

THE SOUTH SEA TRADE

(Commercium ad Mare Australe)

By John Alleyn (1695-1730)

Latin text and English translation

Commercium ad Mare Australe

John Alleyn (1695-1730)

Text from: *Academiae Oxoniensis Comitium Philologica In Theatro Sheldoniano Decimo Die Julii A.D. 1713. Celebrata: In Honorem Serenissimae Reginae Annae Pacificae* (Oxonii, E Typographeo Clarendoniano, An. Dom. MDCCXIII [unpaginated]).

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The only differences between the two editions are that
(1) in 1713, the name and description of the author and his poem appears at the beginning of the volume in the “Ordo Comitiorum Philologicorum”, as

VII. Joh. Alleyn, Reynoldi Alleyn de Barbadoes Arm. fil. è Coll. Magd. Sup. Ord. Commens. *Commercium ad Mare Australe.* Carm. Heroico.

In the 1717 collection, the author’s name is given at the end of the poem as

Joh. Alleyn, Reynoldi Alleyn de Barbadoes
Arm. fil. Coll. Mag. Sup. Ord. Commens.

(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

5 Corda habet; & se jam faustam satis *Anglia* credit.

Non sic *Harleio* visum. Vir providus audet

Ulterius prodesse; in publica Commoda magni

Prodigus Ingenii: Tacita *Ille* in mente repostas

Res Patriæ propere evolvens, perque omnia Acumen

10 Indefessi Animi versans, nova Sceptra remotis

Invenit in terris, aliumque ANNÆ indicat Orbem.

Defunctæ bello Naves, ignobilis Otî

Probra diu veritæ, obscuram sine laude Senectam

Ducere non ultra metuunt; sed munere digno

15 Ornata, modo quæ pacarant, æquora visent,

Exaucturæ 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 præterit æstum
Lemarii, & flavæ *Chiles* allabitur oris.
Apparent procul, & nudata cacumina Montes
Attollunt mœsti: ac veluti prædives Avarus
25 Inculta squallet facie, miserabile corpus
Horrida deformat Macies, & turpis Egestas
Mendaci ore sedet; Tali Regio ista videtur
Aspectu; non læta 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 Indigenæ *Australes* celsas accedere Puppes
Littore prospiciunt, & vim prohibere parati
Armis cuncta tenent: at cum venisse *Britannos*
Fama refert, tanto percussi nomine, saltant
Horrendum; & positis jaculis, & corde feroci,
40 Certatim coeunt, oculisque & mentibus hærent
Affixis; Roseasque genas, formosaque lustrant
Corpora, mirantes tanta dulcedine mistum
Terrorem, Bellique decus. Nunc sanguine tinctis
Hispano gladiis dant Oscula; telaque palpant
45 Horrida; quasque modo trepidavit *Gallia* Cristas,
Attrectant blandi; per barbara pectora surgit
Lætitia; usque adeo juvat aspectasse *Britannos*.

Ast illi interea, quas sedes incolit Aurum,
Quam secreta sibi posuere cubilia Gazæ,
50 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
55 Rivulus, & ripas, quas flumine lambit, inaurat;
Lætus adit miles, propriori languidus æstu,
Dumque sitim sedat, vaga lymphæ sub ore bibentis
Flavescit, luditque Aurum subtile per undas.

Talibus exercet sese novus Advena curis,
60 Et rusam vel versat humum, aut rimatur arenas,
Aut subit effractus montes, curvasque fodinas;
Aut nudum spectat fossorem viscera terræ
Diripere, & venas investigare sequaces;
Aut, alio versus, liquidum fluitare metallum,
65 Fornacesque stupet Nummis fervere futuris.

Interea expediunt *Indi* pretiosa *Britannis*
Munera, Amicitiaë pignus; Donumque paratur
Magnificum Vitrici ANNÆ: Quid Fœmina fecit
Barbara Gens canit, atque incultis laudibus ANNAM,
70 Delicias Boreæ, celebrans, Commercia jungi
Optat, & inde novos sibi surgere spondet Honores.
Jamque omnes reserantur Opes, magnisque superbi
Hospitibus populi, latebris expromere gaudent
Divitias, veteresque ultro tellure recludunt
75 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*

80

Invidiam. Pro te nunc æmulus *Indus* uterque

Muneribus certat; tua, luxus quicquid ubique est,

Unda vehit; *Thamesique* superbum cedere *Gangem*

Mœsta *Aurora* dolet. Seri gaudete Nepotes;

Immortalem aperit Thesaurum *Harleius*; & Austrum

85

Pandit inexhaustum. Vos vela tumentia, *Belgæ*,

Contrahite: & tanto ne fastu, *Hispania*, jactes

Tecta superba *Limæ*. *Britones* miracula *Chiles*

Narrabunt propriæ, & spernent juga fulva *Potosi*.

Anglia nunc, Armis positis, meliore Metallo

90

Vulnificum mutat Chalybem, crescitque vicissim

Ferro Auroque potens: duplici hoc Munimine tuta

Perpetuam aut celebret *Pacem*, æternosve Triumphos.

Tu quoque luxurians nativo Nectare Tellus,

Chara mihi Patria, exultes; Tu debita jungas

95

Gaudia; Te posthac supremo in limite Regni

Non distare querar; non terminus Ultimus ANNÆ

Sceptri eris: *Angliacum* nunc ipsum respicis *Austrum*,

Teque Orbis mediam video, Imperiique *Britanni*.

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 Peace³ 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 farseeing 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

¹ Published in: *Academiae Oxoniensis Comititia Philologica In Theatro Sheldoniano Decimo Die Julii A.D. 1713. Celebrata: In Honorem Serenissimae Reginae Annæ Pacificæ* (Oxford, 1713 [unpaginated]).

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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 Alleyne (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 Alleyn(e), 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.

Genealogical information about the Alleynes may be found in a series of articles by Louise R. Allen originally published in the *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* and collected in James C. Brandow, comp., *Genealogies of Barbados Families* (Baltimore, 1983). See also: Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses ... 1500-1714* (Oxford, 1891), I, 17; H. A. C. Sturgess, comp., *Register of Admissions to the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple: From the Fifteenth Century to the year 1944* (3 vols., London, 1949), I, 266.

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.⁵

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 strait⁶, and glides towards the coast of golden Chile⁷.

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 weeds⁸; 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 blood⁹, 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.

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

⁵ Anne, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, 1702-1714.

⁶ 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 straits to the north of Tierra del Fuego discovered by Magellan a century earlier.

⁷ 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.

⁸ In the Latin, the "wretched weeds" (*infelix Lolium*), and the "barren" (*sterilis*) in the next line, echo Virgil, *Georgics*, I, 154.

⁹ 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 heat¹⁰: 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 plumes¹¹, and gold of enormous weight, and much silver, they heap up and load the ships.

Spread wide your reaches¹², O Thames, receive the first-fruits the South Wind brings you on the joyful tide, the envy of the Eastern world. Zealous now for you both Indies¹³ contend in gifts; thine, whatever luxury, wherever it is, the sea brings; and the sad Dawn¹⁴ 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 Potosi¹⁵. England now, her arms laid by, changing wounding steel

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 Dædalus 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 Indes* (1780). The Latin phrase used by Alleyne, *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. Alleyne 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 nectar¹⁶, 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.”