

EAST INDIAN VOYAGES OF THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES IN THEIR RELATION TO DRUGS, SPICES AND DYESTUFFS.*

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INTRODUCTION.

Since the earliest dawn of civilization certain products of southern Asia and of the islands near the Asiatic shores have been held in high esteem. First in importance among these was the group of pungent and aromatic substances used by men to flavor their meat and drink; but much in demand, also, were certain antiseptic balsams and other plant products employed in medicine, as well as odoriferous woods and resins associated with religious ceremonies, vegetable coloring matters useful as dyes, and still other rare materials prized as perfumes and toilet articles.

From the times when men first engaged in trade, these products have ranked as important articles of commerce. In the ages when transportation was so expensive that substances of moderate value could not be carried for long distances, these relatively expensive wares were taken to the farthest confines of the then known world. As civilization spread over western and northern Europe, the spices and drugs of Asia came into demand in these regions; and, although this demand has been subject to variations, it has been persisted in to the present day. The trade-routes underwent many changes in the course of the centuries, these changes being closely associated with the rise and fall of empires.

It is not the purpose of this paper to trace the channels of trade during ancient, classical and mediæval times. However, the description of Venetian commerce will serve to depict conditions as they were before the discovery of the sea route to Asia; while in the story of the Portuguese voyages will also be found many references to the older trade routes.

VENETIAN COMMERCE.

Among the Italian commercial cities which rose to greatness during the Middle Ages in consequence of the traffic in spices, drugs, and other products of the Orient, Venice stands the queen. Venice it was which triumphed over all others in the contest for the commercial supremacy of the Mediterranean. At the time of the discovery of the Cape route to India, Venice served as the connecting link between the eastern and western worlds.

Founded in the fifth century, by fugitives fleeing from the hordes of Attila the Hun, in her early history nothing more than a collection of fishing hamlets, Venice, even from the first, was dependent upon the sea for sustenance. As time went on, the fishermen engaged in coasting trade, their commodities at first probably fish and salt. Later they dealt also in iron and wood, and made somewhat longer voyages, gradually penetrating the Greek Archipelago and eastern Mediterranean.

At a very early date Venice had established important commercial relations with the Eastern Empire, but in 1082, as a reward for valuable aid furnished in time of peril, Venice was granted special trade privileges in Constantinople, which

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gave her great advantages over her rivals. Gradually acquiring territory upon the mainland and in the Archipelago, Venice grew to be a great power. At the breaking up of the Eastern Empire she was shrewd enough to claim as her share of the spoils territory of strategic importance from the commercial standpoint.

The period of the Crusades brought increased prosperity to Venice. The warriors of the First Crusade had toiled the long and weary way overland to Palestine, but leaders of later Crusades often found it wise to embark their armies at Venice for a sea voyage. The Venetians were willing to furnish ships and supplies, not, however, simply because of their zeal to redeem the Holy Sepulchre. A stronger motive, probably, was the stream of gold which this transport service caused to flow into the coffers of her merchants. Indeed, the leaders of the Fourth Crusade, unable to pay in cash the price of their transportation, were constrained to earn their passage by serving under the banners of Venice in an expedition against Dalmatia, a dependency of Venice, at that time in insurrection. Thus the army enlisted to smite the Saracen frittered away its strength in combat with Christian princes.

The Crusades contributed to the prosperity of Venice, not only because they provided her with a profitable carrying trade for the time being, but because they greatly stimulated in Europe the demand for the product of the East. The warriors of the Cross learned from their Moslem foes the uses of many drugs, spices, and perfumes which up to that time had been little known in Europe. The records of the customs house at Acre, the city which for a century (1191-1291) constituted the principal bulwark of the Crusades in the Holy Land, furnishes us with valuable information in regard to the traffic of that period. We find that among the goods leaving the port of Acre, in the thirteenth century, were the following: rhubarb, musk, pepper, cinnamon, nutmegs, cloves, clove leaves and stalks, aloes-wood, camphor, frankincense, dates, nutgalls, and flax. (Tschirch, "Handbuch der Pharmacognosie," p. 699.)

A further source of information in regard to the commerce of the time is found in the writings of Marino Sanuto, a noble Venetian merchant who visited Palestine and Egypt several times, about the beginning of the fourteenth century. He had been mistreated by the Sultan of Egypt, and one of the principal purposes of his narrative, of which copies were sent to Pope John XXII and to the kings of France, Italy, and Sicily, was to incite these rulers to still another Crusade. Sanuto discusses the cultivation of sugar-cane upon Rhodes and other islands, and that of flax and dates in Egypt. He mentions saffron among the dutiable articles of Alexandria, and states that almonds were an article of import of that city. Among the costly drugs, he mentions cubeb, mace, nutmegs, nard, and cloves; among the less expensive, ginger, pepper, frankincense, and cinnamon. In a later work Sanuto mentions a present sent to the reigning Doge, which included benzoin, balsam, aloes-wood, and opium. (Tschirch, pp. 722-723.) Sanuto apparently hoped, by instigating a blockade of Alexandria by the fleets of the Christian nations, to wrest from the Sultan his monopoly of the transportation of eastern goods from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean.

Although Sanuto's plans were never carried into effect, Venice became more and more powerful, both politically and commercially. She assumed dominion over many of the Mediterranean islands and various rich districts upon the mainland. However, her supremacy was not won without a struggle. Genoa, by her triumph over Pisa in 1284, had become a powerful rival of Venice. Genoa was especially strong in the western Mediterranean, but she gained control also over

important trading centres in the East, among these Famugosto, on the island of Cyprus; Pera, a suburb of Constantinople, and Kaffa, in the Crimea; as well as factories in Sinope, Trebizonde, and Sebastopol. For long Genoa was an ally of the Byzantine emperors, and through their favor enjoyed almost a monopoly of the commerce of the Black Sea. The period of bitter rivalry between Venice and Genoa may be said to cover most of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. During this time there were numerous clashes of arms between the fleets of the enemies, which did not always result in victory for the Venetians. However, by the great naval battle of June 24, 1380, when the Genoese fleet was destroyed, the power of Genoa was broken. For a hundred years and more, Venice was destined to rule the commerce of the Mediterranean. For her crushed rival had been reserved the honor of nurturing the boyhood of that indomitable spirit who was to find a New World.

The era of greatest glory and prosperity for Venice had arrived. Her merchants were found in every city of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, as well as in the commercial cities of northern Europe. Daru, in his "Hist. de la republ. de Venice," tells us that in the fifteenth century the exports of Venice amounted to 10,000,000 ducats annually. (The value of a ducat at this period was approximately one dollar.)

The Venetians at this time possessed a merchant fleet of 300 great galleys or argosies, and several thousand smaller vessels, as well as 45 war galleys. Daru is authority also for the statement that at this period Florence and Milan alone purchased annually from Venice 50,000 hundredweight of cotton, sugar to the value of 95,000 ducats, and great quantities of pepper, cinnamon, ginger, and dyestuffs. (Tschirch, p. 699.)

The larger Venetian vessels of that period probably did not greatly exceed 200 tons in burden. They were called argosies because built for the Venetians at Raguso, a Dalmatian seaport; older forms of the name being *ragosie*, *rhaguse*, and *ragusye*. In Shakespeare we find a picture of Venetian commerce:

"Your mind is tossing on the ocean;
There where your argosies with portly sail,
Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,
Or, as it were the pageants of the sea,
Do overpeer the petty traffickers."

—*Merchant of Venice*, Act I, Scene i.

It was the policy of the Venetians to erect in the more important foreign ports *fondachi* (from the Arabian *fonduk*, a magazine). These were substantial structures, several stories in height, enclosing courtyards. The lower story was used as a warehouse and salesroom, the upper stories served as dwelling houses for the Venetian merchants resident in the port, as well as stopping places for merchants from the interior who had come to buy and sell.

As early as the thirteenth century, Venice had maintained commercial relations with Beirut, with Ajaccio, the port of Aleppo, and with Tabriz in the interior. We know that from these cities the Venetians obtained myrrh, ammoniac, lac, galangal, sandal-wood, camphor, and indigo, as well as various spices and other products of Asia. (Tschirch, p. 701.) However, their business with Alexandria far exceeded in volume that with any other port. The Moorish merchants brought the products of the farther East by way of the Arabian and Red Seas to the port of Suez, thence overland by caravan to the Nile, and down the Nile to Alexandria. Here East touched West; here the Moors, who controlled the commerce of the Mo-

hammedan world, trafficked with the Venetians, who dominated that of the Christian. By long experience in dealing with the Turk, the Venetians had come to know his ways, and it was always the policy of Venetian statesmanship to maintain friendly relations with the Sultan of Egypt. Even during the period of the Crusades the Venetian merchants had not been averse to accepting Moslem gold in payment for military supplies.

Having seen something of the manner in which the Venetian merchants obtained their supplies of eastern spices and drugs, let us follow these wares on their journey to the nations of northern Europe; for the Germans, Flemings, French, and English were at this time dependent almost entirely upon the Venetians for the spices which they were using to flavor their food, for the gums and balsams used in the healing art, for the aromatic woods and resins used as incense in their churches, and for the dyestuffs with which they colored their woollen goods.

The centre of the commercial life of Venice was the Rialto, the merchants' exchange, built upon an island of the same name. If commerce was the life-blood of Venice, then truly the Rialto was the heart. Here, in the days of Venetian glory, gathered merchants, princes and adventurers, the bankers and money-lenders, as well as merchants from Lombardy and Tuscany, from Bavaria and Hungary, from France and Germany. Here it was that Shylock heard the news of Antonio's many ventures, of his argosies despatched to Tripoli, to Mexico, and to England. (*Merchant of Venice*, Act I, Scene iii.) The treatment received by the merchant of the North while he was in Venice should be noted. He was required to live in the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi*, which served as warehouse and hotel. He was carefully watched by an official assigned to him, whose business it was to see that the State was not cheated of its revenues, and that Venetian merchants were not deprived of their profits. (Day, "History of Commerce," p. 95.) He could trade with no one but the Venetian merchants, for no one else must be allowed to make the middleman's profit. Having brought his goods to Venice, he must dispose of the entire quantity, even though the market was poor. These and many other restrictions he submitted to, simply because Venice held the monopoly.

The merchandise purchased by Germans in Venice was transported over the Alps, and this traffic was in the hands of the Germans themselves. Various passes were utilized, but one of the very important trade routes followed the valley of the Etsch, through the Veronese defile, over the Brenner Pass to Innsbruck, then up the Isar and Lech valleys to Augsburg. Convoys intended for the Rhine valley struck to the westward before reaching this point. Up the steep mountain roads creaked and rumbled the heavy freight wagons, guarded by strong detachments of armed men, for these mountain defiles were infested with robbers. (Tschirch, p. 70.)

The needs of western Europe and England were served by a fleet of Venetian galleys which left yearly for the voyage to the ports of these countries. The "Flanders galleys," as they were called, were each rowed by 180 oarsmen and carried a force of archers for protection against pirates. Although the cargo belonged to merchants, the fleet was under State control, and was commanded by an officer serving under the Venetian Government. Among the ports of call on their voyage were Pola, Corfu, Alicante, Almeria, Cadiz, and Lisbon; although many others were visited, at least on some voyages. For most of the galleys the outward voyage terminated at Bruges, in Flanders, at that time the emporium of northern Europe, and the point at which the Venetian met the merchants of the Hanseatic

League. Some of the galleys, however, went to London or Southampton. (Day, "History of Commerce," p. 97.) Venetian galleys were making these voyages as late as 1578, when an argosy was wrecked off the Isle of Wight. The Venetians declared they would not again send their vessels into such dangerous waters, and this incident stimulated interest among British merchants in direct trade to the Levant, which led to the organization of the Levant Company. ("Early Voyages to the Levant," Hakluyt Society, p. 11.)

Venice was a merchant republic. Her nobility, far from scorning vulgar trade, were proud to be merchant princes. Young patricians were sent on the Flanders voyages to study commerce and to learn to serve their city. (Day, p. 97.) Significant of the grateful acknowledgment by the Venetians of the sea as the giver of all their prosperity was the annual ceremony of the symbolic marriage of the Doge to the sea; when, clad in all the splendor of his ducal robes, from his official galley he tossed into the Adriatic a golden circlet, and repeated the words: "We thus espouse thee, O Sea, as our bride and queen."

The fearless sons of San Marco, filled with the spirit of adventure, but shrewdly seeking in all to direct to the marts of their mother city still other consignments of rich Oriental wares, wandered from the familiar channels of trade, and penetrated deep into the interior of Russia and of Asia. The most authentic travel narratives of this period are those which have come down to us from Venetian merchants who wrote letters to journals descriptive of their travels. They wrote of the people, their religions, their manners and customs, their institutions. But they wrote with especial care, and generally with great accuracy, of the resources and products of the countries visited, as well as of trade routes and commercial usages. Some of these records are of particular interest to us as furnishing the earliest authentic information in regard to many Asiatic drugs and dyestuffs.

Very efficiently had Venice served the nations of Europe as a carrier and middleman, but at the close of the fifteenth century she went down before the march of progress. Due to many reladings, as well as to exorbitant customs levied by the Sultan of Egypt, pepper and other products of the East were very expensive by the time they had reached the marts of northern and western Europe. This doubtless was one of the reasons that caused the Portuguese to seek the Cape route to India. From the moment when Vasco da Gama sailed into the harbor of Calicut, May 20, 1498, the commerce of Venice was doomed. Priuli, in his diary, has given us a picture of the consternation which reigned in Venice when the news was noised on the Rialto that Portuguese carracks, laden with Indian spices, were in the harbor of Lisbon. He says: "The whole city was disturbed and astounded. . . . For it is well known that Venice reached the height of her reputation and riches through her commerce alone, which brought foreigners to the city in great numbers; and now by their new route the spice cargoes will be taken straight to Lisbon, where the Hungarians, Flemings, Germans, and French will find the goods cheaper in Lisbon than they can be in Venice." (Horatio F. Brown, "Venice," pp. 324-325.) This was not the first time in the history of Venice that news of grave import had been received, but never had the proud city heard tidings that spelled ruin as did this report of the Portuguese voyage to India. However, the Venetians made an effort to avert the disaster. Leonardo da Ca'Masser was sent to Lisbon disguised as a merchant to obtain accurate information. Venice took steps to discourage the Portuguese from trading in India by inciting the Sultan of Egypt to equip a naval expedition to cooperate with the forces of the Indian princes in an attack upon the Portuguese. Such an expedition was sent out, but was utterly defeated. (Thomas Okey, "Venice," p. 191.)

The Venetians were deterred by several reasons from themselves taking advantage of the Cape route. In the first place, they had in Alexandria warehouses stored with rich goods, which they were afraid would be sacked by the Egyptians, should a part of the Venetian trade be transferred elsewhere. Then again the Strait of Gibraltar was controlled by Spain, which power would have levied duties on Venetian cargoes. Perhaps the most important reason was the realization that the Portuguese possessed a tremendous advantage in greater nearness and accessibility to the markets of northern Europe. (Brown, "Venice," p. 325.) When Cabral, the commander of the second Portuguese voyage to India, returned to Lisbon in June, 1501, with heavy cargoes of Indian wares, King Manuel sent word to the Venetians, by their ambassador, that they need no longer expect to load spices at Alexandria, for few would be found there, but that they might come to Lisbon for them. (Tschirch, p. 701.) The commercial decline of Venice, as well as that of Alexandria, dates from the discovery of the Cape route to India.

(To be continued.)

ASSOCIATIONS.

Many men, it seems to us, have an entirely erroneous idea of what an association is. Their attitude toward their trade association leads us to think that they view it as an entity entirely apart from themselves; a sort of machine into which they are invited to drop their annual dues, on the promise of receiving certain benefits in return.

Nothing could be farther from the true idea of an association, which the dictionary defines as "a combination of persons for the purpose of securing or accomplishing mutually desired ends."

To accomplish these ends it is needful that every member do his part. The work cannot be left wholly to the officers, be they ever so competent and willing. Neither can the chairmen of the various committees nor the entire committee membership do it all. They must have the counsel of the rank and file, and be made to feel that in what they undertake to do they have the backing of the entire membership. An association is not a little body or clique that promises to do something for others for pay in advance, but a body, small or large, that *tries* to do something for itself. Unfortunately for the success of association work, which depends to a large degree upon the measure of support received from those who are benefited, the benefits obtained cannot be confined to the membership, but go in almost equal measure to others who have not contributed anything in return.

These, by refusing to join in with the others, not only take to themselves benefits unearned by them, but they prevent the accomplishment of greater things for both themselves and others by withholding the aid that would in many instances turn the tide the right way. We believe that trade associations do a vast amount of good, not only for their members, but for all persons engaged in that line of trade. We believe they are worthy of much more general support than they generally receive, and, finally, we believe that much greater good would be accomplished if this support could be secured.

Membership in a trade association is not an expense, but one of the best paying investments that can be made.—*Rocky Mountain Druggist.*