

# The March of Trade

National City shows a vivid movie of worldwide banking in commemoration of its 125th anniversary.

Officers of the Philippines branch of the National City Bank of New York had a houseful of guests at the Metropolitan theater Monday afternoon August 22, after business hours, well pleased with National City's full-length movie of the drama of international banking behind the world's international commerce. Introductory remarks by the bank's board chairman, James Handasyd Perkins, well fitted the scenes immediately unfolded. A map of the world was well dotted with National City branches, each with a unique commerce to finance.

Such a movie shows the catalytic power of credit, and its fluidity. The bill of exchange, how potent in provisioning our lives. Babylonians used to make them in clay, a practice that the Assyrians obliterated, and that Jews revived profitably after the captivity. In the dark age after the collapse of the Roman Empire, banking and exchange fell into eclipse, yet when light dawned on civilization again, there were the banks, there were merchants eager to risk fortunes in argosies of foreign goods, and there were the necessary bills of exchange, vellum, and soon, paper from Egypt's papyrus. Nothing much has happened since save a steady extension of the business and no end of refinement of its methods.

Means of communication have advanced miraculously, but not in all places. Products from upstream sources still reach seaports in many countries, for export against bills of credit at the banks, in very primitive and humble ways in many countries, as in China and Brazil.

But when they do reach ports, banks are ready to facilitate their sale. Banks are therefore one of man's handiest tools, and we think, far from being to blame as much as they are sometimes charged with being, for ills of the world, really throw their wise influence in quite the opposite direction. This must be true, since banks live from trade and are never satisfied with its volume. It is not banks that are making international trading harder and harder every year, with new barriers to surmount with every new transaction. Banks are surely opposed

to this sort of thing, and probably husband reserves against the day when it will subside and products will exchange between countries more easily.

Therefore, as you looked at the movie, *The March of Trade*, with National City, you gave banking a clean bill of health. Plainly it was profitable, but plainly it was good: sound service at moderate cost, an economy—an indispensable economy.

But what is really influencing world trade did not fare so well under close observation. The overwhelming nationalism of many countries was evident in details all through the picture. Inroads on western commerce, by exportation of the inventions and refined tools of that commerce, were evident. The picture National City has made so well should be stored, to be looked at 20 and 50 years hence, for by the second date at least the commercial world will have been much changed. The ubiquity of banking is matched by the ubiquitous exportation of the most refined manufactures, the very tools by which the finest or most staple of manufactures are produced, with the result that the economics of many countries begin conflicting with one another whereas heretofore harmonious exchange has existed.

Yesterday's entertaining book was *Oil for the Lamps of China*, maybe tomorrow's literature will include a book entitled, *Lamps for America's Oil*, written in a country called China by a young author inspired by China's new manufactures. But fundamental changes in the nature of goods in world commerce appear everywhere, and a discomfited world finding it hard to trade, sees little for it but war. Bankers, if minded, in the sense of being heeded, could find a better way, since their whole training is in ways of common sense, but it

is usually the fate of bankers to be called in to patch up disasters after free rein to the wild colt has brought disaster on.

This much seems true: If the world in all its major affairs were implemented as well as its banking is, there would be clear sailing ahead. —W. R.



Photo by Philippines Herald.  
E. J. Le Jeune

*For a number of years the manager for the National City Bank of New York in the Philippines, Banker Le Jeune has been called to the New York office at 55 Wall Street to be in charge of the South American business, an extremely important part of the great bank's activities. Before coming to Manila, Mr. Le Jeune managed National City's business in Chili; from Louisiana, his French was an easy introduction to Spanish, of which he has fluent command. In Manila both he and Mrs. Le Jeune have been very popular—nowhere the Le Jeunes are known can congratulations on their good fortune be more sincere.*