

中文导读英文版

A Short History of America

美国简史

[美] 房龙 著



清华大学出版社

(中 文 导 读 英 文 版)

A Short History of America

美国简史

这是一部与众不同的讲述美国历史的书，是真正的经典。是一个国家以及它的人这是房龙的伟大工程，他用优美的文笔告诉我们美国历史上引人瞩目的伟大人物和丰富多元的美国文化。

——美国著名史学家道格拉斯·布郎克

[美] 房龙 原著
王勋 纪飞 等编译

清华大学出版社
北 京

内 容 简 介

A Short History of America, 中文译名《美国简史》, 这是一部通俗、生动的美国史书, 由荷兰裔美国著名历史学家、作家房龙编著。作者以其渊博的知识, 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、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; 还特别介绍了殖民地、独立战争、南北战争以及美国发展时期的一些重要历史人物, 如哥伦布、亨利王子、乔治二世国王、华盛顿、富兰克林、拿破仑、林肯和罗斯福等。

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。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。

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

美国简史=A Short History of America: 中文导读英文版/ (美) 房龙 (Van Loon, H.W.) 著. —北京: 清华大学出版社, 2010.1
ISBN 978-7-302-20520-3

I. 美… II. 房… III. ①英语—语言读物 ②美国—历史 IV. H319.4: K

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2009) 第 109441 号

责任编辑: 李 晔

责任校对: 梁 毅

责任印制:

出版发行: 清华大学出版社

地 址: 北京清华大学学研大厦 A 座

<http://www.tup.com.cn>

邮 编: 100084

社 总 机: 010-62770175

邮 购: 010-62786544

投稿与读者服务: 010-62776969, c-service@tup.tsinghua.edu.cn

质量反馈: 010-62772015, zhiliang@tup.tsinghua.edu.cn

印 刷 者:

装 订 者: 肖 米

经 销: 全国新华书店

开 本: 170×260 印 张: 25.75

字 数: 428 千字

版 次: 2010 年 1 月第 1 版

印 次: 2010 年 1 月第 1 次印刷

印 数: 1~5000

定 价: 25.00 元

本书如存在文字不清、漏印、缺页、倒页、脱页等印装质量问题, 请与清华大学出版社出版部联系调换。联系电话: 010-62770177 转 3103 产品编号: 030321-01



第一章 便宜的香料需求量大增\ Chapter 1 Wanted: More And Cheaper Spices	1
第二章 未知的世界\ Chapter 2 A World Unsuspected	10
第三章 信仰、黄金和印第安人\ Chapter 3 Faith, Gold And The Indian	20
第四章 没有价值的土地\ Chapter 4 Tierras De Ningun Provecho	26
第五章 尚普兰借助独木舟进行探索\ Chapter 5 Samuel De Champlain De Brouage Learns The Noble Art Of Canoeing	30
第六章 加尔文博士探索当今与未来的世界\ Chapter 6 Dr. Calvin Surveys This World And The Next	35
第七章 异教徒成了劫持犯\ Chapter 7 The Heretic Turns Highjacker	40
第八章 印第安神圣的草\ Chapter 8 Herba Sancta Indorum	48
第九章 零下 20 度的新天堂\ Chapter 9 The New Zion at Twenty Below Zero	58
第十章 准备在大西洋西岸创建更幸福的新英格兰\ Chapter 10 Those Who Despair Of The Mother Country Prepare For A New And Happier England On The Western Shores Of the Atlantic	66
第十一章 荷兰西印度公司错误的投资\ Chapter 11 The Dutch West India Company Makes The Wrong Investment	72
第十二章 200 年前瑞典人就来到过美洲\ Chapter 12 The Swedes Arrive Two Hundred Years Too Soon	81



第十三章 各民族共同拥有的自由殖民地\	
Chapter 13 A Free Colony For All Nations	87
第十四章 靠运气和推测开拓殖民地\	
Chapter 14 Colonizing By God And By Guess	96
第十五章 依据国王的法令建立帝国\	
Chapter 15 Empire Building By Royal Rescript	99
第十六章 希望的地平线\	
Chapter 16 Horizons Of Hope	107
第十七章 国王和帝国争夺土地的游戏\	
Chapter 17 The Royal And Imperial Game Of Land Grabbing	111
第十八章 1769年1月5日，人类步入现代纪元\	
Chapter 18 January 5, 1769 The Beginning Of Our Modern Era	118
第十九章 乔治·格伦维尔的失误\	
Chapter 19 George Grenville Turns “Efficiency Expert”	120
第二十章 荷兰茶叶与法国糖蜜\	
Chapter 20 Dutch Tea And French Molasses	125
第二十一章 边境简朴的智慧\	
Chapter 21 The Homespun Wisdom Of The Frontier	131
第二十二章 亚当斯和塞缪尔转向现实政治\	
Chapter 22 Lawyer Adams Of Quincy, Mass., And His Cousin Sam Turn To Practical Politics	136
第二十三章 殖民军总司令不得不报告的坏消息\	
Chapter 23 The Commander Of His Majesty’s Colonial Forces Is Obligated To Report Some Very Bad News	141
第二十四章 乔治·华盛顿将军重新穿上了军装\	
Chapter 24 General George Washington Of Fairfax County, Virginia, Puts On His Old Uniform	147
第二十五章 托马斯·杰斐逊证明传统教育的优越性\	
Chapter 25 Mr.Thomas Jefferson Of Albemarle County, Virginia, Shows The Superior Advantages Of A Classical Education	151
第二十六章 乔治三世国王成为受人欢迎的英雄\	
Chapter 26 King George III Becomes A Popular Hero In His Own Country	159
第二十七章 诺斯爵士不得不保持明智\	
Chapter 27 Lord North Is Forced To Keep Awake	164



第二十八章 富兰克林拜会圣路易的后人\
Chapter 28 Dr. Benjamin Franklin, The Well-Known
Printer Of Philadelphia, Pa., Calls Upon The Descendant
Of Saint Louis 168

第二十九章 卢梭写的书, 拉法耶特做的研究\
Chapter 29 M. Jean Jacques Rousseau Writes A Book
And M. Le Marquis De La Fayette Goes To Study The
Delightful Children Of Nature In The American Wilderness 178

第三十章 宗主国与边境区域的博弈\
Chapter 30 The Mother Country Makes The Best Of A
Bad Bargain And The Men From The Frontier Make
The Best Of A Good One 185

第三十一章 妥协: 在挽救了一个民族同时建立了一个帝国\
Chapter 31 The Compromise That Saved A Nation And
Founded An Empire 191

第三十二章 亚历山大·汉密尔顿商业兴国\
Chapter 32 Mr. Alexander Hamilton Of The Island Of Nevis
(b.w.i) Puts The Country On A Sound Commercial Basis, And
George Washington, Eesq., Returns To Mount Vernon,
An Older And Sadder Man 199

第三十三章 亚当斯总统知道革命并不总是完全一样\
Chapter 33 His Excellency President John Adams Learns
That A Revolution And A Revolution Are Not Always
The Same 210

第三十四章 美国总统杰斐逊与拿破仑皇帝在土地上的重要交易\
Chapter 34 Thomas Jefferson, President Of The United States
Of America, And The Emperor Napoleon, Conclude An
Important Deal In Real Estate 218

第三十五章 宗主国的最后一次造访\
Chapter 35 The Mother Country Pays A Final Visit 227

第三十六章 门罗主义和玻利瓦尔开创的新世界\
Chapter 36 President James Monroe Pays His Compliments
To The Holy Alliance And Simon Bolivar Starts Out To
Found A New World 238

第三十七章 新的信仰\
Chapter 37 The New Faith 247



第三十八章 独裁\	
Chapter 38 Dictatorship.....	252
第三十九章 无聊的杂耍演员和无用的吹笛手\	
Chapter 39 The Frivolous Jugglers And The Useless Players Of The Lute.....	261
第四十章 墨西哥总统圣安娜理解的真理：自然拒绝真空\	
Chapter 40 President Santa Anna Of Mexico Learns The Truth Of The Law Which States That Nature Abhors A Vacuum.....	269
第四十一章 汤姆叔叔和冒烟比利\	
Chapter 41 Uncle Tom And Puffing Billy	276
第四十二章 令人厌烦的契约\	
Chapter 42 An Irsome Contract.....	290
第四十三章 亚伯拉罕·林肯——伊利诺伊州不知名的乡村律师\	
Chapter 43 An Unknown Country Lawyer From Illinois Offers To Take The Case	299
第四十四章 把战争交给陪审团\	
Chapter 44 The Case Is Submitted To The Jury	305
第四十五章 案件终于裁定了\	
Chapter 45 The Case Is Decided For Good And All.....	311
第四十六章 最后一位征服者成了阶下囚\	
Chapter 46 The Last Of The Conquistadores Goes Home——In A Coffin	327
第四十七章 一颗金道钉钉在犹他州的铁轨上\	
Chapter 47 A Golden Spike Is Driven In Utah.....	333
第四十八章 美洲文明第三时期的衰落\	
Chapter 48 The Decline And Fall Of The Third Cycle Of American Civilization	340
第四十九章 埃利斯岛和普利茅斯礁石\	
Chapter 49 Ellis Island And Plymouth Rock	346
第五十章 物质与财富的统治\	
Chapter 50 The Rule Of Things.....	353
第五十一章 更廉价的原料需求大增\	
Chapter 51 Wanted: More And Cheaper Raw Materials.....	365
第五十二章 未知的世界\	
Chapter 52 A World Unsuspected.....	371
第五十三章 美国的新路\	
Chapter 53 The New Road For America	375

前言

亨德里克·威廉·房龙（Hendrik Willem Van Loon，1882—1944），荷兰裔美国人，20世纪美国最伟大的历史学家、科普作家和文学家。上世纪20年代开始，他的著作陆续被介绍给中国的读者，翻译者把这个荷兰名字译为“房龙”。此后，这个名字为我国读者所熟悉，流传下来。

房龙1882年1月出生于荷兰鹿特丹。幼年时对历史、地理、船舶、绘画和音乐感兴趣，这种兴趣终其生也未放弃。房龙10岁时便立志要当一名历史学家。父亲对他专横粗暴，而母亲却百般溺爱。从8岁起，房龙先后进入一些著名的寄宿制学校，学习了拉丁文、希腊文和英文，他的才智迅速提高。1902年，20岁的房龙来到美国，进入康奈尔大学，并在康奈尔大学完成本科课程，在1911年获德国慕尼黑大学博士学位。房龙求学前后，当过编辑、记者、播音员，也先后在美国几所大学任教，游历过很多地方。房龙多才多艺，能用十种文字写作和与人交流，拉得一手小提琴，还能画画，他的著作中的所有插图全部出自他自己手笔。

1913年，房龙编著并出版了第一本历史书《荷兰共和国的衰亡》，虽然销路一般，但受到书评界的赞扬。1920年圣诞节期间，房龙出版了他的第二本书《古代的人》，这是一部带插图的通俗历史读本，市场反应良好。经过知识、阅历、研究成果等方面的积累，房龙于1921年出版了他的第三部历史著作《人类的故事》，并一举成名，从此房龙迎来了他创作的丰收期。之后，房龙陆续出版了《发明的故事》、《圣经的故事》、《美国简史》、《房龙地理》（《人类的家园》）、《人类的艺术》、《宽容》、《与世界伟人谈心》、《伦勃朗传》、《荷兰共和国兴衰史》、《太平洋的故事》等二十多部著作。房龙的作品在当时可谓饮誉世界，荷兰、德国、法国、瑞典、丹麦、芬兰、挪威、日本、印度、前苏联、西班牙、意大利、波兰、匈牙利、希腊等国都翻译出版了他的作品。

自20世纪20年代开始，房龙的主要作品几乎被同步介绍给中国的读



者。房龙深入浅出的通俗文风和百科全书般的渊博知识，对与之同时代的中国读者产生了巨大的影响。这是因为，一方面是房龙的文风正好适合于当时新文化运动所提倡的生活化的白话文，房龙的书也为中国求知者提供了关于人类和自然的启蒙知识；另一方面，房龙的写作技巧也给中国当时的作家以很多启发。历史学家和著名报人曹聚仁回忆说，20世纪20年代，他在候车时偶然买到《人类的故事》中译本，“那天下午，我发痴似的，车来了，在车上读，到了家中，把晚饭吞下去，就靠在床上读，一直读到天明，走马观花地总算看完了。这50年中，我总是看了又看，除了《儒林外史》、《红楼梦》，没有其他的书这么吸引我了”。郁达夫曾说：“房龙的笔，有一种魔力……是将文学家的手法，拿来用以讲述科学……无论大人小孩，读他书的人，都觉得娓娓忘倦了。”20世纪80年代是中国改革开放的年代，房龙的作品重新被发现，且被逐步引进。而自20世纪90年代后期开始，国内兴起“房龙热”，房龙的作品再次受到读者的青睐，这是因为他的著作特别符合现代中国人的心理气象：务实进取的时代，读书趋向于知识性、趣味性。

目前，国内已出版的房龙著作形式主要有两种：一种是中文翻译版，另一种是中英文对照版。其中的中英文对照读本比较受读者的欢迎，这主要是得益于中国人热衷于学习英文的大环境。从英文学习的角度来看，直接使用纯英文的学习资料更有利于英语学习。考虑到对英文内容背景的了解有助于英文阅读，使用中文导读应该是一种比较好的方式，也可以说是该类型书的第三种版本形式。采用中文导读而非中英文对照的方式进行编排，这样有利于国内读者摆脱对英文阅读依赖中文注释的习惯。基于以上原因，我们决定编译房龙系列著作中的经典，其中包括《人类的故事》、《圣经的故事》、《房龙地理》、《宽容》、《发明的故事》、《美国简史》和《太平洋的故事》等，并采用中文导读英文版的形式出版。在中文导读中，我们尽力使其贴近原作的精髓，也尽可能保留原作的风格。我们希望能够编出为当代中国读者所喜爱的经典读本。读者在阅读英文故事之前，可以先阅读中文导读内容，这样有利于了解故事背景，从而加快阅读速度。我们相信，这些经典著作的引进对加强当代中国读者，特别是青少年读者的科学素养和人文修养是非常有帮助的。

房龙始终站在全人类的高度在写作，他摒弃了深奥理论，却拥有自己独立思想和体系，他的论述主要是围绕人类生存与发展等本质的问题，贯穿其中的精神是科学、宽容和进步，他的目标是向人类的无知与偏执挑



战，他采取的方式是普及知识和真理，使它们成为人所皆知的常识。房龙毕生持人文主义立场，在有的问题上不免有与马克思主义不同的观点；同时，由于他是生活在 20 世纪早期的美国作家，其思想的观点不可避免地会受到时代和历史的局限，比如在他的《房龙地理》一书中错误地将西藏放到“中亚高地”这一章，而不是“中国”这一章来讲述，又比如他以地理环境决定论来解释日本近代侵略行为，希望读者朋友阅读这些著作时能够甄别。

本书主要内容由王勋、纪飞编译。参加本书故事素材搜集整理及编译工作的还有郑佳、刘乃亚、赵雪、左新杲、黄福成、冯洁、徐鑫、马启龙、王业伟、王旭敏、陈楠、王多多、邵舒丽、周丽萍、王晓旭、李永振、孟宪行、熊红华、胡国平、熊建国、徐平国、王小红等。限于我们的科学、人文素养和英语水平，书中难免不当之处，衷心希望读者朋友批评指正。

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没精力关注食不厌精的细致。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。意外地客居他乡却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必须在帝国的土地上到处被实现，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海的重要，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，市场上的东方商品成为凤毛麟角，投机商们抓住时机使它们身价倍增。以物易物不再通行，商人们只认准黄金，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，同时也掐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 hastened to re-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 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 to 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