CHAPTER I

THE REVIVAL OF COMMERCE

I. THE MEDITERRANEAN [1]

THE irruption of Islam into the basin of the Mediterranean in the seventh century closed that sea to the Christians of the West, but not to all Christians. The Tyrrhenian Sea, it is true, became a Moslem lake, but this was not the fate of the waters which bathed Southern Italy, or of the Adriatic or the Aegean Sea. We have already seen that in these latitudes the Byzantine fleets succeeded in repulsing the Arab invasion, and after the check which it experienced at the siege of Constantinople in 719, the Crescent re-appeared no more in the Bosphorus. But the struggle between the two warring faiths continued, with alternations of success and reverse. Masters of Africa, the Arabs were bent on seizing Sicily, which they completely dominated after the capture of Syracuse in 878; but that was the limit of their advance. The south Italian towns, Naples, Gaeta, Amalfi, and Salerno in the west, and Bari in the east, continued to recognise the Emperor at Constantinople, and so also did Venice, which, at the head of

[1] BIBLIOGRAPHY.—See the works of W. Heyd and A. Schaube, quoted below in the general bibliography, p. 227.—H. Kretschmayr, *Geschichte von Venedig*, Gotha, 1905–34, 3 vols.—R. Heynen, *Zur Entstehung des Kapitalismus in Venedig*, Stuttgart-Berlin, 1905.—L. Brentano, *Die byzantinische Volkswirtschaft*, in *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung*, etc., t. XLI, 1917.—H. Pirenne, *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade*, translated by Frank D. Halsey, Princeton, 1925.—French edition, *Les villes du Moyen Age*, Brussels, 1927.

the Adriatic, never had anything seriously to fear from the Saracen expansion.

The tie which continued to unite these ports to the Byzantine Empire was, it is true, not very strong, and it grew steadily weaker. The establishment of the Normans in Italy and Sicily (1029–91) definitely broke it as regards this region. Venice, over which the Carolingians had been unable to establish their control in the ninth century, had been all the more willing to continue under the authority of the Basileus, because he prudently refrained from exerting it, and allowed the town to be gradually transformed into an independent republic. For the rest, if the political relations of the Empire with its distant Italian annexations were not very active, it made amends by carrying on a very lively trade with them. In this respect, they moved in its orbit and, so to speak, turned their backs on the West and looked towards the East. The business of provisioning Constantinople, whose population numbered about a million inhabitants, kept up their exports, and in return the factories and bazaars of the capital furnished them with silks and spices which they could not do without.

For urban life, with all the luxury demands which it made, had not disappeared in the Byzantine Empire as it had done in that of the Carolingians. To pass from the latter to the former, was to pass into another world. Here, economic evolution had not been rudely interrupted by the advance of Islam, and an important maritime commerce continued to supply towns peopled with artisans and professional merchants. No more striking contrast could be imagined than that between Western Europe, where land was everything and commerce nothing, and Venice, a landless city, living only by trade.

Constantinople and the Christian ports of the East soon ceased to be the sole objective of the navigation of the Byzantine towns of Italy and Venice. The spirit of enterprise and the search for gain were too powerful and too

necessary to allow religious scruples to prevent them for very long from renewing their former business relations with Africa and Syria, although these were now in the power of the infidels. From the end of the ninth century connections were formed which grew steadily more active. The religion of their customers mattered little to the Italians, provided that they paid. The love of gain, which the Church condemned and stigmatised by the name of avarice, was manifest here in its most brutal form. The Venetians exported to the harems of Egypt and Syria young Slavs, whom they carried off or bought on the Dalmatian coast, and this traffic in "slaves"[1] unquestionably contributed quite as largely to their growing prosperity as did the slave trade of the eighteenth century to that of so many French and English shippers. To this was added the transport of timber and iron, with which the countries of Islam were unprovided, although there was no room for doubt that the timber would be used to build vessels and the iron to forge weapons which would be employed against Christians, perhaps even against the mariners of Venice. The merchant, here as always, could see nothing beyond his immediate profit, and bringing off a good business deal. It was in vain that the Pope threatened to excommunicate the sellers of Christian slaves, or that the Emperor prohibited the supply to infidels of articles capable of being employed in warfare. Venice, whither merchants in the ninth century had brought back from Alexandria the relics of St. Mark, went her own way, secure in their protection, and considered the steady progress of her wealth as the just reward of the veneration in which she held them.

That progress was, indeed, uninterrupted. By any and every means, the city of the lagoons devoted itself with astonishing energy and activity to advancing that maritime trade, which was the very condition of its existence. The entire population practised and depended on it, as on

[1] The word *slave* is, of course, simply the word *slav*.

the Continent men depended on the land. So serfdom, the inevitable consequence of the rural civilisation of the peasants of this time, was unknown in this city of sailors, artisans and merchants. The hazards of fortune alone established between them social differences independent of legal status. From very early times, commercial profits had created a class of rich traders, whose operations already present an incontestably capitalistic character. The *commenda* appeared in the tenth century, obviously borrowed from the practices of Byzantine customary law.

The use of writing, indispensable to every business movement of any importance, bears indisputable witness to economic progress. A "clerk" formed part of the equipment of every merchant ship sailing abroad and from this we can infer that shipowners themselves had quickly learned to keep accounts and to despatch letters to their correspondents.[1] No reproach, it should be mentioned, was here attached to the business of large-scale commerce. The most important families engaged in it. The doges themselves set the example and were doing so as early as the middle of the ninth century, which seems almost incredible in contemporaries of Lewis the Pious. In 1007, Peter II Orseolo set apart for charitable institutions the profits from a sum of 1,250 livres which he had invested in business. At the end of the eleventh century, the city was full of wealthy patricians, owners of a quantity of shares in ships (*sortes*), whose shops and landing-places (*stationes*) stood close together along the rivo-alto and the quays, which stretched further and further along the isles of the lagoon.

Venice was then already a great maritime power. She had succeeded before 1100 in ridding the Adriatic of the Dalmatian pirates who infested it and in establishing her hegemony firmly on the whole of the east coast of that sea,

[1] Heynen, *op. cit.*, p. 82. The earliest example of this practice which can be quoted is in 1110. But it was obviously older.

which she considered as her domain and which remained hers for centuries. In order to preserve control over its entrance to the Mediterranean, she had helped the Byzantine fleet in 1002 to expel the Saracens from Bari. Seventy years later, when the Norman State, set up by Robert Guiscard in southern Italy, threatened her with a maritime competition as dangerous to herself as to the Greek Empire, she allied herself once more with the latter to fight and overcome the peril. After the death of Robert (1076) the dream of Mediterranean expansion conceived by this prince of genius was doomed. The war turned out to the advantage of Venice and with the same stroke she rid herself of the rivalry of Naples, Gaeta, Salerno, and, above all, Amalfi. These cities, which had been absorbed by the Norman State, were dragged down with it, and henceforth abandoned the markets of Constantinople and the East to the Venetians.

For that matter they had already enjoyed an indisputable superiority there for a long time. In 992 the doge, Pietro II Orseolo, had obtained a chrysobull from the Emperors Basil and Constantine freeing the Venetian boats from the customs which they had hitherto had to pay at Abydos. Relations were so active between the port of the lagoons and that of the Bosphorus that a Venetian colony was established in the latter, with judicial privileges ratified by the emperors. In the following years, other establishments were founded at Laodicea, Antioch, Mamistra, Adana, Tarsus, Satalia, Ephesus, Chios, Phocaea, Selembria, Heraclea, Rodosto, Andrinople, Salonica, Demetrias, Athens, Thebes, Coron, Modon, and Corfu. At all points of the Empire Venice possessed bases of supplies and penetration, which secured her commercial domination. From the end of the eleventh century she may be said to have held a practical monopoly of transport in all the provinces of Europe and Asia still possessed by the rulers of Constantinople.

Nor did the emperors try to oppose a situation with which it was to their own disadvantage to quarrel. The privilege accorded to the doge in May 1082 by Alexis Comnenus may be regarded as the final consecration of Venetian superiority in the Byzantine empire. Henceforth the Venetians were exempt, throughout the Empire, from every kind of commercial tax, and were thus favoured above the Emperor's own subjects. The stipulation that they should continue to pay duties on foreign merchandise is final proof that thenceforth the whole of the maritime trade of the eastern end of the Mediterranean was in their hands. For, though we are rather badly informed in regard to the progress of their trade with the Moslem lands from the tenth century, everything indicates that it developed in the same way, if not entirely with the same vigour.

II. THE NORTH SEA AND THE BALTIC SEA [1]

The two inland seas, the North Sea and the Baltic, which bathe the coasts of Northern Europe, as the Mediterranean, to which they form a pendant, bathes its southern coasts, presented, from the middle of the ninth century to the end of the eleventh, a spectacle which, profoundly as it differs from that which we have been describing, resembles it nevertheless in one essential character. For here, too, on the coast and, so to speak, on the very edge of Europe, we find a maritime and commercial activity which is in striking contrast with the agricultural economy of the Continent.

[1] BIBLIOGRAPHY.—A. Bugge, *Die nordeuropäischen Verkehrswege im frühen Mittelalter und die Bedeutung der Wikinger für die Entwickelung des europäischen Handels und der europäischen Schiffahrt*, in *Vierteljahrschrift für Social-und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, t. IV, 1906.—W. Vogel, *Geschichte der deutschen Seeschiffahrt*, Berlin, 1925.—J. Kulischer, *Russische Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, t. I, Berlin, 1915.—E. Babelon, *Du commerce des Arabes dans le nord de l'Europe avant des croisades*, in *Athénée oriental*, Paris, 1882.—O. Montelius, *Kulturgeschichte Schwedens*, Leipzig, 1906.—K. T. Strasser, *Wikinger und Normannen*, Hamburg, 1928.

We have already seen that the activity of the ports of Quentovic and Duurstede did not survive the Viking invasion of the ninth century. Lacking a fleet, the Carolingian Empire was unable to defend itself against the Northern barbarians as the Byzantine Empire had defended itself against the Moslems. Its weakness had been only too well exploited by the energetic Scandinavians who, for more than half a century, subjected it to annual raids, not only by way of the estuaries of the northern rivers but also by those of the Atlantic. But the Northmen must not be represented as mere pillagers. Masters of the sea, they could and did combine their aggressions. Their object was not and could not be conquest; though they won a few settlements on the Continent and in the British Isles, that was the most they could do. But the incursions which they pushed so deeply into the mainland were essentially great razzias. Their organisation was obviously carefully planned; they all set off from a fortified camp as centre, where booty collected from neighbouring regions was piled up while awaiting transport to Denmark or Norway. The Vikings, in fact, were pirates, and piracy is the first stage of commerce. So true is this that from the end of the ninth century, when their raids ceased, they simply became merchants.

To understand Scandinavian expansion, however, it must also be remembered that it was not directed exclusively towards the West. While the Danes and the Norwegians threw themselves on the Carolingian Empire, England, Scotland and Ireland, their neighbours, the Swedes, turned to Russia. From our point of view it is immaterial whether they had been asked for assistance by the Slav princes in the valley of the Dnieper in their struggle with the Patzinaks, or whether, in search of gain, they made a spontaneous thrust towards the Byzantine shores of the Black Sea, by the great natural route which from remotest times had been followed by Greek merchants from the

Chersonese and the Sea of Azov seeking Baltic amber. It is enough to state that from the middle of the ninth century they established entrenched camps along the Dnieper and its tributaries, similar to those that their Danish and Norwegian brothers were establishing at the same date in the basins of the Scheldt, the Meuse and the Seine. Constructed at so great a distance from their mother country, these *enceintes* or, to use the Slavonic word, *gorods*, became permanent fortresses, from which the invaders dominated and exploited the not very warlike people who surrounded them. It was there that they amassed the tribute imposed on the vanquished and the slaves taken from among them, as well as the honey and furs which they obtained from the virgin forests. But before long, the position which they occupied inevitably led them to engage in trade.

Southern Russia, where they had installed themselves, lay, in fact, between two areas of superior civilisation. To the east, beyond the Caspian Sea, stretched the caliphate of Baghdad, to the south, the Black Sea bathed the shores of the Byzantine Empire and led to Constantinople. The Scandinavians in the basin of the Dnieper at once felt this double attraction. The Arab, Jewish and Byzantine merchants, who were already frequenting this region before their arrival, showed them a road which they were more than ready to follow. The country conquered by them put at their disposal products particularly suited for trade with rich empires leading a life of refinement: honey, furs and above all slaves, the demand for whom from Moslem harems, as well as from the great estates, promised the same high profits which tempted the Venetians.

Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in the tenth century, has left us a picture of the Scandinavians, or rather the Russians (to give them the name by which the Slavs knew them), assembling their boats each year at Kiev, after the melting of the ice. The flotilla slowly descended the Dnieper, whose innumerable rapids presented obstacles which had to be

got round by towing the barks along the bank.[1] Having reached the sea, it sailed along the coast to Constantinople, the goal of the long and perilous voyage. There the Russians possessed a special quarter, and their trade with the great city was regulated by treaties, of which the oldest dated back to the ninth century. The influence which she soon came to exercise over them is well known. It was from her that they received Christianity (957–1015); it was from her that they borrowed their art, their writing, the use of money and a good part of their organisation. There can be no more striking witness to the importance of the trade they kept up with the Bosphorus. At the same time they were making their way, through the valley of the Volga, to the Caspian Sea and trafficking with the Jewish and Arab merchants who frequented its ports.

But their activity was not confined to this. They exported merchandise of all sorts to the north, spices, wines, silks, goldsmiths' work, etc., which they obtained in exchange for their honey, furs and slaves. The astonishing number of Arab and Byzantine coins discovered in Russia mark, as with the silver point of a compass, the trade routes which crossed it, converging either from the course of the Volga, or from that of the Dnieper to the Dvina and the lakes which are attached to the Gulf of Bothnia. There, the commerce from the Caspian and Black Seas joined the Baltic and continued through it. Across the immense stretches of continental Russia Scandinavian navigation was thus linked with the oriental world.[2] The island of Gothland, in which there have been dug up even more hoards of Islamic and Greek coins than have been found

[1] W. Thomson, *Der Ursprung des russischen Staates*, p. 55 *et seq.* (Gotha, 1879). *Cf.* E. J. Arne, *La Suède et l'Orient* (Upsala, Paris, Leipzig, 1914, in the *Archives d'études orientales*, ed. by J. A. Lundell).

[2] For the finds of Arab and Byzantine coins in Russia, see E. J. Arne, *op. cit.*, and R. Vasmer, *Ein im Dorfe Staryi Dedin in Weissrussland gemachte Fund Kufischer Münzen* (*Fornvännen* of the Academy of History of Stockholm, 1929).

in Russia, appears to have been the great entrepôt of this traffic and its point of contact with Northern Europe. It is tempting to believe that the booty gathered by the Northmen in England and France was there exchanged for the precious goods brought from Russia.

In any case, it is impossible to doubt the part played by Scandinavia as a middleman, when we consider the astonishing progress of its navigation in the tenth and eleventh centuries, that is to say, during the period which succeeded the invasion of the Danes and Norwegians in the West. It is quite clear that they ceased to be pirates and became merchants after the example of their Swedish brothers; barbarian merchants, perhaps, who were always ready to become pirates again on the slightest occasion, but merchants all the same, and what is more, merchants navigating the high seas.[1] Their deckless ships now carried the articles of trade which came to Gothland far and wide. Trading posts were founded on the Swedish coast and on the shores, still Slavonic at this period, of the extensive littoral which lay between the Elbe and the Vistula; in the south of Denmark, excavations made quite recently at Haithabu (north of Kiel) have revealed the existence of an emporium, whose ruins bear witness to its importance during the course of the eleventh century.[2] This commercial activity naturally extended to the harbours of the North Sea, well known to the northern navigators who had devastated its hinterland for so long. Hamburg on the Elbe and Tiel on the Waal became, in the tenth century, ports actively frequented by the Northmen's ships. England received a still greater number of them and the trade carried on by the Danes conferred on them a superiority which the Anglo-Saxons could not resist and

[1] Interesting details on Swedish commerce in the ninth century are to be found in E. de Moreau, *Saint Anschaire*, Louvain, 1930.

[2] O. Scheel and P. Paulsen, *Quellen zur Frage Schleswig-Haithabu im Rahmen der fränkischen, sächsischen und nordischen Beziehungen* (Kiel, 1930).

which reached its height when Canute the Great (1017–35) united England, Denmark and Norway in an ephemeral empire. The trade which was thus carried on from the mouths of the Thames and the Rhine to that of the Dvina and the Gulf of Bothnia is attested by the discovery of English, Flemish and German coins in the basins of the Baltic and North Sea. The Scandinavian sagas, in spite of the late date at which they were written down, still preserve the memory of the risks run by the intrepid seamen, who ventured to far-away Iceland and Greenland. Daring young men went to join their fellow-countrymen in Southern Russia; Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians are found at Constantinople in the bodyguard of the emperors. In short, the Nordic people gave proof at this time of an energy and a spirit of enterprise which reminds us of the Greeks in the Homeric era. Their art was characterised by a barbarous originality, which nevertheless betrays the influence of that East with which their commerce brought them into communication. But the energy which they displayed could have no future. Too few numerically to retain the mastery over the immense expanses where their ships had sailed, they had to yield place to more powerful rivals, when the extension of commerce to the Continent brought about a revival of navigation to compete with their own.

III. THE REVIVAL OF COMMERCE [1]

Continental Europe was bound soon to feel the force of the two great commercial movements which appeared on

[1] BIBLIOGRAPHY.—See the works of W. Heyd, A. Schaube, H. Kretschmayr, H. Pirenne cited in Bib., p. 16.—C. Manfroni, *Storia della marina italiana dalle invasione barbariche al trattato di Ninteo*, t. I, Livourne, 1899.—G. Caro, *Genua und die Mächte am Mittelmeer*, Halle, 1895–9, 2 vols.—G. J. Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois dans la mer Noire au XIIIe siècle*, Paris, 1929.—A. E. Sayous, *Le rôle du capital dans la vie locale et le commerce extérieur de Venise entre 1050 et 1150*, in the *Revue belge de philol. et d'histoire*,

its borders, the one in the Western Mediterranean and the Adriatic, the other in the Baltic and the North Sea. Responding as it does to the craving for adventure and the love of gain which are inherent in human nature, commerce is essentially contagious. Moreover, it is by nature so all-pervasive that it necessarily imposes itself on the very people whom it exploits. Indeed it depends on them by reason of the relationship of exchange which it sets up and the needs which it creates, while it is impossible to conceive of commerce without agriculture, since it is sterile itself and needs agriculture to supply food for those whom it employs and enriches.

This ineluctable necessity was imposed on Venice from its very foundation on the sandy islets of a lagoon, on which nothing would grow. In order to procure a livelihood its first inhabitants had been forced to exchange salt and fish with their continental neighbours for the corn, wine and meat which they could not have obtained otherwise. But this primitive exchange inevitably developed, as commerce made the town richer and more populous, and at the same time increased its demands and sharpened its enterprise. At the end of the ninth century, it was already commandeering the territory of Verona and above all the valley

t. XIII, 1934.—E. H. Byrne, *Genoese Shipping in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1930.—R. Davidsohn, *Geschichte von Florenz*, t. I, Berlin, 1896.—A. Sayous, *Le commerce des Européens à Tunis depuis le XIIe siècle*, Paris, 1929.—E. H. Byrne, *Genoese Colonies in Syria*, in *The Crusades and other Historical Essays presented to D. C. Munro*, New York, 1928.—L. de Mas-Latrie, *Traités de paix et de commerce . . . concernant les relations des chrétiens avec les Arabes de l'Afrique septentrionale au Moyen Age*, Paris, 1866.—H. Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, t. I, 5th ed., Brussels, 1929.—R. Häpke, *Brügges Entwickelung zum mittelalterlichen Weltmarkt*, Berlin, 1908.—H. Pirenne, *Draps de Frise ou draps de Flandre?*, see above, p. 6, n. 2.—R. L. Reynolds, *Merchants of Arras and the Overland Trade with Genoa*, in *Revue Belge de philol. et d'histoire*, t. IX, 1930.—*Id.*, *The Market for Northern Textiles in Genoa, 1179–1200*, *ibid.*, t. VIII, 1929.—F. Rousseau, *La Meuse et le pays mosan en Belgique*, in *Annales de la société archéologique de Namur*, t. XXXIX, 1930.

of the Po, which provided an easy avenue for penetration into Italy. A century later its relations had extended to a number of points on the coast and mainland: Pavia, Treviso, Vicenza, Ravenna, Cesena, Ancona, and many others.

It is clear that the Venetians, taking the practice of trade with them, acclimatised it, so to speak, wherever they went. Their merchants gradually found imitators. It is impossible, in the absence of evidence, to trace the growth of the seeds sown by commerce in the midst of the agricultural population. That growth was no doubt opposed by the Church, which was hostile to commerce, and nowhere were bishoprics more numerous and more powerful than south of the Alps. A curious episode in the life of St. Gerald of Aurillac (d. 909) bears striking witness to the incompatibility of the moral standards of the Church with the spirit of gain, that is to say, the business spirit. As this pious lord was returning from a pilgrimage to Rome, he met in Pavia some Venetian merchants, who asked him to buy oriental stuffs and spices. Now, he had himself purchased in Rome a magnificent pallium which he took the opportunity of showing to them, mentioning how much he had paid for it. But when they congratulated him on his good bargain, since according to them the pallium would have cost considerably more in Constantinople, Gerald, reproaching himself for having defrauded the vendor, hastened to forward him the difference, considering that he could not take advantage of it without falling into the sin of avarice.[1]

This anecdote admirably illustrates the moral conflict which the revival of commerce was to provoke everywhere, and which indeed never ceased during the whole of the Middle Ages. From the beginning to the end the Church

[1] *S. Geraldi comitis, Aureliaci fundatoris Vita* (written by Odo of Cluny, c. 925), in Migne, *Patrologia latina*, t. CXXXIII, col. 658, on which see F. L. Ganshof in *Mélanges Iorga*, p. 295 (Paris, 1933).

continued to regard commercial profits as a danger to salvation. Its ascetic ideal, which was perfectly suited to an agricultural civilisation, made it always suspicious of social changes, which it could not prevent and to which necessity even compelled it to submit, but to which it was never openly reconciled. Its prohibition of interest was to weigh heavily on the economic life of later centuries. It prevented the merchants from growing rich with a free conscience and from reconciling the practice of business with the prescripts of religion. For proof of this we need only read the many wills of bankers and speculators, directing that the poor whom they had defrauded should be repaid and bequeathing to the clergy a part of the property which at the bottom of their hearts they felt to be ill-gotten. If they could not refrain from sin, at least their faith remained unshaken and they counted on it to obtain absolution for them on the day of judgment.

It must, however, be recognised that this ardent faith contributed largely all the same to economic expansion in the West. It played a great part when the Pisans and Genoese took the offensive against Islam at the beginning of the eleventh century. Unlike the Venetians, in whom the spirit of gain ruled supreme, these cities were impelled by hatred of the infidel and by enterprise alike to wrest the mastery of the Tyrrhennian Sea from the Saracens. An unending struggle was waged between the two religions face to face there. In the beginning it had constantly turned to the advantage of the Mohammedans; in 935, and again in 1004, they had pillaged Pisa, doubtless with the intention of suppressing the first feeble efforts at maritime expansion there. But the Pisans were determined to expand, and the following year they defeated a Saracen fleet in the Straits of Messina. The enemy had their revenge by invading and destroying their bold competitors' port, but the Pisans, exhorted by the popes and lured by their adversary's wealth, resolved to continue a war which

was at once religious and commercial. With the Genoese, they attacked Sardinia and succeeded in establishing themselves there in 1015. In 1034, emboldened by success, they ventured as far as the coast of Africa and for a time made themselves masters of Bona. A little later, their merchants began to frequent Sicily and it was to protect them that in 1052 a Pisan fleet forced the entrance of the port of Palermo and destroyed its arsenal.

From that time fortune turned in favour of the Christians. An expedition, to which the presence of the Bishop of Modena added all the prestige of the Church, was directed against Mehdia in 1087. The sailors saw in the sky the archangel Michael and St. Peter leading them into battle. They took the town, massacred "the priests of Mohammed," pillaged the mosque and imposed an advantageous commercial treaty on the vanquished. The Cathedral of Pisa, built after this triumph, symbolises to perfection both the faith of the Pisans and the wealth which their victories were beginning to bring them. Pillars, precious marbles, gold and silver ornaments, curtains of purple and gold carried away from Palermo and Mehdia adorned it. It is as though they wished to symbolise by its splendour the revenge of the Christians upon the Saracens, whose wealth was a thing of scandal and of envy.[1]

Islam fell back before the Christian counter-attack and lost its hold over the Tyrrhenian Sea, which had been a Moslem lake. The launching of the first crusade in 1096 was to mark its definite overthrow. In 1097, the Genoese sent a fleet with reinforcements and supplies to the Crusaders besieging Antioch, and the following year obtained from Bohemond of Tarento a *fondaco* with commercial privileges, which was the first of a long series to be obtained in due course by the maritime towns on the coast of the Holy Land. After the capture of Jerusalem the relations of Genoa with the Eastern Mediterranean increased rapidly. In 1104, she possessed a colony at St. John of Acre to which King Baldwin ceded a third of the town, a street by the sea and the rent of six hundred gold bezants out of the customs. Venice set up counting-houses at Tyre, Sidon, St. John of Acre and Kaffa. Pisa devoted herself with growing energy to provisioning the states founded in Syria by the crusaders. Moreover, the commercial revival which had begun on the coast of Italy soon reached that of Provence. In 1136, Marseilles already occupied an important place, her citizens having founded a settlement at St. John of Acre. From the other side of the Gulf of Lyons, Barcelona was already ushering in her future prosperity, and, just as in former times the Moslems had engaged in the Christian slave trade, so Moorish slaves captured in Spain furnished her with one article of her traffic.

[1] A spirited contemporary poem published by E. Du Méril, *Poësies populaires latines du Moyen Age*, p. 251 (Paris, 1847), enables us to appreciate the large part played by religious enthusiasm in Pisan expansion.

Thus the whole Mediterranean was opened, or rather re-opened, to western navigation. As in the time of Rome, communications were established from one end to the other of this essentially European sea. The exploitation of its waters by Islam was at an end. The Christians had recaptured the islands whose possession guaranteed its mastery, Sardinia in 1022, Corsica in 1091, Sicily in 1058–90. It matters little that the Turks soon destroyed the ephemeral principalities founded by the Crusaders, that the country of Edessa was reconquered by the Crescent in 1144 and Damascus in 1154, that Saladin took Aleppo in 1183, then, in 1187, Acre, Nazareth, Caesarea, Sidon, Beyrout, Ascalon, and finally Jerusalem, and that in spite of all their efforts the Christians never recovered until our own day the domination of Syria which they had won in the first crusade. However important it may be

in general history, and however heavily it has weighed since on the destinies of the world, the Turkish thrust did not shake the position that the Italian towns had gained in the Levant. The new offensive of Islam extended only to the mainland. The Turks had no fleet and did not attempt to create one. Far from harming them, Italian trade on the coasts of Asia Minor was to their advantage, for by it the spices brought by the caravans of China and India to Syria continued to be carried to the West by Italian ships. Nothing could have been more profitable than the persistence of a navigation which served to maintain the economic activity of the Turkish and Mongolian lands.

Undoubtedly the Italian fleets continued to lend an increasingly active co-operation to the crusades down to the day when the defeat of St. Louis at Tunis (1270) brought them to an end and marked a definite check both in the political and in the religious sphere. It would not be untrue to say that without the support of Venice, Pisa and Genoa, it would have been impossible to persist so long in these fruitless enterprises. Only the first crusade was carried out by the land route, the transport by sea of masses of men going to Jerusalem being at that time still unfeasible. The Italian ships contributed nothing beyond supplies for the armies. But almost immediately the demands of the crusaders upon their navigation galvanised it into incredible life and vigour. The profits realised by army contractors have been immense in all ages, and it cannot be doubted that the Venetians, Pisans, Genoese and Provençals, finding themselves suddenly rich, hastened to put new ships on their stocks. The establishment of the crusading states in Syria ensured the regular use of these means of transport, without which the Franks would have been unable to maintain themselves in the East. Thus they were prodigal of privileges to the towns whose services were indispensable to them, and from the end of the

eleventh century helped them to set up their *fondaci* and *échelles* all along the coasts of Palestine and Asia Minor, and of the Aegean islands. Before long, indeed, they began to make use of them for military operations. During the second crusade the Italian boats carried the troops of Louis VII and Conrad III along the coast of Anatolia, to the Holy Land. The third crusade furnishes a characteristic proof of the growth of Italian and Provençal tonnage, which was considerable enough to transport the troops of Richard Coeur de Lion and Philip Augustus. From then onwards, all subsequent expeditions were carried out exclusively by the sea route. It is well known how the Venetians exploited the situation by diverting to Constantinople the fleet equipped for the fourth crusade, whose commanders, unable to pay the agreed price for the passage, were compelled to abandon the direction of the whole enterprise to them and how they finally used the fleet for the siege and capture of Constantinople. The ephemeral Latin empire then set up on the shores of the Bosphorus was largely a creation of Venetian policy, and when it disappeared (1261), Venice had to resign herself to allowing the Genoese, who, in order to outwit her, had worked for the restoration of Michael Palaeologus, to dispute with her the economic supremacy of the Levant.

Thus the one lasting and essential result of the crusades was to give the Italian towns, and in a less degree, those of Provence and Catalonia, the mastery of the Mediterranean. Though they did not succeed in wresting the holy places from Islam, and though no more than a few places on the coast of Asia Minor and in the islands remained of their early conquests, at least they enabled Western Europe not only to monopolise the whole trade from the Bosphorus and Syria to the Straits of Gibraltar, but to develop there an economic and strictly capitalistic activity which was gradually to communicate itself to all the lands north of the Alps.

Islam did not react against this triumphant advance until the fifteenth century and the helpless Byzantine Empire was forced to submit to it. From the beginning of the twelfth century its supremacy in the eastern Mediterranean was at an end. It rapidly fell under the influence of the maritime towns, which now monopolised its import and export trade. Sometimes in an endeavour to shake off their yoke, the emperor tried to play off the Pisans and Genoese against the Venetians, or allowed the populace to massacre the detestable foreigners indiscriminately, as, for example, in 1182. But he could not do without them, and willy-nilly had to abandon Byzantine commerce to them, even more completely than Spain in the seventeenth century was to abandon hers to the Dutch, the English and the French.

The revival of maritime commerce was accompanied by its rapid penetration inland. Not only was agriculture stimulated by the demand for its produce and transformed by the exchange economy of which it now became a part, but a new export industry was born. In both directions the lead was taken by the Lombard plain, admirably situated as it was between the powerful commercial centres of Venice, Pisa and Genoa. Country and towns shared equally in production, the former with its grain and wines, the latter with their linen and woollen stuffs. As early as the twelfth century Lucca was manufacturing silk fabrics, the raw material for which came to her by sea. In Tuscany, Sienna and Florence communicated with Pisa by the valley of the Arno and shared in her prosperity. Behind Genoa the movement spread to the coast of the Gulf of Lyons and reached the basin of the Rhône. The ports of Marseilles, Montpellier and Narbonne traded all over Provence as did Barcelona over Catalonia. So vigorous was the trade of the maritime countries that in the eleventh century it began to spread northwards through the Alpine passes, which the Saracens of Garde-Frainet had blocked

so dangerously in the tenth century. From Venice it reached Germany by the Brenner, the Saône and Rhine valleys by the Septimer and St. Bernard, and the Rhône valley by Mont Cenis. The St. Gothard was long impassable, but eventually a suspension bridge was slung from rock to rock across the gorge and it too became a route of transit.[1] In the second half of the eleventh century we hear of Italians in France. It is more than probable that they were already frequenting the fairs of Champagne at this period and met there the flow of commerce from the coast of Flanders.[2]

Indeed, the economic revival which was in process of achievement in the Mediterranean, was matched on the shores of the North Sea by a revival which, if it differed from it in extent and character, proceeded from the same causes and produced the same result. As we have seen above, the Northmen had established, in the estuary formed by the arms of the Rhine, the Meuse and the Scheldt, a mart which soon attracted trade from far and wide along these rivers. In the eleventh century Tiel already appears as a commercial centre frequented by many merchants and in communication by way of the Rhine valley with Cologne and Mainz, which now show signs of considerable activity. No other proof is needed

[1] This is the first suspension bridge of whose existence we know. It probably dates from the beginning of the thirteenth century.

[2] See the letter written by Gregory VII to the archbishops and bishops of France, on Sept. 10th, 1074, condemning the conduct of King Philip I, accusing him of having robbed the "mercatoribus qui de multis terrarum partibus ad forum quoddam in Francia nuper convenerant . . . more praedonis infinitam pecuniam" (E. Caspar, *Das* Register Gregors VII, *M.M.G.G.*, p. 131). In a second letter the Pope calls the merchants "Italiae negociatores" (*ibid.*, p. 150); in a third, he speaks of "Italis et aliarum provinciarum mercatoribus" (*ibid.*, p. 168). His insistence may be considered as proof of the development of international commerce at that period. If, as A. Schaube, *op. cit.*, p. 91, thinks, the incident occurred at the unimportant fair of Lendit, it is difficult to explain the magnitude of the losses suffered by the merchants.

than the six hundred *mercatores opulentissimi* mentioned in 1074 in the first of those towns by Lampert of Hersfeld, although we may doubt the figure quoted and it is impossible to know what was the chronicler's standard of wealth.[1] At the same period, a trade developed in the Meuse valley, extending as far as Verdun by way of Maastricht, Liége, Huy and Dinant. The Scheldt enabled Cambrai, Valenciennes, Tournai, Ghent and Antwerp to communicate with the sea and the large rivers which emptied their waters among the Zealand Islands. The harbour of Bruges at the end of the Gulf of Zwyn, now silted up, was so convenient that from the end of the eleventh century ships began to put in there in preference to other ports, and the future glory of the city was thus ensured.

It is certain that at the end of the tenth century Scandinavian trade kept Flanders in close relations with the North Sea and Baltic countries. Coins struck by Counts Arnold II and Baldwin IV (965–1035) have been discovered in Denmark, Prussia and even Russia. Her trade was naturally still more active with England. The tariff of London tolls, between 991 and 1002, mentions the Flemings as being among the foreigners who traded in the city.[2] The Channel was less frequented than the North Sea, but there was a regular trade between the Norman and English coasts, by way of Rouen and the estuary of the Seine, and thence along the river to Paris and to the confines of Champagne and Burgundy. The Loire and the Garonne, by reason of their distance, did not experience until later the effects of the commercial revival in the northern seas.

Flanders soon came to occupy a privileged position, which it was to keep until the end of the Middle Ages. Here we meet with a new factor, industry, which was nowhere else in operation at so early a date and with such

[1] *Lamperti Hersfeldensis opera*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, p. 192.
[2] F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, t. I, p. 232.

remarkable results. Already in the Celtic era, the Morini and Menapii in the valleys of the Lys and the Scheldt had been manufacturing the wool from the large flocks of sheep which they kept in that country of lush meadows. Their primitive cloth manufacture was perfected during the long Roman occupation, when their conquerors introduced them to the technical methods of the Mediterranean. So rapid was its progress that in the second century Flanders was exporting cloth as far as Italy.[1] The Franks, who invaded the region in the fifth century, continued the tradition of their predecessors. Until the coming of the Northmen in the ninth century, Frisian boatmen regularly carried cloths woven in Flanders along the rivers of the Low Countries; under the name of *pallia fresonica*, their beautiful colours made them so popular that Charlemagne could find nothing better to send as a gift to the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid.[2] The destruction of commerce by the Scandinavian invasions naturally interrupted this export. But when, in the course of the tenth century, the pillagers became traders whose boats reappeared on the Meuse and the Scheldt in quest of merchandise, the cloth manufacture found a market once again. The fineness of the cloths soon caused a demand for them along all the coasts frequented by the Northern seamen and, to meet that demand, their manufacture increased to proportions hitherto unattained. It was already so considerable that at the end of the tenth century native wool was insufficient for its needs, and wool had to be imported from England. The superior quality of English wool naturally improved that of the cloth, the sale of which increased as its fame grew. In the course of the twelfth century the whole of Flanders became a country of weavers and fullers. Cloth-making, which up till then had been carried on in the country, was concentrated in the merchant towns, which were founded

[1] Camille Julian, *Histoire de la Gaule*, t. II, p. 282 ff.
[2] H. Pirenne, *Draps de Frise ou draps de Flandre?*, see p. 6, n. 2.

on all sides and supplied an ever-growing commerce. It was cloth which created the nascent wealth of Ghent, Bruges, Ypres, Lille, Douai and Arras. Already an essential article of maritime trade, it now brought into existence an extremely important trade by the land routes. From the beginning of the twelfth century Flemish cloth was being taken by sea to the fair of Novgorod,[1] while the Italians were coming to Flanders to buy it in exchange for the spices, silks, and goldsmiths' work which they imported from south of the Alps. But the Flemings themselves frequented the famous fairs of Champagne, where, midway between the North Sea and the Alps, they met buyers from Lombardy and Tuscany. These carried Flemish cloth in enormous quantities to the port of Genoa, whence under the name of *panni francesi* they were taken by sea as far as the ports of the Levant.

Of course, Flanders was not the only place where cloth was manufactured. Weaving is by nature a domestic occupation, which is known to have existed from prehistoric times and is met with wherever there is wool, i.e., in all countries. It was only necessary to stimulate its production and perfect its technique for it to become a real industry. This was not neglected. In the thirteenth century, Genoese notarial instruments mention the names of a number of towns which were sending cloth to that port: Amiens, Beauvais, Cambrai, Liége, Montreuil, Provins, Tournai, Châlons, etc. Nevertheless, Flanders and soon afterwards its neighbour, Brabant, occupied an unrivalled place among their competitors. The proximity of England enabled them to obtain excellent wool on the best terms and in much larger quantities than the latter. In the thirteenth century the overwhelming superiority of the Flemish industry is reflected in the admiration which it inspired in foreigners. Throughout the history of

[1] H. Pirenne, *Draps d'Ypres à Novgorod au commencement du XIIe siècle*, in *Revue belge de philol. et d'histoire*, t. IX (1930), p. 563.

medieval Europe no other region presented this character of an industrial country which distinguished the basin of the Scheldt. It offers, in this respect, a contrast to the rest of Europe which brings to mind England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nowhere else was it possible to equal the finish, the flexibility, the softness and the colours of these fabrics. Flemish and Brabantine cloth was, indeed, a cloth *de luxe*, and it was this which made its success and assured its world-wide expansion. In an age when the means of transport were not sufficiently developed to be adaptable to the circulation of cheap and heavy goods, the first place in international commerce belonged to merchandise of great value and medium weight. In short, the success of Flemish cloths is to be explained, like that of spices, by their high price and the ease with which they could be exported.

In striking contrast to the Italian towns, Flanders and Brabant, as they became more industrialised, became also less interested in the maritime commerce for which their geographical situation seemed to have destined them. They abandoned it to the foreigners whom their industry attracted in ever-increasing numbers to the port of Bruges, Scandinavians in the eleventh century, and, later, Hansards. In this respect it is tempting to compare them with modern Belgium, in so far as it is permissible to compare the Middle Ages with our own times, taking into account their relative economic development. In the same territory once occupied by them, does not the Belgium of to-day present the same paradoxical spectacle of extraordinary industrial productivity combined with a relatively insignificant marine?