

THE RISE OF NEW YORK PORT

[1815-1860]

BY

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WITH THE COLLABORATION OF
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CHAPTER I

TWO CENTURIES AND A DECADE

THE names of Liverpool and Hamburg suggest the sea and little else. At New York, as at London, the seaport tends to be overshadowed by the manifold aspects of the metropolis. Yet Broadway, Wall Street, and Fifth Avenue would not be what they are today had it not been for the activity on the waterfront a century or so ago. Only recently has New York become the world's leading port. Although from the outset it was one of the chief American ports, it secured national primacy only after two centuries. A third century was necessary before it also won the world title by passing London, Liverpool, and Hamburg in the volume and value of its commerce. In 1614, New York's first chartered commerce began. Exactly two hundred years later, in 1814, the port was ready to enter upon a new era, as the War of 1812 was brought to a close. Just a century after that, in 1914, the World War began to cripple the trade of New York's transatlantic rivals, with which it had been running neck and neck. From that time on, it has been the world's busiest seaport; a title more secure than its claims to be the world's largest city.

In all those three centuries, the most significant period of the port's development lay between the years 1815 and 1860. To narrow things down still more radically, it may be said that the first decade of peace, from 1815 to 1825, determined that New York would outstrip the other seaports of America. One may even fix upon the year 1817 as the *annus mirabilis* when the all-important innovations were decided upon. Twenty years earlier, to be sure, New York had pushed ahead of its rivals in volume of trade; but in 1815 Boston and Philadelphia were still close enough astern to render the primacy very uncertain. Ten years later, they had dropped almost hopelessly far behind. During the intervening period, New York had struck while the iron was hot and

by means of packets, steamboats, canals, and other well-timed devices had caused the main channels of commerce to flow in its direction. The long period of peace after 1815 gave this leadership an uninterrupted chance to develop and New York became, as the phrase went, "the great commercial emporium of America." That decade was to prove of more value to New York than the whole two centuries which had gone before.

It is somewhat surprising, in view of its manifold natural advantages, that New York took as long a time as this to gain such leadership. Not only did it have the best geographical setting of any American port, but it also possessed a unique commercial heritage. It was founded for purely trading purposes by the Dutch, who held it during that portion of the seventeenth century when their remarkable maritime activity was at its height. From the viewpoint of old Amsterdam, the busiest port in the world at that day, the commerce of this New Amsterdam must have seemed negligible. With their East Indies trade sometimes yielding profits of a million guilders and their commerce with the Baltic and the Mediterranean still heavier, Dutchmen must have thought little of the occasional cargoes of beaver skins from the Hudson. This fur trade was the *raison d'être* of New Amsterdam—yet at its peak it seems to have consisted of only 85,000 skins a year. It is not surprising that the Dutch West India Company sneered at "the trifling trade with the Indians or the tardy cultivation of uninhabited regions," when the capture of a Spanish plate fleet once brought them 15,000,000 guilders' profit at a single stroke.

On a summer day in 1664, four English frigates swooped down to change New Amsterdam into New York. The port thus passed into England's hands just as she was successfully challenging Holland's supremacy on the seas and was welding her overseas possessions into a coordinated commercial system. New York soon found a profitable, if unimpressive, niche in the mercantilist plan for a self-sufficient empire. It was not one of those ideal colonies, from the mother country's point of view, like the West Indian islands with their sugar, Virginia with its tobacco, or South Carolina with its rice and indigo. It was not, on the other hand, considered as "prejudicial" as the New England colonies, whose ships and fish competed with home activities.

Not long after that capture, the flour barrel began to replace the beaver skin as the port's most valuable offering to the world of commerce; and would remain so for more than a century. A significant step was taken in 1678 when the colony passed an act requiring that the sift-

ing or "bolting" of flour for export be concentrated at the port in order to facilitate inspection and to safeguard its uniform quality, which was important for the port's reputation. This shift from the fur economy to the stimulus of agriculture paved the way for a more normal expansion of both the port and the hinterland. The growing of wheat and milling of flour meant not only a more widespread market but also a more stable population. The act, although not long in force, greatly stimulated the port. In 1678, there were said to have been only three ships, eight sloops, and seven boats at New York, whereas sixteen years later the number had risen to sixty ships, sixty-two sloops, and forty boats.

The flour barrel led to the triangular trade. The triangle was as popular in early American commerce as it became in modern fiction. Where two regions, such as England and Virginia, had a mutual desire for each other's wares, a direct shuttle trade was possible and satisfactory, but for the northern colonies, the triangular system was a necessity. England did not want enough of the products of New England, New York, and Pennsylvania to pay for what they wanted of her in return. The solution lay in the West Indies and southern Europe, which would buy enough New England fish and lumber and New York flour to enable the colonists to pay for their English wares. The New Yorkers consequently peddled their flour down among the sugar islands, to the southern European nations, and along the Atlantic seaboard, while they sent only a fraction of it directly to England.

In this early English period, New York did not confine its activity to flour exports. Scarcely was that business getting under way when more exciting diversions arose. In 1689, England and France entered upon the first act of their "Second Hundred Years' War," that intermittent duel for empire, which did not reach its final phase until the peace settlement of 1815. For years, it would give New Yorkers and other colonies recurrent opportunities to sally out, under letters of marque, and prey upon enemy commerce—an exciting and sometimes lucrative occupation. Privateering was common for most Atlantic ports, but New York in particular became more closely involved than any other colonial port in the next stage—outright piracy.

In a bizarre interlude around 1700, Captain Kidd and various other pirates made New York a rendezvous, where they might dispose of loot wrested from distant Indiamen. They swaggered about the streets, abetted by many leading merchants who were glad to buy their booty

at bargain prices, while officials winked at their shady activities. Captain Kidd himself, strange to say, held the King's commission to suppress piracy. Yet, when he picked up at New York a crew of 150 "men of desperate fortunes," the governor had serious misgivings, which proved well-founded. In 1698, when a ship arrived from the pirate base at Madagascar, to cite an instance of this merchant co-operation with piracy, her cargo was put ashore "by hasty and secret efforts in the night." When officers were sent to seize it, "the whole body of merchants interposed" with violence. One New York merchant, hearing that another such cargo was on the way to him from Madagascar, sent his son in a vessel to take off the East India loot at sea and carry it to some other port. Things went to such a length that eventually the governor urged the Admiralty to send over a swift vessel "which would discourage and destroye these vermine who have hitherto made New York their nest of safety."

During most of its first seventy-five years under English rule, New York was overshadowed commercially by Boston. While the New Yorkers were playing with the pirates, the Bostonians were busily cementing more prosaic and permanent contacts. The New Yorkers awoke to this situation before the eighteenth century had progressed far. They realized that a considerable share of their goods from England was reaching them by way of Boston instead of direct and that their financial transactions were likewise routed by way of Massachusetts. This was perhaps the only time in its history that New York found itself on the passive end of such a relationship—it would later force many another port into such a position. Boston, moreover, at this time was aided by a hinterland with a larger population than New York's sphere of commercial influence, which was limited to the sparsely settled province of New York with adjacent parts of New Jersey and Connecticut.

To combat this competition, New York at last laid a heavy duty on goods which came from England by way of Boston and gradually caught up with its New England rival, which was having to share its business with Salem, Newport, Portsmouth, Falmouth (Portland), and other neighbors. By 1742, New York had built up its trade with England so that it exceeded that of all New England. For a few years, the port enjoyed a foretaste of the leadership which would belong to it in the next century.

Then opposition suddenly arose to the southward. Philadelphia was

founded more than half a century after New York and Boston, but in 1749 its trade made a threefold jump. For most of the next fifty years, it enjoyed a slight lead over the other rivals.

The customs figures for the period down to 1769 are satisfactory only for the direct trade to and from England and give only occasional glimpses of the general distribution of colonial exports. A three-year average for 1715-1718, for instance; shows that New York was sending annually 112 vessels to the West Indies, 71 along the coast, 21 to Great Britain, and 11 to other parts of Europe, but the vessels averaged only 35 tons each. Boston, in those same years, was sending nearly twice as many vessels and they averaged 50 tons each. The increased vigilance and activity of the customs officials during the years immediately preceding the Revolution left more ample records which give a fuller picture of the situation.

In 1770, for example, New York stood fourth among the American ports in the total tonnage arriving and clearing. The figures for the arrivals, which were about equal to the clearances, show Philadelphia leading with 47,000 tons, Boston next with 38,000, and Charleston third with 27,000, closely followed by New York in fourth place with 25,000. The heaviest item in that New York total was the West Indian trade, at 8695 tons. Great Britain and Ireland accounted for 5722 tons, southern Europe for 3124, and Africa for 230. These old reports have a unique value, for they are practically the only ones before the twentieth century to give figures for the coastwise trade. The New York total in that field was 7768 tons, far behind Philadelphia and Boston, but slightly ahead of Charleston. Of that figure, trade with nearby Rhode Island and Connecticut accounted for some 3000 tons. The trade with the southern ports, which would later reach an important figure, did not yet amount to much.

The value of a colony in those days was determined largely by its record in the customs ledgers of the mother country. So all-important was this aspect that the British came very close to taking the rich little sugar island of Guadeloupe instead of Canada, in 1763. From that point of view, New York was not outstanding, for as a consumer of British goods it took only 3 per cent of the mother country's exports. In fact the port was relatively less valuable to England when it was a colonial possession that it became seventy or eighty years later as a foreign port in trade with England.

By 1770, of course, New York's days in the British Empire were

numbered. In one way, that imperial connection had been rather more in evidence at New York than in most of the other ports. Its central location made it the western terminus of the government packets, established in 1755 to bring the American mails from Falmouth, England, by way of Halifax or Bermuda; and it was also the center of such general administrative authority as existed on this side of the Atlantic. During the Seven Years' War, the port did a rushing business with the movement of supplies and troops, but that successful conflict was no sooner over than trouble began with the new British fiscal methods. England was determined, as every one knows, to make the colonies pay their share of the cost of defense and other expenses. The merchants of New York joined with those of Boston and Philadelphia in the non-importation agreements, with which they opposed the Stamp Act as well as many of the subsequent measures. On the whole, however, the New York group was more moderate than that in either of the other two cities.

During the Revolution, New York played an unusual role as a Tory port. It was occupied by the British in the summer of 1776 after the battle of Long Island and remained in their possession for seven years. Not until late in 1783 did they finally evacuate the city. During the occupation, it was the center of British authority in America and there was much official business as well as lively Tory privateering. For much of this time, the British zone was limited to a radius of only twenty or thirty miles around the city and for a while this cut off the port from trade with the countryside. Consequently, instead of its usual shipping of flour to others, New York had to receive its foodstuffs from overseas. On the other hand, the last months of the British occupation in 1783 were the busiest that the port had ever seen. The evacuation of the army and that of nearly 30,000 loyalists as well taxed the shipping facilities to the limit.

Then, with the peace, the port encountered several extremely lean years. Its mercantile personnel had been more violently disrupted than in the case of Boston and Philadelphia, where the British occupation had been very much briefer. Certain of the New York merchants had been able to keep on doing business under the various successive changes, but many of the Tory merchants, who had flourished during the war, sailed away to Nova Scotia or London. The patriots who returned from seven years of exile found a radically reduced population in the city, as well as the ruins of a great fire which had swept away

a thousand buildings. They also awoke to the disheartening realization that their pre-war debts to English merchants were now by the treaty terms collectible at accumulated interest; with the energetic, determined Alexander Hamilton among the most active of the debt collectors. To be sure, New York was better off than Boston at this time as far as outside trade conditions were concerned. British regulations in 1783 disrupted the old triangular trade with the West Indies. This exclusion of American vessels from trade with the British West Indies bore more heavily upon the New England shipping centers than upon New York or Philadelphia. The new laws discriminated against New England's lumber and fish, while still permitting in British bottoms the shipments of flour from the middle states. Altogether the combination of circumstances left Philadelphia in the most favored position, and for thirteen years after the peace, it maintained first place in American commerce.

New York made various attempts to adjust itself to the new situation. It was the scene of the heaviest dumping of British manufactures in the first three years of peace, but the Hessian fly ruined the grain with which it hoped to pay for its purchases. The French effort to capture American trade, by means of vessels sailing regularly to New York, soon ended in failure. The pioneer voyage of the *Empress of China* from New York to Canton in 1784 was the most conspicuous attempt to find a new avenue of trade. Interstate rivalry and the jumbled condition of the state currencies, however, seriously hampered the merchants—a depressed and at times desperate tone runs through their letter-books of those years. Their realization of the need for a united American front in the outside commercial world made the ratification of the federal Constitution particularly acceptable to New York City, which, for a brief period, was the national capital.

One ray of hope buoyed some of the merchants during the gloom of the 1780s. Late in 1787, one of these New Yorkers wrote to his Jamaica correspondent, "Should a war (O, horrid war!) take place between Great Britain and France, will not your ports be open to us, and our commerce with you as neutrals be an object of consideration?" In a few years the hoped-for war had come, when England entered the French Revolutionary struggle early in 1793. The British West Indian regulations became a dead letter; France needed neutral bottoms for the commerce of its sugar islands; and in many directions American tonnage and American grain were at last in active demand.

This European war brought a boom period to all the American ports, and especially to New York. Its exports, which amounted to \$2,500,000 in 1792, rose to \$5,400,000 in 1794, \$13,300,000 in 1797, and reached a peak of \$26,300,000 in 1807. Its registered tonnage doubled in five years and trebled in fifteen. The year 1797 had a particular significance in the history of the port, for in that year, when it lost the state capital to Albany, it passed Philadelphia and thus jumped into national first place both in imports and in exports. It has kept that position ever since with but two brief exceptions. This lead, however, was to remain insecure until after 1815.

The swelling customs figures tell only part of the story. As American shipping penetrated into the ports of the belligerents, it ran afoul of their stringent and rapidly changing commercial regulations. France was the first offender, chiefly with high-handed seizures in the West Indies, but Britain was soon doing worse as its frigates snapped up New York merchantmen all the way from Sandy Hook to Java Head. Nevertheless, New York's commerce continued to grow even after the stringent terms of Napoleon's Berlin and Milan decrees and the British orders in council were proclaimed, and this increase continued to the very end of 1807. In fact, the volume of trade in that year was scarcely approached again for almost a quarter century. The passage of Jefferson's Embargo Act, barring American vessels from foreign trade, shut down with deadening effect after 1807. A British traveller, who had marvelled at the busy East River wharves in the summer of 1807, returned the following year to count 500 idle vessels in port. A fair recovery was under way after the repeal of the act, when the War of 1812 interrupted everything.

Although popular accounts of "Old Ironsides" and her consorts give the impression of striking American naval success, the experience of New York during that sorry conflict reveals quite another story. At first, when vessels were able to come and go fairly freely, many New York privateers slipped to sea and there a few met with unusual luck. By the summer of 1813, however, the British clapped down a blockading squadron off Sandy Hook and by the end of the year were patrolling the Sound as well. New York began to feel the influence of sea power, thus exercised by the Royal Navy. Foreign commerce was almost at a standstill and the southern coastwise movements likewise had almost ceased. A few little vessels slipped in from the Sound but not many were able to get through the blockade. The

prices of textiles, salt, and other imports more than doubled in value, while flour and other domestic goods were a drug on the market. By 1814, the city was certain that the British were going to attack and worked feverishly to throw up defenses. The tireless British patrol of the sea lanes outside did not slacken, although there was no attack on the port. All trade languished while the merchants and many other New Yorkers as well grew heartily tired of "Mr. Madison's War."

On the day before Christmas in 1814, British and American negotiators drew up at Ghent the peace terms which would go into effect as soon as they were ratified in both capitals. Communications were so slow that the belligerents did not hear of the peace in America for several weeks and continued their fighting. During that interval, Andrew Jackson won his victory at New Orleans, and at New York two episodes occurred in the blockade. The *President*, New York's favorite frigate, a sister ship of the *Constitution*, and the product of an East River shipyard, tried to escape to sea but pounded her bottom on Sandy Hook bar; in her crippled condition she was overtaken by the British and captured. The inhabitants of Southampton on Long Island watched with mixed emotions when one of the blockading vessels pounded to pieces on their shore and most of the crew perished.

Then came February 11, 1815, one of the most significant dates in the whole history of the port and the beginning of the period of this study. It was a bitterly cold night and there were only three men at the *Gazette* office in Hanover Square instead of the usual group who gathered nightly to discuss the affairs of the town and of the world. As those three were about to leave for home, a pilot breathlessly staggered into the room with the news of the peace. The British sloop-of-war *Favourite* was lying below with an American legation secretary and a British King's messenger aboard, the bearers of the official tidings of the seven-weeks-old treaty at Ghent.

The news spread like wildfire throughout the city. In spite of the freezing night and snow in the streets, every one turned out to celebrate. No one bothered about the peace terms; it was enough that the war was over. All through the night, with torchlight parades and with shouts of "a peace!" the city rejoiced over the end of "Mr. Madison's War." Had those New Yorkers been able to look into the future, their joy would have been increased manifold, for their port was on the eve of its spectacular rise.

That news of peace marked a turning point in the rivalry of Ameri-

can ports. Although New York had stood first in exports and imports since 1797, its lead had not been decisive. Its New England rivals, moreover, were deliberately treated leniently by the British blockade because they were known to be bitter and rebellious toward their government for declaring war and might even secede. Boston had consequently once more forged ahead.

For more than fifty years, most of such progress made by the rival ports had been impermanent, because commerce had been carried on under abnormal conditions in the rapid succession of wars and in the periods of tension or dislocated trade. Now, however, conditions were different, for, though the men of that day could not perceive it, the nation was settling down to almost a half century of peace, broken only by the distant Mexican War. Anything accomplished from 1815 onwards would have far more lasting effect than any earlier efforts. Thus it was that New York was able to compensate by singularly well-timed initiative during this coming decade for those two centuries, in which it had failed to capitalize adequately its magnificent natural advantages.

At the risk of a certain amount of repetition, it might be well to glance briefly at that noteworthy decade of port history before turning to the various particular aspects of it. Those years gave the chance of a fresh start to the various ports in their rivalry for trade—therein lay their chief significance. New York alone struck while the iron was hot, to make the streams of commerce flow to its wharves. It drew to itself the three major trade routes—from Europe, from the southern ports, and from the West. Without producing many of the important articles of commerce itself, New York made itself into an entrepôt where goods of every sort from every place were exchanged and the New Yorkers grew rich from the profits, commissions, freights, and other excuses for levying toll upon that volume of business. It was in like manner that Amsterdam and London in turn had become the foremost seaports of the world, while the accumulated profits from such business had made them the world centers of finance. New York was on the threshold of a similar career when the peace news arrived on that February night; had the crowds realized what was in store, they might have cheered even more lustily.

It took a while for the seaboard to shift from war to a peace basis. Although the peace terms were ratified at Washington on February 17, officially ending the war, a time allowance was given to let the news spread to the ships at sea. The treaty contained a sliding scale of

dates until which captures of enemy craft would still be "good prizes," ranging from twelve days for the coasting trade and thirty for the Atlantic shuttle to three or four months for the distant seas. This interval was employed to good advantage by the shipwrights and riggers in fitting out the merchantmen which had been lying idle up the Hudson during the blockade, removing the tar barrels ("Mr. Madison's night caps"), inverted over the mastheads, and the salt shovelled in to preserve their timbers.

New York had a constant series of interesting episodes during those first months of peace. February saw fireworks at Governors Island and a great dinner and celebration to show the city's joy over the end of the war. Robert Fulton died, just before the completion of his final brain-child, the first steam warship, which came on the scene just too late to be used against the King's ships at Sandy Hook. During March, privateers kept slipping in to port from their final cruises; and there was a hint of new trouble when a New York-bound Spanish ship was plundered by pirates. In April, the *Cyane*, late a sloop of the Royal Navy, arrived at New York as a prize to "Old Ironsides," which had captured her off Madeira late in February. Ships from Bermuda and Halifax brought in American seamen who had been confined there, while over in England several New York sailors were killed in a prison riot at Dartmoor. The governor of New York meanwhile proclaimed a day "devoted to public prayer, thanksgiving and praise" for peace, but scarcely was it over when news came of Napoleon's escape from Elba for the "Hundred Days." Early in May, a French frigate hurried in from the West Indies, and her commander, after some deliberation, hauled down the Bourbon lilies and hoisted the tricolor. British warships from Halifax returned to their familiar patrol off Sandy Hook and snapped up two French merchantmen from Guadeloupe. In that same month, the navy sold off 44 little gunboats and Decatur sailed from New York with a squadron for the Mediterranean to punish the Barbary pirates. By the beginning of August, the news of Waterloo arrived by way of Boston; and real peace at last settled down upon New York, which proceeded to organize a Peace Society.

In the meantime, commerce was getting underway with a rush. As soon as the "safe" period approached, vessels began to clear for foreign ports. Apparently, the first was the *Diamond*, which left for Havana the 1st of March. Five days later, the *Othello* opened the transatlantic business by clearing for Ireland. A week after that,

Astor's *Seneca* cleared for Canton, then the *Emily* and the *Kensington* sailed for India.

More significant than these clearances were the arrivals. The British seem to have settled upon New York as the best port for the bulk of their "dumping" of manufactures. It seemed better for their purposes than Boston, where the British had played upon the anti-war feeling by tolerating a reasonable amount of leakage and which consequently had not been deprived of European goods to the extent of New York. New York's central location made it preferable to the ports to the southward, which had also been rigidly blockaded and where imported goods were likewise scarce and prices high. Anticipating the peace news, the British had sent a considerable number of well-laden merchantmen to Halifax, Bermuda, and other nearby vantage points from which they might hasten to New York with the lifting of the blockade and take full advantage of the situation. Several such cargoes had reached New York before the first American ship arrived direct from Liverpool in mid-May. She was the *Massachusetts*, with a cargo valued at a million dollars, the vanguard of a flotilla of British and American merchantmen which poured woollen and cotton cloth, hardware, cutlery, and other articles into the empty market in such profusion that it was soon glutted. The subsequent sale of the surplus goods in auction rooms at sacrifice prices drew customers from far and wide to the city.

That British decision to "dump" at New York rather than at some other city was the first step in the port's remarkable rise at this time. New York itself, of course, could claim no credit for this step, which was all-important in setting one of the main currents of world commerce flowing in its direction.

The magnitude of the movement may be judged from the customs figures. The full statistics for imports by states are not available for the years before 1821, but a fair idea of the relative volume of imports may be gained from the amount of duties collected in each state. The ports of New York and Philadelphia accounted for almost the whole total for their respective states, while the Massachusetts figures had to be divided among Salem, Portland, and several other active ports in addition to Boston. In 1811, the last year of fairly normal trading before the war, the rivals were still running pretty much neck-and-neck, with \$2,700,000 for Massachusetts, \$2,400,000 for New York, and \$2,300,000 for Pennsylvania. Four years later, the British dump-

ing had given New York an impressive lead. For the year ending September 30, 1815, representing only about the first six months of active trading after the peace, Massachusetts stood at \$5,900,000 and Pennsylvania \$7,100,000; while New York had a larger total than both of those combined, at \$14,600,000.

Although it was simply New York's good luck that the British gave it that initial advantage, its own initiative deserves full credit for keeping that stream of manufactures coming in its direction two years later, when it seemed probable that the British would turn their shipments from New York's overstocked market to some of the other ports. New York took two steps which helped to maintain its lead in the import business in 1817. The first of these was the enactment of favorable auction legislation which became law at Albany on the same day, as we shall see, as the Erie Canal bill. Abraham Thompson, a New York auctioneer, claimed credit for the measure, which was designed to secure final sales of all goods put up for auction. By discouraging the withdrawal of goods in case the bidding ran low, it was expected that more buyers would be attracted by the prospect of bargains. More important in keeping the foreign wares coming to New York was the announcement on October 24th of that same year of the first regular ocean liners, sailing on schedule to Liverpool. This pioneer packet line, which came to be known as the Black Ball, went into operation in the first week of 1818. The new regularity of service, as anticipated, attracted shippers almost at once and helped to clinch New York's leadership as the chief receiving port for the offerings of European markets.

In view of the attitude of many historians in oversimplifying the explanation of New York's rise by attributing everything to the Erie Canal, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that New York's distinction as an importing port has always been greater than in exporting, which was the main advantage of "Clinton's Ditch." Even before this canal was opened in the fall of 1825, the packets and other devices had strengthened New York's hold on the Atlantic shuttle. Its import duties for the year ending a few weeks before the canal opening totalled \$15,700,000, as compared with \$5,700,000 for Massachusetts (now separate from Maine), and \$5,200,000 for Pennsylvania. Baltimore, handicapped by its geographical position, lagged far behind in imports, for the Maryland duties came to only \$1,300,000.

The route which led down the bay, past Sandy Hook, and then turned

eastward, across the Atlantic to Europe, was only one of the directions in which a vessel might leave New York. On the other three routes as well, New York made innovations. One of these also led down the bay, but upon reaching Sandy Hook, bore southward along the New Jersey coast toward the cotton ports. Another, starting with the East River and the tortuous channel of Hell Gate, led to the quiet waters of Long Island Sound and toward New England. The fourth route was up the Hudson, from which a vessel might connect with New York's unique water-level way to the West.

On the southern coastal route, New York developed what was perhaps the cleverest step of all, by diverting the commerce between Europe and the cotton ports some two hundred miles out of its normal course, in order to collect toll upon it and at the same time to provide eastbound cargoes for Liverpool. Cotton became New York's most important article of export and the South received most of its foreign imports by way of New York. The South passively allowed New York to gain this strangle hold on its trade and to strengthen the arrangement with the packet lines to the cotton ports. In several ways this fitted admirably into New York's concentration of commerce, giving it an excellent market for the distribution of its imports and at the same time providing return cargoes for the eastbound transatlantic shipping. Without those the Atlantic shuttle could not have operated successfully, while British markets were closed to flour and grain, the principal northern offerings.

From the commercial standpoint, the route through Hell Gate to the Sound was the least important of all, for the New Englanders to the eastward were too energetic traders themselves to be as easy subjects of exploitation as the southerners. The Sound, however, was admirably adapted for an extension of New York's energetic use of the steamboat. The successful introduction of steam navigation slightly antedates our period, for it was 1807 when Fulton's *Clermont* began its runs on the Hudson. Steamboat traffic on that river had steadily developed, but the British blockading squadron had prevented such service on the Sound until the first weeks of peace in 1815, when the *Fulton* began her runs to New Haven. Before long, this was extended to Providence and intermediate points, greatly facilitating traffic to the eastward and helping to bring southern and western New England within New York's sphere of commercial influence. Steamboat service was also rapidly developed during the decade on the route across the

Bay to the Raritan, making much simpler the trip to Philadelphia and points beyond. In the use of the steamboat, New York rapidly gained and kept a lead over all the other coastal ports—one more significant factor in drawing business to its waterfront.

Finally, there was the Hudson route which was made to lead to the West. The great ridge of the Appalachians stood between the western farmers and the eastern seaboard. A fortune awaited the port which could first provide them with a cheap and easy means of marketing their flour and other products. The first successful solution of the problem came in 1817, as the most conspicuous act of that vital year of port development. DeWitt Clinton pushed through the state legislature an act which provided for the digging of the Erie Canal. He lifted the first spadeful of earth at Rome on the Fourth of July of that year, just six months before the first Black Ball packet sailed; but the canal took eight years to dig.

The great decade may be said to have reached its close on November 4, 1825, with the arrival at New York City of a procession of canal boats, which had come the entire way from Buffalo by water. That triumphal opening of the Erie Canal was the event which captured the public imagination more than the Black Ball packets, the "cotton triangle," or the extension of the steamboat service. Yet without those other examples of New York initiative in that decade, "Clinton's Ditch" alone could not have made New York what men were already calling it—"the great commercial emporium of America." Only then did the other ports awaken to all that New York had been quietly accomplishing and by that time it was too late for them to catch up. The first appendix shows concisely the effects of the resultant rivalry in a dozen branches of maritime activity; Boston and New Orleans shared the second places, but New York stood first in every case. Those ten years had done more for the port of New York than the whole two centuries which had gone before.

CHAPTER II

PREDESTINATION

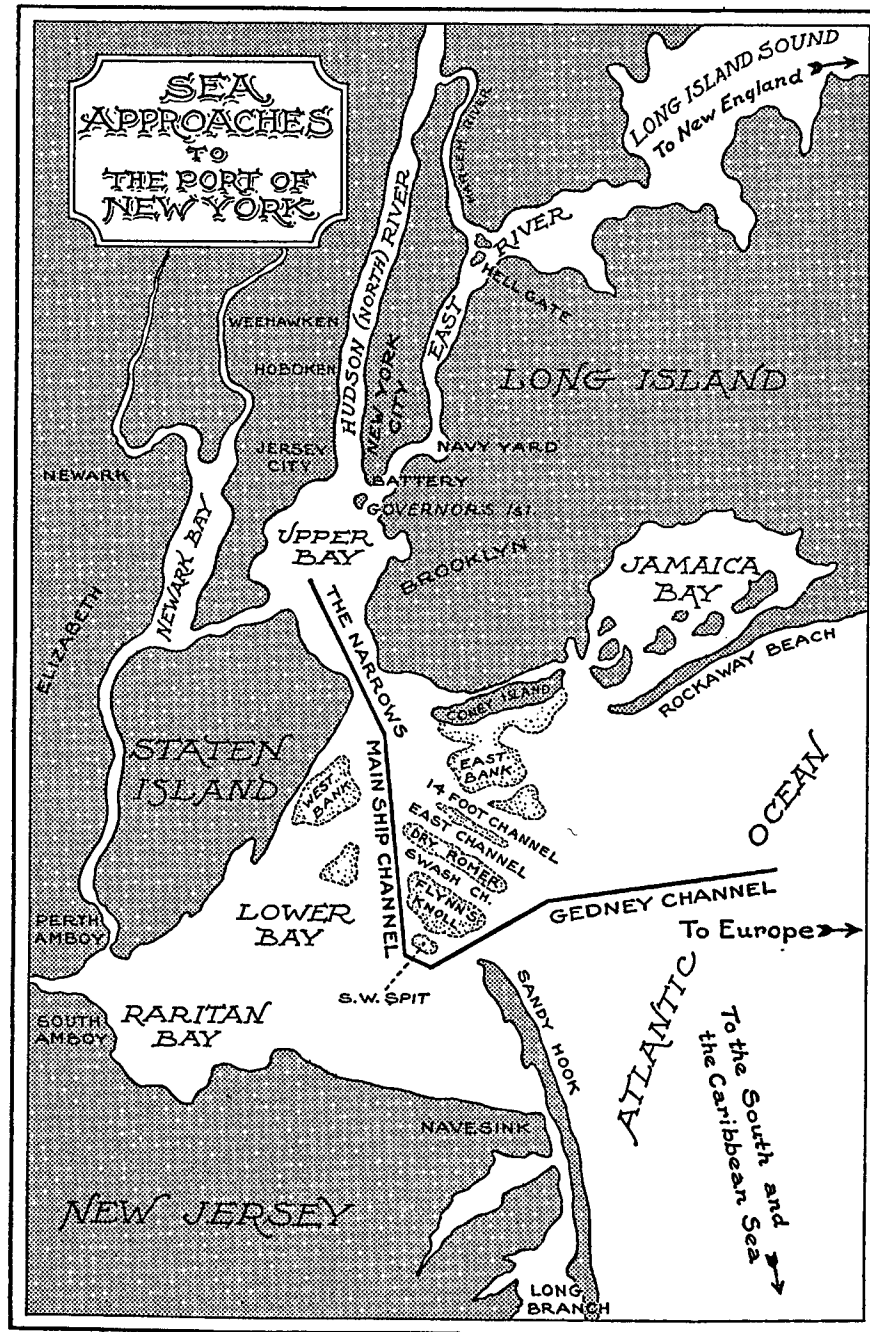
NATURE can do a good deal, but not everything, to determine the success of a seaport. Human initiative also counts for something; otherwise American maritime history would have less to say of Salem with its mediocre physical setting and more to say of Norfolk with its rich endowment of natural advantages. Geographical considerations were all-important in the story of New York port. Other places have surpassed it in particular respects, but at no other spot on the North Atlantic coast was there such a splendid harbor so favorably situated for the combination of transatlantic, coastal, and inland trade. Yet even New York trailed behind less favored rivals for many years until local initiative finally took full advantage of nature's bounty.

As approached from the sea, the beautiful harbor of New York lies at the apex of a large sandy angle, interminable stretches of beach upon which the surf pounds incessantly. One arm of this is the outer shore of Long Island, stretching eastward 104 miles from Coney Island to Montauk Point. The other arm is the New Jersey coast, extending 110 miles from Sandy Hook to Cape May. Along the former ran the main sea lane to Europe; the latter was skirted by shipping for the southern and the Caribbean ports. In normal weather, vessels were usually in sight of those endless beaches. In bad weather, those sandy arms formed menacing lee shores for New York shipping. All the way to Montauk and Cape May, there was not a single harbor of refuge for anything larger than schooners. Year after year, vessels by the dozen would pile up on the sands of that desolate angle, uninhabited at that time save for a few scattered fishing villages. Society had not yet discovered Southampton and the Jersey coast was still innocent of boardwalks. Yet strangely enough, a wreck quickly drew a crowd of Long Islanders, who generally succored the victims, or of wild Jerseymen, who

too often looted them. That absence of good harbors, however, helped to prevent the development of rival ports to share New York's commercial influence over the region; while Long Island shut off New Haven and the other Sound cities from direct contact with the open sea. As for the Jersey ports within the limits of the sheltered Bay at New York, Perth Amboy and Newark have from time to time entertained hopes of maritime greatness. Newark's efforts belong more to present; but Perth Amboy, at the mouth of the Raritan River, some three miles nearer the open sea than New York, offered inducements to shipping in our period, with loopholes for evasion of New York's customs, quarantine, and immigration regulations. But the Raritan was not the Hudson and the great stream of shipping left it at one side.

At some prehistoric period, before the sea receded, the area within that angle was probably dry land, for hydrographers have recently discovered the ancient bed of the Hudson, running far out to sea, and roughly bisecting the present sandy angle. For some eighty-five miles, it leaves a track of mud only a few fathoms deeper than the surrounding sandy angle; then it deepens for forty-five miles into a gorge deeper and wider than the Grand Canyon, where the river had once apparently cut its way through to the sea. Even in the mid-nineteenth century, before this was known, a mariner, seeking his bearings in thick weather, knew from the *American Coast Pilot* that in coming from the eastward his soundings would reveal more than twenty miles of gray sand with sixteen fathoms of water "which depth will carry till you get into what is called the Mudhole, where are from twenty to thirty-six fathoms water, marl or green ooze, and sometimes pebbles."

In clear weather, however, the incoming mariner, whether approaching from Europe or the southward, realized he was nearing his objective when, miles offshore, he spied the Highlands of Navesink. This steep bluff, colloquially known as Neversink and now called Atlantic Highlands, rises sharply from the shore to some 282 feet, an unusual feature in the flat seacoast of the region. At its foot, the Jersey coast terminates in a sandspit some five miles long, aptly known as Sandy Hook because its shape resembles a fishhook curving inward from the sea. Sandy Hook, lying about seventeen miles from the tip of Manhattan, has always been regarded as the conventional outer limit of the port of New York. To the uninitiated, six miles of good, clear water seem to lie between Sandy Hook and Coney Island at the end of Long Island. Actually, however, a broad sandbar, perilously close to the sur-



face at some points, joins the two shores, and has made it necessary for vessels to be guided into the bay by pilots.

The waters of the port of New York within this entrance fall into five main divisions—the Lower Bay, the Narrows, the Upper Bay, the East River, and the Hudson (or North) River. The Lower Bay, being exposed to the sea by that six-mile gap at Sandy Hook, did not offer adequate security to shipping. Upon clearing Sandy Hook, a vessel might be headed westward into Raritan Bay to Perth Amboy or, as was far more likely to happen, be steered northward through the Lower Bay to the Narrows between Staten Island and the present Brooklyn end of Long Island.

The Narrows, two miles long, and at one place only three quarters of a mile wide, form a bottle-neck through which has passed more than a third of all the nation's foreign commerce. The Narrows became the obvious place for quarantine inspection and harbor defenses and also served a far more valuable end in giving New York a virtually land-locked harbor, almost completely protected from ocean gales.

The incoming vessel emerged from the Narrows into the Upper Bay or harbor proper, which is some four miles wide. In the pre-dredging era, shallow flats extended for a considerable distance from either shore, but there was always adequate room in the center for a deep channel and for the anchorage of a large number of ships. Manhattan Island splits the upper end of the harbor into two parts—the East and Hudson Rivers. The dividing point is the Battery at the southern tip of Manhattan, off which lies Governors Island.

Until fairly recent times, the more sheltered East River was the scene of the principal business at the port. This stream is about sixteen miles long and at present, after extensive fillings on each side, varies from 600 to 4000 feet in width. It is a tidal strait rather than a river proper. It makes Long Island an island by joining the Upper Bay with Long Island Sound. Incidentally, Manhattan Island itself owes its insular status to the Harlem River, a similar but even narrower, double-ended tidal strait, with its beginning and end in salt water. In the first mile or so of the East River towards the Bay were to be found most of the important wharves of the port during the period before the Civil War; beyond them, near the great bulge of Manhattan at Corlear's Hook, were the shipyards. Roughly midway between Bay and Sound, the East River formed at our period one of the most-cursed stretches of water on the Atlantic coast. The English had to alter its

old Dutch name only slightly into the appropriate Hell Gate. The tides rushed through it at five or six miles an hour; each of its rocks acquired a sinister familiarity to the skippers of the eastern coasters, who named them Flood Rock, Mill Rock, the Gridiron, the Pot, Bald-Headed Billy, and the like. Nevertheless, plenty of mariners were glad to use Hell Gate because that short bad passage led to a hundred safe miles in the sheltered waters of Long Island Sound.

The Hudson, on the other side of Manhattan Island, was often called the North River, a relic of the Dutch days when the Delaware at the other end of New Netherland was the South River. About a mile wide at New York, the Hudson was broader and less turbulent than the East River, but shipping at its wharves was less protected from the elements because of its broad sweep and the danger of floating ice. As an element of the New York waterfront, its utility was limited at first to the traffic with the upper Hudson region. The foretaste of its future came in 1847 when the Cunard wharves were built across the river at Jersey City. Some ludicrous accidents to the first French steamships in the narrow, crowded East River emphasized the fact that the Hudson, with its ample room for turning, was the better berthing place for ocean steamships. From that time on, the North River piers have accommodated most of the largest liners afloat. The Hudson is a tidal estuary to the head of navigation, some 150 miles inland from New York at Troy. Unlike the East River, it is a real freshwater stream in its upper reaches. While the rise and fall of the tide are noticeable as high as Albany and Troy, salt water generally penetrates only as far as Poughkeepsie, seventy-odd miles upstream.

The Hudson and Long Island Sound have been vital factors in New York's geographical importance. The Hudson gave easy access to the rich hinterland of its own valley, and was the first stage in the "water-level" route to the West, which was to give New York a marked advantage over the other ports. The stream afforded a good depth of water until one reached a sandbar known as the "overslaugh" a few miles below Albany. Little sailing sloops took full advantage of the river from its earliest days and later it furnished a practically ideal setting for the first permanently successful application of steam.

Long Island Sound was even more unusual as a body of water. Lying between Long Island and the Connecticut coast, it is about a hundred miles long and averages from ten to twenty miles wide, with ample depth of water and plenty of convenient harbors. Its most

valuable feature is the shelter which it offers from the sea, for the outer shore of Long Island catches the full brunt of the ocean waves. While the Sound can at times grow very rough with waves of its own production, vessels are safer than they would be on the outside. The trade of Bridgeport, Norwalk, New Haven, and the other Sound ports naturally gravitated to New York; and the Sound afforded a valuable "back door," utilized by most of the vessels trading to other parts of New England and points eastward. It gave, besides, an alternative approach to New York when weather conditions made it difficult to enter past Sandy Hook. Adverse winds might keep all arrivals away for days at a time at other ports, but at New York because of the alternative entrance to the harbor, it was a rare day when the marine intelligence did not herald the arrival of several vessels. In time of war, the Sound gave an added chance to escape from blockaders. Finally, this body of water offered another excellent setting for the use of steam.

The two entrances from the sea brought in two distinct tidal movements. Arriving at different times, they helped to keep the East River turbulent. The normal rise of tide in New York harbor is about four and a half feet. Twice a month, however, the so-called "spring" tides rise about a foot higher than normal, while at the first and third quarters of the moon each month, the "neap" tides run about a foot less than usual. The naval Hydrographic Office has minutely calculated the ebb and flow of the tides and from their detailed tables, one may plot the progress of each tide as it comes in through Sandy Hook and up the Sound. On a particular day, for instance, when the tide was high at Sandy Hook at noon, high tide reached the Narrows at 12.11 and the Battery at 12.36. Leaving for a moment that portion of the main tide from Sandy Hook which passed into East River, we may follow the rest of the tide up the Hudson, where high tide reached Tarrytown at 2.26, West Point at 3.25, Poughkeepsie at 5.21, Hudson at 7.41, Albany at 10.22, and Troy, the head of navigation, at 11.52, which was just before the next high tide was coming over the Sandy Hook bar. The rise of tide varies at different parts of the Hudson, ranging from two and a half feet at West Point to four feet at the town of Hudson. Those are modern figures, affected by the deepening and straightening of the channel; in 1831, the tide rose only a foot at the Troy dam; in 1931, it rose three feet.

In the meantime, the second tidal "wave" was coming up the Sound,

much later than the one from Sandy Hook, because it had much farther to travel from the open sea. On our typical day, when one high tide reached Sandy Hook at noon, another reached Montauk Point, at the tip of Long Island, at 12.25, but in its slow progress up the Sound it did not reach New Haven until 3.04, Throgg's Neck at the Sound end of East River until 3.24, and Flushing, just east of Hell Gate, until 4.04. Meanwhile, of course, part of the Sandy Hook tide passed the Battery into East River at 12.36. To complicate matters, at the Bay end of East River the tide rose about four and a half feet; at the Sound end it rose seven feet. The two currents had to find a common level in that narrow stream, where, in the words of the Army Engineers, "the water level approximates a plane surface, sloping between the heights of tide at the extremities." The result was that Hell Gate, on our particular day, had its high tide at 2.24, two hours later than the Bay end of the river and one hour earlier than the Sound end.

The coming and going of such a tremendous volume of water into and out of the harbor with its narrow entrances naturally produces strong currents which were a matter of much greater concern in the days of sail than at present. Such currents are generally stronger on the ebb than on an incoming tide. For an hour or so at the turn of the tide, their effect is not marked; at their maximum strength with a normal ebb tide, they run nearly three miles an hour at Sandy Hook and in parts of the Upper Bay, reaching a maximum velocity of more than five miles in the East River where Blackwell's (Welfare) Island divides the river into two streams. At Hell Gate, the velocity is about five miles both on ebb and flood tides. Twice a month, however, on the "spring" tides, the velocity is about one-fourth stronger, giving more than six miles an hour at Hell Gate and Blackwell's Island. Even with a favorable wind, a sailing vessel could scarcely make headway against such a current and with the wind ahead tacking would be out of the question and the vessel would have to wait for the tide to turn. That was one feature which gave the steamboats such an advantage over sail on the Sound.

So much for the description of the port—although one might like to quote the impressions made upon travellers even in the pre-skyline era by the beauty of the approach through the Narrows into the Upper Bay. Instead, we shall turn to a brief comparison of the port with some of its potential rivals in respect to certain features which contribute to a seaport's success or failure. Nine other ports seem worthy of inclusion

in the list of those which had good reason to hope that they might either overtake New York as the chief commercial outlet of North America or at least secure a generous share of the seaborne trade: Montreal, Portland, Boston, Philadelphia, Norfolk, Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans. Several names, such as Salem, Newport, and Mobile, are deliberately omitted since they were never serious competitors in general trade, while San Francisco and the other Pacific ports were in a separate category. The considerations about Montreal apply in general to Quebec, which first monopolized the seagoing trade from the St. Lawrence. Even though situated outside the United States, these Canadian ports had good cause to hope for a liberal share of our western trade.

In the days before acts of Congress might cause thirty feet of water to flow where only ten had flowed before, the natural depth of water at the entrance of a port was an all-important consideration for its success. Bars from river silt or from the shifting of shore sands had an exasperating habit of forming before some of the most likely locations. Both the normal depth of channel at low tide and the average rise of tide affected a port. Some ports had plenty of water even at low tide to accommodate the largest ships; some were accessible only at high tide; while the least favored were unable to admit a ship, bark, or brig at any stage of the tide.

The draft or depth of keel on various types of vessels at different periods was an essential point since the problem was the amount of water under a keel at high or at low tide. The Navy was most vitally concerned for, in the period before the Civil War, its vessels had deeper draft than most merchantmen. For instance, it reported in 1836, that with full equipment ships of the line drew from 25 to 26 feet and frigates from 21 to 22½ feet. The steam vessels, built shortly after that by the Navy, had somewhat lighter draft. The draft of merchantmen was not given in the regular customs measurements and is somewhat elusive. It affected chiefly the pilots, whose rates were based on so much per foot of draft, and might vary from trip to trip according to the weight of the cargo. Until after the Civil War, however, 23 feet seems to have been a general maximum both for sail and steam. The celebrated frigate, *Constitution*, built in 1797, drew more water than the maximum merchant shipping of a half century later. If "Old Ironsides" could visit a port, the largest packet or steamship need run no risk there.

Channel depths fluctuated from time to time, making it rather difficult to state categorically the "controlling depth" or shallowest part of the main channel in the pre-dredging period. Portland and Boston had no bars and were safe for the largest ships at all stages of the tide. They did not need their nine-foot rise of tide which would have been a boon to some of their southern rivals. Quebec and Norfolk likewise had no cause to worry about depth of water, but not so Montreal with less than eleven feet at low tide. Vessels in all sizes could ascend the Delaware until just below Philadelphia, where a bar cut the depth to some 18 feet even at high water. Baltimore, too, had a controlling depth of 18 feet—"three fathoms of water, soft bottom, being the most you will have in this channel, common tides." Charleston had some 12 feet at low water and 17 feet at high, while south of that the situation grew worse. Savannah at one time had a channel seven feet deep at low water and about double that at high tide. Large vessels could ascend Mobile Bay until about six miles from the port, where a bar reduced the depth to some 11 feet at high tide, which in the Gulf meant generally only a one foot rise. At New Orleans, the situation was reversed. Ample water was available at the city and down the Mississippi to within a mile of the Gulf; but there, at the entrance to all five passes, the river silt piled up bars of soft mud, so that there was at the deepest only 13 feet at times at low tide and 14 at high. Had it not been for New Orleans' unsurpassed connections with the interior, the port would have suffered keenly as ships grew larger.

Many other ports had such shallow entrances that they never had a real chance to develop. For instance, in 1833 a dismasted brig, naturally lighter with her masts gone, was said to have been "the first square-rigger that ever entered" Little Egg Harbor on the Jersey coast near the present Atlantic City. Inadequate draft prevented the North Carolina ports from developing much of a direct foreign trade because the Cape Fear River kept vessels of more than 300 tons away from Wilmington, while Ocracoke Bar, the entrance to most other ports of the state, was often hazardous even for schooners.

It was one thing to have adequate depth of water under one's keel and quite another to find easily the channel where that water lay. Every port had its records of mishaps to vessels which failed to strike the channel. Some were better situated than others, but even at the best, pilots were a virtual necessity for all vessels except the smaller coasters. It was appropriate that pilot charges were estimated at so much for

each foot of draft, for naturally, the deeper a vessel lay, the more chance she ran of grounding. In this matter of easy access, few ports could rival Portland with its straight, deep channel, and with only three and a half miles from open sea to docks. Boston had similar deep water, but the channel wound among many rocky islands, dangerous in darkness, storm, or fog. The long winding channels leading to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Savannah, and New Orleans offered numerous chances for grounding.

With the conditions at the other ports in mind, one may appreciate the advantages and the limitations of the Sandy Hook bar, which controlled the depth of water and the ease of access for New York. As far as depth of water was concerned, New York was well fixed. The old Main Ship Channel over the bar had a natural minimum depth of 21 feet at low water, with four to five feet more at high tide. In 1837 Lieutenant R. T. Gedney, U. S. N., improved this channel as a result of Coast Survey soundings by discovering an outer extension in the alternative channel, which still bears his name. This gave a minimum depth of 23 feet at low tide and also, by bearing southeast upon leaving the bar, saved three or four miles and gave shipping a wider range of winds. As a result, virtually all the pre-Civil War shipping might enter and leave New York at all stages of the tide.

To find the channels was another matter and the Sandy Hook bar was a bad one in this respect. In the six miles of bar, which stretched from Sandy Hook to Coney Island, there were only the few hundred yards of the Main-Gedney Ship Channel available for larger vessels and that ran close to Sandy Hook. Smaller craft might use one of the three lesser channels, the Swash, "Fourteen Feet" or East (today deepened into the 40-foot Ambrose Channel), but close to each lay dangerous sandbanks. One of the latter was only two feet under water at low tide and sometimes exposed at spring tides—hence its name of Dry Romer. Vessels which gave Sandy Hook too wide a berth were liable to run on the Southwest Spit, while the so-called East Bank and West Bank were also lying in wait for the unwary. The bar was composed of hard sand, a continuation of the shifting sandy beaches of the Long Island-New Jersey angle; not a deposit of river silt, for the Hudson leaves that well upstream. For a while, it looked as if Sandy Hook might move outward some time to close the Main Channel. A Coast Survey chart showed a marked outward movement around

1800—an outcome devoutly desired, it was said, by Philadelphians. It did not; but the sand was there, to be plowed by many an unwilling keel.

Only twice until the close of the nineteenth century did the depth of water at Sandy Hook bar have any important influence. Both instances occurred during the rare emergencies when war came to New York harbor; and both gave the responsible officers the excuse of the bar to account for their failures. In the summer of 1778, a French fleet crossing the Atlantic to co-operate with the Americans headed for New York, where Lord Howe with a weak squadron of smaller vessels awaited it just inside Sandy Hook. The French admiral, aware that in wartime the channel buoys were removed and that his first-rate flagship, the *Ville de Paris*, one of the largest vessels afloat, would have scant margin for clearance anyway, gave the bar as his reason for withdrawing to Newport, thus saving Howe from an action under desperate handicaps. In the other episode, early in 1815, the frigate *President*, as we have seen, fell into British hands after being crippled by pounding on the bar. Her commander also used the bar as an excuse and prejudice remained in naval minds. In 1817, a commission of naval and army officers, inspecting potential navy yard sites at eastern ports, rated Boston as perfect in all respects, but pointed out that capital ships could not enter New York at low tide. One influential old commodore seems to have continued this grudge against New York as a naval base for many years afterwards.

The Sandy Hook channel was put to a severe test in the last months of our period with the first arrival of the *Great Eastern* on June 28, 1860. That giant ship, some 22,500 tons by the old reckoning and 18,900 gross tons by the new measurement, was far ahead of her time in size; fully loaded, she drew 30 feet. There was talk at first of sending her to Portland, but finally, it was decided to try the Sandy Hook approach to New York. After an 11-day run, she reached the lightship early in the morning, drawing nearly 27 feet aft. She had to wait nearly seven hours for high tide; the time was spent in adjusting the cargo to place her upon an even keel. *The Herald* next day told of the crossing:

It is now about two o'clock—the tide is at its height and the moment has arrived when the fact is to be demonstrated whether or not the *Great Eastern* can cross the bar. Much has been said pro and con on the subject, and it is quite natural that the liveliest interest should prevail. The offi-

cers are all at their stations. . . . Capt. Vinehall and Mr. Murphy, the New York pilot, with his associate, Mr. Van Duzer, are on the wheel house, cool, calm, and collected; the engineer is at his station, looking down into the huge vault where revolves the massive machinery. . . .

The order is finally given by Mr. Murphy, under whose command the ship has now passed, to "Go ahead." The engineer waves his hand, the officer below repeats the order to those still further below, and in a minute the great wheels commence their revolutions. . . . Gradually the point of danger is neared. The perilous bar is at hand. Speed is accordingly slackened, and Mr. Murphy from his position silently gives his orders. . . .

Once, it is said, the noble vessel barely touched the bottom, but this is uncertain. . . . Among those cognizant of the fact, it was generally agreed that the discolored water which marked the spot was only the stirring up of the great deep by her screw.

The bar was safely crossed and the great ship proceeded triumphantly past the booming guns of Fort Lafayette in the Narrows to her North River pier where cheering thousands greeted her arrival.

The Hell Gate entrance to the port was still worse; the water was deep enough but it swirled so violently around the reefs that the channel was a dangerous one for large vessels. It was considered a superb feat of seamanship during the Revolution when the British frigate *Roebuck* was taken through East River into the Sound; and during the War of 1812, smart handling was required to steer the still larger American frigate *President* through the same passage. During the Revolution, however, another British frigate, the *Hussar*, struck a rock near Hell Gate and went to the bottom too quickly to save the gold, estimated at several million dollars, which she was carrying as pay for the redcoats. Ever since, that huge treasure has presumably lain buried in East River mud but the swift current has so far frustrated repeated efforts at salvage.

Human ingenuity applied itself to modifying these natural disadvantages along the coast. The first step, before serious efforts were made to secure deeper water, was to build vessels with shallower draft. As we shall see, New York shipwrights were very successful with large "flat-floored" ships for the Mississippi entrance, while in the lesser craft, sloops and schooners were made with centerboards instead of fixed keels for use in still shallower waters. But the deepening of harbors and rivers became the usual method to deal with the problem. For many years, such a project was part of the internal improvement plan of the Whig party, but congressional "river and harbor" appropriations were not common before the Civil War.

The first effort to improve upon nature at New York was a municipal appropriation of \$13,861 in 1851 to remove some of the Hell Gate rocks and a reef at the harbor entrance to East River. Two years later, Congress appropriated \$20,000 for similar work. The main entrance at Sandy Hook, however, was regarded as adequate until 1884 and not until the turn of the century were heavy appropriations needed for the accommodation of the largest liners. About that time, the East Channel through the bar, with its 16 feet minimum natural depth, was converted into the Ambrose Channel with 40 feet at low tide and also the North River docks, in extensive operations, were made accessible to the liners. Long before that, the army engineers had built huge jetties to sluice deep channels through the bars at Charleston and New Orleans, while many lesser ports and would-be ports had dipped into the "pork barrel." It is an evidence of the natural advantages at New York that up to 1911, only \$21,000,000 of a national total of \$800,000,000 in river and harbor appropriations had been spent in improving the port which handled so much of the nation's foreign commerce.

Like depth of water, shelter from the sea was an all-important prerequisite in a good harbor. It is obviously essential that shipping in port have protection from the violence of ocean waves in storms either by nature or by artificial breakwaters or moles. The river and bay ports, lying far inland from the sea, had naturally little to worry them in this respect, and luckily even the major American harbors opening directly upon the ocean were relatively well protected against the intrusion of stormy seas. To appreciate this good fortune, one has only to read of the extensive and expensive efforts required to secure shelter at numerous foreign ports, such as Port Said and Madras, or even at Plymouth and Cherbourg, where breakwaters were needed to guard the harbor openings. Well-sheltered harbors were needed not only for the protection of the shipping anchored in the stream or lying at the wharves but also, if possible, as refuges for vessels caught in storms at sea. Such havens of distress were fairly common along the New England coast, but between New York and Charleston, Norfolk was the only place of refuge for large vessels until the government built a huge breakwater just inside Cape Henlopen at the mouth of the Delaware.

Of the ten major ports under consideration, five lay far up rivers or bays and the other five enjoyed the rare combination of shelter and deep water, close to the open sea. New York possessed a landlocked harbor,

which offered more perfect natural shelter than that of any other major American port as close to the sea. A century ago, a prominent engineer remarked that even if the sandy mass of Long Island might have no other use, it justified itself as a natural breakwater for New York. Staten Island served a similar purpose. Even if a southeast gale should drive high waves through the Narrows, they would come at such an angle that their force would be spent on the New Jersey flats. Shipping in the Lower Bay or at the Narrows might catch the force of a gale, but the waters around Manhattan were spared the surges of stormy seas.

Even at that, the almost annual gales at times made things uncomfortable in the Upper Bay. The harbor might grow very rough, but this was simply the effect of the winds; and the same results were evident on inland lakes. Year after year, particularly at the period of the September "line" storms, a fairly consistent list of casualties would appear in the daily press as soon as the wind subsided. Generally the story was pretty much the same—a few little sloops, loaded with stone or timber, sinking at the wharves; a brig or two, insecurely fastened, breaking loose; the harbor ferries and the Sound steamers suspending service; a few small craft capsizing in the Upper Bay; perhaps a vessel or two dragging anchor at the Narrows and running aground. A December gale in 1833, however, was an exception and inflicted "a vast amount of damage," according to the *Evening Post*. Blowing directly down the Sound and East River, it accumulated the water at high tide in the bay and drove it up into the streets of the lower city, flooding cellars and kitchens, putting out fires. On the day of the gale, the *Evening Post* stated, "The water is so high that small boats from the vessels in the harbor pass over the wharves. A sailboat has passed up Maiden Lane from South to Front Street."

Rarely, however, did one read of the larger ships inside New York harbor sustaining any damage beyond loss of spars. For instance, in September, 1815, a series of gales "covered the Atlantic seaboard with the wrecks of vessels, floating spars, casks, boxes & c." The worst of the gales, blowing from the northeast, swept the New York waterfront for thirty hours. The next issue of *The Shipping and Commercial List* reported, "Last Saturday a severe gale of wind done (*sic*) considerable damage to the wharves and shipping in the city; no vessels lost. To the eastward, the violence of the gale exceeded all recollections, doing incalculable damage on the land and water." The reports from

New England confirmed that last remark. At Boston, where the harbor lay somewhat exposed to northeasters, numerous vessels at the wharves were "stove in and sunk," several wharves were badly smashed, while "of all the vessels at anchor in the stream at the commencement of the gale, only two vessels (schooners) held on and rode it out." From Stonington, Connecticut, came word that "A new ship belonging to N. York is in the street, by Mr. Franklin's with the bowsprit over the house. The sloop *Volunteer* went over the wharf, and now lies in Mr. Cheesbrough's meadow." Providence, likewise, had "a sloop standing upright in Pleasant street before the door of Col. Webb, and a ship in the garden of General Lippett." Altogether, shipping might count upon New York as a pretty safe harbor of refuge in storms. Most of the damage was caused by the winds, and relatively little by the waves, except at the Narrows, where the damage inflicted served to emphasize the greater security inside.

Ice was an occasional nuisance at New York; but only on very rare occasions did the harbor freeze over so as to prevent the going and coming of shipping past Sandy Hook. There was no repetition of the great freeze in the winter of 1779-80, while the British were occupying the port during the Revolution. For several weeks the Narrows and Upper Bay were frozen so solid that on one day the commissary was able to send eighty wagons loaded with provisions across the harbor to Staten Island. On occasions during our period temporary cold snaps tied up shipping for a few days. In February, 1818, for example, no vessels arrived or cleared for six days. Another short stoppage occurred in January, 1821, when one day the thermometer dropped to 7° below zero. Rarely if ever, however, was New York cut off from the open sea for a whole week—the strong tidal currents through the Narrows generally prevented that.

On the other hand, the floating ice from the Hudson many times caused trouble in the harbor. This was particularly true at the beginning of our period before iron anchor cables and steam towing came into vogue. Vessels at the Narrows were frequently driven ashore after the ice cakes cut their hempen cables; and on one occasion a schooner arriving from Curaçao sank near the Narrows after an ice floe crushed her planking. The East River and the Hudson were occasionally so jammed with ice that for a few hours men could walk from Manhattan to the Brooklyn or the Jersey shore. Packets sometimes missed their sailing dates in January or February when ice cakes kept them hemmed in at

their piers. Vessels tied up at the outer end of wharves were particularly vulnerable. On a December day in 1831, after a huge ice floe had drifted from the Hudson into East River so that hundreds crossed "free of toll," *The Post* remarked:

It often happens that a temporary bridge of this kind is formed, and is the cause of great damage, carrying before it all vessels at anchor. In one instance we recollect a brig, loading at the end of one of the docks, was cut in two, from stem to stern . . . she sunk so quickly that the stevadores in the hold had great difficulty in escaping with their lives.

While the harbor itself remained relatively ice-free, New York was annually affected when the freezing of the Hudson cut it off from Albany and the interior. Various tables are available showing the date of the closing and opening of navigation on the river—a hundred days was the general average for ice, extending from late November to early March. Sometimes unlucky sloops were held imprisoned in the ice for months; and one of the crack river steamers, wintering at Albany, was carried down river to destruction when the ice went out. The shallow Erie Canal was frozen solid for an even longer period each year—an average of more than four months. The New York end of Long Island Sound was also frequently liable to long obstruction by ice. In the early days of steamboats, service was generally suspended both on Sound and river from mid-November to mid-March.

To appreciate New York's relative advantages in the matter of freezing, we might turn to a few of the rival ports for comparison. Naturally, most of those to the northeast suffered more severely. Montreal and Quebec were generally cut off from the open sea about five months each year, a situation which would give Portland some seventy years of prosperity as the winter port of Montreal. Even Portland, however, sometimes had its harbor frozen solid as far out as House Island in the ship channel. Boston, too, suffered far more often than New York from freezing. Wide publicity attended the action of the Boston merchants who subscribed several thousand dollars to saw a seven-mile channel through the harbor ice so that one of the first Cunarders might sail on time. Portsmouth alone of the eastern ports was apt to remain ice-free, thanks to the swift rush of the currents which accompanied its abnormally heavy rise of tide. In compensation, however, that same current was pretty much of a nuisance to shipping during the rest of the year.

Even to the southward, several ports suffered more than New York, particularly Philadelphia and Baltimore with their quieter river water. The Delaware River was liable to be frozen solid for several weeks in the colder winters; at times even Delaware Bay froze too. One need only examine the marine intelligence in the Philadelphia newspapers to note the scarcity of arrivals in January and February, or to read of icebound flotillas tied up just below the great bend in the river. A year-by-year summary outlined this situation from 1681, when three vessels with settlers from England remained icebound all winter at Chester, to 1828, when it was remarked, as unusual, "during the winter, the navigation has been uninterrupted." In 1817, the river was closed for 50 days and in 1822 for 52 days. Consequently the lists of marine arrivals at New York contained scores of such notes as "Ship *Nautilus*, 65 days from Liverpool, belonging to Philadelphia, put in here on account of the ice." Doubtless many shipowners diverted their trade elsewhere and, even though shipping movements were lightest in winter even at ice-free ports, it is probably safe to say that Philadelphia ranked next to Montreal and Quebec as a victim of ice.

Baltimore suffered somewhat less, as Chesapeake Bay generally remained free from all but floating ice, although the Patapsco River, leading to the port, often froze over. In February, 1831, for instance, Baltimore reported nearly a hundred vessels of all classes in the river and bay waiting for the ice to break up, while many people were amusing themselves on the ice, patronizing "travelling shops with refreshments and strong drinks" and admiring "a sailboat on runners" which "beat up very handsomely to windward." A year later, Baltimore shipowners "contracted for the opening of a channel to the termination of the ice." Other ports in the Chesapeake region were sometimes affected by ice, as Richmond for instance. Norfolk, however, seems to come off well in this as in most other natural respects although the floating ice in the bay was sometimes troublesome. In 1840, according to a report from Norfolk, "all the vessels in Hampton Roads are cut through with ice. Two ships and four brigs have come up for repairs." Naturally only an unusually cold winter brought ice farther southward as, for instance, in the record-breaking great freeze early in 1827 when "all our great rivers with the exception of the Mississippi are either frozen over or obstructed by ice."

The steamboat, as it gradually came into use, helped to keep channels open where sailing vessels could not have moved. Several early Hudson

and Sound steamers did valiant work in opening channels, sometimes straining their engines to the breaking-point in the process.

Apparently the first instance of towing at New York occurred in February, 1818, during a period of floating ice. By 1835, enterprising Baltimore had its steamboat, *Relief*, especially designed as an ice-breaker, with a bow bearing "a close resemblance to the bowl of a tablespoon." She proved so useful that in 1839 a more powerful ice-breaker was built by popular subscription. By that time, the Philadelphia authorities had appropriated \$70,000 for a "City Ice Boat."

Compared with ice, fog was a less important natural handicap. It was most prevalent at New York from December to March. The northern seaboard from the St. Lawrence to New York felt its effects most severely; further south, with the Gulf Stream running closer to the shore, it was less troublesome. Modern fog statistics of the Lighthouse Service, based on the average hours per year for a quarter century or so in which fog signals were operated at various stations, show that New York's Ambrose Lightship had the heaviest score at any port south of Maine with 876 hours, as compared with 832 for Boston Lightship, 602 for the mouth of the Delaware, 331 for the approach to Chesapeake Bay, 192 for Charleston, 173 for Savannah, and 528 for the lower Mississippi.

At almost every seaport the fog was heavier just outside rather than inside the harbor. At Robbins Reef, in the Upper Bay at New York, the total was only 438 hours and at Hell Gate, 192. "True ocean fogs," report the Army Engineers, "seldom reach the inner part of New York Harbor," although troublesome light fogs more frequently settle over the water during the morning hours. They demonstrate statistically that for only about 52 hours during the average year is the visibility in the inner bay less than a quarter of a mile, more than half of which comes between December and February. Off the Hook, of course, conditions are worse and in the old days often led to grounding on the bar. Fog generally implied an absence of wind so that collisions were rare, but not unknown, with sailing vessels in and around the harbor. Shipping might often be held up by fog for hours or even days and the harbor would resound with the clanging of ships' bells; quieter to be sure than the modern raucous chorus of deep-throated whistles which at present penetrate lower New York on a foggy day. At its worst, however, fog was only a temporary nuisance and would seldom, if ever, divert shipping from one port to another.

Another natural harbor consideration is the capacity for expansion in waterfront and other port facilities. In this respect, the exceptionally compact configuration of New York harbor gave it a marked advantage over its American rivals. Both sides of Manhattan Island, the Brooklyn and Jersey shores, as well as Staten Island, were always available and recent dredging has opened channels from the Upper Bay to yet further potential waterfront. Compared with this accessible and compact area, river ports such as Montreal, Philadelphia, Savannah, or New Orleans are at a disadvantage, for their waterfronts may be expanded only by spreading out for long distances up and down the stream or by elaborate docking systems "dug out of the mud," as in the cases of London, Liverpool, Hamburg, and some other foreign ports. The remarkable concentration of commerce at New York, however, has saved its rivals from too severe problems of expansion. The modern port of New York has a tremendous waterfront, estimated by the most extreme standards at some 771 miles of potential wharfage. In addition, New York has exceptionally ample space for anchorage. Port experts, however, claim that all this available room for expansion has caused the port to spread out in an inefficient manner. Even before the Civil War, New York shippers were wrestling with this problem of port expansion.

Turning from the harbor to more general geographical considerations, nearness of the open sea was a factor of importance, more vital in the days of sail than in modern times with steam or other artificial power. Since sailing vessels in an extra fifty or hundred miles of river channel were more apt to be delayed by vagaries of the wind than in an equivalent extra distance between ports on the open sea, the ports lying up rivers were thereby handicapped. Ice and fog, as well as wind conditions, were liable to cause more complications in reaching such ports. The danger of collision was an added liability in the narrow approaches. From this situation arose increased charges for pilotage or towage, and even at times for marine insurance.

Six of the ports considered lie fairly close to the sea. Although the distances from "bar to berth" are susceptible to juggling, there seems to be a general concurrence in the mileage from the principal docks to the open sea. Portland has the least distance with $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles, followed by Charleston, Boston, New York (with 17 miles), Savannah, and Norfolk (with 30 miles). There is, naturally, a considerable jump to Philadelphia and New Orleans, each just over 100 miles; Baltimore,

152 miles; and Montreal, 500 miles from the Gulf of St. Lawrence and about 1000 from the Straits of Belle Isle.

To offset that long approach with its liabilities of ice and fog, Montreal is the closest of the ten ports to northern Europe. Portland is the nearest United States port to Europe, followed by Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Norfolk, Baltimore, Savannah, and finally New Orleans, with its handicap of the long trip around the Florida peninsula. Thanks to the studies of Lieutenant Matthew F. Maury and others in connection with ocean currents, combined with years of experience, the modern Hydrographic Office figures, given in the appendix, for these distances, probably represent shorter sea lanes than those in use a century ago; but the relative position of the ports remains much the same.¹ The distances between these ports and Gibraltar are in identical order except that Montreal is in third place.

In the routes to the Caribbean, New Orleans and Savannah are about tied as the closest ports to Havana, while the eight other ports are, as one would expect, in almost exactly reverse order from their proximity to Liverpool. The sea lanes to South America, on the other hand, present a surprise. Among the seaboard ports, there is a difference of only 123 miles to South America. One would scarcely believe that Portland is 414 miles nearer Rio de Janeiro than is New Orleans, or only 19 miles farther than Savannah! Since vessels from all these ports had identical routes after passing the great bulge of Brazil, the figures for Rio represent the same relative situation as for Buenos Aires, the west coast of South America, and the clipper route to California. All the ports had a fair start with few favors in that competition, and since the Havana distances are pretty much in reverse order of the European, the eight ports from Portland to Savannah were fairly evenly matched in their locations for foreign trade.

For general coastwise trade, a central position is the most desirable, facilitating as it does the interchange of products up and down the coast. A port which lies too far "off side" is thus seriously handicapped. A glance at the map would give the impression that Philadelphia and Baltimore occupy the positions closest to the center of the coastline in general; that, however, is offset by their distance from the sea, a handicap more serious than mileage alone would indicate. The relative advantages of the ten port locations for coastwise trade may be determined roughly by averaging the distance from each port to the other nine.

¹See Appendix, xxiv.

In this respect, New York is a close second, being 20 miles more than Norfolk. After these two, come in order Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, Charleston, Portland, and Savannah. New Orleans has a coasting average almost double that of any of those eight ports and Montreal has an even worse position. In colonial days, New York was regarded as the most central of the ports, but the opening of New Orleans threw that advantage to Norfolk. New York naturally had another asset in Long Island, whose shelter was of more help than the 15 miles which it saved in comparison with the outside route.

Curiosity has prompted a carrying of this arithmetical geography to an arbitrary conclusion by combining the distances in the three most significant fields of trade: the Liverpool and Havana mileage added to the coastal average. Charleston, with 4997 miles, has a slight lead over Norfolk, with 5007, and New York, with 5039. Then comes Savannah, followed by Philadelphia and Boston nearly tied, Portland, and Baltimore. New Orleans and Montreal have their usual excessive totals. The significance of these differences may be partly appreciated by remembering that a hundred miles a day at sea was a good average run for a sailing vessel; in the port approaches, the rate would be normally slower. This game, of course, might be carried to greater lengths; most of the rivals are so close that by taking other standards than the Liverpool and Havana routes, the order might be altered in minor details.¹

Yet the fundamental relationship would be much the same. No port along the seaboard from Portland to Savannah suffered under a serious handicap or enjoyed an undue advantage in the length of its major sea lanes. New York was among the most favored but it did not, as is sometimes claimed, have a commanding position in this respect.

One must look to the land, as well as to the sea, to appreciate fully the location of a seaport. New Orleans and Montreal, in spite of the length of their sea lanes, became major ports because they were situated on rivers which penetrated far inland and gave them, and them alone, natural water communication with the rich interior of the continent. Of the other eight, Baltimore and Philadelphia were closest to the West—Baltimore being more than a hundred miles nearer Chicago than was New York. In estimating inland routes, however, altitudes must be considered. Therein lay New York's geographical advantage—the principal explanation of the rise of the port, according to popular ac-

¹See Appendix, xxiv.

count, which exaggerates the situation. Unlike the other ports with the Appalachians rising between them and the West, New York was able to take the mountains in flank, use canals, and thus have a water-level approach to the West through the Hudson and Mohawk valleys. As we shall see later, New York utilized this Hudson-Mohawk route at just the right moment, before the railroads came on the scene to make the mountain barrier less of an obstruction for the other ports. This proved of tremendous value to the port, but it may be possible to demonstrate that New York's rise as a seaport was caused more by its capitalization of its sea routes than by the building of the Erie Canal.

All told, nature had distributed her advantages among the ports with a fairly even hand. The northern ports had ice and fog; the southern had sandbars. All had fairly adequate shelter. The two ports most handicapped in the matter of sea lanes had the best natural connections with the West. Yet the fact remains that New York, while superlative in few of these considerations, was not seriously handicapped in any of them. Norfolk alone seemed to offer a similar happy sum of such advantages—but perhaps the more bracing climate of Sandy Hook was a further natural asset in New York's favor!

letters, and society were to be found travelling by packet. The cost of an eastbound cabin passage during most of the early period was "40 guineas, wines included"; for the slower westbound crossings, when the passengers would have to be furnished meals for a longer period, the charge was a guinea higher. Only the Havre packets carried any considerable number of immigrants during the early years; not until the steamships had cut into the cabin trade and the fine freight, did the Liverpool packets devote their "'tween decks" to this less attractive form of business.

As for the "fine freight," the same advantages of fixed sailings and quick crossings transferred much of the business from the regular traders to the packets. Instead of the old irritating uncertainty about the relative chances of early sailings of various vessels, the shippers found it much more satisfactory to send their freight to the packet agents. They found that by patronizing the packets their freight was forwarded quickly and that the period during which their goods lay unproductive in port or on the ocean was materially reduced. Even for shipments from Liverpool, say to Boston, Philadelphia, or Charleston, it was at any rate easier and generally quicker to send them to New York by packet and have them distributed by the coastal steam or sailing lines from that port. Once these advantages were realized and habits formed, not only was the success of the packets assured, but New York was in a position to take its profits on business which, before the packets, would not have come within a hundred miles of Sandy Hook. Even the opening of the Erie Canal did not blind certain contemporaries, such as Hezekiah Niles, the Baltimore editor, and Lieutenant Maury, the oceanographer, to the significance of this fact.

In that, more than in anything else, the ocean packets contributed to the rise of New York port. The tremendous volume of trade on the Atlantic shuttle assured constant cargoes, some of which represented high value in small bulk. In the course of her three annual voyages, a packet would probably carry more valuable freight than an East India-man in her single annual voyage and the duties collected on these packet cargoes at the New York Custom House paid a considerable part of the running expenses of the United States government. Ultimately, of course, the very considerations of speed and regularity which had shifted this business from regular traders to packets moved it on again from packets to the ocean steamships.

CHAPTER IV

DRY GOODS, HARDWARE, AND WET GOODS

IN THEIR dresses and "unmentionables," the women of 1855 probably carried around more yards of cloth than any others before or since. From the rather scanty directory gowns at the beginning of the century, a gradual increase reached its culmination in the huge bell skirts, supported by half a dozen petticoats. A prominent authority on the history of costume, when consulted on this matter, estimated that the average dress of 1855 required some thirty yards of material, while the petticoats and other garments underneath brought the total close to a hundred yards. This was about eight times the amount needed for all purposes in 1800, and it was sufficient to clothe fourteen women in the nineteen twenties when the cycle of styles had once more swung around to scantiness.¹

The relationship of feminine fashions to commercial history may seem obscure until one recalls that the prosperity of New York, New Orleans, Liverpool, and certain other ports rested primarily upon trade in the raw materials or finished products of such textiles and that the more the women wore, the more business there was for all concerned. Those bell skirts, with their voluminous underpinnings, might be termed a style that launched a thousand ships, but we shall not go so far as to claim that the decline of the American merchant marine was caused by the substitution of the wire hoop for four or five of the petticoats around 1856.

A correspondent in a Liverpool newspaper complained of this trend toward fullness as early as 1829, when its effects began to be noticeable:

Among the novelties of the times, the fashions of ladies' dresses are peculiarly remarkable, when contrasted with those in vogue twenty years ago. At that time five and a half or six yards of cloth were considered sufficient

¹See Appendix, xxv.

for the making of a lady's gown of fashionable cut, so closely was that garment fitted to the shape. . . .

If the ladies of 1800 were guilty of scanty garments, those of 1829 are delinquents in the opposite extreme, by enlarging and modelling their lovely forms to the beau ideal of female beauty, by means of bustles, cushions, plaiting, stuffing, puffing, and other elegant et ceteras of the toilet. . . .

We should not feel inclined to reprehend this profuse expenditure of clothing material, were it observed without rendering its objects somewhat ridiculous, for it must tend greatly to increase the consumption of goods, and thus benefit the manufacturing interests of the country. . . .

Supposing a man should marry a woman thus built and inflated to the roundness and symmetry of beauty on the supposition that such shape was her own: how would he look when he found that all he admired was the effect of mere padding and stuffing? that she was inflated into symmetry . . .? Might he not demand an annulling of the marriage contract? might he not plead that he had been cheated and deceived? Might he not say, "I married, as I thought, a fine, robust, well formed woman: I find her divested of her borrowed plumes and stuffing, an ordinary feeble-bodied object, as shapeless as a post!"

It seems singularly inappropriate that such a plaint should have come from Liverpool of all places, for its whole prominence and prosperity rested on the volume of textiles which it handled. New York, which was also vitally concerned in the business, was more ready to sacrifice æsthetic to practical considerations. The *Evening Post*, commenting upon the Liverpool article, remarked, "We sincerely hope that the present amplitude of female drapery will not cease to be the mode. . . . It contributes to the warmth if not the adornment of the person."

The changes in men's styles were less violent during those years. Throughout the period, the well-dressed man required only about twelve or thirteen yards of material, but the proportion of woollen goods increased as long trousers gradually replaced the former silken knee breeches.

These textiles composed the most valuable part of the freight carried westward by the packets and other vessels on the Atlantic shuttle from England and the Continent to New York. Numerous other articles of various sorts were brought across the North Atlantic in the teeth of the westerly gales in return for the cotton, flour, tobacco, naval stores, and other American products shipped eastward. Iron in its various forms from penknives to railroad rails figured prominently and so, too, did the various kinds of alcoholic stimulants from wines to gin. All of these were dwarfed into insignificance, however, in comparison with the

textiles, which, as Britain's chief article of export and the United States' chief article of importation, towered above all else in the world of commerce in that day. For New York in particular, textiles were of outstanding importance since in such imports its leadership was more pronounced than in any other branch of the nation's commerce.

As the result of being the pioneer in the Industrial Revolution, England easily led in the field of manufactured products by 1815. For a half century English industry had been shifting from the old handicraft stage of the spinning wheel and hand loom to the use of power machinery concentrated in factories. The inventions of Hargreaves, Arkwright, Crompton, and Cartwright had enabled the English to make cloth far more cheaply and in much larger quantities than had been possible under the old methods. The textile business was not new to England, since for centuries the nation's commercial prosperity had rested upon some form of it. Back in the Middle Ages, England had limited itself to the production of raw wool, which outsiders had carried away to spin and weave, a passive economy similar to that of the American South with its cotton in our period. By an energetic economic policy, England finally achieved a more active rôle and by the days of Elizabeth, Merchant Adventurers were offering finished woollen cloth in every foreign market where they were able to wedge their way. This business continued to expand for two centuries more, with the growing market for England's woollen goods resting more upon commercial aggressiveness than upon advantages in production, since other nations could, if they would, use the same sort of spinning wheels and hand looms. By the late eighteenth century, England added to this long-established and successful system of world marketing the new and vital advantage of cheap, large-scale production of the Industrial Revolution. This enabled the English to undersell their rivals in most kinds of woollen and cotton goods—and to make their country the "workshop of the world" for nearly three-quarters of the nineteenth century.

The customs statistics show that throughout our period most of the American textile imports came from British ports, principally from Liverpool. In 1825, for instance, of a total \$39,800,000 in value, \$24,300,000 came from the United Kingdom, \$6,700,000 from France, \$3,300,000 from China, \$1,900,000 from Hamburg and Bremen, and \$600,000 from India. The commanding position of the British was particularly marked in woollen and cotton goods, with 94 per cent and

88 per cent respectively. They also sent 54 per cent of the linen and other manufactures of flax, chiefly produced in Ireland, but in silks, which were almost as valuable as the woollens or cotton goods, they sent only 2 per cent. In 1860, those proportions were much the same, with some \$85,000,000 out of a total of \$120,000,000 for all textiles coming from British ports. The only important difference at the later date was the marked increase in silk shipments from England, amounting to slightly more than half the total. These figures do not necessarily imply that all the goods shipped from a particular country were manufactured there, but at least they indicate why the Liverpool-New York shuttle was so important.

Of the textiles shipped from non-British ports, those from France, particularly from Havre, stood second. It was the outlet for the manufactures of Switzerland, and of part of Germany and Italy, as well as for the French industrial centers. Silk, manufactured at Lyons and other French centers, bulked largest in this category. In 1825, 55 per cent of the silk imports came from France, while the shipments of the other textiles were negligible. In 1860, the French silk shipments had dropped to 40 per cent. Ribbons, laces, and "luxury" articles of various sorts were more common than ordinary cloth in these arrivals from Havre.

Linen, which was gradually losing its earlier importance in competition with cheaper cotton goods, came not only from Ireland but also from Germany. In 1825, it stood first among the textile imports from Hamburg and Bremen. By 1860, those "Hanse towns" were also sending a considerable quantity of hosiery and other knit goods, both cotton and woollen.

While most of the textile imports arrived by way of the Atlantic shuttle, a modest and decreasing amount came from more distant regions. In 1825, the silk imports from China amounted to \$3,000,000, or 30 per cent of the total; by 1860, this had dropped to \$900,000, or about 3 per cent. China and India also sent a modest quantity of nankeens and other cheap cotton goods at the outset; but these were among the first victims of the protective tariff, and were generally reshipped to Latin America, with the duties refunded.

The magnitude of the textile trade warrants a still further parading of statistics, for it overshadowed all else in the world of commerce. Throughout our period, textiles amounted to nearly 60 per cent of England's domestic exports and about one third of the imports of the

United States. As far as England was concerned, the upstart cotton industry rapidly overtook the long-established manufacture of woollens, the cotton exports being about double those of all other textiles combined. In American imports, however, woollens maintained a slight lead over cotton goods throughout most of the period in value though not in volume. One yard of woollen goods, of course, was worth as much as several yards of cotton cloth. In 1821, for instance, the per capita imports, for every man, woman, and child in the United States, amounted to 69 cents in woollens and 61 cents in cotton goods. By 1860, increasing prosperity and voluminous styles had apparently offset the inroads of domestic manufactures, and those figures had nearly doubled, standing at \$1.36 for woollens and at \$1.00 for cotton goods. At the latter date, the end of our period, the nation's textile imports amounted to \$37,900,000 for woollens, \$32,900,000 for silk goods, \$32,500,000 for cotton goods, \$10,700,000 for linen and other manufactures of flax; exclusive of \$4,000,000 for lace, \$2,100,000 for ready-made clothing and a few other minor items. The relative importance of this trade is evident if we realize that the woollen, silk, and cotton manufactures were each more valuable than the highest non-textile imports, which were sugar at \$31,000,000, coffee at \$21,800,000 and iron and steel close behind at \$21,500,000. The cargoes of tea from China, so suggestive of wealth, totalled only \$8,900,000.

These textile imports were the outstanding feature of New York's whole business as a seaport in this period and the port had almost a monopoly of them. Adequate figures are lacking for commodity imports by ports in the early years, but by 1860, New York had become the distributing center for the United States to such an extent that out of the national total of some \$120,000,000 worth of textile imports, about \$101,000,000 arrived by way of Sandy Hook. The other ports lagged hopelessly behind, with Boston not quite \$8,000,000; New Orleans, \$4,600,000; Philadelphia, \$3,700,000; San Francisco, not quite \$1,000,000; and Baltimore, less than \$700,000. New York port thus played a distinctive role in clothing the American people. This was doubtless its most profitable single activity.¹

At this distance, and with the old customs manifests burned, we are often able only to guess the amount of textiles carried by particular ships or handled by particular merchants. The incoming textile cargoes were designated merely by the vague phrase "merchandize." The bales,

¹See Appendix, x.

cases, and square hair-covered trunks, moreover, were an elusive basis for estimating values, compared with the fairly uniform staple articles such as barrels of flour or bales of raw cotton. Besides, a bewildering variety of cloths were made from each of the major textiles. The merchants of that day knew their names and respective attributes, but today even many of the old names are obsolete. Broadcloths, satinets, kerseys, blankets, and flannels covered only a part of the woollen cloth, while cotton goods included much else besides muslins, calicoes, sheetings, and shirtings. It took a practiced eye to know, for example, whether a consignment of blue broadcloth was dyed with indigo, which would hold fast, or had gained its color more cheaply with logwood, which might run or change color. Altogether it was a complicated trade.

New York's rapid commercial rise, as we saw, was stimulated when the British selected it as the center of their "dumping" operations early in 1815. A huge surplus of textiles and other manufactures had been piling up in England during the years when war had interrupted trade with America and the Continent; and manufacturers were naturally ready to sell them for whatever they might bring. At New York, on the other hand, textiles had become increasingly scarce as the War of 1812 dragged on, while the few lots which found their way to the port by devious means commanded high prices. Scoville, the chronicler of the old New York merchants, tells the story of one young New Yorker, who had recently entered the textile business without much capital. Early in February, 1815, he attended an auction of these scarce imported cloths and bid to the limit of his resources for one lot which went, however, at an abnormally high price to his former employer. News of the peace treaty arrived that night and the bottom dropped out of the textile market. The young merchant realized his good fortune, for a week later he found that he was able to buy similar goods at only a fraction of that earlier price. Many others were not as fortunate and were caught with considerable stocks of woollens and cottons, which they had to sell at tremendous losses. One young Connecticut Yankee, Stephen B. Munn, extricated himself from the situation by exchanging his cloth for the land warrants, which had been given the soldiers. Then he laid the basis of a big fortune by swapping those frontier lands in turn for New York real estate.

It took presence of mind and luck of that sort during the early period of peace to keep on one's feet in the Pearl Street textile business. Even

before the *Massachusetts* arrived in May direct from Liverpool with her million-dollar cargo, various other vessels, which had been awaiting the peace at Halifax or Bermuda, had poured a generous stock of British manufactures into the empty market. This new rush of imports, instead of being handled by importing merchants who had bought outright from British manufacturers or exporting merchants in the usual way, was put up for sale by the manufacturer's agents at auctions, which will be discussed further in a later chapter. The importing merchant, unable to compete with the violent price fluctuations of the auction rooms, dropped out of the picture for the time being. New York jobbers and country merchants from far and wide flocked to the Pearl Street auctions, lured by the ever-present chance for bargains. This established a custom which would last for years, for even when more normal importing returned after a quarter century or so, the southern and western merchants kept on coming to Pearl Street to make their purchases. Thus lured to New York for textiles, they would also buy other articles of every sort, and so strengthened the port's commanding position as the great entrepôt of American trade.¹

This flood of British textiles became the storm center of violent tariff disputes. The Pearl Street auction rooms and the "damned Yorkshiresmen," as Hezekiah Niles called the manufacturers' agents in his protectionist weekly, were distasteful not only to the old importers, whose business was thus undermined, but also to the cotton-mill operators who had built up that "infant industry" during the period of interrupted trade between the Embargo Act and the coming of peace. The little cotton mills in New England could not count on adequate returns for their wares with the British manufactures selling in vast quantities at sacrifice prices; and many of them folded up quickly.

This clamor from the domestic manufacturers and importers led to a moderate protective tariff in 1816, with changes at frequent intervals thereafter. Woollen and cotton goods, because of their volume in trade, naturally were particularly subject to attack in the perennial disputes but here there is no occasion to follow the historians of the tariff through the maze of changes. The New Yorkers divided on the merits of protection and free trade. The principal local excitement occurred in connection with the passage of the irrational "Tariff of Abominations" in 1828. It was passed in the middle of May and its increased rates were to go into effect, as far as textiles were concerned, on the

¹See Appendix, xvii.

first of July. This was a time of cruel anxiety for those who had ordered from abroad, for the passage of the bill came too late to countermand orders in those days of slow communications. Excitement increased as the July deadline approached, for numerous cargoes were on the high seas and it was difficult to predict within ten days how long a westbound passage might take. The Swallowtail packet *Silas Richards* slipped in under the deadline on June 29 with a valuable cargo. Two days later, the *Evening Post* gave an appreciative account of the last minute rush:

Today that unblest act, the *tariff*, commences to operate, and we are pleased to learn that all the gentlemen connected with the revenue department manifest a very proper solicitude for the shipping and commercial interest. Yesterday we understand that Capt. Benjamin Wood, the boarding officer at Quarantine Ground, continued to board the inward bound vessels and endorse their manifests till 12 o'clock at night, thereby saving to the merchants large sums of money which would have been payable under the new tariff, if the same service had been deferred until this morning. Such generous and praiseworthy conduct deserves the commendation and thanks of all classes of our citizens, except the woollen manufacturers.

Some vessels, however, came too late to take advantage even of that act of grace. The ship *Franklin*, for instance, left Liverpool on May 18; six days ahead of the lucky *Silas Richards*, but she did not reach New York until July 6. It was estimated that the additional duties on the green baizes, fine flannels, carpeting and low-priced cloths in her cargo amounted to \$70,000. "The greater portion," remarked the *Post*, "will probably be entered in bond, and reexported in British bottoms to another market." Such instances help one to appreciate the changes later wrought by steam and the cable on the Atlantic shuttle.

At times, however, tariff legislation met more favor with the merchants of the port. Their agitation helped to secure the Warehousing Act of 1842, which facilitated the storage of imported goods in bonded warehouses, with payment of duties only when they were withdrawn for internal consumption. This simplified the shipment of British manufactures to Canada by way of New York. The achievement of moderate tariff reciprocity with Canada and other parts of British North America in 1854 further stimulated the trade to the northward.

The tariff affected the New York textile market in another way, by stimulating the competition between domestic and imported goods. A significant feature between 1816 and 1832 was the establishing of

a minimum *ad valorem* rate on cotton and woollen goods. This meant, for instance, that a duty of 25 per cent was charged on all cotton goods, but the minimum basis for reckoning was 25 cents a yard, which meant a duty of 6¼ cents. As the price of the cheaper and coarser grades gradually dropped to less than nine cents a yard, this afforded very powerful protection to that type of domestic cotton goods. Similar protection was granted to woollen manufactures, but was partly offset by a duty on raw wool. The American factories had not yet developed adequate technique to produce satisfactory substitutes for the finer grades of imported textiles but they steadily increased their production of the cheaper sorts. Factories by the score were constantly springing up, particularly in New England. In the cotton industry, the total number of spindles in the country was reckoned at 8000 in 1807, 87,000 in 1810, 130,000 in 1815, 800,000 in 1825, 2,300,000 in 1840 and 5,200,000 in 1860. That final total was about equal to the number in France, more than double the number in Germany, but still very far behind the British total of 30,000,000. By 1860, the output of the domestic cotton factories was valued at \$115,000,000, more than three times as much as the imported cotton goods, while the American woollen output was reckoned at about \$69,000,000, as compared with imports of nearly \$38,000,000.

For a while, it looked as though Boston, as the center of the New England factory district, would profit at New York's expense as the increasing domestic production relieved the dependence upon foreign textiles. For several years, Boston held great annual auctions of domestic cloths which attracted buyers from many parts of the country. New York's well-established position as a general entrepôt stood it in good stead here as in many other ways, and gradually drew the business from Boston to Pearl Street. The merchants from the South and West found it more convenient to buy all their stocks in New York rather than to go up to Boston for "domestics" after ordering their imported goods on Pearl Street. As a result, by the 'forties, the products of the New England mills were being brought to New York either by Sound steamers or by the little packet schooners around Cape Cod. New Yorkers were thus handling and taking profits on most of the nation's textile supply, whether spun and woven at Manchester, Leeds, Lowell, or Fall River.

Closely related to the importation of textiles was the trade in ready-made clothing. Some of this was imported but still more was made up

at New York of imported and domestic fabrics in about equal proportion. The pioneer in this business is said to have been James Chesterman, a journeyman tailor who migrated to New York about 1800 from Bolton, one of the most active manufacturing centers in Lancashire. During the 'twenties, Chesterman and two associates "commenced importing ready-made clothing from Europe, in which business they realized a handsome fortune," Chesterman being rated as a millionaire by the mid-'fifties. Although most people in the East had their clothing made by tailors, dressmakers, or at home, there seems to have been a good business in making up garments, more durable than fashionable, for laborers and for the South and West. One enterprising New Yorker went into this business heavily, later establishing branches at New Orleans and other centers. Not all the ready-made clothing was of ordinary sort, however, and as early as 1831 there was advertised at auction a stock of 5000 garments, "part of a stock of a fashionable clothing store," and including: "superfine blue, black, brown and green cloth dress, frock and short coats and pantaloons; cloth, camblet and tartan plaid cloaks; cloth, violet, marseilles, valence and silk vests; seasonable pantaloons and round jackets; cotton shirts, linen collars & c." The word cloth, it will be noticed, was used in a narrow sense, denoting a particular type of woollen goods. According to census figures which cannot be taken too literally, New York led all other states in the manufacture of clothing, turning out products worth \$16,000,000 a year in 1850 and nearly \$25,000,000 in 1860, more than a third of the national total in each case. A large part of this state total came from New York City and its vicinity. In addition, the imports of ready-made clothing and wearing apparel amounted to some \$820,000 in 1850 and \$2,000,000 in 1860, New York's share at the latter date being \$1,500,000. England furnished about half of the total and France about a third, most of the remainder coming from Hamburg and China.

The world of fashion was not interested in ordinary ready-made clothing, but it furnished a constant market for certain articles in the latest styles, imported from Havre. This "luxury" trade included not only silks, ribbons, laces, and fancy vest materials, but hats and bonnets as well. As early as 1817, one Mme. Deyaux was advertising that on the following Saturday she would "open one case of spring hats, just received from Paris, of the newest fashion; and also one case of ladies' black crape dresses," while she had "just received the latest number of *The Journal of Fashions*, containing a description of the

latest that have been adopted in that metropolis." In 1835, Aaron Burr appeared as one of the counsel for Eugene Martineau, a dealer in these luxury imports, who was suing one John Odronaux, a sugar refiner, for the balance of a \$1236.34 bill. This had been run up in four months by his estranged wife in purchases for herself, three daughters, and the fair of the Catholic Asylum. The items, only part of which are listed below, with the original spelling, give an idea of the sort of articles which helped to make the Havre trade important:

A black uncut velvet hat trimmed with gauze and black artificial feathers, gauze ribbons, blond lace inside	16.00
3 Donna Maria gauze scarfs with tassels at 2.00	6.00
A real bird of paradise (entire)	40.00
A circular box for the above bird	2.00
A rich pearl buckle	4.50
A Paris made pink satin tippet wadded all through and trimmed with swan fur	20.00
An embroidered pink crape dress	26.00
A bug colored real thibet shawl	10.00
16¼ yards pink poule de soie at 1.25	20.30
A pair of chaly fancy shoes	2.50
A pair of long white silk lace gloves	4.00
A blue satin French hat trimmed with two blue feathers, wreath inside	16.00
A blond thulle inside handkerchief trimmed with rush and blond lace	4.50
8 rich striped and figured Hernani shawls at 4.00	32.00
A blond lace hdkf. a la Paysanne, trimmed with gauze ribbon and rush	10.00
2 doz. watered and embroidered with gold and silver bead bags	96.00
8 boxes French sugar plums and fruits from the Fidel. Berger, at 22s	12.00
1 small poule de soie Dress with embroidered sleeves	5.00
A fancy smelling cushion for Hdkfs.	7.00
6 embroidered silk stockings at 3.00	18.00
A long pink figured sattin Pellarine trimmed with swan	20.00
6 bottles cologne water	3.00
A bunch of fine rice papered flowers	3.00

Some of the material imported from Havre was intended for re-export to the southward. An advertisement of DeRham, Iselin and Moore, an outstanding house in this field, headed by Henry C. DeRham, Swiss consul, included, along with ribbons, Florences, Gros de Naples, Satin Russe, Plush, sewing silk and Leghorn Hats, "embroidered Swiss

muslin robes, adapted to the Mexican market," listons (whatever they might be) in assorted high colors "put up with great attention for the southern markets," and French printed muslins, "suitable for exportation." A Havre packet was named for DeRham in recognition of the large amount of business which was brought to the line.

The packet service with its regularity was of particular importance in this luxury trade with its emphasis on the latest Paris modes. By 1825, a Boston critic of New York's increasing business pointed out that the regular traders, bringing cargoes twice a year to Boston, could not compete with the Havre-New York packets. The frequent sailings of the latter enabled merchants to keep their stock constantly up to the minute without having to load up with articles which might go out of style before they were sold.

Iron in its manifold forms stood next to dry goods in importance in the cargoes which came westward on the Atlantic shuttle. As in the case of textiles, the technological advances of the Industrial Revolution had given a tremendous stimulus to a long-established British industry. In both cases, the United States depended almost entirely upon England and other overseas nations before American industry reached a position to meet local demands. The relief from such foreign dependence came more slowly in iron than in dry goods and as late as 1850, three-fifths of the nation's iron needs were still being supplied from abroad.

As far as value went, the different imports of iron amounted to only a sixth of the textile total and consequently they were of less concern to the importing merchants. With the shipowners, it was a different story because the weight and bulk of the iron cargoes created a much greater demand for tonnage than the textiles, which represented large value in small bulk.

England figures about as impressively in this trade as in dry goods, but, because of the difficulty of handling the material, there was less tendency to concentrate the business at particular ports. Because of its bulk, "heavy iron," such as rails, was usually shipped from the port closest to where it was produced to the port nearest to the place of ultimate consumption. Liverpool and New York figured more heavily than their rivals, but they did not enjoy the remarkable concentration of business which they commanded in the textile trade. In 1860, for instance, when New York received more than 80 per cent of the na-

tion's textile imports, it handled only 57 per cent of the arriving iron.

The iron trade fell into three major parts. First, and at the beginning by far the most important, came the finished cutlery and hardware manufactured at Birmingham, Sheffield, and other centers of the industry. These knives, pots, pans, and much else were usually shipped from Liverpool. Throughout the period heavy importations of iron and steel were made in semifinished form, such as bars, sheets, rods, and the like. The third major group consisted of the heavier manufactures, particularly railroad rails, increasing in importance as time went on and generally shipped from Bristol or some other outlet of the South Wales industry. While steel in its finer forms was represented, of course, in Sheffield cutlery from the beginning, the great age of steel did not come until after Bessemer's experiments at the very end of our period.

Sheffield and Birmingham became in the iron and steel business what Manchester and Leeds were in textiles. For centuries, Sheffield blades had been celebrated and its only rival in steel production in the early nineteenth century was Essen in Germany. Sheffield furnished a considerable part of the knives, scissors, edged tools, and similar steel products used in the United States a century ago. The city was so closely connected with the New York trade, that when the Red Star Line named one of its packets the *Sheffield*, the merchants there engaged in the American export business presented her with a flag.

The same line had already named another ship the *Birmingham*, for that more versatile city on the edge of the "Black Country" was turning out a remarkably variegated array of articles, chiefly but by no means wholly made from iron. In the summer of 1815, a New York importer advertised the contents of forty-two casks of assorted Birmingham wares, imported in one of the ships which swarmed from Liverpool in the "dumping" rush which followed the news of peace. The scores of items, thrown together with the illogical lack of sequence and relationship common to the commercial notices of that day serve to indicate the wide scope of the factories of "Brummagem" as the city was popularly called. There were compasses, thimbles, pincers, hammers, gimlets, tap borers, trunk handles, nails, commode knobs, binding wire, knitting pins, brushes, curtain rings, cloak and curtain pins, bells, fencing foils, skates, tongs, shovels, pokers, clock balls, pinions, forged work, castings, eyes, cranks, knobs, locks, fishhooks, watches, spoons, shuttles, snuffers, corkscrews, bodkins, mainsprings, screws, keys,

coal "scoupes," hods and buckets, hinges, dustpans, sifters, gridirons, coffee mills, stair rods, staples, tea urns, block-tin teakettles, tea and coffee pots, inkstands, caddies, graters, carpenters' rules, squirrel chains, dog calls, powder flasks, Norfolk and thumb latches, spittoons, tenter-hooks, hobnails, beefsteak tongs, dog collars and chains, giggering irons and surveyors' chains, as well as such non-metallic products as glass gauges, brushes (hearth, bottle, clothes, hair, nail, tooth, etc.), children's rattles, game boards, pencils, backgammon boards, chessmen, green wax, "segar boxes," corals, shot belts, gun charges, gunflints, gun picks, bellows, saddlery, fishing tackle, and morocco cases of needles. Another cargo, which arrived that autumn, included such additional items, probably from Sheffield as well as Birmingham, as knives, forks, pens, "chissels," plane irons, Britannia metal teapots, gilt and plated coat and vest buttons, fowling pieces and pistols, spectacles, frying pans, anvils, and files. The following year a merchant advertised, among his imports from Birmingham, a most amazing item, indicating that the British had not taken the late war too seriously—"victory furnitures" celebrating the recent American victories on land and sea! Apparently the ingenuity of the Birmingham manufacturers of that day knew no limit. As for the reputation of these products, old Rufus King, the former minister to the Court of St. James's, once compared a certain New Jersey senator to "Brummagem ware"—shiny, brittle, and made for the American market.

In the importation of partly finished iron from abroad for the purpose of working it into its final form on this side, the bar, pig, and sheet iron, together with steel, amounted to between one-third and one-half of the total value of iron imports. About a half of the national imports came to New York, where the firms of Blackwell, McFarlane & Co., Boorman, Johnson & Co., and Phelps & Peck made a specialty of it. This was the branch of the iron trade where England's monopoly was less secure, because considerable amounts came from Sweden and other parts of the Baltic. At the very beginning of our period, in July, 1815, for instance, Blackwell & McFarlane were advertising "300 tons Swedes, Russia and English Iron—flat, square and round, of all sizes . . . landing from different vessels." Phelps & Peck, whose business was so extensive that Anson G. Phelps became the leading metal importer of the country, did not limit themselves to iron; but also brought in large quantities of brass, lead, tin, and copper, with copper sheathing for vessels a particular specialty.

Gradually, "heavy" iron manufacture began to grow up in the South Wales region, with shipments from the old port of Bristol and from Newport, as well as from the new port of Cardiff, opened after a huge capital outlay by the Earl of Bute. In 1824, New York received from Bristol the iron pipes for its new gas system.

Within a few years, a far more extensive business began when the new American railroads sent abroad for rails, or "railroad iron" as the phrase went. Some of this consisted simply of flat iron strips fastened to the top of wooden rails. Robert L. Stevens of Hoboken, however, was not satisfied with this crude device. The same versatile genius which led him to invent many of the significant steamboat devices made him consider a solid iron rail. When the Stevens family undertook the building of the Camden & Amboy Railroad to link New York and Philadelphia, Robert went to England to secure rails. Crossing on the Black Baller *Hibernia*, he one day picked up a block of wood and began some thoughtful whittling. When he was through, he had produced a section of the "T" rail, very much as we know it today. An iron manufacturer in South Wales, after some arduous experiments, managed to turn out a satisfactory product. The first cargoes were shipped to Philadelphia, as that end of the line was to be completed first. Ships carried some 600 tons at a time—one of them, a former Black Baller, bound from Bristol to Philadelphia, struck a shoal near Cape Henlopen where the heavy cargo pounded her bottom out. New York, in the meantime, soon began to receive rails for the new series of railroads running parallel to the Erie Canal.

From that time on, the rapid increase of the American railroad net meant that ships by the score loaded up with two or three miles of rails when no better cargo offered. New York was more passive than its rivals in railroad construction until the late 'forties. Consequently there were some years when Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore ran well ahead. It was not bad when a ship merely filled out part of her cargo with rails, but when they were the chief item, there was apt to be trouble. In 1841, for instance, the ship *Echo*, bound from Liverpool to New York, encountered a heavy gale at sea. Losing two of her masts, she rolled heavily in the trough of the sea. "She was laden principally with railroad iron, eighty tons of which were between decks, which during the storm got loose, and at every roll was thrown against the side of the ship with tremendous violence." Numerous other accidents occurred, either in foundering at sea because of increased stiffness or

from the added risk in running aground. The marine insurance rates jumped sharply when a ship's cargo of iron amounted to more than half of her registered tonnage.

During the late 'forties, occasional efforts were made to produce rails on this side of the Atlantic, notably by Abram Hewitt at Trenton, but it was difficult to compete in price with the British manufacturers, some of whom were accepting railroad bonds in payment. By the mid-'fifties, American industry began to take over part of the steadily increasing demand, but as late as 1860, the imports of railroad iron into the United States amounted to 122,000 tons, valued at \$3,700,000. New York by that time stood first among the ports, with just about a third of the total, followed by New Orleans with a fifth.

The changes in women's styles which swelled the consumption of dry goods were mild when compared with the innovations which stimulated the use of "heavy" iron. The spread of railroads, with their demand for rails and bridges, was the chief factor in this, but by the mid-'fifties the use of iron beams in buildings pointed the way to still further demand. By that time, however, Pittsburgh was developing to a point where it could more and more relieve the dependence upon British sources; and not long after our period ends, the domestic iron and steel industry would make an even more spectacular rise than that made in the textile industry.

After dry goods and iron, the importation of wines and spirits was the most interesting aspect of the cargoes from Europe. In this branch of trade, as in textiles, New York played a prominent role. In several ways the trade in alcoholic beverages differed from that in dry goods and hardware. England's participation was slight compared with that of France, Holland, Spain, Portugal, and the wine islands. Linked with that was the fact that the Industrial Revolution did not affect this trade to any extent. Also, instead of showing a relative increase during the period, it showed a falling off in per capita consumption. This arose not so much from the temperance propaganda of the 'fifties as from the increasing use of domestic whiskey. The stills of the West were more immediately effective in relieving dependence upon Europe than were the spindles of Lowell and Fall River or the furnaces and foundries of Pittsburgh.

The range of New York tastes in drinking at the outset can be

judged from the advertisement of James Farquhar & Son, liquor importers, in October, 1815. Their offerings consisted of

London Particular Madeiras, 5 to 20 years old; Lisbon Port, Sherry, Teneriffe, Marseilles and Sweet Sicily Wines, in whole, halves, and quarter pipes, demijohns and bottles; Claret, sparkling Champagne, very old Hoc, Barsac and Grave Wines; Bitters; old Batavia Arrack; Old Cognac Brandy; Real Irish Whiskey; Jamaica and Antigua Rum; Holland Gin; and London Bottled Brown Stout.

Tastes of various sorts could be gratified at no great expense. A British visitor to New York in 1818 wrote:

The markets of New York are well supplied with provisions of all kinds, which are in price less than in the metropolis of England . . . and with the exception of malt liquor, the votaries at the shrine of Bacchus may enjoy, for a fourth part of the sum, the glorious and exhilarating blessings of the Jolly God.

He added, however, that "The continual use of ardent spirits from the cradle, on the part of the males, ruins the constitution, for at thirty, nature becomes torpid." The advertisement of one New Yorker who sold "Groceries—cheap for cash," two years later, gives an idea how cheaply one might ruin one's constitution. Wine prices ranged from seven shillings a gallon for claret to twenty shillings for Madeira. Cognac and Jamaica rum both sold at nine shillings a gallon; Holland gin at eight shillings sixpence; Pierpont's gin, apparently domestic, at five shillings; and common rum, probably from New England, at four shillings sixpence. Those figures were in New York currency with the shilling at twelve and a half cents. Philip Hone's diary, however, tells of choice wines which commanded \$11 a bottle.

Scoville, the chronicler of the old New York merchants, describes the business of one debonair Irishman who ranked high as a wine dealer:

Dominick Lynch kept a very large wine store in William Street, three doors from Wall, and opposite the Merchants' Exchange. In 1829 he was burned out, and a splendid stock of wines was consumed. I was at that fire, and never did the firemen of New York suck such delicious wines as then.

The fire did not burn up Dominick Lynch. He was more energetic after than before the fire. He commenced in 1830 his importations of the great Lynch's "Chateau Margeaux." A man was nobody in those days if he had not subscribed for a box of that almost inaccessible wine to anybody but Lynch. The subscription lists for three hundred cases contained all the principal people of New York. The cases were about three feet long and four

feet round, and contained four dozen quart bottles. A smaller size contained four dozen pints. The price, I believe, was about \$75 a case.

In 1833, *The Journal of Commerce* published some pioneer temperance propaganda which included the "curious and not unuseful calculation" concerning the importation of ardent spirits (not including wines, of course) into the United States:

Enough has been brought into the country since the beginning of 1790 to fill a canal from New York to Trenton four feet deep, twenty feet wide and sixty miles long, with a surplus of twenty-five million gallons of rum to provide against leakage and the draughts of the boatmen.

By the year of this propaganda, the trade was beginning to fall off and the per capita consumption to decrease.

By the end of the period, when we may distinguish the imports for the particular ports in the customs records, New York's leadership was clear. In 1860, it imported about \$3,400,000 out of the national total of \$5,100,000 for distilled spirits; \$2,900,000 of the total \$4,700,000 for wines; and nearly \$300,000 of the almost \$800,000 total for ale, beer, and other malt drinks. Altogether the port had about two-thirds of the whole business.¹

France was the source of about two-thirds of the alcoholic imports. Its brandy alone amounted to \$3,700,000 in 1860 followed by its champagne at \$1,300,000, while other wines made the rest of the \$6,300,000 total. At the outset, much of this came from Bordeaux, which had shipped out wines for centuries. The establishing of the Havre packet service, however, caused much of the wine and brandy to travel up the coast to the Seine port for shipment to America. Nearly every Havre packet reached New York with scores of cases and hundreds of hampers of French drinks of one sort or another. A lesser amount came to New York from Marseilles.

The names of port and sherry, derived from the ports of Oporto in Portugal and Jerez in Spain, indicate the prominence of those two countries in the wine business, while the islands which they owned out in the Atlantic contributed still further to the total. Madeira was a particular favorite at New York from early in the eighteenth century. A considerable amount of this wine did not come directly from Portuguese or Spanish ports but came by way of London or Hamburg.

"Holland gin" was the source of much business with Amsterdam and

¹See Appendix, x.

stood high among the imported drinks in value, amounting to nearly \$900,000 in 1860. Scoville relates that Frederick Gebhard was the first to make a specialty of the gin trade at New York. His imports of Swan gin were tremendous and the mainstay of his "packets" plying between the two ports. Effective rivalry came by the late 'thirties from Udolpho and Joel Wolfe, who established a distillery in Amsterdam and shipped large quantities of Schiedam Schnapps to New York where they bottled it. Scoville, also tells the story of another enterprising New Yorker who had gin distilled at Baltimore and then, because of the preference for imported liquors, had it shipped to New York by way of Amsterdam. Occasionally, shipments of juniper berries were advertised at New York for the domestic manufacture of gin.

The importation of malt liquors lagged far behind brandy, gin, and wine in both volume and value, although nearly every London packet brought a moderate amount of ale, porter, or stout. This was because it was easier to produce adequate beer in this country and the domestic beer business gained a tremendous impetus with the coming of the Germans in the 'forties.

The domestic production of whiskey in the inland states also cut radically into the demand for imports in that line. By 1830, the amount of domestic spirits carried through the Erie Canal toward New York exceeded the total national imports of ardent spirits, which had fallen off radically. Large amounts of whiskey also found their way down the Mississippi to New Orleans, and some of that was carried northward to New York. Rum was always a strong rival of brandy; and the West Indian supply was supplemented by the distilleries at Medford, Portland, and elsewhere along the coast.

On the other hand, the efforts of Nicholas Longworth of Cincinnati and others to create a demand for their domestic wines was not particularly successful in reducing the imports of wine from France. The consumption of imported beverages, like the use of French luxury goods, tended to center in the larger cities along the coast. Consequently the imports did not keep pace with the growth of population to the westward because domestic whiskey or beer answered cheaply the desires of that region.

The trade in "dry goods, hardware, and wet goods" by no means accounts for all the business on the Atlantic shuttle, but there is no space here to do more than mention some of the remaining commodities. Crates of earthenware from British potteries were a bulky form of

freight which shipping from Liverpool carried, if fine textiles, with their higher rate of freight, were not available. The better grades of "chinaware" usually came from Canton at the outset, but as time went on, the products of Wedgwood and others in England, together with the French wares from Limoges, added to the business of the shuttle.

British coal was constantly coming into New York throughout the period. At the beginning, it was superior to the Virginia coal which then formed the only local offering, and there still remained certain uses for bituminous from Liverpool, Newcastle, and other British ports after Pennsylvania anthracite became popular for fuel in the 'twenties. The steamboats on local runs, as we shall see, ordinarily used wood and were not at first successful in their experiments with anthracite. The British transatlantic steamships to New York were usually supplied with Liverpool coal, brought over in sailing vessels. Even the proud packets were occasionally reduced to cargoes of coal, along with Liverpool salt, in depression periods when fine freight was lacking. From Havre, "burr" stones, to be used in grist mills, were regularly carried in lieu of ballast.

The Baltic and Mediterranean furnished a constant but modest stream of cargoes to New York. Aside from Swedish iron, a fairly regular trade existed in iron, hemp, and tallow from St. Petersburg, while an occasional cargo of those same commodities came from icebound Archangel on the White Sea. The Mediterranean ports offered a richer variety with raisins, figs, oranges, lemons, and almonds from Malaga; rags, marble, olive oil, and silks from Leghorn, Naples, Palermo, or Trieste; wool, opium, and tobacco from Smyrna; and a wide variety of wares from Marseilles.

In both the Baltic and the Mediterranean New York ran into stiff competition from Boston, which held the upper hand in some branches of that trade. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that New York's real distinction in its transatlantic contacts lay in its much larger trade with the western Atlantic ports of Europe and there it was without effective rivalry.¹

Many strange miscellaneous items and episodes were to be found in this European trade. Some of the pioneer locomotives for American railroads reached New York from Liverpool. Race horses and other animals for breeding were frequently to be found in the cargoes. Several residents of New York, including the radical William Cobbett during

¹See Appendix, vi.

his temporary sojourn, imported seeds and plants, sometimes trying to introduce new varieties. Grant Thorburn, for instance, author of some interesting reminiscences, was advertising in 1820 the merits of Cape Broccoli, with its "taste almost equal to a cauliflower." Many watched for the arrival of the London packets because they carried the latest books and magazines. In 1815, when New York had been cut off for nearly three years, one circulating library advertised that it would pay the full original price for any books which travellers might have brought with them.

Probably the greatest value in smallest bulk of any of the shipments coming to New York across the shuttle were the consignments to Tiffany & Young who, from starting a little store on Broadway in 1837, began to send one partner abroad each year to pick up jewelry and novelties and gradually went into the trade in precious stones. This reached a climax when the widespread revolutions of 1848 led many of the old continental aristocracy to sell their diamonds. Tiffany and his partners decided to put all their available capital into taking advantage of this opportunity at a time when prices were cut in half and the stones which they purchased that year and brought back to New York did much to establish their primacy in that business.

New York's participation in the business of the Atlantic shuttle, altogether, was the most impressive part of world commerce by the close of our period. In 1860, 904 vessels, totalling some 975,000 tons, arrived at New York from the ports of western Europe, about two-thirds of them from England. Not only was New York's total far and away greater than that of any other American port, but the steamships coming to New York on that run, like the packets which preceded them, were the finest ships in the world's merchant marines. The value of the articles brought to New York, as we have seen, made a similar impressive total. Finally the distribution of a considerable part of those imported wares throughout the nation was doing more than anything else to clinch New York's position as the greatest seaport in America and one of the greatest in the world.

passages of 130 or 140 days in length, establishing new duration records for the Atlantic crossing.

The Hart and Herrick concerns, whose warehouses were attacked by the mob, were leaders among the domestic produce merchants who handled flour and grain from the interior, generally on a commission basis. They helped to draw the business to New York by advancing a considerable part of the purchase price several months in advance. A southern writer commented on this practice in 1854 as follows:

Last autumn, the rich regions of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois were flooded with banknotes of the eastern states, advanced by the New York houses on produce to be shipped by them by way of the canals in the spring. These moneyed facilities enable the packer, miller and speculator to hold on to their produce until the opening of navigation in the spring and they are no longer obliged, as formerly, to hurry off their shipments during the winter by way of New Orleans in order to realize funds by drafts on their shipments. The banking facilities of the East are doing as much to draw trade from us as the canals and railways which eastern capital is constructing.

By paying for the flour before it was milled, just as it paid for the southern cotton before it was planted, New York derived a triple benefit from its position as the nation's chief financial center. By placing the farmers and planters in a chronic state of debt, it drew a steady stream of interest in return for the advances; it had first call on the products of the interior for export from its own port; and above all, the money which it advanced generally inclined the country storekeepers to replenish their stocks with imports and domestic manufactures which came through New York rather than through some rival port. Even though much of the flour, beef, and pork might go down the Mississippi to New Orleans instead of eastward through the Erie Canal, the chances were great that the proceeds would be spent for New York goods anyway.

This meant that, except for the immediate spheres of influence of Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, most of the country had become New York's hinterland at least two decades before the Civil War. The Erie Canal had played its part in adding the West, and the financial bonds which resulted were so strong that the subsequent efforts of the rival ports to tap that region with railroads did not shake the predominance of New York.

CHAPTER VI

THE COTTON TRIANGLE

SOUTHWARD from Sandy Hook past storm-swept Hatteras to the cotton ports ran a sea lane second in importance only to the Atlantic shuttle, as far as New York was concerned. Coastwise trade has been consistently slighted in writing of the sea, but unlike the little schooners which came to New York with lumber from Maine or grain from the Chesapeake, these vessels along the Gulf Stream were no ordinary coasters. In their size; in the risks they encountered on that stormy, hazardous course; and particularly in the cargoes they bore; they could hold their own with much of the shipping which left Sandy Hook to cross the Atlantic. The ingenious trade in which they were employed, moreover, was one of New York port's most profitable and original achievements.

By creating a three-cornered trade in the "cotton triangle," New York dragged the commerce between the southern ports and Europe out of its normal course some two hundred miles to collect a heavy toll upon it. This trade might perfectly well have taken the form of direct shuttles between Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, or New Orleans on the one hand and Liverpool or Havre on the other, leaving New York far to one side had not it interfered in this way. To clinch this abnormal arrangement, moreover, New York developed the coastal packet lines without which it would have been extremely difficult to make the east-bound trips of the ocean packets profitable.

At the three corners of the "cotton triangle" were the cotton port (Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, or New Orleans), the European port (generally Liverpool or Havre), and New York. On this triangular course there were two distinct major movements.

Many vessels, usually the majority, actually sailed around the three sides. They carried cotton directly from the southern port to Europe; returned to New York with general freight or immigrants; and finally

returned southward on the coastwise run with freight or in ballast. In that trade New York, as we shall see, had an interest even in the eastbound cotton cargoes which went direct.

The port was much more vitally concerned, however, with the alternative course which utilized only two sides of the triangle, eliminating the normal direct run between, say, New Orleans and Liverpool. A considerable part of the southern cotton and other products was carried to Europe by way of Sandy Hook and the wharves of the East River, even though that involved some two hundred extra miles of carrying and the extra charges for unloading and reloading. This gave the packets on the Atlantic shuttle their eastbound cargoes. In return, an even larger proportion of the European goods reached the South by travelling the two sides of the triangle via Sandy Hook instead of going direct from a European port to a cotton port.

This trade around the two sides naturally affected New York more directly than the sailing around the three sides of the triangle, but New York business circles profited by both. They actually took over a large share of the South's commercial activity. The combined income from interest, commissions, freight, insurance, and other profits was so great that, when the southerners finally awoke to what was happening, they claimed that the New Yorkers with a few other northerners were getting forty cents of every dollar paid for southern cotton.

This interference with the commerce of the cotton ports may well be called impudent because unlike the development of the Atlantic shuttle or the digging of the Erie Canal, there was no logical need for it. In the case of the ocean packets or of the Erie Canal, inlets for European wares and outlets for western products were so essential that the business would have been divided among the big northern ports anyway, whether or not New York had shown its timely enterprise in attracting the major share of it. The South, on the other hand, needed no such service nor any such northern interference in their commerce at all. New York, however, had very good reasons for interfering. Without the cotton and other southern products, it would have been hard pressed to provide return cargoes for the vessels which brought imports from overseas. The uncommercial attitude of the southerners, who found it more congenial to have the Negroes raise cotton than to engage in countinghouse routine and risks, gave New York port its opportunity. Yankee representatives of New York concerns, backed with adequate capital to make loans, swarmed into the

southern ports and, provided they survived the yellow fever, found it a simple matter to absorb the lion's share of the business.

The varied groups profiting by the cotton trade were summed up by Israel D. Andrews in his well-known report to Congress in 1852:

Cotton employs upwards of 120,000 tons of steam tonnage, and at least 7,000 persons engaged in steam navigation in its transportation to southern shipping ports. In some sections it pays freight to railroads for such transportation. Its first tribute to the underwriter is for insurance against casualties in its transportation from the interior.

Cotton affords employment and profit to the southern commission merchant or factor, and to the many and various laborers engaged in carting, storing it, &c., in the southern port; and a second tribute is paid to the underwriter for insurance against fire whilst in store. The "compressing" and relading it for shipment coastwise to eastern Atlantic cities, or to foreign ports, and insurance against the danger of the seas, give additional employment and cause additional charges.

The transportation of that portion of the crop sent along the gulf coast to the principal gulf ports, or coastwise to eastern cities, employs upwards of 1,100,000 tons of *American* shipping in the gulf and Atlantic coasting trade, and upwards of 55,000 American seamen engaged in such trade. As no foreign vessel can participate in the trade, the freights are highly profitable. They ordinarily average from the gulf ports to New York not less than five-eighths of a cent per pound freight.

In the eastern Atlantic cities, the wharfinger, those who unlade the vessel, the drayman, the storekeeper, the commission merchant, the cotton-broker, the weigher, the packers who compress the bales by steam power or otherwise, the laborers, and those who charge for "mendage," "cordage," &c., &c., the fire insurer, and the shipper, the stevedore, and numerous other persons in those ports, find profitable avocations arising from cotton, whether destined for a home or for a foreign market. . . .

More than 800,000 tons of the navigation of the United States engaged in the foreign trade are employed in carrying American cotton to Europe and elsewhere, and upwards of 40,000 American seamen are given employment in such vessels. It is estimated that the foreign tonnage and seamen employed in carrying American cotton to Europe and elsewhere to foreign countries amount to about one-sixth of that of the United States so employed.

Since this is a history of the port, it will not be necessary to go into all the financial ramifications of New York's contacts with the cotton ports. This will be merely the story of the major coastwise trade, from Charleston southward. The bringing of naval stores from North Carolina and of tobacco and flour from the Chesapeake will be dealt with later in connection with the lesser coastal trade.

By the time our period opens, the cotton bale had become the most important single unit in American commerce. Wrapped in burlap and tightly bound, it contained 400 pounds of cotton more or less, tightly pressed into a round or square shape so that it would take up as little room as possible in a vessel's hold. Its value, of course, fluctuated from month to month and gradually declined as the supply increased. By and large, \$50 was a fair average value for "uplands," grown in the hinterland of Carolina and Georgia. "Louisiana" cotton from the Gulf region might command a few dollars more, while the occasional bales of choice "sea island," grown off the Georgia coast, might be worth twice as much as ordinary uplands. A trunk of broadcloths from Liverpool or a matting-covered chest of tea from Canton would generally be worth more than a single bale, but the southern cotton output grew at such a tremendous rate during our period that it overshadowed all other individual items of import or export.

That importance, however, was only of recent date. The cotton bale was conspicuously absent in the commerce of the colonial period. The mills of Lancashire in the late eighteenth century were being supplied with cotton from the Mediterranean, the West Indies and, to a lesser degree, from India and Brazil. The very few bales which arrived at England from American colonial ports before the Revolution had probably been brought originally from the West Indies.

No sooner was the Revolution over, however, when Carolina began to grow cotton of its own. There is an unconfirmed legend to the effect that when an American ship brought eight bags of Carolina-grown cotton to England in 1784, the customs officials at first declared it an illegal importation because they had never heard of cotton being grown in the United States. A survey of the Liverpool shipping lists gives no record of those eight bags, but it yields the significant revelation that almost from the very start the southern cotton was carried to Liverpool by way of New York. The story of the cotton triangle goes back to a beginning just thirty years before the arrival of the peace news in 1815. The first arrival of American cotton recorded at Liverpool was a "bag" direct from Charleston in January, 1785. The following month, a second bag of cotton reached there—this time by way of New York, in the ship *Tonquin*. That was apparently the beginning of the roundabout trade which was to reach such tremendous proportions later.

Until after Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin about 1792, the "bags" of southern cotton were not numerous and they commanded a

high price. At first the shipments consisted of only a few scattered bags, but by 1789, one ship from New York had brought more than 330 bales in a single trip. By the end of 1789, New York had sent some 572 bales to Liverpool, while Philadelphia's total was some 521. Both of those ports had a larger total than the 133 from Charleston whence most of the cotton had come originally. The first direct shipment of two bags from Savannah did not reach Liverpool until 1790.

The invention of the cotton gin made it possible to produce marketable cotton far more cheaply than before, and led to a remarkable expansion of planting which was to give southern economic life its distinctive aspect. By 1806, the United States had passed the West Indies as a source of cotton and by 1810 its 240,000 bales amounted to more than half of the British cotton imports. From that time on southern cotton dominated the Liverpool market and was the most valuable single item in British imports.

Looking at it from the standpoint of American exports, cotton enjoyed an even higher relative importance. In 1821, the national total of exports, excluding specie, was \$54,000,000. In that amount, cotton was an easy first at \$20,000,000; next in order, but trailing far behind, came tobacco at \$5,000,000 and flour at \$4,000,000. Thirty years later cotton was relatively still more a leader, for out of the export total, excluding specie, of \$188,000,000, cotton accounted for \$112,000,000 or nearly 60 per cent, with flour at \$10,000,000, and tobacco at \$9,000,000.

It was small wonder that New York, seeing how completely its local offerings of flour, meat, ashes, and the like were overshadowed by the cotton trade, was eager to participate in this grand prize of American commerce. The creation of the cotton triangle, however, was a very gradual and very quiet affair, unaccompanied by the fanfares which called public attention to the beginnings of the Erie Canal or even to the Black Ball Line. For them, we may ascribe very definite dates and bestow credit upon particular men. New York, however, was not anxious to advertise its activity to the southward, lest the cotton ports become alarmed and safeguard their direct trade. Consequently, it is only by delving in the analyses of individual cargoes that one may trace New York's development of the practice which started with the shipping of that bag of cotton in the *Tonquin* in 1785.

Gradually, during the early years of the century, the "cotton triangle" began to assume a definite form. To Jeremiah Thompson, the

Yorkshire woollen importer, New York is indebted not only for the inspiration which led to the Black Ball Line but also for the decided stimulus which he gave to the shipping of British goods southward and the bringing back of cotton wherewith to pay for his textiles at Liverpool. His Yorkshire colleague, Benjamin Marshall, was also active in this business, frequently spending his winters in Georgia purchasing cotton from the planters, a pioneer among the hundreds who would later go south from New York on similar missions. Possibly there were others who were even more active in those formative years in routing southern commerce by way of Sandy Hook. There is an opportunity for some patient scholar to analyze the coastwise cotton consignments in the New York shipping news and reveal the parts played by those who developed the trade. That lies before the period of this study and it will be enough here to note what progress had been made on the eve of the War of 1812.

The first issue of *The Liverpool Mercury* appeared just a year before that conflict started; and a tabulation of its lists of incoming cargoes for those intervening twelve months reveals that New York had already made good progress. It shipped some 15,000 bales, in forty different cargoes, almost a quarter of the whole amount arriving at Liverpool from the United States. Nearly every ship from New York brought at least a few bales; and in two or three cases more than 700 came by a single ship. The cotton from New York was more than the combined shipments from Philadelphia, with nearly 3000; Boston with 2200; and Baltimore with nearly 1000.

With that good start before the war, New York was in a position to make rapid advances in perfecting the cotton triangle as soon as peace came. By the early 'twenties, the old secrecy was removed and various commercial periodicals gave detailed analyses of the cotton movements. In 1822, for instance, cotton was far and away the most valuable of New York's domestic exports, while certain other commodities from the southward demonstrated the success with which the triangular arrangement was operating. The total value of the port's domestic exports was \$9,228,000. Some 40 per cent of this was represented by cotton at \$3,925,000. Flour, the principal northern offering, was a poor second at \$794,000, closely followed by tobacco, brought chiefly from the nearer South, at \$754,000. Then came a sharp drop to pot and pearl ashes, a northern product, at \$464,000; followed by undressed skins and furs, brought in part from the South, at \$291,000; and northern

flaxseed at \$277,000. Then, just ahead of northern salt beef and pork, came two southern items, naval stores at \$232,000 and rice at \$213,000. Altogether the purely southern products of cotton, tobacco, naval stores and rice accounted for 55 per cent of the total, to which should be added part of the skins together with part of the barrel staves and other lumber. Without this southern connection, New York would certainly have been hard pressed for eastbound cargoes on the Atlantic shuttle.

Approaching the situation from another angle, New Orleans in that year shipped out 156,000 bales of cotton, of which 64,000 went direct to Great Britain, 33,000 direct to France, and 51,000 coastwise, including 28,000 to New York, 10,000 to Philadelphia, and 7000 to Boston. Three years later, during the great speculative boom in cotton, the New Orleans total was 204,000 bales, of which 101,000 went direct to Great Britain, 32,000 to France, and 69,000 coastwise. By that time, New York had increased its proportion with 51,000 bales, compared with only 7000 to Boston, and 3000 to Philadelphia.

So common had been this preponderance of southern exports from New York that when, in 1843, the new packet *Queen of the West* sailed on her maiden trip, Philip Hone wrote in his diary:

Saturday, Sept. 16—A state of things exists in the commerce of this country unprecedented and worthy to be noted down among the memorabilia of the day. This ship has taken out to England a cargo consisting of articles all (with the exception of the naval stores) of Northern production, and the *Ashburton*, which sailed a day or two since, has not a Southern article on board. Not a single bale of cotton in both cargoes. The *Stephen Whitney* has only 119 bales of cotton. . . . The large shipments of provisions may be accounted for by Sir Robert Peel's new tariff. Cotton is higher in the United States than in England, and rising.

By that time, the coastwise shipments of cotton to New York were being frequently overshadowed by the cargoes to Boston, destined for domestic industry. In the 1836-37 season, for instance, New Orleans sent 39,000 bales to Boston, 23,000 to New York, and 6000 to Philadelphia. This was the general proportion for many years to come, though there were still seasons such as 1843-44 when New York led with 82,000, followed by Boston at 72,000, and Philadelphia with 6000.

This surfeit of statistics has been given to demonstrate the extent to which New York's participation in the physical movement of cotton and other southern products had developed at the beginning of our

period. Since coastwise figures were not gathered and published by the government, these are not as readily obtainable elsewhere as are statistics for foreign trade. The other part of New York's share in the cotton triangle—the carrying of imported goods and northern manufactures southward—may be postponed for the moment.

By 1822, then, when the Erie Canal was only partly finished, the cotton triangle was a well-established and strongly functioning business. Even after that much-touted ditch had been opened, it would seem reasonable to argue that the cotton and other southern products brought north by coasters far exceeded in value the flour and other western offerings carried by the canal boats. The South, moreover, probably ranked before the West as a distributing point for the imports and domestic manufactures which New York had to offer. At any rate, advertisements in the New York newspapers were addressed to "Southern and Western Merchants," and it was only toward the end of the period, after the West was filling up rapidly, that its merchants were placed first.

Of the four major cotton ports, involved in the triangle, the business at first centered in the two old and well-established seaboard cities of Charleston and Savannah. Gradually they were overtaken in volume of business by the old French ports on the Gulf, New Orleans and Mobile. In some ways, the conditions at the seaboard ports were different from those on the Gulf, as far as New York was concerned.

The early leader was Charleston, oldest, and perhaps proudest, of the four cotton ports. Situated on a narrow peninsula between two rivers, it was the only one of the ports opening directly on the sea, and had the only first-rate harbor for miles in either direction along the barren sandy Carolina coast. Founded around 1670, it had soon developed a shuttle trade with England, whither it sent large quantities of rice and indigo. By the eve of the Revolution, it stood third among the American ports, with a greater volume of trade than New York. Its imports in 1772 were actually heavier than they were to be during the period between 1837 and the Civil War. With exports it was a different story, for the opening of the cotton era found it the chief outlet for the upland cotton grown in the back country. With its old, proud, and wealthy society and long-established mercantile houses, Charleston was to be the most difficult of the four ports for Yankee traders to penetrate. Nevertheless, enough of them were there in 1819 to form a New England Society, and many a name in the commercial columns

of the *Mercury* betrayed the merchants who flocked south from Connecticut by way of New York. Even after the Gulf ports finally overshadowed Charleston in the customs figures, it was ready, as the most intensely southern of the ports, to take the lead on several occasions against what it considered northern aggression.

About a hundred miles farther south lay Savannah, some twenty-four miles inland from the sea on the Savannah River, which penetrated far into the interior. Founded in 1733, it never managed to catch up with Charleston in trade. On the eve of the Revolution, its commerce was only a fifth or a sixth of the Charleston total. Savannah likewise became an outlet for upland cotton and at the beginning of our period it was showing marked initiative in steam navigation, not only on inland waters but also in sponsoring the pioneer transatlantic steamship which bore the city's name. Its mercantile community was not as large, nor as wealthy, nor as exclusive as Charleston's and consequently offered better openings to the ubiquitous Yankees. They also swarmed into Augusta, up the river in the cotton country, the chief gathering point for Savannah's cotton cargoes.

Unique in many ways was Mobile, which lay some thirty miles from the Gulf at the head of the beautiful Mobile Bay, near the mouths of two rivers which ran far into the Alabama hinterland. It was the second oldest of the cotton ports, for in 1702 the French explorer Iberville had planted a near-by settlement which seven years later was moved to the present site. For more than a century, however, under the three flags of France, England, and Spain, it had been a slumbering little hamlet with virtually no trade at all. The customs figures during the period of British occupation just before the Revolution showed the arrivals of only a vessel or two each year. Andrew Jackson occupied it during the War of 1812 and under its fourth flag, Mobile began to awaken. By the time Alabama was organized in 1818, planters from the seaboard states were flocking to the rich virgin soil of the hinterland while New Yorkers and other northerners began to swarm to Mobile and its upstart rival Blakely near by. Corner lots in both towns were being advertised in the New York newspapers and, since the old inhabitants of the former had developed virtually nothing in the way of business, the New Yorkers had a clearer field for action than in any of the other ports; and New York's ascendancy was probably highest there. More than any of the other cotton ports, Mobile depended upon New York for its imports, developing almost no direct

trade with Europe during the years in which it gradually surpassed Savannah and then Charleston in the volume of its exports. In 1851, for instance, its exports amounted to \$18,000,000 and its imports to only \$413,000, a ratio which was probably never equalled elsewhere.

Finally, destined to outrank all the other cotton ports and for a while to overshadow even New York in exports, came New Orleans. A hundred miles up the Mississippi from the mudbars at its mouth, it was the natural outlet for the inland produce of the thousands of miles of that great river and its tributaries. With this fortunate location for commercial growth, it was able to tap a good part of the interior of the continent. Like Mobile, it was of French origin, having been established by Bienville in 1718, and like Mobile, it also passed later into Spanish hands. From the beginning, it was more important than its Alabama rival, gathering together a colorful, variegated, and rather turbulent population. Its commercial potentialities were not realized under the French or Spanish régimes, but by 1803, when the Louisiana Purchase brought it into the United States, the opening of the West meant an almost immediate stimulus of business. It also offered rich opportunities for newcomers from the North. Vincent Nolte, the international financial adventurer, described its population at the time of his first visit there in 1806.

In the city itself the French number at least three-fifths of the inhabitants; one other fifth was of Spanish race, and another Americans, among whom were some Germans. The city numbered about 16,000 souls, of whom one-third were people of color or slaves. The mercantile class was made up of four or five French establishments, springing from the neighborhood of the Garonne, and founded during the continuance of the French rule; three Scotch counting-houses, one German concern, and eight or ten commission-houses, lately opened by young American merchants from New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.

As the trade of the port expanded, the last group grew rapidly. In certain summers, the newspapers carried long casualty lists of the northerners dying of yellow fever, most of the victims being in their twenties or thirties.

The river brought an ever-increasing amount of cotton and western produce to New Orleans, at first in flatboats which were broken up at the port for lumber. The first river steamer reached there in 1811; and by 1840 there were scores of them at the levees, unloading cargoes which would be hoisted into seagoing vessels for New York or over-

seas. In 1834, the rapidly growing city ran ahead even of New York as the first port of the nation in the value of its exports. It continued in that position for nearly a decade, winning a place among the foremost seaports of the world.¹

Lapsing into figures once more, it is possible to indicate briefly the relative growth of the cotton ports in trade and population. In exports, by millions of dollars, the standing in 1815 was Charleston 6, New Orleans 5, and Savannah 4, Mobile not yet having come on the scene. In 1822, New Orleans overtook Charleston for first place. By 1836, Mobile had won third place from Savannah and four years later passed Charleston as well, the score in 1840 standing: New Orleans 34, Mobile 12, Charleston 10, and Savannah 6. They remained in that order for the rest of our period, but the Gulf ports drew steadily ahead of the old seaboard centers. By 1860, the score was: New Orleans 108, Mobile 38, Charleston 21, and Savannah 18. A moderate amount of cotton was shipped from the Florida Gulf ports of Pensacola and Apalachicola as well as from Galveston in Texas, but none of these could compare with the four big cotton ports.

Whereas New Orleans grew to be a good-sized city, Charleston remained moderate in population, while Mobile and Savannah were small, in view of the size of their trade. New Orleans had about 5000 inhabitants in 1785, 17,000 in 1810, and 168,000, almost the size of Boston, in 1860. Charleston's growth was more moderate. In 1790, it had 16,000 inhabitants, just below Boston and just above Baltimore. In 1860, this had grown to only 40,000. Mobile, which numbered less than 800 in 1785, had only 1500 in 1820 and 29,000 in 1860, while Savannah, the smallest of the four, had about 5000 in 1810 and only 22,000 in 1860.² The census figures in 1850 throw light on the origins of the population of the various cities. In the four cotton ports, there were 5637 natives of New York and 3822 who were born in New England, where Massachusetts stood first, followed by Maine and Connecticut. This New York-New England element was proportionally strongest at Mobile, with 1324, approximately 10 per cent of the white population. It was lowest at Charleston, with less than 3 per cent. In the business districts of those ports, however, those New York-New Englanders were prominent out of all proportion to their numbers.

As for the shipping between New York and these ports, maritime history has been constantly neglectful of coastwise navigation. One

¹See Appendix, i, ii.

²See Appendix, xxix.

reason for this is that, while statistics are available in generous quantity for foreign commerce, the customs authorities were not required to keep such records for the even larger volume of traffic which passed between the ports of our own coasts. The story of the coastwise trade consequently involved deeper searching. A second and equally cogent explanation is the false impression that coastal navigation is apt to seem a simple matter of skirting along the shore—mere child's play compared with venturing into deep water. Actually, a vessel out at sea, with plenty of room to maneuver, is much safer than one in frequent danger of contact with the shore, the source of most accidents. It may be a surprise to know that, in the eyes of the marine-insurance experts, whose business it was to estimate the probabilities of accident, the trip from New York to New Orleans was regarded as more risky than to Liverpool, London, or Havre and almost as dangerous as the route halfway round the world to China. In 1825, for instance, the rate of insurance from New York to New Orleans was $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, while to the British Isles and France it was 1 to $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent and to Canton in China only $1\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. The shorter routes to Charleston and Savannah, of course, were considered safer with a rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.¹ A third reason for slighting the coasting trade may be in part a borrowing of the attitude of the English, whose coastal voyages were much shorter affairs. A vessel from London might arrive in a dozen different foreign countries in shorter trips than that from New York to New Orleans, while it might reach several within the limits of the much briefer run from New York to Charleston. Altogether, the coastwise voyages to the cotton ports were tasks requiring first-rate vessels and first-rate men.

For all four ports, the early stages of the passage from New York were the same. Passing Sandy Hook, a vessel skirted the Jersey coast until halfway down, about at Barnegat, where it stood out to sea to clear Cape Hatteras, the stormy outer tip of the huge sandy barrier which runs along the Carolina coast. That "graveyard of the Atlantic," with its dangerous offshore shoals, caught victims year after year, both because of its constant storms and because of the fogs which involved the danger of a premature landfall. The southward passage was particularly dangerous, since shipping had to stand well in toward the shore to avoid the current of the Gulf Stream, running in the opposite direction.

¹See Appendix, xix.

Beyond Hatteras, there was a parting of the ways between the vessels bound for the seaboard ports and those headed for the Gulf. The former skirted the two other Carolina capes, Lookout and Fear, and by that time were not far from their destinations. To Charleston, the closest of the four ports to New York, the distance was only 627 miles. The Savannah run averaged 700 miles, roughly one day's farther sailing.

Meanwhile, the shipping bound for the Gulf was encountering the meanest part of its passage. It was necessary to pass through the long barrier of islands, keys, and reefs which separate the Gulf from the Atlantic. The shortest route lay through the Providence Channel, cutting through the Bahamas northeast of Nassau at a place appropriately termed "Hole-in-the-Wall." Then, after dodging numerous reefs and keys on either hand, one reached the Florida coast which offered similar perils. Complicating all this was the presence of the Gulf Stream, which was at its narrowest and swiftest off the Florida coast. Between August and November, moreover, shipping faced the ever-present risk of violent hurricanes. "Wrecking" became a thriving industry at Key West. Once past the Dry Tortugas off the tip of Florida, the trip across the Gulf was generally fair sailing. The vessels for Mobile bore northward but, after making the bay, were usually forced to anchor some miles below the port and have their cargoes carried the rest of the way in lighters. The distance from New York to Mobile was 1658 miles, whereas it was 1711 to New Orleans, which offered the added annoyance of traversing the shallow muddy bars at one of the various entrances to the river. Then one had still a hundred miles of river to travel, which was ordinarily slow work unless the cargo was of sufficient importance to warrant the hiring of a steamboat for towing.

For the larger ships, these trips averaged a hundred miles a day. That, at least, was the result of tabulating more than three thousand northward packet passages from the cotton ports to New York. From Charleston, the average was 6.5 days; from Savannah, 7.3; from Mobile, 17.7; and from New Orleans, 18.0. These fluctuated from month to month, usually being at their best in the spring and worst in autumn and winter. Those records were made by full-rigged ships, operating on fairly regular schedule. Part of the trade with Charleston and Savannah was carried on in brigs and even schooners, and for them the average passage would be apt to be somewhat longer.¹

¹See Appendix, vi, xxiv.

During the early 'twenties, the success of the Black Ball service to Liverpool led to the organization of similar packet lines for the cotton ports. For many years before that, the term "packet" had been used for many vessels, more properly regular traders, which linked New York and Charleston or Savannah without regular scheduled service. Since the packet lines to the cotton ports have been analyzed by the author in a separate work, only a few of their more significant features will be mentioned.

As in the case of the ocean sailing packets, the original operators of these lines were generally merchants actively engaged in business with those ports. They were bringing cotton northward and shipping general cargoes southward on their own account anyway, and believed that regular service would bring them added profit by carrying similar wares for others. Their agents in the cotton ports were frequently partners or close associates in business, and were generally part owners in the ships. In two conspicuous cases, packet captains became operators of coastal lines, but, along with that, both developed a general commission business specializing in the southern trade.

The first really regular line was established in the spring of 1822 to Charleston with four, and soon five, ships of moderate size. The most conspicuous of the merchants who joined forces to organize this service was Anson G. Phelps, who, we recall, was one of the nation's outstanding importers of metals. To provide return payments, he engaged heavily in cotton exports by way of New York. This Charleston "Ship Line" continued until 1855, being operated for a considerable period by George Sutton, one of Phelps's original captains. The New York-Charleston packet service also included a short-lived "brig-line" and a more permanent line, which started with schooners and gradually progressed through brigs to ships.

Savannah packet service began in 1824 with two rival ship lines. The close relation of the coastal and ocean packet trade, involving the cotton triangle, was indicated by the fact that one line was started by John Griswold, operator of London packets, and the other and more lasting service, by William Whitlock, Jr., prominent in the service to Havre. Many changes of ownership and management occurred in the Savannah service, until, around 1840, most of the ships were transferred to the New Orleans run. A more modest service continued to Savannah mostly with brigs.

The Mobile packets, operated by Elisha D. Hurlbut, began in 1826

but were so irregular in their performance that they scarcely deserve the name of packets at all, particularly after 1840. Instead of keeping to the New York-Mobile shuttle, they were more inclined to sail around the triangle, like many of the transient tramps. They would carry cotton from Mobile to Liverpool or Havre; bring back immigrants and general freight to New York, and there load other general cargoes for the return trip to Mobile.

The New Orleans packets, like the New Orleans trade in general, soon overshadowed all the others. This service had been started in a modest way with three brigs in 1821 by John W. Russell, originally from New Bedford, who advertised a "line of packets" but did not observe a regular schedule. Silas Holmes, a Stonington mariner who had commanded one of Russell's brigs, began a rival line of his own in 1824. This second line, under Holmes and his successor, William Nelson, established a distinguished record for duration and performance. It continued to run regularly until the Civil War interrupted the business. During all that time only one of its vessels was totally wrecked, whereas one of the later rival lines lost six ships in a decade. In 1831, keen competition came with the appearance of the "Louisiana and New York Line," which suddenly sprang into being with five new and almost identical ships, particularly designed with "flat-floored" construction in order to carry heavy cargoes over the shallow Mississippi bars. This line quickly passed under the management of Edward K. Collins, who was later to win a high reputation with sailing packets and steamships on the Liverpool run. By this time, the New Orleans packets compared favorably with those on the Atlantic shuttle. The 741-ton *Shakespeare*, built for Collins in 1835, was larger than any ocean packet at the time, while several of the able captains assembled by Collins for this New Orleans run later won outstanding reputations in the Liverpool service. The New Orleans packet service continued to grow, especially after 1840, when most of the Savannah ships were transferred to that longer and more profitable run to the Mississippi. There would be no point, however, in following here the various shifts in lines and operators.

Altogether, New York's coastal packet fleet was an invaluable adjunct to its ocean packets and the fact that they were "mere coasters" should not obscure the fact that in size, performance, and earnings the ships plying to the cotton ports were among the finest afloat.

While cotton was by far the most important item carried by these vessels on their northbound trips, it was by no means their only source

of freight to New York. A detailed analysis of the individual coastal packet cargoes arriving at New York in 1835, as a typical middle year of the period, has been reproduced as an appendix in the author's packet study. It indicates not only the range of products from each of the ports but also the marked seasonal fluctuations.

The cotton season extended from early autumn until late spring. During the summer, news would often arrive that the "first bale" had reached tidewater, usually at Savannah, where one particular planter made it a point to win this distinction, if possible. Other bales would trickle in during September, but not until October was the season really under way; and the statistics for a cotton crop were ordinarily given for the year beginning in October. By midwinter, the movement was in full swing until it began to taper off after April. During the summer, cotton shipments were almost at a standstill. In 1835, for instance, the receipts of cotton at New York by coastal packets from New Orleans dropped from 2577 bales in April to 119 in September. The changes at Charleston and Savannah, while less violent, followed the same trend, while from Mobile packet movements simply ceased during the summer months.

One reason for the irregularity of the Mobile packets was the fact that that port specialized so intensively in cotton that it had few alternative offerings for the dull season except skins and hides, which came in varying quantities from all the southern ports. It happened that whereas the summer months were the dull season on the coastal run, they were the busiest on the Atlantic shuttle. Consequently, more money was to be made in having the coastal packets carry cotton directly to Europe and on the return trip participate in the regular Atlantic shuttle business to New York.

New Orleans, on the contrary, had numerous alternative cargoes with which the packets might be filled during the off-season. More regular service, therefore, could be maintained throughout the year on a fairly profitable basis. The naming of the New Orleans packet *Galena* was a recognition of the importance, during the slack season in cotton, of the shipments of lead mined at that town in Illinois. From February through April, for instance, the New Orleans packets brought 7185 bales of cotton and only 300 pigs of lead; from July through September, the cotton fell to 2330 bales while the lead rose to 33,188 pigs (about 1100 tons). A moderate amount of flour was brought north during the summer months. Tobacco, chiefly from Kentucky, and sugar

from Louisiana's rapidly developing industry were brought in considerable quantities. The tobacco shipments were spread fairly evenly throughout the year but the sugar season coincided almost exactly with that of cotton. Nearly \$2,000,000 in specie, chiefly from the Mexican silver mines, was carried to New York, most of it arriving in November and December. Numerous other articles in wide variety but smaller quantities were to be found in the packet cargoes from New Orleans—hams, bacon, pork, lard, flaxseed, pig iron, molasses, buffalo robes, and much else in addition to the ever-present hides, skins, and furs. This wide diversity and good seasonal spread were the chief reasons why the New Orleans packet fleet rivalled in size and in profits the sailing liners to London and Havre.

Charleston and Savannah were in an intermediate position between New Orleans and Mobile in this respect. They had an important alternative in rice, but unfortunately, from the line operators' standpoint, the rice and cotton seasons were almost identical. From January to March, for instance, Charleston sent by packet 2899 bales of cotton and 7810 casks, or their equivalent, of rice. From June to September, the total shipments were only 1554 bales of cotton and 106 casks of rice. Outside of hides and skins, no other commodity was sent in any considerable amount, though both ports from time to time shipped small quantities of Spanish moss, wool, peanuts, and lumber. Savannah occasionally sent reeds and Charleston shipped a little cotton seed. Naval stores, which today constitute the principal offering of Savannah, were entirely absent from all the cotton port cargoes except for a single small shipment of turpentine from Charleston. The large quantities of tar, rosin, and turpentine which the ocean packets carried to Europe had been brought, as we shall see, in smaller craft from the North Carolina ports where the sandbars kept larger vessels from entering in safety. The result of this poor seasonal spread was that during the summer the Charleston packets sailed only twice a month instead of weekly, while the Savannah packets were quite irregular. Rather than sail only partly full, the packets were ready to carry cheap and bulky freight at low rates. Large quantities of firewood were brought northward during the dull seasons, particularly from Savannah, while baled hay and granite paving blocks were frequently carried southward from New York.

The major portion of the cotton brought northward to New York was simply shifted from one wharf to another on South Street and carried to Liverpool or Havre in the ocean packets. In 1835, for example, the

packets carried northward 47,952 bales of cotton, worth more than \$3,000,000. From New Orleans, Charleston, and Savannah came the equivalent of enough for the Liverpool packet cargoes that year, while Mobile sent nearly enough for the Havre packets. Naturally, they were not all those same identical bales, since some of the cotton brought to New York was taken by Sound steamers to Providence for the southern New England mills.

While New York was most vitally interested in the cotton and other products brought directly to the East River in the packets and other vessels, it also had a definite concern in the much larger amount of cotton shipped directly overseas from the southern ports. A considerable part of that business was in the hands of New York firms or their representatives.

The first stage in that process lay in the relationship between the planter and the "factor" resident in some such inland town as Augusta. These factors were in many cases New Englanders, who had established New York connections before moving southward. The key to their success lay in their ability to advance long credit. The average planter was inclined to be at least one year in debt, receiving from the factor, at a substantial rate of interest, a considerable part of the value of his next year's crop. This chronic state of debt arose in part from the desire to buy more land and more slaves. New York's constantly increasing importance as a financial center placed it in a better position than any other city to take advantage of this situation, for the banks, if not the New York merchants themselves, could carry the cotton crop during those months of waiting and prosper from the accumulation of interest.

The methods under which business was carried on by one of those inland factors are revealed in rich detail by the letter books, journals, ledgers, memorandum books, and other commercial records of William Bostwick, preserved at Yale. Bostwick, apparently from Connecticut, operated as a cotton factor and merchant at Augusta, Georgia, from the mid-'twenties to the mid-'forties, sometimes in partnership, at other times alone. The ledgers reveal accounts with scores of scattered planters as well as with occasional storekeepers further inland. From them he received cotton; to them he advanced credit and sold various wares, chiefly from New York. The informal store memorandum books supplement the ledgers, indicating the details of this business:

John Thornton will send in Sdy next 8 bales of cotton—sell them at not less than 13, and apply the money to pay his note for \$325. If it will not command 13c keep it for his further instructions. . . .

Benj. Bugg's waggon will be in tomorrow with six bales cotton, to be stored with Baird & Rowland, and keep warehouse net. Send by the waggon 6 bush. salt, 1 qtr. rice, 3 small packages (paper bundles). . . .

In store for Jones & Hester which send by first waggon from Elbert County with a bill 100" lead, 2 bundles shot and bags, 1 coil rope, 5 casks nails (nails to be sent when they arrive from New York). . . .

In store for P. F. Maragne bot. this day—send bill—to go by Edwards' boat or any other boat if this does not arrive soon. 50" coffee, (?) bus. salt, 1 jug wine, 1 bundle of 14 blankets, 1 bag rice 20", 1 box cheese from Morse. When Baird & Rowland sell Mr. M's cotton call on them for money enough to pay Cross & Turpin's bill & also the amt. he owes on my books. C. & T. must be paid *soon* tho' the cotton be not sold.

The Georgia hinterland did not monopolize Bostwick's attention. He was in very frequent communication with New York, particularly with Thaddeus Phelps, a commission merchant who dealt in cotton and much else, a relationship which Bostwick summarized in 1841:

In my case, every bale of cotton that I have shipped to your market in the last *ten years* has been consigned to you. Every order I have had executed has been by you. Every draft I have drawn, in short every transaction in your city during that period upon which I have paid a commission has been with yourself.

The occasion for those remarks was discontent with Phelps's increase of the interest rate on his account, for he was in a fairly constant state of debt to New York just as the planters were to him. He drew notes steadily against Phelps for purchases, chiefly from New York, and informed him every month of those about to mature. A typical routine letter ran:

Above I hand you check for \$500, which please place to my credit. You will please pay my 4 notes as they come to maturity in March as at foot. You may send me by Savannah 1000 lbs. bar lead in boxes or casks—the bars must be small, say about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pound each—1 pound will not do—James McCullugh, Tucker & Carter and James Kelso are the men I buy it of. The last I bot was at 6 months. Our cotton market continues to advance.

At times, he ordered directly from New York wholesale grocers or textile jobbers, rather than through Phelps, generally stipulating that the goods be sent by the schooner line of packets to Savannah. A little set of pocket memorandum books contain the scrawled notes made

during his annual summer visits to New York, when in accordance with the regular custom, he purchased a considerable part of his stock from the jobbers, importers, or auctioneers.

From the factors in the inland towns, the cotton generally passed to other New York-New Englanders in the cotton ports. Samuel St. John, for instance, the leading cotton dealer in Mobile, came originally from New Haven and was closely linked with Elisha Hurlbut and other New York merchants. These men at the ports might ship the cotton to New York, which was becoming the chief American center for speculation, or to New England, for domestic industrial use; or, a still more likely possibility, directly overseas to Liverpool, Havre, or some other port. Even in the latter case, New York again profited, for the major part of the cotton was carried either in New York transient "cotton droghers" or in New England vessels, for whose service some New York shipbroker was apt to have received a commission. The chances were also good that the marine insurance premiums on such cargoes would go in large part to one of the New York companies. In interest, commissions, freight, insurance, and from other similar sources, New York took its toll even on the cotton which never came past Sandy Hook.

The man who perhaps did more than any other to inaugurate this system was, as we saw, Jeremiah Thompson. By the early 'twenties, he rated as the foremost cotton trader in the world. His Liverpool dealings were with the house of Cropper, Benson & Co., also Quakers, whom he selected as agents for the Black Ball packets. He consigned tremendous quantities to them, shipping some cotton by way of New York in the Black Ballers, and the rest directly in his own ships from the cotton ports. In the mid-'twenties, when he was at the height of his success as a cotton trader, he was likewise one of the heaviest shipowners in the United States.

The very nature of the cotton trade made it an object of speculation. Thompson and his associates in Liverpool were in the thick of the boom in 1825, the biggest orgy in cotton speculation. At the end of 1824, it was announced that the stock of cotton on hand in Liverpool was about one-third less than usual and consequently prices rose rapidly. Cropper, Benson & Co. and a few other Liverpool traders decided to gather all possible American cotton into their hands, and by achieving a corner in the material, force prices still higher. When the news reached New York by packet a few weeks later, a similar boom resulted. Thompson despatched a fast pilot boat to New Orleans with word to his agents,

including Nolte, to buy up as much as possible. One of the coastal packets beat the pilot boat, however, and Russell's correspondents, receiving the news nearly two days ahead, were able to make heavy advance profits by buying in the still-normal market. From that time on, the boom ran its course of rise and collapse at Liverpool, then at New York, and finally at the cotton ports, with an interval of several weeks between those cities, depending upon the speed with which the packets could carry the news. In 1824, Charleston and New Orleans each had export totals of about \$8,000,000; in 1825, these jumped to \$11,000,000 and \$12,000,000 respectively. The infant trade of Mobile increased by only \$130,000 while Savannah actually fell off. The most violent jump in exports occurred at New York, indicating that a considerable amount of the cotton was brought up the coast to that more sensitive market, closer in touch with the latest news from abroad. From \$22,000,000 in 1824, New York's total suddenly rose to \$35,000,000. Cotton exports, rather than the opening of the Erie Canal, apparently accounted for that.

By the middle of April, the market began to crack in Liverpool. One Scottish firm threw a small amount on the market at a reduced price, while an unexpectedly large arrival of Brazilian cotton further threw off the calculations of the speculators. The Manchester manufacturers, in the meantime, had curbed their purchases and were running on a hand-to-mouth basis. Prices suddenly tumbled at Liverpool but continued at an abnormally high level in New York, where the speculators were ordering even more from the southward. With the arrival of the Black Baller *Florida* in May, prices likewise dropped at New York but New Orleans still remained in ignorance of the change and Nolte was far up the river buying cotton at top prices. By midsummer, the cotton market was prostrate at all three ports and the boom left a trail of failures in its wake. Jeremiah Thompson weathered the storm and emerged apparently richer than ever, only to meet his doom three years later when Cropper, Benson & Co. passed a virtual financial death sentence upon him, since, in view of a declining market, they refused to honor his drafts for heavy consignments of cotton. Afterwards, from time to time, other speculative attempts were made to corner the market, particularly the ambitious but unsuccessful scheme of Nicholas Biddle in the next decade, but none reached the magnitude of the 1825 boom.

By the mid-'fifties a change took place in the cotton movements. Its principal feature was a sharp diminution of the amount of cotton sent

northward to New York for transshipment to Europe. A considerable part of that amount had always been for speculative purposes and the speculators gradually found that it was enough to send the bills of lading and samples to New York. In this way, the speculative trade might be handled without having the bales themselves incur the added charges of freight and handling involved in going abroad by way of Sandy Hook. The first annual report of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York called attention to this trend in 1859:

In discussing the cotton trade of New York, it must not be forgotten that the import of cotton from the Southern States has been materially diminished by the mode of selling cotton at this port by sample, while on its way from Southern ports to Europe—especially to Liverpool—or, as the phrase is, “in transit.”

This mode of conducting the more speculative portion of the cotton trade only began to be commonly resorted to four or five years ago, and has been constantly on the increase since. There has always been a class of adventurers who wished to have the option of terminating their operations by a sale in New York. A few years ago, this class—a very important one in moving the cotton crop—ordered the cotton to be shipped to New York; but this necessarily involved double freights, insurances, and expenses on the cotton with only the small advantage of selling for home consumption. Now, however, the plan is to ship the cotton direct to Liverpool, from the Southern port, and to send the samples and bills of lading to New York, where it can be sold, if the adventurer is unwilling to take the risk of the Liverpool market.

The report cited the statistics of shipments from New Orleans and Mobile for several “cotton seasons.” For the latest one, ending in mid-May, 1859, the total was only 28,800 bales to New York as compared with 310,400 to other coastwise ports (chiefly in New England) and 1,866,000 direct to foreign ports. Those figures stood in sharp contrast to the annual average for 1850–53, when 94,000 bales were sent to New York, 176,000 to the other coastwise ports, and 982,000 to foreign ports. It was pointed out, on the other hand, that the “transit” transactions with samples at New York had probably risen to 200,000 bales a year by 1859, but that was cold comfort to the shipowners who lost the freights from the former profitable, if irrational, extra trip up the coast to New York. By that time, the British demand for American grain had increased and New York was not as dependent upon cotton for its eastbound cargoes. Even in 1860, however, cotton remained an easy first in New York’s exports.¹

¹See Appendix, ix.

The freight movements in the opposite direction along the cotton triangle are more elusive. Cotton bales were convenient units for comparison but the variegated cargoes of manufactures and other wares were not adequately described to make possible a similar survey of just what happened. As in the westbound ocean traffic, the blanket phrase “merchandise” covered a large variety of articles. The extent of this trade may be deduced in part by comparing the figures for exports and imports for the southern states as given in the appendix. In 1822, for example, the combined exports of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana amounted to almost \$21,000,000 and their imports to only \$7,000,000.

The South received, therefore, only a relatively small amount of imports direct from Europe, compared with the exports which it sent thither. This does not mean necessarily that it consumed a total of European goods equivalent in value to its heavy cotton exports. In the absence of statistics for the coastal trade, we may do no more than guess. One student of the subject has declared that the South, with its simple rural economy, probably did not consume much more in the way of imported articles than it received directly from overseas. That is probably too extreme a statement, for it is certain that a considerable amount arrived at the southern ports by way of New York. As time went on, it seems likely that the cargoes carried southward from New York to the cotton ports contained an increasing amount of northern domestic manufactures, which gradually took the place of previous similar wares from Europe. Southern industry was in its infancy, so that northern manufactures made up for much of the region’s needs. Altogether, the South was essentially a one-crop region, specializing as it did in cotton. It received a large amount of food-stuffs from the West, while the bulk of the remaining portion of its outside needs came by way of New York port.

Whereas the northbound packet cargoes, as we saw, were pretty much limited to a few staple articles, the table of packet freight rates in 1836 lists literally scores of articles regularly sent southward. European textiles formed a part of these, but manufactures of iron and leather also bulked large. The packet *Newark* was named in recognition of the large amount of business which the line received from the factories of the New Jersey metropolis, where leather in particular was a flourishing industry. Furniture was also a common article in southern shipments, Duncan Phyfe and the father of “Boss” Tweed

being among those most prominently engaged in the business. Carriages of various sorts were also so commonly carried that freight rates were regularly quoted—\$25 for a coach and \$20 for a barouche. The Charleston packets even carried south the English and New York made locomotives for South Carolina's first railroad. Altogether, the cargoes shipped to the cotton ports resembled those which New York was sending to Cuba and to other parts of Latin America.

One of the important seasonal activities in New York's business district was the coming of the southern merchants early in the summer to lay in their stocks for the coming year. Arriving by packet in June or July, sometimes accompanied by their families who summered at some near-by resort, the southerners would spend several weeks among the New York jobbers selecting what they wanted from the stocks of imported and domestic goods. The day of the jobber's "drummer" who went out to solicit business among the customers had scarcely arrived—the customer still came to the jobber. Some southern writers later represented this practice as a burden to the merchants, but it seems likely that to many it was a welcome opportunity to get away from home at a time when business and weather were bad, and a good excuse not only for a trip but also for a sojourn in a city whose hotels and theatres were even then making life attractive for transient visitors. The trip north was not really a necessity—the factors who bought the cotton could also bring down anything needed and there were plenty of New Yorkers in southern cities who carried a considerable stock. It was significant that in later days, when the travelling salesmen removed the excuse for such trips, business men developed conventions of one sort or another to gratify their wanderlust. At any rate, as autumn approached, the southern merchant started back, frequently in the same packet which bore his purchases. At times, these southbound cargoes were more valuable than those arriving from Europe. When the Savannah packet *Louisa Matilda* was wrecked near Hatteras in 1827, for instance, it was pointed out that her cargo was worth between \$350,000 and \$400,000 and that the loss of those goods would represent a serious inconvenience to the Georgia merchants.

As time went on, a new inland triangle developed, complementary to the cotton triangle. The two had a common base in the sea route between New York and New Orleans but the opposite angle of the new figure was Cincinnati or some other western city, instead of Liverpool or Havre. The interest in this new geometrical figure lay in the rivalry

between its sides—whether the western storekeepers would replenish their stocks from New York by way of packets and river steamers through New Orleans or by way of the Erie Canal and its northern connections. There was also the question of which route to use in sending their flour, pork, and other products to the sea. Since the South and the West both lay in New York's sphere of commercial domination, the metropolis stood to gain, whichever route was used.

In the beginning, the coastal route to New Orleans had the advantage but as time went on the Erie Canal gradually cut into its business in handling freight to and from interior ports. In 1833, the canal commissioners, contemplating a reduction of rates in order to stimulate business, sent questionnaires to many inland merchants asking for opinions on the relative merits of the two routes. A firm in Nashville replied that it secured merchandise from New York by both routes. The sea route was cheaper but the canal route was quicker. To bring a ton of merchandise from New York by packet to New Orleans and thence by river steamer up the Mississippi, Ohio, and Cumberland cost about \$20 less than the alternative route by way of the Erie Canal, lake transportation, Ohio Canal, and steamer down the Ohio and up the Cumberland; but the latter was ten to twelve days quicker. With the frequent reduction of canal rates, the northern route gradually drew more and more of the shipments to the interior; but New Orleans still attracted the bulk of the heavy outward traffic in flour and the like. In 1852, Cincinnati tobacco dealers reported that it was both cheaper and quicker to use the northern route. The freight on a 1200-lb. hogshead to New York cost some \$15 by way of New Orleans and ship; \$8.50 by way of the Erie Railroad and \$7.50 by way of the Erie Canal. By rail the trip took 6 to 8 days; by canal about 18 days; and by New Orleans a month or two more. The freight arrived by rail or canal in better condition than if it had "sweated" in the hold of a packet. The previous year, however, just as railroads were about to complicate the situation, statistics showed that at Albany and New Orleans combined, the total value of the goods going inland was \$173,000,000, exactly equal to the amount coming out. At Albany, the goods going west, chiefly from New York but partly from Boston, were worth \$135,000,000, while the freight from the interior came to only \$65,000,000. At New Orleans, the situation was exactly the reverse. The "up trade" amounted to only \$38,000,000, while the heavy "down trade" totalled \$108,000,000.

Whether it travelled by New Orleans or by Albany, however, much of the westbound "merchandise" destined for the shelves of country stores had originally come from New York, which took its profits in either case. Even the foodstuffs sent from the West to feed the South helped New York indirectly, for they enabled the inland farmers to purchase imports and domestic manufactures from New York. With the hinterland grown to national dimensions, South Street, Pearl Street, and Wall Street would profit, whichever route the freight might follow to and from the back country.

By the mid-'thirties, the South began to awaken to just what New York was doing. Boston had fully appreciated and analyzed the situation back in 1825, but the first serious rumblings from the South came in 1836 when Charleston sought unsuccessfully to establish a packet line to Liverpool. "Direct trade" was the objective, eliminating New York's profitable participation.

The southerners tried to take advantage of the temporary setback to New York after the panic of 1837. Six commercial conventions were held within eighteen months. These culminated in a convention at Charleston in 1839, which drew up a lengthy report attacking New York's position in the southern trade. It was bad enough, the report said, to have a national tariff which discriminated against the South. In addition, "the direct trade, which was her own by every law of commerce and nature, and which should have grown and increased every year, grew less and less until it almost disappeared, being by this unpropitious policy transferred to the northern ports and people. . . . The importing merchants of the South became an almost extinct race, and her direct trade, once so great, flourishing and rich, dwindled down to insignificance." The report included a detailed analysis which attempted to prove that the southern shopkeepers could procure their imports more cheaply direct through Charleston than by way of New York. In the flood of rhetoric appeared the remark, "The South thus stands in the attitude of feeding from her own bosom a vast population of merchants, shipowners, capitalists, and others, who without the claims of her progeny, drink up the life-blood of her trade." The movement, once begun, continued spasmodically down to the Civil War with conventions held in various cities from time to time. Lieutenant Matthew F. Maury, the oceanographer, and J. D. B. DeBow in his *Review* persistently kept the propaganda alive, but nothing much came of it.

Though the European manufacturers and merchants showed an inclination to go halfway in developing a direct trade and a few short-lived attempts were made to establish packet or steamship lines, the southern shopkeepers kept on making their annual pilgrimages to New York to replenish their stocks. When the Civil War broke out, the cotton triangle was still one of the major features in American commerce. The news of Fort Sumter, however, placed in a difficult position those New York merchants who had been happily exploiting southern commercial passivity.

native New Yorker, stood his courtmartial aboard the *North Carolina* in port and, contrary to the general public indignation at his conduct, most of the eminent New York shipowners upheld his conduct as essential to discipline at sea.

The artillerymen at the harbor forts broke into print much less often, except when a soldier or two was drowned in the capsizing of a sailboat which he could not handle. General Scott and others, inspecting New York's defenses just after the War of 1812, felt that "Castle Clinton" at the Battery was not enough—by the time the enemy came within range of its guns, it would be too late to save the city. A fort was built on Governors Island, and Forts Tompkins and Hamilton were built to command the Narrows, supplemented by Fort Lafayette which rose out of the water at the Long Island end of the bar. Two other forts, Schuyler and Totten, covered the approach from the Sound into East River. Nothing much seems ever to have happened. Major Thomas J. Jackson found the life so boring after two years at Fort Hamilton that he threw up his commission in 1851 and taught school until the Civil War gave him a chance for excitement as "Stonewall." None of the guns of those New York defenses, fortunately, ever had to be fired in earnest; but their very presence was enough to give the port reasonable security in that day.

New York had still other officials and waterfront functionaries whom we have not mentioned, but the inspectors of flour and steamboats have been dealt with elsewhere; and there seems no need to discuss the sordid details of the crimps and harlots who handled the port sojourn of too many visiting seamen, despite the efforts of missions and "bethels." The survey has already gone far enough to indicate that it took more than merchants and mariners alone to operate a first-rate seaport.

CHAPTER XII

MERCHANT PRINCES

APPARENTLY there never has been a typical New Yorker. "On the island of Manhate, and in its environs, there may well be four or five hundred men of different sects and nations; the Director General told me that there were men of eighteen different languages." Thus was the infant Dutch colony described by a famous Jesuit missionary who visited it in 1643. A melting pot from the very outset, New York was still one two centuries later, in our period; and is still more of one today, at the close of its third century.

The merchants of Manhattan, in consequence, present more of a problem in description than do the more homogeneous group who made Boston a great port. The latter, almost to a man, came from families which had taken root in that immediate region some time before the Revolution. Boston had such an abundance of commercial talent that outsiders found little room for a foothold. With a common racial background, and brought up in the same distinctive New England traditions, the Boston merchant was a more definite type. In contrast with the New York situation, the men who developed the maritime business of New England came for the most part from families which had been settled in the region since the reign of George II, if not from that of Charles I. Among the great names of Salem, for example, the Peabody family had settled near by in 1635, the first Derby had come in 1671, and even the un-Puritan name of Crowninshield had been identified with Massachusetts since about 1688. Few of the important Boston merchants had come farther afield than Cape Cod. Far from having to import maritime talent, New England was able to export it in large quantities.

That was far from true of the New York merchants of our period. Such little homogeneity as the group gradually possessed was to be

impressed upon it by the newcomers who gradually slipped over the border from New England.

Men of decidedly varied background dominated New York's commerce in 1815. The old Dutch stock was conspicuously absent; but many of them did not need to undergo the toil and worry of trade, for their ancestral acres were yielding ever-increasing rents as Manhattan rapidly grew in population. Some of the British, Huguenot, and other elements of the old Knickerbocker society, however, did their part. As for newcomers, John Jacob Astor was foremost among the merchant princes. He was already rich from his fur empire and his China trade; but many New Yorkers still remembered how he had peddled in the streets, an immigrant fresh from Waldorf in Germany. Archibald Gracie, another important merchant, was a Scot, born in Dumfries, and trained in Liverpool. He had migrated to Virginia and then moved north to take advantage of New York's superior opportunities. Another Scot was Robert Lenox, who had come to New York after a sojourn in New Jersey. The last great commercial house managed by the old New York aristocracy, if one excepts the near-greatness of the Barclays, was the firm of LeRoy, Bayard & McEvers (at times LeRoy, Bayard & Co.), whose Huguenot and Scottish forbears had long been prominent in the city. Its primacy ended with the death of the elder William Bayard in 1826.

The foreigners and the old Knickerbocker society shared the honors for the innovations which gave New York its lead over its rivals in the years immediately following 1815. Probably the man who did most of all was the Yorkshireman, Jeremiah Thompson, who was, we recall, credited with the original inspiration of the Black Ball packets and who also seems to deserve much credit for establishing the "cotton triangle." DeWitt Clinton, whose unflagging energy made the Erie Canal a reality, could trace his distinguished New York ancestry back to 1729. The idea of the *Clermont* came from Fulton, a Pennsylvanian of Irish descent; her engines were made in England by Boulton & Watt; her hull was built at New York by an Englishman; and the essential financial backing came from the deep Knickerbocker pocket of Chancellor Livingston.

Once that group had set New York upon the road to success, outsiders flocked in from every direction. Many came "on their own," but a considerable part of the migration resulted from the common practice, already noticed, of sending a partner, relative, or junior em-

ployee of a firm to handle the business at another port and thus keep all the profits and commissions under control. This practice was so prevalent that it must be taken into account in considerations of port rivalry—outside of New England, few ports had their business concentrated in the hands of native sons. On the whole, the more active the port, the more such "commercial exiles" it sent out and the fewer it received in return. If Boston represented extreme self-sufficiency, the newly developed ports of New Orleans and Mobile were just the reverse, receiving a host of outsiders and sending back relatively few in return.

New York was in an intermediate position in this respect. It sent men out to almost every port in the world with which it did business, except to New England. At the same time, it received a considerable, but probably smaller, number of outside representatives in return.

As far as Europe was concerned, New York seems to have exchanged business men on a fairly even basis. Many New Yorkers were among the members of the American Chamber of Commerce at Liverpool with a fair number in the similar body at Havre. A few established themselves in other trading centers on the Continent. Their numbers were offset by the many representatives of British and Continental firms who settled in New York. With the passive commercial regions of the Caribbean and Latin America, as with the ports of the southern states, New York's exports of commercial talent far exceeded its imports, while no hong merchants came from Canton in exchange for the young New Yorkers who settled there to do business.

While many of these men returned home after they had "made their pile," it was a significant feature of this interchange of talent that a large number became naturalized and settled down as permanent residents of their adopted country, eventually merging quite completely into their new surroundings. New York experienced both sides of this. A Captain Delano, for instance, who had come from New Bedford to New York, settled at Valparaiso, where a permanent branch of that versatile family was established—the genealogy shows, in later generations, a large number of Don Jaimes, Don Tomasos, if not Don Juans, who had become good Chilians in spite of the good old Yankee surname of Delano. On the other hand, such well-established families as the Belmonts and the DeRhams at New York today are descended from men who first came to the city as representatives of European business houses a century or so ago.

Before turning to the New Englanders, who were far and away the most numerous and successful of the invaders, we might note briefly some of those from other regions who were shrewd or lucky enough to rise to the status of "merchant prince." Considering the fact that according to the census of 1840, New York had 417 commercial houses engaged in foreign trade and 918 commission firms, it is obviously out of the question to do more than look at some of the more important merchants, examining whence they came and how high they rose; but to make no attempt to list them individually or even to estimate how many came from each region.

Because of the volume of trade with Liverpool, more business men came from England and Scotland than from any other foreign country. They swelled the membership of the societies of St. George and St. Andrew, while Wales, with its proximity to Liverpool, furnished members for the St. David's Society. These transplanted Britons had a journal of their own in the weekly *Albion*; and they used to take the ferry over to Hoboken to eat turtle in celebration of the King's or the Queen's birthday. Despite their numbers, not very many of them reached first rank in New York commercial circles. Many of them were manufacturers' agents, the "damned Yorkshiremen" of the protectionists, who transmitted the incoming Liverpool textiles to the auction rooms and lived in the numerous boarding houses which catered to British business. Most of them never appeared in print until, one day, the papers would announce the death of so-and-so, a native of Huddersfield or Bolton, "long a resident of this city."

None of the later comers from Great Britain approached the eminence of Jeremiah Thompson, who had come from Yorkshire before our period. His closest rivals for high honors would also be found among that little group of Black Ball pioneers. Benjamin Marshall eventually went upstate to supervise his cotton factories. Jeremiah's uncle Francis, besides helping to manage Black Ballers, was one of the first to raise the steerage trade to the level of big business. Samuel Thompson, another nephew of Francis, continued this in an even more extensive fashion and acquired ownership of several large immigrant "packets." James Boorman, who came from England, and his Scottish partner, John Johnston, headed a leading iron importing firm; Boorman also became first president of the Hudson River Railroad. The Irish members of the St. Patrick's Society could point with pride to John Flack, a prominent but not outstanding shipowner early in the period,

and to Dominick Lynch, the debonair wine merchant. John Haggerty, whose auction business built up one of the largest fortunes early in the period, had a good Irish name but was not a first-generation newcomer. Most distinguished of those directly from Ireland was Alexander T. Stewart of Ulster, who amassed millions in the dry-goods business.

Several distinct waves of Frenchmen came to New York at various periods and some of them succeeded remarkably well. The Bayards, LeRoys, and Pintards were of French Huguenot stock which had been settled near New York for about a century by 1815, as was James P. Allaire, the foremost builder of marine engines. They, however, had become members of the old New York stock by the time our period opens. The Grinnells and the Delanos were also of Huguenot descent, but their long New Bedford background places them among the New Englanders. A wave of *émigrés* came direct from France when the French Revolution started to get rough and a few went into business; but most of them were returning to Havre or Bordeaux in the opening months of peace in 1815. More conspicuous in New York business circles were those other Frenchmen who fled at the same time from another terror—the Negro uprising in Santo Domingo. That wave, which gave Philadelphia its greatest merchant in Stephen Girard, enriched New York business with Francis Depau, son-in-law of Admiral DeGrasse and founder of the Havre packet service, as well as Stephen Jumel. The latter was the leading wine merchant in the early years of the century and his wife, an unscrupulous charmer from Rhodé Island, tricked him out of his fortune and later married Aaron Burr. All three of those groups came to New York to escape persecution or death. The fourth group came more gradually and more voluntarily during our period, principally to participate in the western end of business on the New York-Havre shuttle. Conspicuous in this category were the eccentric Louis Salles, who made more than a million in the trade, and Charles Sagory, the New York representative of Lewis Rogers's vast tobacco business, involving Richmond, New Orleans, New York, Havre, and Paris.

A few highly successful merchants came from other parts of the Continent. Switzerland's most distinguished representative was Henry Casimir DeRham, already mentioned as consul, and so valuable a patron of the Havre packets that one was named for him. From Holland came Frederick Gebhard, and his sons-in-law, Frederick Schuchardt and Frederick Favre, who made a fortune in bringing gin from

Amsterdam in their fast regular traders. Though Sweden sent no merchant of importance, John Ericsson contributed to the port's development with his original work in marine engineering. The outstanding Spaniard was the somewhat mysterious millionaire, Peter Harmony, who owned many vessels and traded heavily with Spain and the Caribbean.

The Jews had not as yet made their remarkable inroads into New York business circles. Plenty of them, to be sure, were to be found on and around Chatham Street, but relatively few had risen to the wealth and importance which many enjoyed a century later. The most distinguished was the Rothschild representative, August Belmont, who married into the family of the Perry commodores, and built up a fortune in finance; but the Chamber of Commerce contained few Jews among its members.

Relatively few of the principal business men came from the states to the southward. Some of them were natives of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, but almost none were from the far South. The best known of this group were James and Stewart Brown, who handled the New York end of the private commercial banking business, established by the Irish Alexander Brown at Baltimore.

Even near-by New Jersey contributed amazingly few, when one contrasts its influence with that of Connecticut which had slightly fewer people and was little farther from New York City. Save for the all-important Stevens family, whose spacious grounds in Hoboken bordered on the waters of the port itself, practically the only merchant of the front rank from New Jersey was John C. Green, born near Lawrenceville. Propinquity, then, was not everything.

Upstate New York, however, did a bit more than New Jersey, with Eli Hart, one of the foremost flour traders, and three men whose start to fortune was based on steamboats—Isaac Newton, who helped to develop the "floating palaces"; Daniel Drew, the sharp and sanctimonious operator; and George Law, son of a farmer who had migrated from the County Down in Ireland. Long Island was represented by three families of Quakers: Isaac Wright and his son, the Black Ball pioneers; Samuel Hicks and his sons, wealthy shipping magnates; and the Lawrences, noteworthy in several fields. New York's presiding genius in marine insurance, Walter R. Jones, also came from Long Island. Closer at hand, Staten Island produced the greatest transportation genius of them all in Cornelius Vanderbilt.

Though the old stock of New Yorkers were losing their control of trade in 1815, it was only to be expected that occasional native sons rose high from modest backgrounds. Particularly conspicuous were John and Philip Hone, of German and French descent, sons of a carpenter in modest circumstances. They established one of the two most successful auction houses, and amassed comfortable fortunes, though Philip later lost most of his. He had other claims to fame, however, especially as author of a valuable and oft-quoted diary. Another marked success was Moses Taylor, son of a confidential agent of Astor. After a good beginning in Cuban trade, we recall, he became head of the City Bank and eventually amassed several millions. There were others in various fields, such as Robert Kermit, a sea captain's son, who became an operator of Liverpool packets.

All of these, however, whether born in England, France, Holland, Long Island, or New York City itself, were swamped by the mighty invasion of business and maritime talent from New England in general and Connecticut in particular.

The tales of ships and skippers leave the impression that New England enjoyed a virtual monopoly of America's seagoing enterprise. The arid tables of imports and exports, however, show that the center of commercial activity lay not in New England but thirty miles beyond its frontiers in New York City. By the eve of the Civil War, the foreign commerce of New York was nearly six times that of all New England.

The answer to this apparent conflict between tradition and statistics is that the New Englanders captured New York port about 1820 and dominated its business until after the Civil War. Applying a little genealogy to the occupants of New York's countinghouses, shipyards, and quarterdecks, we find New Englanders in most of the important positions. They built and commanded most of the ships engaged in New York's ever-increasing commerce. They were, moreover, the leaders among the merchants and shipowners who set those ships in motion and made fortunes from their comings and goings.

There had been New England participation in New York commerce ever since Isaac Allerton, reputedly the wealthiest of the Pilgrim Fathers, became one of the leading traders of New Haven and New Amsterdam. Since that time, a gradual infiltration had been in progress from the eastward. The chief rush came around 1800 and twenty years later New England had the situation well in hand. The movement was part of the remarkable expansion of New England into many spheres

of national activity beyond its own frontiers. The same motive which lured farmers from the barren, stony acres of western New England to the richer fields of the Middle West was attracting other New Englanders to the thriving seaport just beyond the Connecticut border.

Compared with the rather easy-going old Knickerbocker element, the newcomers from the eastward were "more conservative in character, more grave in temperament, and at the same time, more enterprising, and more insistent in action than the descendants of the Dutch and English settlers" of New York. Scoville, describing one of them, remarked that he "was the personification of a Yankee—if there is such a race—long legs, hatchet face, skin and bones, slight, pokey, and keen as a briar."

Most of them came from southern New England. Beyond Cape Cod, plenty of commercial and seagoing opportunities were to be found at Boston, Salem, Newburyport, Portsmouth, Portland, and other "down east" ports to absorb most of the commercial talent in that region; but an ever-increasing number of ships and mariners came from those more remote New England ports and compensated for the lack of recruits to the ranks of the merchant princes.

It was perhaps natural that Connecticut should be most heavily represented among the invaders from the eastward, since it was the nearest New England state to New York. Yet the even closer New Jersey had made no such contribution. Long Island cut off New Haven and the other western ports from direct contact with the open sea and, since the Connecticut Yankee was famous for his trading proclivities, it was not surprising that he took advantage of the excellent opportunity close at hand. Talent poured in from all parts of the State, Stonington being particularly prominent for its sea captains and Stamford for its shipbuilders, while potential merchant princes came from all over the State. Others came from Rhode Island and from southern Massachusetts, particularly from New Bedford, Nantucket, and the Cape.

The New England recruits for New York's commercial circles fell into four main groups. Some men who had already built up a moderately prosperous business in a New England port moved it to the wider sphere. Others came to handle the New York end of a business which remained in New England. A third lot were Yankee captains who came ashore to set up countinghouses at New York, and finally there were the self-made men who came to New York young and worked up from the bottom in the New York business district.

The constant commercial intercourse between New York and New England meant that good connections with one of the ports to the eastward gave a prospect of adequate commissions. Both ends of this business were usually retained in New England hands. If a Boston cargo of tea from Canton or a Salem shipment of pepper from Sumatra was to be sold at New York, the commissions were apt to go to a son of the owner, a friend of the family, or a junior employee who had moved to New York for the purpose. It was the same with shipments of domestic cotton goods from Lowell and Fall River, or shoes from Lynn and Haverhill, to say nothing of Maine lumber and New Bedford whale oil. Equally lucrative were the possibilities of the ship brokers, whose business it was to offer ships, brigs, and schooners from one's home port in New England for "sale, freight, or charter" and to find as constant employment for the vessels as possible, frequently acting as agent at a generous commission. Both the ready-made merchants from eastern ports and the young representatives of firms which remained there were very numerous among the South Street countinghouses.

The quarterdeck was not as common a preparation for the countinghouse at New York as it was to the eastward where a few years in command of a brig or ship had figured in the background of many of the leading merchants. The number of shipmasters who became merchant princes in New York was considerably less than of those whose whole education lay in the countinghouse; only a few of them even had experience as supercargoes, who, we recall, were a sort of business men afloat. Preserved Fish was a conspicuous graduate of the quarterdeck. Three others, Charles H. Marshall, Elisha E. Morgan, and Silas Holmes made fortunes in operating packets after previously commanding them. Several more utilized the contacts which they had developed either with passengers or with merchants during their frequent periods in port, to establish themselves as ship brokers, commission merchants, or ship chandlers, but only those four, all New Englanders, rose to the front rank during our period. Captain Rowland H. Macy, of a prominent old Nantucket whaling family, however, started a little store in 1858, which would one day grow to gigantic size. The resultant absence of ex-mariners made the New York commercial magnates a somewhat less colorful group than were the merchants of Boston, Salem, and Portland.

Finally, there were the poor boys, particularly from Connecticut,

who made good. Old Scoville, who had been one of them himself, wrote several passages which remind one of Horatio Alger—and Scoville was apt to be more accurate in some of his generalizations than in his specific facts.

His winter schooling generally ends when the boy is fourteen years old. He can by that time (if he is smart) parse pretty well, and has reached the "double rule of three" in Daboll. He needs no more towards his future success than a trunk, "Sunday-go-to-meeting" clothes, and a Bible. This the family provide, and with a few dollars and a mother's prayer, the young hero goes forth to seek his fortune in the great mart of commerce.

He needs but a foothold. He asks no more, and he is as sure to keep it as that light will dispel darkness. He gets a place somewhere in a "store." It is all store to him. He hardly comprehends the difference between the business of the great South Street house, that sends ships over the world, and the Bowery dry goods shop with three or four spruce clerks. He rather thinks the Bowery or Canal Street store the biggest, as they make more show. But wherever this boy strikes, he fastens. He is honest, determined and intelligent. From the word "go" he begins to learn, to compare, and no matter what the commercial business he is engaged in, he will not rest until he knows all about it, its details—in fact, as much as the principals.

Another characteristic of the future merchant is this—no sooner has he got a foothold, than the New England boy begins to look for standing room for others. Perhaps he is the son of a small farmer who has several other children. The pioneer boy, if true blue, does not rest until one by one he has procured situations for all of his brothers. If he has none, he has friends in the village, and ere a year, Bill, Jo and Jim have been seduced off to New York.

Later, Scoville explains why these young New Englanders were more successful than the New York boys with their superior connections:

It is a singular fact that a foreign-born boy, or one from the New England states, will succeed in this city, and become a partner in our largest firms, much oftener than a born New York boy. The great secret of this success is the perfect willingness to be useful and to do what they are required to do, and cheerfully.

Take for instance such a firm as Grinnell, Minturn & Co. In their counting room, they have New York boys and New England boys. Moses H. Grinnell comes down in the morning and says to John, a New York boy—"Charley [*sic*], take my overcoat up to my house on Fifth Avenue." Mr. Charley takes the coat, mutters something about "I'm not an errand boy. I came here to learn business," and moves reluctantly. Mr. Grinnell sees it, and at the same time, one of his New England clerks says, "I'll take it up." "That is right. Do so," says Mr. G., and to himself he says, "that boy

is smart, will work," and gives him plenty to do. He gets promoted—gets the confidence of the chief clerk and employers, and eventually gets into the firm as partner.

It's so all over the city. It is so in nearly every store, counting room or office. Outside boys get on faster than New York boys owing to two reasons. One is, they are not afraid to work, or to run of errands, or do cheerfully what they are told to do. A second reason, they do their work quickly. A New York boy has many acquaintances—a New England boy has none, and is not called upon to stop and talk, when sent out by the merchant.

Those old remarks, written during the Civil War, seem worth quoting *in extenso*, because they explain the beginnings of so many prominent New York mercantile careers. The story goes that a Scot, returning to Glasgow from a business trip to London, was asked how he liked the English. "I canna tell," was the alleged reply, "as I talked only with the heads of firms." A New Englander visiting New York during the second quarter of the last century might well have carried back a similar story.

Any list, however restricted, of the leading New York shipping houses between 1820 and 1860 would certainly include six New England firms, four of which were headed by sets of brothers. The Griswolds from Old Lyme and the Lows from Salem were in the China trade; the Howlands from Norwich in the Latin-American trade; and from New Bedford the Grinnells were among the greatest shipowners of the day. Ranking with them were the great commission house headed by Jonathan Goodhue from Salem and Pelatiah Perit from Norwich, together with the extensive metal importing and cotton exporting concern of Anson G. Phelps in successive partnerships with Elisha Peck and William E. Dodge, his son-in-law, all of whom came from Connecticut.

In 1794, the vanguard of that group appeared in New York. George Griswold at twenty-one grew restive at the limited opportunities of Old Lyme, where Griswolds had been settled for more than a century, furnishing Connecticut with more than one governor. George went to seek his fortune in New York, followed two years later by his brother Nathaniel. The brothers, "stout, fine looking young men, six feet high each, and well proportioned," in 1796 formed the firm of N. L. & G. Griswold. An early letter book, one of the few to survive a fire which later gutted their countinghouse, indicates that they started as brokers for the shipping from the lower Connecticut River and as flour exporters. Then they sent their flour to the West Indies, importing sugar

and rum in return. From that, their activities stretched down the coast of South America and a considerable fleet of vessels flew their blue-and-white-checkered house flag. While continuing their general commerce, they became leaders in the Canton trade, we recall, with a succession of ships named *Panama*. Scoville was probably exaggerating when he wrote, "I do not suppose there is a country store however insignificant, in the whole United States, that has not seen a large or small package of tea marked 'Ship *Panama*' and 'N. L. & G. G.' upon it." At any rate, the Griswold business was so prosperous that the wits translated the initials "No Loss and Great Gain." "Old Nat," quiet and retiring, handled the shipping end of the business and made an added fortune in dredging on the side, while George did not limit his bold financial ability to the company's affairs but played a conspicuous role in the city's banking and real-estate development. Two cousins from Old Lyme, John and Charles C. Griswold, made a conspicuous success with the "Black X" packets to London, John serving for many years as operator while Charles lived for a while in Savannah, buying up cotton, before retiring to Connecticut, a part owner in most of the line's ships.

Joseph Howland, descended from John Howland of the *Mayflower*, was reasonably prosperous as a shipowner and merchant in Norwich, in 1800. Shortly afterwards, he moved his business and his family from Connecticut to New York. His own transplanted commercial activity attained no particular magnitude; our interest centers in his sons Gardiner Greene and Samuel Shaw Howland. Gardiner started his training with his father and with the Bayard firm, married an heiress, and in 1816, at twenty-nine, joined his brother in the firm of G. G. & S. Howland. We have already noticed their remarkable success in the Latin-American trade, conducted with their numerous second-hand ships, and we shall hear shortly of the "Greek frigate" scandal which left them richer in cash but poorer in reputation for business honesty. The brothers retired from active direction of the firm in 1834, retaining a special interest. Gardiner became one of the chief promoters of the Hudson River Railroad. His son, William E., and his nephew, William H. Aspinwall, whose mother was a Howland, continued the business as Howland & Aspinwall. The house gradually engaged in merchant banking and Aspinwall later will be seen in his important role in connection with the California trade, running the Pacific Mail steamships and developing the Isthmus of Panama.

Late in 1807, Jonathan Goodhue moved from Salem to New York with far better backing than the average New England invader. He had been trained in the Salem countinghouse of John Norris, who sent him as supercargo on two voyages to the East. Son of a United States senator, young Goodhue came well armed with letters of introduction to business and social circles and was aided besides by the patronage of John Norris, Joseph Peabody, and William Gray, who threw many good commissions his way. Constant trade interruptions, beginning with the Embargo, gave him a slow beginning, but gradually Goodhue & Co. became one of the outstanding commission houses of the city. His principal silent partner was Pelatiah Perit of Norwich. The influence of the house was increased by its close relations with the British banking house of Baring which loaned half the money for the Goodhue purchase of the Black Ball Line in 1834, in conjunction with two of the captains. Graduates of their countinghouse were established as correspondents of the firm in handling their imports and exports. Perit and another silent partner, Calvin Durand, also from Connecticut, carried on the business after Goodhue's death in 1848.

A fourth great house had its origins entirely in the New Bedford region. Preserved Fish, an eccentric whaling captain, decided that selling whale oil was more profitable than gathering it and moved to New York. In 1815, he formed a partnership with his cousin, Joseph Grinnell, also from New Bedford. Fish, contrary to a legend that he was picked up as a baby adrift at sea, came from Portsmouth, Rhode Island, where the family had settled in 1643, a year after the first Huguenot Grinnell (originally Grennelle) reached there. The firm of Fish & Grinnell (later Fish, Grinnell & Co., and finally Grinnell, Minturn & Co.) began as commission merchants for New Bedford whale oil, selling, according to Scoville, "two kinds of oil, good and bad." The success of the Black Ballers lured them into packet operation and by 1824 their Swallowtail liners were running both to Liverpool and to London. By 1829 both the original partners had retired, Joseph Grinnell returning to New Bedford, where he later became a Congressman; a railroad president, and the pioneer in that city's cotton industry, while Fish, after various ventures which ended in disagreements, settled down as a New York bank president.

Their places were taken by Joseph's younger brothers, Henry and Moses Hicks Grinnell, who had already come from New Bedford, and by Henry's brother-in-law, Robert Bowne Minturn, whose grandfather

had moved a prosperous business from Newport to New York and whose father had headed the house of Minturn & Champlin until ruined by the War of 1812. Their swallowtail house flag eventually flew over more than fifty ships, and they seem to have been among the most extensive shipowners in America. Their fleet included not only the numerous packets of their two lines, but also general freighters and the most famous of the clippers, the *Flying Cloud*. Trading extensively with England, China, Cuba, and elsewhere, the firm was conservative in policy but, as Scoville remarked, "all is fish that gets into their nets." Celebrated for their unostentatious generosity and their public-spirited cooperation in local and national affairs, the three partners were among New England's finest contributions to New York port.

The Lows from Salem came on the scene somewhat later than the others. It was not until 1829 that the elder Seth Low, a native of Gloucester, moved his business in China and India drugs and other wares from Salem to New York, where he also served as agent for glass bottles manufactured in New England. He was soon followed thither by Abiel A., the eldest of his twelve children. Abiel went to Canton in 1833, and, like his brother later, became a partner in Russell & Co. In 1840, he returned to New York and went into the China trade on his own account. In 1845, he took his brother Josiah into partnership and later others of the family also became partners, but Abiel's leadership was reflected in the firm name of A. A. Low & Bros. Their *Houqua* and her successors, we know, were among the fastest of the early China clippers and one of her commanders was another brother, Captain Charles P. Low, who won a reputation as a "princely host" at Canton. The firm was still active in 1865 when it took into partnership Abiel's son Seth, who later became president of Columbia University and mayor of New York City.

More typical of the experience of poor Connecticut boys who "made good" was the career of Anson G. Phelps. Born in Simsbury, he was left an orphan while still young and learned saddlery under his older brother. He established his own business in saddlery at Hartford and began to sell his products in the South. In 1812, he moved to New York and joined in partnership with Elisha Peck from Hartford. Soon he was engaged in his great specialty, the importation of iron, copper, brass, and other metals, an activity in which he attained first place among American merchants. To pay for these abroad, he shipped cotton from New York and was one of the promoters of the pioneer

line of coastal packets to Charleston in 1822. Later, his partnership with Peck gave way to one with two of his sons-in-law as Phelps, Dodge & Co. The silent partner, David James from upstate New York, represented them in England. The other, William E. Dodge, a native of Connecticut, has left interesting memoirs of his start as a \$3-a-week clerk in a New York dry-goods concern. Later, after running a country store back in Connecticut, Dodge became a dry-goods jobber before marrying one of Phelps's seven daughters and becoming a partner in the metal business. Eventually, Phelps, Dodge & Co. supplemented the importation of metals by developing the domestic supply of iron from western Pennsylvania and copper from Michigan and Arizona, as well as engaging in the manufacture of metal wares, particularly in the Connecticut town named Ansonia for Phelps. Both Phelps and Dodge amassed large fortunes and were very generous in their support of religious and philanthropic measures.

There were many other conspicuous New Englanders. Stephen Whitney from Connecticut, who became one of New York's first millionaires, is said to have laid the basis of his fortune by smuggling cotton out through Amelia Island during the War of 1812. The leading house of private bankers, Prime, Ward & King, were all New Englanders. Nathaniel Prime, according to Scoville, was a butler in a New England mansion before becoming a financial giant. The first of three generations of Samuel Wards came down from Rhode Island and the second was father of Julia Ward Howe. James Gore King was the son of the Maine-born Rufus, one of the first ministers to the Court of St. James's. Three different Morgans came from the eastward. Junius Spencer Morgan, born in western Massachusetts, came by way of Hartford to New York, where he spent two years in learning the banking business with which the name of his son, J. Pierpont, would be prominently associated in later days. Edwin D. Morgan likewise came from western Massachusetts by way of Hartford. He revealed his business genius in a clever deal while on a trip to New York, moved there about 1836, built up a large wholesale grocery business, and became one of the heaviest importers of sugar and coffee. He served as war governor of New York and later as senator. The third Morgan, Charles, a shrewd, quiet native of Killingsworth, Connecticut, came to New York as a boy and, starting as a grocery clerk, was soon a ship chandler and fruit importer. He soon was prominent in ship-owning, running one of the early lines of steamers to Charleston and

then opening steam service in the western Gulf between New Orleans and Texas, where, operating from New York, he later became supreme. He also purchased one of the largest marine-engine works in New York and eventually went into railroads in the Gulf region. Edward K. Collins, the foremost individual operator of packets and steamships, was born at Truro, far out on Cape Cod, and joined his father at New York, specializing at first in the Mexican trade. In addition to the merchants proper, we shall see later that several of the chief shipbuilders likewise came from the eastward, as well as many others in important positions; but this brief account must not degenerate into too much of a catalogue.

Ample evidence shows that these New Englanders were leaders in New York commercial circles. The Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York, the mouthpiece of the merchants, had a New Englander as president for the entire thirty years from 1845 to 1875 save for one interlude of eight months. James G. King, Moses H. Grinnell, Pelatiah Perit, Abiel A. Low, and William E. Dodge all served in that position. Whenever the merchants assembled to protest against the tariff or to welcome an important guest, a Goodhue, a Griswold, a Grinnell, or a Howland usually presided at the ceremony. Most of these merchant princes were directors and many were presidents of banks and insurance companies. Their influence on New York business methods was so strong that it was remarked in 1845 that the city "borrows its institutions mainly from New England."

The Knickerbocker element resented the coming of the New Englanders fully as much, it is said, as a later New York resented the invasion of another acquisitive group. The New Englanders not only beat the old New Yorkers at the commercial game, but had the effrontery to boast about it. As early as 1805 they formed the New England Society in the City of New York "to commemorate the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers on Plymouth Rock and to promote friendship, charity, and mutual association, and to establish and maintain a library," with the membership open to "any person being of full age, being a native, or the son of a native, of any of the New England states, and of fair character." The carefully preserved accounts of their annual dinners reek with self-satisfaction. The toasts in 1831, for instance, included, "New England habits—industry, enterprise and shrewdness," "The rich and precious cargo of the *Mayflower*—Yankee capital—the real wealth of nations," and "The universal Yankee nation!

As universal, it would seem, as civil and religious liberty." In 1846, Brooklyn, the home of many "down east" shipmasters as well as merchants, established a New England Society of its own.

Washington Irving was particularly irritated at the invaders from the eastward and became prime mover in the organization of the St. Nicholas Society, of which he was the first secretary. Its start is recorded by Philip Hone, who apparently did not take it as seriously as Irving. In his diary for February 14, 1835, we find the following:

I attended this evening a meeting at Washington Hall of a number of New Yorkers, with a design to form a regular Knickerbocker society, as a sort of set off against St. Patrick's, St. George's and more particularly the New England. The meeting was large and exceedingly respectable . . . a goodly show of good fellows who will not disgrace their ancestors. . . . I suppose we shall have a few annual dinners which will be pretty much all that will grow out of it.

The annual dinners have continued for a century and with them the ceremony of turning the head of the society's gilded rooster to the eastward so that it might crow back at the Yankees.

Even a half century later, the irritation of the old New Yorkers had not completely died out. In 1883, the elder James W. Gerard delivered before the New York Historical Society a rambling paper entitled "The Impress of Nationalities upon New York." Remarking that there was no love lost in the old days, he continued:

There is good feeling and fellowship enough now, and a peaceable quiet invasion of New York in business and professional circles is continually in progress, without murmur. The laudation of New England and its sons, however, is rather too much dinned into our ears by those sons denized here, and the changes are played on Plymouth Rock until we have become heartily tired of the continual *reveille*. With all due respect for New England, and admiration for its enterprising and cultured sons and daughters, the queer question arises continually in our minds, why, if it be such a delectable and superior place as is so abundantly lauded, should her sons and daughters desert it in such flocks and locate themselves in such an inferior place as New York.

However much pride New York might take in the swelling statistics of its commerce, it admitted the superiority of the Boston merchants in their cultural interests, at least in the early days before the New Englanders took over the port. The editor of the *Evening Post* wrote in 1823:

It is a truth, a humiliating truth to New York, that the character of the

mercantile class of its citizens, generally speaking, is, in point of literature, politics and the fine arts, not upon a footing with that of the same class at Boston. This disparity, I have believed, is chiefly, if not altogether, owing to the great superiority of the public schools, English and Latin, in the latter place, and the far greater attention devoted to those institutions, by the public functionaries there, than here.

The occasion for those remarks was the establishing in 1820 of a Mercantile Library Association and an Association of Merchant Clerks under the auspices of the Chamber of Commerce. Like the similar organizations in other cities, these were designed to give ambitious young clerks an opportunity to improve their minds. At the time of organization, the preamble of the association called attention to the fact that

In a large and populous city, with excitements to pleasure surrounding them on every side, and hurried on by the warmth of early years, too many have become the votaries of vice and depravity; too many have sacrificed their health and their characters at the shrine of dissipation and run the giddy round of error before they have beheld the dawning of manhood. Our object is to oppose a barrier to the inroads of these moral foes, and to guard ourselves against their contaminating influence. The end we have in view is intellectual improvement.

The project received the blessing and support of many of the same merchants who were trying to provide better living conditions for the sailors in port. A reading room was opened, with a library which excluded "all works of an immoral or irreligious tendency," but at the end of three years it had only 200 members from the young clerks, whose total was estimated at 4000; and in 1827, a correspondent complained that the average clerk was "led to conclude that loquacity in a salesman, or a knowledge of Bennett's system in a bookkeeper, is the perfection of a mercantile character."

As late as 1840, the Mercantile Society announced a course of lectures by seven distinguished men, including "Mr. Longfellow, the poet," on Dante and Richter; Professor Torrey on "the Chemistry of Nature," Professor Silliman "on the curious subject of meteoric stars," Horace Mann on education, and "R. W. Emerson, an impressive speaker, possessing a peculiar style and mode of thinking," on the philosophy of history. This stern chase, to catch up with Boston in culture, however, seems to have been as fruitless as the efforts of Boston and the other ports to catch up with New York in commerce during those same years.

College graduates were rare among the New York merchant princes,

but that would hold true for the business men of most other cities in that day. Jacob Le Roy had apparently been graduated from Princeton in 1783, the year before he formed his famous partnership with William Bayard. Pelatiah Perit of Goodhue & Co. was a Yale man, as was the elder John Austin Stevens, president of the Bank of Commerce, whose son of the same name, a sugar importer and author, attended Harvard. James G. King was also a Harvard graduate, while Charles King, a Gracie partner until the firm's failure and later president of Columbia, had attended Harrow with Byron and Peel and then the École Polytechnique. Mortimer Livingston, who operated Havre packets and steamships, was graduated from Columbia. A few other scattered examples might be found, but most of the merchant princes had not gone beyond the little red schoolhouse.

On that point, Scoville commented that "Old Archibald Gracie took ten times more pains with his clerks than is taken in Columbia College," and added

If I had a son, whom I wished to make a thoroughbred gentleman—a man of the world and a man of business, I would send him to college for three years, and then let him spend five more in the counting-house of a heavy merchant, where he should sweep out and end by being a thorough book-keeper.

Aside from education and countinghouse training, there remained, of course, the two traditional aids to success: inheriting money and marrying it. A recent writer, in comparing Boston and New York in later days, attributes part of Boston's gradual loss of initiative to a practice which developed in its mercantile circles, sustained by a judicial decision around 1830. This was the so-called "spendthrift trust," whereby cautious merchant fathers tied up their sons' inheritances in trust funds, which assured a comfortable income but prevented the use of the principal. This system, it was pointed out, produced a secure group of "four per cent coupon cutters" who had plenty of chance to develop the finer things of life, being deprived of the opportunity, if not the incentive, of risking their capital in new ventures. This Boston practice did not prevail at New York, where sons had more opportunity to risk their patrimony in new ventures, with the alternative prospects of increasing it or of losing everything. Consequently, New York offered many examples of sons working a comfortable inheritance into a substantial fortune while, conversely, there were more

cases of "three generations from shirt sleeves to shirt sleeves" than among the sheltered sons of Boston.

Even for those who lacked the silver spoon at birth, marriage might often be a short cut to success. The self-made Connecticut Yankees showed uncanny luck in winning heiresses and in rising rapidly in the businesses established by their fathers-in-law. In many cases, it is difficult to tell whether the business or marriage ties were the first cause of success—sometimes sons-in-law were promoted to lieutenants and sometimes lieutenants were rewarded with a daughter's hand. Charles Morgan placed Connecticut sons-in-law in charge of different branches of his far-flung operations; William E. Dodge rose from comfortable profits in dry goods to a fortune in metals with his Phelps marriage; while the Howlands supplemented their modest patrimony with marriage into the circle of merchant princes. The Haggerty auction fortune established very comfortably three sons-in-law, including a son of DeWitt Clinton. The examples might be multiplied by the score.

As for the finished products of mercantile training, one wishes that space permitted a whole chapter on the mode of life and the attitudes of the New York merchant princes, for abundant material is at hand from many scattered sources. As it is, there is room to mention only very briefly a few of their outstanding characteristics.

In the opening years of our period, the elite of New York's social and business world—and the two were closely interlocked—might be found in comfortable residences in the aristocratic First Ward, close to the business district at the lower tip of the island, some of the finest houses being those which overlooked Bowling Green. Some of the early merchants actually lived over their places of business. Gradually the residential district moved uptown. Scoville's description of the experience of Daniel and Henry Parish, prominent merchants, was typical:

Daniel hired the house No. 12 Beekman street, and he lived there until 1831, when he and his brother Henry bought the lots Nos. 49 and 51 Barclay street, and put up two houses side by side, that were deemed in their day as palaces. . . . Our citizens would go out of their way, especially on Sundays, to look at them, then in a fashionable quarter of the town. The Parishes saw their happy days in those houses. They lived merry while they occupied them. When in after years, 1847, Henry moved up to a palace in Union square, corner of Seventeenth street, Daniel resided in his old house No. 51, years afterwards or until 1854, when he moved to Fifth Avenue and Sixteenth street. It is said that when Henry bade farewell to No. 49 Barclay, he visited every room, like a child, and the last words he said as he was

leaving it, were: "Old house, good-by, I shall never know so much happiness anywhere else."

One of these old merchant homes, built in 1836, on Fourth Street, has been restored and opened by the Historical Landmarks Association.

More familiar to New Yorkers is the old Archibald Gracie mansion on the East River near Hell Gate, one of the more remote "country-seats" which many of the merchants maintained in addition to their town houses. An Englishman visiting New York in the spring of 1819 wrote:

All the road from the city, to the extremity of and beyond the isle, is adorned, on both sides, with the country-seats and pleasure grounds of rich citizens, who, like those of London, every morning and evening drive to and fro in great numbers. . . . The houses on the roads, thus leading thru the isle to the city, have each from five to ten acres of green pasture, park, or pleasure-garden.

Some of these country seats were as far distant as Throg's Neck and Flushing, where Gardiner G. Howland had a "noble farm," but many others were far down in what is now considered the heart of the city. Scoville wrote of Henry Coster, for example, that he "moved from No. 28 William to a new house in 85 Chambers street. He had a country seat in what is now First Avenue, between Thirtieth and Thirty-first streets. It was sold to Anson G. Phelps in 1835."

Whether at town house or country seat, a delightful social life existed among many of the merchant princes and their friends of the old New York society, whose real estate shielded them from the necessity for scrambling. One has only to open Philip Hone's diary to catch a glimpse of that existence, particularly of the constant succession of dinners where old wines of the best vintage were consumed in quantities which kept the Havre packets busy. Hone, a combination of the old New Yorker and self-made man, was in the inner circle of the day and missed nothing. The older edition of his diary includes many lists of the guests at these occasions—and two or three of the New England merchant princes were generally among the number. Hone, like some of his friends, winced at the ridicule which Dickens poured upon the generous hospitality accorded to him on his first visit to America in the 'forties.

In addition to the well-ordered good living among the great merchants, some among the commercial groups fell into the extreme categories of the "spartans" and the "sports." Scoville contrasted the ca-

reer of two Pearl Street dry-goods merchants. John Robbins, who in 1846 was rated as worth \$800,000, as much as Moses Taylor, Henry Grinnell, and Jonathan Goodhue combined, was put in the "spartan" category. Even at the age of eighty-two, during the Civil War, Robbins

goes regularly to market every morning; stopping first at the baker's for his loaf of bread for breakfast—and this, too, in all kinds of weather, in winter and summer. He never wore a pair of gloves in his life; but in very cold weather he wears his woollen mittens. Every morning, as early as the light, he is in his store. He opens it, sweeps it out, and makes the fire. . . . Mr. Robbins has never been a slave to luxuries, or felt their necessity. He never had a fire in his sleeping apartment, and he never had a wash-stand there. He did without Croton water for many years, and was content with the old-fashioned pump water. . . .

He was the very opposite of his old friend Henry Laverty. Laverty did love luxuries, from early strawberries and green peas to the finest woodcock and tenderest game. I remember him, an old man, long years ago, and yet with a remarkably keen eye for a young and pretty girl. His house in Broadway was once the seat of hospitality and festivity. I remember the son who accidentally killed Sykes, at Windust's saloon, near the old Park Theatre. . . . Henry Laverty was crippled in means for years. He was never out of trouble. He died poor, and left nothing, comparatively speaking.

Other examples of both sorts naturally were easy to find. "Old Salles," the millionaire French importer, was as famous for his slovenly appearance as for his enormous appetite. One formerly prosperous wholesale grocer and notorious "fast liver" wound up as a common sailor and ended his career by falling from a spanker boom.

In their social attitudes toward philanthropy and reform, the New York merchants covered a wide range. On one extreme were the elder Howlands, whose sharp practices in connection with the Greek frigates alienated many and who were conspicuously absent from many of the philanthropic movements of the day, although they made substantial bequests to charity in their wills. The opposite attitude was evident in another pair of New England brothers, Arthur and Lewis Tappan, natives of Northampton, Mass., and prosperous silk jobbers. They were reformers of the most aggressively meddlesome type—the *Herald* once referred to "Lewis, who keeps an office for looking after everybody's business but his own." Arthur started *The Journal of Commerce* in 1827, ostentatiously announcing that it would publish no theatre, liquor, nor lottery advertisements, nor would it gather news on the Sabbath. The brothers were identified with the Bible society, peace society,

and mission boards. Arthur took a hand in the suppression of vice and was president of the Magdalen Society when it shocked New York with a report that there were 10,000 fallen women in the city. Their most conspicuous activity, however, was in connection with slavery. They became prominently identified with the cause of abolition and their houses were attacked by a mob in the Negro riots of 1834. The commandant of the Navy Yard sent marines to guard Arthur's home at a time when rumors told of a high reward, some said \$100,000, offered in the South for his kidnapping, and of a mysterious pilot boat which had come to New York for the purpose.

The "cotton triangle" naturally led to close relationships between southern merchants and the Pearl Street jobbers. The southerners were in a dilemma because the Tappans frequently had the best bargains in silks. Threats were made from the southward of a boycott against any merchant who traded with the Tappans or certain other firms suspected of abolitionist tendencies; whereupon the firm of Bailey, Keeler & Remsen inserted a "card" in the newspapers in 1835:

Having learnt that some insinuations have been made (probably with the design to injure us) that our firm is in favor of the cause of Abolition, we hereby declare that such accusations are utterly false and unfounded; and we pledge ourselves that all the members of our house are opposed in principle to the views of the abolitionists, regarding the agitation of the slave question, and the interference with the rights of southern slave-holders as inexpedient, unjust, and pregnant with evils.

Sometimes the sale of property of southern debtors to satisfy accounts with New Yorkers temporarily involved the latter in slave-owning. Altogether, the close commercial ties with the South meant many embarrassments for New York merchants as friction developed between the sections and few were ready to follow the Tappans in their outspoken stand.

Midway between the Howlands and the Tappans with their extreme views stood a large number of merchants who were generous in their philanthropy and public spirit without attempting to force reforms on others. John Pintard was conspicuous in this respect in the earlier days. Robert B. Minturn, for example, like several other prominent merchants, gave of his time and energy as a commissioner of emigration, was instrumental in founding the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor and St. Luke's Hospital, and supported his wife's agitation for the project to set aside Central Park. His partners, Henry

and Moses H. Grinnell, were likewise decidedly generous and public-spirited; but they were by no means exceptional in this, for there were many others of that sort among the merchant princes. Captain Charles H. Marshall and other shipping men helped ameliorate the conditions for seamen in port. Anson G. Phelps is said to have given over half a million, chiefly for missionary and other religious purposes. In fact, his philanthropy was said to have saved his life; he had just left his desk to attend one of his many board meetings when his new warehouse collapsed, burying the head bookkeeper and several others in the ruins. The names of at least two New York merchants are borne by the colleges that they helped to establish; at Constantinople, that of Christopher Robert and in Indiana, that of John Purdue, a commission merchant who traded with the West. Drew Theological Seminary had its background in New York's steamboats, deriving its name and part of its support from Daniel Drew, who located it on the estate which was once owned by Thomas Gibbons. The list might be extended indefinitely.

As for their political views, Scoville, who had been private secretary to Calhoun, said "Very few merchants of the first class have been Democrats. The mass of large and little merchants have like a flock of sheep gathered in the Federal, Whig, Clay or Republican folds. The Democratic merchants could have easily been stowed in a large Eighth Avenue railroad car." That Democratic minority included Preserved Fish as well as Churchill C. Cambreleng, who sat in Congress for several sessions and was a right-hand man of Van Buren. A few merchants of the opposite faith also went to Congress, particularly James G. King and Moses H. Grinnell, together with Grinnell's brother Joseph, after his return to New Bedford. The Grinnell and Goodhue concerns threw their forces of clerks, longshoremen, and sailors into the riotous elections of 1834 and were accused of discharging Jackson men. Daniel Webster was a frequent visitor in New York merchant homes and married the daughter of one merchant, Herman Le Roy, as his second wife.

As for the wealth of these merchants, Carl Schurz, arriving at New York in 1852, was told that \$150,000 was considered a fortune. Moses Y. Beach, editor of *The Sun*, set \$100,000 as the lower limit of "wealth" in the, not too accurate, series of annual handbooks which he published between 1845 and 1855. The Europeans who sneer at the Americans as a race of money-worshippers could scarcely find better ammunition than this primitive "Who's Who." The sole prerequisite for inclusion

in its columns was the estimated possession of at least \$100,000. Official, social, or intellectual achievements were inadequate unless, in the opinion of the editor, one's fortune ran into six figures. Such a book would be out of the question today, except perhaps for the semisecret works of Dun and Bradstreet, for each individual would be torn between considerations of pride on the one hand and of the collector of internal revenue on the other. Mid-century New York, however, seems to have found it the most interesting and significant method of listing the relative importance of its citizens.

If we may credit Beach's estimates, which in many cases seem too low, New York had fourteen millionaires in 1846. Nineteen others had more than a half million, while a further 137 were rated at more than a quarter million. The book altogether contained about a thousand names. As New York City at the time had about a half million inhabitants, one individual in 500 was thus placed in the "wealthy" class. By 1855, the number of reputed millionaires had risen to twenty. From the remarks which accompany most of the estimates, not always complimentary in their nature, it is possible to gain a fair idea of the sources of this wealth. Finance and industry accounted for relatively few, while shipbuilding was conspicuously absent. Commerce and real estate bulked most prominently and in many cases the fortunes, as in the case of Astor, represented a combination of the two. Land values in Manhattan were rising with extraordinary rapidity and Scoville claimed that Pelatiah Perit made more money from the casual purchase of some uptown lots than he did from his long and strenuous service as a Goodhue partner. Those fortunes represented the fruits of New York's commercial success for the lucky minority and a heavy portion of them had been amassed by Connecticut shrewdness exploiting the opportunities of the rising port.