THE SOUTH SEA TRADE

(Commercium ad Mare Australe)

By John Alleyn (1695-1730)

Latin text and English translation
Commencium ad Mare Australe

John Alleyn (1695-1730)


The only differences between the two editions are that


2. in line 49, 1717 prints “cubilia” with an upper-case “C”.

3. in line 81, 1717 prints a colon instead of a semicolon after “Muneribus certat”.

Dum victos Gallorum animos, finitaque Belli
Tædia, & Europam composita Pace silentem
Læta Theatra sonant: Britonas generosa reliquit
Ambitio, secura Quies oblita laborum

Corda habet; & se jam faustum satis Anglia credit.

Non sic Harleio visum. Vir providus audet

Ulterior prodesse; in publica Comoda magni
Prodigus Ingenii: Tacita Ille in mente repostas
Res Patris propere evolvens, perque omnia Acumen

Indefessi Animi versans, nova Sceptræ remotis
Invenit in terris, aliumque ANNÆ indicat Orbem.

Defuncta bello Naves, ignobilis Ofā
Probara diu veritæ, obscūram sine laude Senectam
Ducere non ultra metuunt; sed munere digno

Omnæ, modo quæ pacarant, æquora visent,
Exauctæ Opibus, quos defendere, Britannos.

Jamque mari insultat Classis, fluctusque superbos
Spe plena agglomerans, fragrantia pone relinquit
Littora *Brasiliae*; vel divitis Ostia *Platae*

20
Contendit petere; aut *Patagonas* visere gestit
Prole Gigantea notos; vel praeterit aestum

*Lemarii*, & *lavae Chiles* allabitur oris.

Apparent procul, & nudata cacumina Montes

Attollunt moesti: ac veluti praedives Avarus

25
Inculta squallet facie, miserabile corpus
Horrida deformat Macies, & turpis Egestas
Mendaci ore sedet; Tali Regio ista videtur
Aspectu; non lata Seges, non Herba virescens
Triste solum vestit; non ridet fertilis Arbos,

30
Non ipsum infelix Lolium; nuda omnia circum,
Et tota est sterilis Tellus. Tamen intus abundat
Vis larga Argenti, & rudis Auri pondera crescunt.
Huc subeunt *Britones*, justaque cupidine lucri
Ardentes, alacri terras clamore salutant.

35
*Indigenae Australes* celsas accedere Puppes
Littore prospeciunt, & vim prohibere parati
Armis cuncta tenent: at cum venisse *Britannos*
Fama refert, tanto perculsi nomine, saltant
Horrendum; & positis jaculis, & corde feroci,

40
Certatim coeunt, oculisque & mentibus harent
Affixis; Roseasque genas, formosaque lustrant
Corpora, mirantes tanta dulcedine mistum
Terrem, Bellique decus. Nunc sanguine tintcis
*Hispano* gladiis dant Oscula; telaque palpant

45
Horrida; quasque modo trepidavit *Gallia* Cristas,
Attrahent blandi; per barbar a pectora surgit
Lætitia; usque adeo juvat aspectasse *Britannos*. 
Ast illi interea, quas sedes incolit Aurum,

Quam secreta sibi posuere cubilia Gazæ,

Quærere festinant prompti: delectat euntes

Sub pedibus crepitans Tellus, & tinnula Gleba

Vicinas enarret Opes; Stellata metallo

Saxa micant, tremuloque ardescit pulvere Campus.

Labitur exiguus juxta per devia rura

Rivulus, & ripas, quas flumine lambit, inaurat;

Letus adit miles, proprii languidus aestu,

Dumque sitim sedat, vaga lympha sub ore bibentis

Flavescit, ludique Aurum subtile per undas.

Talibus exercet sese novus Advena curis,

Et rasum vel versat humum, aut rimatur arenas,

Aut subit effractos montes, curvasque fodinas;

Aut nudum spectat fossorem viscera terræ

Diripere, & venas investigare sequaces;

Aut, alio versus, liquidum fluitare metallum,

Fornacesque stupet Nummis fervere futuris.

Interea expediunt Indi pretiosa Britannis

Munera, Amicitiae pignus; Donumque paratur

Magnificum Vitrici ANNÆ: Quid Fœmina fecit

Barbara Gens canit, atque incultis laudibus ANNAM,

Delicias Boreæ, celebrans, Commercia jungi

Optat, & inde novos sibi surgere spondet Honores.

Jamque omnes reserantur Opes, magnisque superbi

Hospitibus populi, latebris expromere gaudent

Divitiæ, veteresque ultimo tellure recludunt

Thesauros: & jam detracta monilia collo,

Dædaleas Plumas, & vasti Ponderis Aurum,

Argentumque ingens cumulant stipantque carinis.
Totos pande sinus Thamesis, læto excipe fluctu

Quas tibi Primitias Notus affert, Orbis Eoi

Invidia. Pro te nunc œculus Indus uterque

Muneribus certat; tua, luxus quicquid ubique est,

Unda vehit; Thamesique superbum cedere Gangem

Mœsta Aurora dolet. Seri gaude te Nepotes;

Immortelem aperit Thesaurum Harleius; & Austrum

Pandit inexhaustum. Vos vela tumentia, Belgæ,

Contra hite: & tanto ne fastu, Hispania, jactes

Tecta superba Lima. Britones miracula Chiles

Narrabunt proprie, & spernent juga fulva Potosi.

Anglia nunc, Armis positis, meliore Metallo

Vulnificum mutat Chalybem, crescitque vicissim

Ferro Auroque potens: duplici hoc Munimine tua

Perpetuum aut celebret Pacem, æternosve Triumphos.

Tu quoque luxurians nativo Nectare Tellus,

Chara mihi Patria, exultes; Tu debita jungas

Gaudia; Te posthac supremo in limite Regni

Non distare querar; non terminus Ultimus ANNÆ

Sceptri eris: Anglicum nunc ipsum respicis Austrum,

Teque Orbis medium video, Imperiique Britannæ.
THE SOUTH SEA TRADE

(Commercium ad Mare Australe)\(^1\)

By John Alleyn (1695-1730)\(^2\)

(Translated from the Latin by John Gilmore)

While with the Peace\(^3\) agreed the glad theatres tell of the conquered souls of the Gauls, and the end of war's horrors and the calm of Europe, great-souled ambition departs from Britain, safe repose takes possession of hearts forgetful of their labours, and England now believes herself fortunate enough.

Not so it seemed to Harley.\(^4\) The far-sighted man dares to be of further use, prodigal of genius in the public good: he in his silent mind speedily considering far-off things for

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\(^1\) Published in: *Academiae Oxoniensis Comitia Philologica In Theatro Sheldoniano Decimo Die Julii A.D. 1713. Celebrata: In Honorem Serenissimae Reginae Annae Pacificae* (Oxford, 1713 [unpaginated]).


The poem was written just before the conclusion of the treaty between England and Spain (13 July 1713). Its author was only 17 at the time.

\(^2\) The name appears as Alleyn in the *Musarum Anglicanarum Analecta*, but was generally spelt Alleyne. The family were descended from a Reynold Alleyn (or Allen) who was living in Barbados by 1630, when he was one of the members of Governor Hawley’s Council, and who died in the island in 1651.

John Alleyne, the writer of this poem, was the son of Reynold Alleyne (1672-1722) of Four Hills, Barbados, who was a Member of the Barbados House of Assembly. John Alleyne was born in Barbados, 23 December 1695, and matriculated at Magdalen College, Oxford, 14 January 1711/2. He had been admitted to the Middle Temple in 1710. He married the daughter of another Barbadian planter in London in 1718, and later returned to the island, where it is said that “although frequently pressed to take part in public affairs he declined to do so.” He died at Bath in England in 1730. His son Sir John Gay Alleyne (1724-1801) was for many years Speaker of the Barbados House of Assembly and one of the most prominent figures in Barbados, while one of his daughters, Rebecca Alleyne (1725-1764), married an English peer.


\(^3\) The Peace of Utrecht, which ended the War of the Spanish Succession. Two of the most important aspects were the treaty between England and France (31 March 1713) and that between England and Spain (13 July 1713).

\(^4\) Robert Harley (1661-1724), created Earl of Oxford, 23 May 1711, and Lord Treasurer, 29 May 1711, making him the leading figure in the government. At that point, Britain had been at war since 1701, and Harley, as the man responsible for securing a negotiated peace which appeared to bring great benefits to Britain, became immensely popular. In particular, the Treaty with Spain, which contained a number of provisions favouring English trade, was expected to produce enormous wealth and lead to the frenzy of speculation known as the South Sea Bubble, which finally collapsed in 1720. However, the Treaty was not a licence to exploit the mineral wealth of Chile, and John Alleyn’s poem is, to put it mildly, an exercise in hyperbole.
his country's good and reflecting upon all things with the cunning of his unwearied soul, he finds new sceptres in far off lands, and shows another world to Anna.  

Ships which have done with war, long fearful of the shame of ignoble ease, no longer dread inglorious old age, but adorned with a worthy duty they will behold the seas which they have now tamed, to increase exceedingly in wealth which defends Britain. And now the fleet leaps upon the sea, and joining the proud billows with a full hope, after it leaves the fragrant shores of Brazil either struggles to seek the harbour of the rich Plate, or strives to behold the Patagonians famous for their gigantic race, or passes Lemaire's strait, and glides towards the coast of golden Chile.

Far off appearing, sad mountains raise their barren tops: like some most wealthy miser who is filthy and unkempt, a horrid leanness deforms his wretched body, and shameful want sits on his lying face; just so that region seems: no glad harvest, no flourishing plants the sad soil clothes, no fertile tree smiles, not even wretched weeds; all around is bare and the whole earth is barren. Within, however, abounds a mighty store of silver, and pounds of raw gold grow. Here come the Britons burning with a just desire of gain, and hail the land with cheerful shout.

The southern natives gaze out from the shore as the tall ships sail in, and stand firm, ready to meet force with force, but when it is reported that the Britons are coming, struck by so great a name, they dance their savage dance, and casting aside their spears with bold hearts they eagerly approach, crowd round and stare and examine their rosy cheeks and handsome bodies, wondering that with so much beauty is mingled terror and the ornament of war. Now they kiss the swords dyed with Spanish blood, and caress their frightful weapons. The plumes which late caused Gaul to tremble they fondle with delight, joy swells within their savage breast, so much it gladdens them to look upon the Britons.

But they, meanwhile, eagerly hasten to enquire where Gold is to be found, where he has placed the secret chambers of his treasury. As they walk, the crackling earth beneath their feet delights them, and the tinkling soil declares wealth to be nearby.

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The intrigues of his rivals cost Harley the royal favour, and he was obliged to resign his office, 27 July 1714.

Anne, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, 1702-1714.

The passage between Tierra del Fuego and the Isla de los Estados, leading to Cape Horn. Discovered by a Dutch expedition commanded by Jacob Lemaire in 1616, it provided a better passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific than the strait to the north of Tierra del Fuego discovered by Magellan a century earlier.

Alleyn treats Chile in Latin as if it were a Greek noun, which allows him in the two places where it appears (lines 22 and 87) to use a Latin genitive which happens to be identical with the English one (Chiles = Chile's). This, and the similar trick he plays with the name of Potosi (below), probably impressed his original audience.

In the Latin, the "wretched weeds" (infelix Lolium), and the "barren" (sterilis) in the next line, echo Virgil, Georgics, 1, 154.

Note how Alleyn plays on the "Black Legend" of Spanish cruelty to the indigenous peoples of the Americas, and its frequent corollary, the claim that they were better treated by the English.
The sparkling rocks flash with metal, and the fields burn with quivering dust. A little rivulet glides through the wandering countryside and gilds the banks washed by its flow. The happy soldier comes, wearied by a closer beat; while he quenches his thirst, the flowing water glitters beneath his face as he drinks, and gold-dust plays beneath the ripples.

With such concerns the new-come stranger busies himself, turns up the red earth, or searches through the sands, or climbs the broken mountains with their hollow pits, or watches the naked miner tear up the bowels of the earth and search its wandering veins, or, looking elsewhere, wonders at the flow of liquid metal, and furnaces which blaze with future coin.

Meanwhile the Indians bring to the Britons precious gifts, a pledge of friendship, and a magnificent present is prepared for conquering Anna. The woman's deeds a savage race doth sing, and with their untutored praises celebrating Anna, darling of the North, Commerce chooses to be joined, promising herself new honours to arise from thence. And now all their wealth is revealed to the mighty guests of a proud people, they rejoice to bring forth riches from their hiding-places, and show ancient treasures to another world: and now with necklaces taken from round their throats, Daedalean plumes, and gold of enormous weight, and much silver, they heap up and load the ships.

Spread wide your reaches, O Thames, receive the first-fruits the South Wind brings you on the joyful tide, the envoy of the Eastern world. Zealous now for you both Indies contend in gifts; thine, whatever luxury, wherever it is, the sea brings; and the sad Dawn mourns that the proud Ganges yields to Thames. Rejoice, ye late-born grandsons: Harley opens an immortal treasury, and reveals an unexhausted South. Furl your swelling sails, ye Dutch; and do not vaunt with such vainglory, Spain, the proud roofs of Lima. Britons shall tell the wonders of their own Chile, and scorn the golden heights of Potosí. England now, her arms laid by, changing wounding steel

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10 The idea is that the sun is closer to the earth than in more temperate regions (e.g., Britain).

11 The adjective refers to the legend of Daedalus and Icarus, and seems to be introduced only in order to provide a classical epithet. Feathers were and are used in various forms of ornament by many Amerindian peoples, and this fact featured prominently in accounts by European writers from the earliest period of contact; see, for example, the references in Aphra Behn's Oroonoko (1688).

12 There is perhaps a pun here in the Latin: sinus means curves or hollows of any kind, and appears to be used here mainly in a geographical sense, but the Latin word could also refer to sails, or to purses. There is also an echo of Juvenal, Satires, I, 150.

13 That is, the East and the West Indies, a common expression in the 18th century, probably best known from its appearance in the title of the Abbé Raynal's Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des européens dans les deux înaes (1780). The Latin phrase used by Alleyn, Indus uterque, was also part of the motto used on the coat of arms of Jamaica during the colonial period: Indus uterque serviet uni, “Both the Indies will serve one [master].” This in turn echoes a phrase in Horace (Odes II, ii).

14 The East, personified.

15 A mountain in Bolivia, celebrated for its mines, not of gold, but of silver. Alleyn manages to introduce the name, unaltered, into his Latin by using it as a genitive.
for a better metal, and grows powerful by iron and by gold in turns: safe in this double rampart she shall celebrate perpetual peace, or everlasting triumphs.

Thou also, O land abounding in thy native nectar, Fatherland dear to me, rejoice; join in with gladness due; no more shall I complain you lie in the farthest reaches of the Kingdom, no more will you be the last point of Anna’s rule: Gaze now upon an English South – I see you the middle of the world and of the British empire.

16 Presumably cane-juice, rather than rum. Alleyn uses the word Nectar in the Latin; it can carry the idea of “anything sweet”, but it also implies “the drink of the gods.”