



【名著双语读物·中文导读+英文原版】



*A Short History of America*

# 美国简史

[美] 房龙 著  
冯可馨 等 编译

清华大学出版社



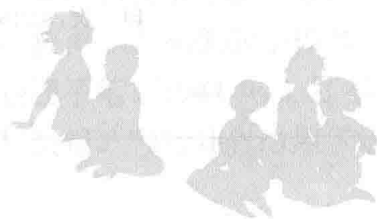
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## 内 容 简 介

《美国简史》是一部通俗、生动的美国史书，是美国历史类著作中的经典。作者以其渊博的知识，简洁、流畅的笔触，以宏大的世界发展史作为背景，讲述了从哥伦布发现新大陆至第二次世界大战前的美国历史，对这个时期的历史事件、历史人物、西方文明、科技发明以及美国的政治生活进行了深刻而独到的描述；还特别重点介绍了其中的重要历史事件——北美殖民地、独立战争、南北战争等以及重要历史人物——哥伦布、亨利王子、乔治二世、华盛顿、杰斐逊、富兰克林、拿破仑、林肯和罗斯福等；叙述历史的同时讲述了美国人民为梦想而奋斗的故事。

无论作为通俗的美国简史读本，还是作为语言学习的课外读物，本书对当代中国的读者都将产生重要的影响，特别是对培养中国青少年读者理性、科学和宽容的意识也非常有益。为了使读者能够了解每章内容概况，进而提高阅读速度和阅读水平，在每章的开始部分增加了中文导读。同时，为了读者更好地理解书中的内容，在部分章节中加入了插图或照片。

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# 第一章 便宜的香料需求量大增

## Chapter 1 Wanted: More And Cheaper Spices



由俭入奢易，由奢入俭难。这句话在此又应验了。

在公元的第一个千年里，欧洲人还习惯于粗茶淡饭的生活，平日里的打打杀杀使他们无法讲究食不厌精的细致。而当新的千禧年到来之后，在安定下来的一代中奢靡的风气却在滋长。

在这点上，东方人是欧洲人的老师。穆斯林在7世纪奇迹般地崛起，并很快逼近地中海的北岸。新月与十字的厮杀混战未休，东方的精致与奢华却迷幻般地征服了这些粗朴的欧洲人。战后，在地中海上穿梭来往的不再是圣战军团，而是熙熙攘攘的商队，香料成为了欧洲人品质生活的必需品，其所带来的巨额利润，使得宗教狂热被搁在一边，基督的信徒和真主的皈依者你来我往。

而此时随鞑靼人涌向西方的一支小小部落却将改变历史。客居他乡反而使他们在百年后神话般地成为伊斯兰世界的王者，“土耳其人”——他们因此而名扬世界，同时新一轮的扩张被激起。

土耳其的胜利也将印证安拉的胜利。从乡野中重新振作起来的虔诚之心必须在帝国的土地上随处体现。僧侣们奔走各地，号召人们回归纯正的古兰经教义。与异教徒的贸易将遭到摒弃，商人们很快认识到恪守僧侣教诲的重要，而谨慎地断绝了与基督子民们的联系。

习惯了东方商品的欧洲人由此感到不适，市场上的东方商品凤毛麟角，

投机商们抓住时机使它们身价倍增。以物易物不再通行，商人们只认黄金，而欧洲的大地出产不了这么多的金银。坏消息纷至沓来，土耳其的铁蹄继续在西亚和北非的土地上奔驰，同时也阻断了一条条曾经的商道。重新开启贸易看来是遥遥无期了。坐以待毙绝不是资本主义的态度。由此一小部分人开始幻想新的黄金之路，他们向南或向西走向未知的大海，去试探自己的命运——要么穷途潦倒，要么创造奇迹。

*T*HE Guild of the Grocers was in dreadful straits.

Their supply of spices was well-nigh exhausted.

But the demand surpassed anything that had ever been seen before.

The Guild of the Grocers was in dreadful straits.

And thereby hangs a story.

It is a law recognized both by the professors of political economy and the judges of our police courts that those who have for a considerable time dined at the Ritz will not willingly return to Jack Mulhaly's far-famed fish-chowder and beans. Of course, in case of actual need they will content themselves with the simple fare of the excellent John. But before they reach that point of open and avowed defeat, they will fight tooth and nail to maintain the standard of excellence to which they have become accustomed.

The barbarians who overran the greater part of western Europe during the first ten centuries of our era were men of simple taste, which usually means men of no taste at all. With them, quantity came before quality, and a continent that had lain practically unscratched since the last great glacial epoch easily satisfied their demands for a wooden bench, a greasy slab of beef and unlimited ale.

Besides, there, was so much to be done and there were so few people to do what needed being done that their surplus energy was entirely exhausted by the chores of every-day life. Roughly speaking, it took them a thousand years to settle down. Then the job was done. Peace and quiet returned to this earth and with peace and quiet on the part of the elders came the Wanderlust of the

younger generation.

Ten centuries before that Wanderlust would have led to another outbreak of anarchy. But by now the people of the West once more recognized a single master. He laid no claim to worldly power. His spiritual weapons, however, could annihilate entire battalions of Swiss mercenaries. His paper arrows could pierce the walls of the strongest castles.

His mere displeasure was more terrible than a threat of war on the part of emperor or king.

Surrounded by the cleverest of diplomats, the most astute of politicians, he was able to divert the rising tide of unrest into the practical channels of foreign conquest and to bring about that great migration towards the East which ever since has been known as the era of the Crusades. Unfortunately this episode has been so often chosen as a subject for romantic literary rhapsodies that we are apt to forget the true if more prosaic nature of the conflict.

The ancient world was the world of the Mediterranean. He who had command of that vast tract of water could dictate his will to the rest of mankind.

It was an ambitious undertaking, and the small fry of pirates and buccaneers who infested the deep bays of the Spanish and Greek and Italian peninsulas and who lived along the shallow coast of Morocco and Tripoli and Egypt could not possibly hope for more than a trifling local success.

Nothing short of "racial groups"—vast agglomerations of people bound together by tens of thousands of years of a common social, economic and religious development were able to handle a problem that must be settled upon so gigantic a scale. They well knew the risk they took, for such quarrels were apt to be quite as disastrous to the victor as to the vanquished.

Only twice before had it come to an open break.

The first time in the fifth century before our era, when Greece as the champion of the West had defeated the invading hordes of the Persians and in a series of brilliant counter-attacks had pursued her enemies as far as the shores of the river Indus.

The second time two hundred years later, when the Romans narrowly averted disaster by such a display of national energy that the state almost perished before the last of the Carthaginian strongholds had been reduced to ashes.

Then, for more than eight centuries, there had been peace.

But in the year 622 Asia, marching under the banner of a brand-new prophet, was once more ready for the unequal struggle. This time the campaign was planned upon a truly gigantic scale. The left wing of the Mohammedan armies took possession of Spain. The right wing meanwhile made for Constantinople by way of Syria and Asia Minor. It was at that moment that the head of the Christian Church took fright and proclaimed a holy war.

This war, from a military point of view, was a complete failure. But its social consequences were of great and lasting importance. For the first time since the disappearance of the Roman state the nations of Europe were exposed to a civilization which in almost every respect was higher than their own. They went east to slaughter the infidel and to deprive him of his pagan possessions. They returned home with a new conception of comfort and luxury and with a profound dislike for the crudities of their own barren existence.

This sudden change in the general point of view was soon reflected in the houses of the people of the western mainland, in their clothes, in their manners, in the way they spent their idle hours and in the things they ate and drank.

The older generation (after the habit of all older generations) continued to talk about the simple virtues of the ancestors. The children merely shrugged their shoulders and smiled. They had been to the "big city" and they knew better. Quietly they bided their time, but as soon as the old folks were dead they hastenedre-upholster the parlor, sent for a couple of outlandish cooks and despatched their sons to the nearby town that there they, might learn how to become bankers or manufacturers and acquire within a single lifetime Sat wealth which the soil would not surrender in a thousand years of heart-breaking toil.

The Church grumbled.



This was a consequence she had not quite foreseen.

Alas! the returning heroes were no longer animated with that holy and unquestioning zeal which had been so characteristic of their parents and grandfathers. Familiarity with one's friends may breed contempt. But familiarity with an enemy is apt create mutual respect.

As a result there was a slump in the building of churches. But private palaces and richly adorned municipal buildings were arising on all sides.

I do not say that this was a good thing. I do not say that it was bad. I merely state a fact. If you want to draw any conclusions, go ahead and suit yourself.

Meanwhile on the other shore of the Mediterranean there also had been a considerable decline in the ardor of that strange religious devotion which measured its love by the number of slaughtered captives. In short, both parties had accepted a stalemate and were willing to reach a compromise which meant money in the pockets of their respective merchants.

The ancient trade-routes, trampled down by millions of iron heels and hoofs, were put in a state of repair. Once more the patient camels carried their burdens from Kashgar to Damascus. Again, as in the days of old, the Venetian caravels and the Genoese galleys plied regularly between Alexandria and Famagusta.

Wherefore all was well with the world and the rate of interest upon a successful Levantine deal rose rapidly from just exactly nothing to four hundred per cent.

Then one of those insignificant incidents happened which (after the nature of insignificant occurrences) are apt to change the entire aspect of history for all time to come. It was during the middle of the thirteenth century. The dreadful Tartars had just gone on the warpath and from the Amur to the Vistula people were flying in blind panic before this flood of grinning little yellow devils. Among the fugitives was a small group of nomads (two or three hundred families at the most) who since time immemorial had lived peacefully in the heart of Asia. They ran almost as far as the Mediterranean. Then they heard that



the danger was past and decided to return home. In order to do this they must cross the river Euphrates. But an accident happened. Their leader slipped off his horse and was drowned. The others who were still on the western bank of the river took fright. They regarded this sudden calamity as a direct warning of Heaven and asked the King of Persia to let them stay where they were.

The rest is a matter of common knowledge. Within less than a hundred years these wandering shepherds had made themselves the masters of the empire that had given them hospitality and one generation afterwards they were the recognized rulers of the Mohammedan world and had started upon that career of conquest which eventually was to carry their horse-tail banners to the gates of Vienna and was to make the mere name of "Turk" a byword for cruelty and bravery for all ages.

Now if this sudden revival of Moslem fury had been merely a political movement, it would not have been so bad. But a profound spiritual frenzy swept across the plains and hills of western Asia. During the six centuries which had gone by since the death of the Prophet the original ardor of his followers had considerably cooled. The "faith of the fathers" was something very fine but so was the sweet profit derived from the traffic in pepper and cinnamon and indigo. It was unfortunate that this trade forced the true believers to be on amicable terms with the infidel dogs from the other side of the Mediterranean, but you know how it is. Business is business and one cannot draw the line at Christians if one is in trade.

Not so the inhabitants of the villages and the lonely valleys ! They took their religion seriously and encouraged by the military and the political success of their Turkish leaders they now decided to bring their erring brethren of the big cities back to the true faith.

Far and wide the Dervishes (the monks of the Mohammedan world) traveled through the realm of the Prophet. Some of them prayed, some of them danced, some of them whirled, some of them howled. But one and all they preached a return to the stem tenets of the original desert creed.

At first the merchants of Bagdad and Damascus laughed. But the

“puritans” were in dead earnest. Soon the merchants even ceased to smile. A little later (warned by the fate of their murdered neighbors) they began to restrict their commercial operations to their own fellow religionists.

And in this way, just when the people of Europe had come to depend upon certain Asiatic goods, the supply was suddenly cut off.

Of course this did not happen in a day or a week or even a single year. But those products which for more than two hundred years had flowed westward in such complete and uninterrupted abundance now began to disappear from the European markets. The available supplies were at once cornered by the speculators. Prices began to soar. Credit was withdrawn and payment had to be made in gold. This was something new in the West. The medieval worlds in its every-day transactions, had never insisted upon ready money. Every one lived within hailing distance of every one else. One man's pork was as good as another man's eggs. The honey of one cloister could readily be exchanged for the vinegar of another.

It is true, foreign trade had always insisted upon a certain amount of gold and silver coin. It had been impossible to satisfy the spice dealers of Calicut with slices of bacon and barrels of salt. Before they authorized their agents in Jidda or Aden to make delivery they had demanded a deposit of Venetian doubloons and pieces-of-eight.

But now the European market began to ask for cash on delivery. That greatly complicated matters,

For gold, the mysterious, yellow substance which seemed to defy the power of State and Church, was another article that had to be imported from abroad. There were a few silver mines in Europe but the small amount of gold—that was found in the mountains of Austria, Saxony and Spain was by no means sufficient to finance the ever-increasing operations of the speculators and the legitimate spice dealers.

Here was as pretty a vicious circle as the world had ever seen. A public ready and eager to buy—a decreasing amount of supplies—a rapid increase in prices—a general demand for bullion—a decrease in the available supply of



gold—one country of western Asia and northern Africa after another falling into the hands of the relentless heathen—one caravan road after the other closed for an indefinite space of time and the young and lusty capitalistic system of Europe fighting for its life.

The capitalistic system (using this term in the sense in which it is understood or misunderstood by most of our contemporaries) has been accused of many and highly diversified crimes. But even its worst enemies cannot accuse it of laziness or deny that in times of a crisis it is able to develop an almost supernatural energy. It was just such a crisis which now threatened to ruin the western commercial world during the first half of the fourteenth century.

I have spoken of the plight of the grocers. They were most active and vociferous in their protestations. But the entire economic (which in the last analysis means the entire spiritual, social, literary, artistic and scientific) fabric of Europe was in imminent danger of collapse.

It is true that Syria and Egypt (the two countries through which the principal trade-routes from the East to the West had run since the beginning of time) were not captured by the Turks until a dozen years after the death of Columbus. But a merchant who knows his business does not wait for the actual day of disaster. He anticipates.

We hear a great deal of the sagacity of our modern princes of commerce and we flatter ourselves that it is our own era that has given birth to this intrepid race of men. And we are apt to think rather patronizingly of the medieval trader who sat in a stuffy little room, who counted his shekels with the help of a pair of diminutive scales, who dictated his letters to two clerks simultaneously (that he might have a carbon-copy of his correspondence) and who was obliged to wait half a year before he got an answer from his agents in Viborg or Novgorod.

But that is one of the fallacies of our happy age which takes to self-flattery as a duck takes to water.

The world of the year of Grace 1927 is really very much like the world of

the year of Grace 1427 or 427. It is composed of all sorts of people. Some are bright. Some are not quite so bright. Others are downright stupid.

The latter (always the vast majority) did not take any interest either one way or another. The second category felt vaguely that something must be done, then got frightened at its own boldness and did nothing. But the first (a very small minority) took off its coat and vest, rolled up its sleeves and went forth to decide the issue then and there. The overland route to the profitable East was gradually being closed. Very well. Then they would look for a new road by way of the South or the West. The undertaking, entailing a voyage across uncharted seas, looked about as hopeless as an airplane trip to the moon in our own time. Indeed, the practical obstacles were so immense that they could only be overcome by a dreamer.

The world was full of experienced sea-captains, who could foretell the approaching storm through the rheumatism in their aching bones; of highly trained astronomers who could read the book of Heaven as we consult a time-table; of adventurers eager to risk their lives for a bit of excitement or a pot full of ducats.

But it took a different sort of creature to solve this problem—a strange genius who derived his inspiration from the Apocalypse of Ezra has any one within the memory of man read this muddled mixture of Heaven, Hell and prophecy? —a professional pro-motet who would not budge until he had been given a duly signed contract assuring him ten per cent of all the precious metals to be discovered in the domains on the other side of the ocean—a vain peacock who insisted upon being called “Admiral of the Ocean” —a humble mystic who died in the poor garb of a Franciscan monk.