spread over the world by the ships of traders, the course of civilisation would have been greatly accelerated.

In modern times there is, owing to international commerce, such a free intercourse between nation and nation that every new discovery benefits not merely the country of its origin but the whole world. This also leads to new developments of the idea of the original inventor. An invention made by a scientific man in England may be almost immediately improved in quick succession by other clever men in America, France and Germany. In all these ways commerce promotes the cause of civilisation, indirectly by increasing wealth, and more directly by enabling the nations of the world to make full use of the intellectual and material wealth of one another.