

vantages of those vast masses of triangular continents, which, like Africa and the greater part of South America, are destitute of gulfs and inland seas. It cannot be doubted, that the existence of the Mediterranean has been closely connected with the first dawn of human cultivation among the nations of the west, and that the articulated form of the land, the frequency of its contractions, and the concatenation of peninsulas, favoured the civilization of Greece, Italy, and perhaps of all Europe westward of the meridian of the Propontis. In the New World the uninterruptedness of the coasts, and the monotony of their straight lines, are most remarkable in Chili and Peru. The shore of Columbia is more varied, and its spacious gulfs, such as that of Paria, Cariaco, Maracaybo, and Darien, were, at the time of the first discovery, better peopled than the rest, and facilitated the interchange of productions. That shore possesses an incalculable advantage in being washed by the Caribbean Sea, a kind of inland sea with several outlets, and the only one pertaining to the New Continent. This basin, whose various shores form portions of the United States, of the republic of Columbia, of Mexico, and several maritime powers of Europe, gives birth to a peculiar, and exclusively American system of trade. The south-east of Asia, with its neighbouring archipelago, and above all, the state of the Mediterranean in the time of the Phœnician and Greek colonies, prove that the nearness of opposite coasts, not having the same productions, and not inhabited by nations of different races, exercises a happy influence on commercial industry and intellectual cultivation. The importance of the inland Caribbean Sea, bounded by Venezuela on the south, will be further augmented by the progressive increase of population on the banks of the Mississippi; for that river, the Rio del Norte, and the Magdalena, are the only great navigable streams which the Caribbean Sea receives. The depth of the American rivers, their immense branches, and the use of steam-boats, everywhere facilitated by the proximity of forests, will, to a certain extent, compensate for the obstacles which the uniform line of the coasts, and the general configuration of the continent, oppose to the progress of industry and civilization.