

## COMMERCE—ITS INFLUENCE AND POWER.

BY W. P. LEONARD.

Commerce is King, says Carlyle, the great English philosopher and political economist, the truth of which can but be admitted by all men, for it is the great power next to Christianity which holds in check the ambitions and passions of nations. It develops agriculture and manufactures; stimulates the construction of railroads, canals and all industrial enterprises; increases population by affording it employment; promotes the growth of great cities; encourages and fosters the arts and sciences, and does everything to strengthen the bonds of man's brotherhood. Without commerce our great forests and almost illimitable fields would have remained in idleness; for unless the products of man and man be brought together in barter and exchange, indigence, barbarism and social declension are unavoidable. Trade is an *instinct* of the animal man, and unless there be opportunity for its indulgence, he sinks to the level of other animals. Well has it then been said to be the "Golden Girdle of the Globe;" and referring to its achievements the poet has beautifully declared—

"Her daughters have their dowry  
From spoils of nations, and the exhausted East  
Pours in her lap all gems in sparkling showers."

Without commerce what would be our great cities and towns? Simply silent communities of living dead people. Take away the music of machinery, the presence of the railroad, the activity of steamboat levees, the rattling roll of wagons, drays and carts, the busy hurrying to and fro of hundreds and thousands mixing and commingling in the turbulence of trade, and what would be the result? Silence deeper than death and ruder than discord would pervade everything. A nameless inactivity would curdle the blood of every one, for what is more miserable to contemplate than a community of unemployed people? Where would be the need of your splendid warehouses and your elegant and costly salerooms? Temples, minus their presiding deity—minus commerce, the *genus loci*. Adipose and sapient seniors, dapper and business-like juniors; figure-wise accountants; lively, pushing salesmen and bronzed and stalwart porters all dispensed with—"Othello's occupation gone." We will not contemplate the change, for Carlyle was right—"Commerce is king."

We may mark the progress of nations in revealed facts, not by their glorious conquest of arms, not by their feats of valor, not by the lands they have overcome and the thrones they have made subservient to their own superior force; but by the extension of that great civilizer, Commerce, into the boundaries of the conquered provinces. Science, and Art, and Literature are but the handmaidens of Trade, for were it not for its incalculable aid the "monuments of human grandeur" would not only perish, but, indeed, would never have had their birth. We may draw an instance in the Roman Empire, a dominion whose history more or less, is familiar to everyone. Do we find her most stable successes when the swords of her Cæsars, her Pompeys and her Scipios, like the lurid course of the meteor, swept the sky of humanity, or when the torches of her advancing legions were glaring in the lands of her enemies? No; but when she

carried her trade, her arts and her sciences with her arms, then do we note pacification and prosperity—for Commerce is also, as the sun, beneath whose broad and genial smiles the seeds of success and plenty germinate and blossom and fructify. Or take Britain, a still more applicable illustration. To what cause does she owe her unexampled pitch in the scale of wealth, power and civilization? Is it to military generalship or superior conquering battalions? By no means. England, may with far greater pride, boast that her success is due only to that pervading spirit of commercial activity that has marked her policy and characterized her mode, until now her provinces seem like a mighty garden strewn over with cities, palaces, villages and country seats, for she "has dotted the globe with her possessions and military posts, whose morning drum-beat, following the sun and keeping company with the hours, circles the earth daily with one continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs of England." Nor can the United States—invincible in arms, so considered, attribute its career of enlightenment, refinement

and broad, generous, uncontracted happiness, to any other thing other than its powerful and conquering trade and self-sustenance. By a most liberal encouragement of commerce, by prodigality in stimulation of the interchange of commodities, who will say that our nation has not become more to the present age than was Rome to the by-gone centuries when she ruled the world. The sword, then, destroys, Commerce builds up. The sword of the Romans was like the fame of Erastus who destroyed a temple he had not the cunning to build. The commerce of the American is most God-like, for it is *creative*. Creative of happiness, of power, of influence, of inestimable good. Truly, truly, Carlyle uttered wisdom—"COMMERCE IS KING!"

Coming, then, to consider the relation that it bears towards one of the most important sections of the Union; the development that has thus far been made of its powers; the capabilities for future extension; the facilities for its successful conduct; the natural and artificial means it employs; the auxiliaries, direct and indirect, it brings to aid it; we at once, and most sensibly, realize the immensity of the subject, its almost inexhaustible food for reflection, and sigh for a pen far worthier the theme.

Oregon! Glorious Oregon! a land rightly taking front rank among the fairest beneath the sun; with a climate gentle and inviting; a land dotted with smiling villages and beautiful towns; a land whose fertile fields and arable plains can produce almost everything that can tempt the palate of man—certainly, everything that is absolutely needful and of utility—a land tracked and intersected by clear and bright and swift-rolling streams; with mountains and hills steaming with mineral abundance, which does not lie buried much beneath the ken of man, but seemingly wearied of lethargy has outcropped and is

now sunning its wondrous richness ungathered. Its geographical advantages are peerless. It is the choicest section, taken as a whole, of the Union; its metropolis is known throughout the whole world as being one of the most beautiful cities, while its locality must place it at the intersection of converging and diverging railroads—railroads coming and going in all directions, will make it the focal point between North and South; and with the grand Northern Pacific route terminating here another will have been added to her already numerous advantages, thus rendering her a great central emporium for the distribution of products to the North, South and East. This destiny we believe is inevitable. It is the glorious necessity of physical geography. It is the lavish favor of a provident God. It is the

boast and pride of the native citizen, and the wonder and admiration of visitors and strangers. What land has called forth more encomia, either for its lovely climate or fertile soil; for its mineral stores or its agricultural advantages; for its varied and picturesque landscapes, or its marvelously excellent topography; for the thrifty, industrious, enterprising spirit of its business men, or the genial, hospitable welcomes of its inhabitants, and yet, scarcely the half has been told. The compliments have rarely been extravagant, more frequently understating the actual facts. Indeed, it is so dotted with the treasures of nature and art and the wonders of industry, that a man has only to use his eyes and he grows accomplished. Oregon has a fame abroad, but no one tells the story of her latent, or even developed wealth as it is, and as it is seen by the intelligent eye on a liberal survey. And yet what marvelous changes have been wrought. Fifty years ago and the solitude of these surrounding plains was unbroken by the sound of the white man's voice. Thirty years ago and the pioneer struggles with the Indians came, when the watch-dog was stationed sentinel at the harvest field; when the trusty rifle went as regularly to the field as the plow, when the ear of the herdsman was ever on the alert, listening for danger, and the silent footsteps of the stealthy foe, and when the return to his lodge at night was the occasion for recounting the perilous adventures of the day, and the rendering of thanks to the Great Father of all for his protecting mercies. But quite recently, and the winding trail led one from one trading post to another, where some hardy adventurer had planted himself far in advance of civilization, for the purpose of traffic and gain with the native tribes. The waters of our beautiful Columbia shimmered beneath the laughing beams of a Summer's sky, bearing on their bosoms the red man's canoe, but they contributed aught to the comfort of civilized man. Our broad acres, blooming in all the loveliness of wild and uncultured charms, presented their virgin bosoms to the sun, having wearily awaited, during the long lapse of ages, the fructifying hand of the husbandman.

Time, since then, we say, has wrought many changes, not only in our social and domestic relations, but in the physical aspect of the country. The prairies have been brought under cultivation, the rivers spanned with bridges, and their waters utilized in various ways; cities and towns have sprung up in every quarter, and the sound of the mechanics' hammer, the rattle and whir of machinery keep quick-measured time with the rumbling wheels and clank of engines. The spire of the church points its mute, yet suggestive finger, heavenward; the school and college meets us—a familiar friend, on every street. Our surplus products crowd the warehouse and weigh down the car. We are no longer compelled to toil unceasingly "from early morn till dewy eve," to procure a bare subsistence; but have time for relaxation; for mental improvement; for "elegant leisure;" while our tables groan with plenty, and we stand erect in every presence with a feeling of competence and independence.

These results have been achieved by no magical or supernatural influence; nature has not stepped aside from the beaten track to work these changes; no good genii have come from



PILOT KNOB—On the Oregon and California Stage Route.



A VIEW ON THE COLUMBIA RIVER—CASTLE ROCK IN THE DISTANCE.