A SHORT HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

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PREFACE

In this book I have sought to tell clearly and impartially the story of human achievement in what is now the United States, from the earliest traces of man's existence to the present time. Out of the multitude of facts which may be considered within the domain of American history, those have been recounted which seem best suited to explain the progress of the people as a nation. The influence of physical environment has been discussed in the opening chapter, which also deals with the primitive inhabitants. An attempt has been made to give the colonial period its proper unity and show in what manner the colonies were a part of the general British scheme of imperial government. At the same time one must remember that it is American and not British history which concerns us, and for that reason the narrative must not neglect the individual colonies. From the end of the colonial period the dominant interest is the progress of events which have to do with the common cause of independence, and after that with national development.

Much thought has been given to the proper distribution of emphasis between the various historical factors. Political institutions are the most conscious expression of the national will. They determine the form of the story which the historian has to tell. But social and economic conditions and the actions of leading men give color and contour to the figure and decide whether it be attractive or unattractive, vivid or unimpressive. This volume contains at intervals summaries of the habits and social progress of the people, while throughout it seeks to present the decisions of congress and administrations in the matters which relate to the most important phases of popular welfare. It is believed that, if well done, it thus becomes in the most vital sense a social history. My aim has been to lay the necessary foundation for those who wish to pursue further the subject of American history in whatever phase they may be interested.

In a work like this it is impossible to discuss new historical evidence. I have had to content myself with what has already been done by patient and faithful investigators. I have drawn from the results of their labors freely and gratefully. It has also been necessary to omit many things which I should have desired to include had greater space been allowed by the plan to which the book must conform. It seemed best to deal only with the main currents of history, and to follow these with considerable fullness rather than encumber the narrative with many details. If some of my readers are disappointed

through the omission of something they expected to find, I hope they will be consoled by finding that what has been attempted has gained in amplitude of treatment.

The bibliographies at the ends of chapters are intended as an aid to those who wish to read further than this book can carry them. They are classified with respect to subjects, and while they are not critical, no book has been mentioned which does not contain useful information, although some of them must be perused with discrimination. It is suggested that the investigator suppplement the information herein offered by consulting Larned, *The Literature of American History* (1902), Hart, editor, *The American Nation*, 27 vols. (1904–1908), as well as special bibliographies. The books mentioned under the caption, *For Independent Reading*, are popular rather than scientific, but they generally contain reliable information. It is hoped that they may be of value to students who wish to read American history during vacations and to others who read through their own initiative.

Finally, the author's thanks are due to Professor Marshall S. Brown of New York University, who kindly read and criticised the completed manuscript, but who is in no way responsible for the errors herein contained.

J. S. B.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

THE CONTINENT AND ITS EARLY INHABITANTS

Physical Factors in American History

The history of the United States, like that of other countries, has been modified by physical environment. Nature has determined where man should begin to penetrate the continent, his routes of communication between the various portions of the country, and the resources out of which he has built up the national wealth. Climate has limited achievement, or aided it, the soil has determined the form of labor, and rainfall has marked out the area he inhabits. In some respects he has overcome natural conditions, but in most things he has had to conform his actions to them. Speaking generally, nature has been favorable to man in the United States. Says Shaler: "There is no area, in either of the Americas, or for that matter in the world outside of Europe, where it would have been possible to plant English colonies, that would have been found so suitable for the purpose."

The Influence of Nature.

The area of the United States, exclusive of Alaska and the island possessions, is 3,026,789 square miles, which is less than that of Europe by 725,000 square miles. Great irregularities mark the coast line of Europe and facilitate political subdivision. Our own coast line is relatively regular, and most of the interior is one vast river system. The Appalachian Mountains are not a formidable barrier between the coastal plain and the interior, since they are easily penetrated in Pennsylvania and fall away entirely in Georgia and New York. The Rockies are much higher, but they were not reached before the day of railroads, and through means of this invention most of their difficulties disappeared. It has therefore happened that the people from the Atlantic to the Pacific constitute one nation. They are relieved of the burdens which opposing interests lay upon the powers of Europe, and the size of the country has given it great influence in international affairs.

Effects of Territorial Unity.

Through this extent of territory there is a wide range of climate, but the mean temperature is mild. The fact that a great plain extends from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Ocean without the interruption of a mountain chain accounts for a wide variation in temperature for a given point. Through this means mighty currents of heated atmosphere are carried far northward in

Climatic Variations.

summer and cold waves come far southward in winter. As a result, Arkansas, for example, has the winter climate of Edinburgh and the summer climate of Spain, while Minnesota has summers like those of Venice and winters as cold as those of Scotland. The Pacific coast, protected from the disturbing force of the currents in the interior of the continent, has a more stable climate; but the Appalachians are not high enough to shield in a similar way the Atlantic coast.

Rainfall.

In all parts of the United States there is adequate rainfall except near the Rocky Mountains. An area beginning with the eastern slope of this range and extending westward to the Sierra Nevada range is deficient in this respect. A large part of it yields grass for ranches, but one fourth of it is entirely arid and makes a great desert with no vegetation except alkali plants and prickly shrubs. Much of this general region may be reclaimed by irrigation, and in 1902 Congress provided means of reclamation which will eventually bring these parts within the area of fertile production. Two ocean currents modify the climate of the United States. The Gulf Stream on the east exerts an influence on the coast as far north as Cape Hatteras; and the Japanese Current, sweeping down from Alaska, where its effects are marked, tempers the winters of all the Pacific slope north of Mexico.

The Atlantic Drainage System.

Means of water transportation are adequate. Harbors are numerous on the Atlantic coast, and rivers suitable for the ships of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are so well distributed that if a line were drawn from Maine to Florida parallel with the coast and one hundred miles inland, there would hardly be a spot east of it which was more than a day's journey from water transportation. This rim of coast received the first colonies, and its natural advantages made easy the introduction of civilization. The plain west of it is traversed by several large rivers which by offering means of communication and an abundance of fertile bottom land marked out the lines of advance for future settlements. This took the frontier to the Alleghanies, to pass

The Passage into the Mississippi Basin.

which three easy routes might be followed; one around the northern end of the range to the lakes, another around the southern end, and another through central Pennsylvania to the upper waters of the Ohio. The Iroquois Indians held back immigration by the northern passage for many years, and the Creeks and Cherokees did the same on the south, so that the first English advance across the barrier was by way of the central route.

Interior Water Courses.

The Mississippi basin, as the central portion of the continent is called, is entered from the sea by three great systems of water communication. One comes from the north by the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes and gives access to the very heart of the central north. Another is the Mississippi and its tributaries. Its northeastern branches approach within

short distances of the streams which flow into the lakes of the north, and its western and northwestern tributaries penetrate the broad western plains. A third system is the Alabama, which reaches the sea through Mobile bay. Smaller than either of the others, it nevertheless covers a large and important region north of the Gulf of Mexico. The currents of most of these rivers make it difficult for sailboats to come upstream, and the earliest transportation was by flatboat down the river; but the invention of steamboats in 1807 put the navigable rivers of the country entirely under human control.

Harbors and Rivers on the Pacific Coast.

The Pacific slope differs from the Atlantic slope in both harbors and waterways. Only four of the former are important: Puget Sound, San Francisco, San Diego, and the mouth of the Columbia river, which is dangerous. The mountains approach so near to the sea that the coastal plain is too narrow for large streams; but in Oregon and southern California they recede enough to allow the exit of two great rivers which gather their waters in the high grounds of the interior. One of these is the Columbia, which flows through a fertile and well-timbered valley, the home of a numerous people; the other is the Colorado, whose course is twisted through an arid region, which can only hope for development through irrigation.

Canals.

Certain physical features have materially aided in the construction of artificial means of communication. After roads, which with their bridges were early made by the settlers to facilitate travel, canals were next undertaken, usually in order to reach the interior beyond the heads of navigation of the rivers. They generally paralleled small streams whose shallowness made them unfit for navigation. Philadelphia interests, seeking to reach the rich western trade which had its gateway at Pittsburg, planned a canal over the mountains. Starting from Harrisburg it followed the Juniata river to the base of the Alleghanies, where it was forced to stop. On the other side of the range it was resumed along the banks of the Conemaugh and Alleghany rivers to Pittsburg. The ridge between these two links has an elevation of 2491 feet and a width of forty-two miles. Uncompromising advocates of canals proposed a tunnel throughout the whole distance, but a railroad was built instead. There were other attempts to reach Pittsburg from the coast, but the line just mentioned was the most continuous water route that was utilized. Its disadvantages were many, and it was used chiefly for freight, passengers preferring the quicker journey over one of the several post roads to the upper Ohio.

The Pittsburg Route.

When Pennsylvanians developed this line of transportation they had their eyes on a competing system in New York. From the Hudson at Albany to Buffalo is only three hundred and sixty-three miles. Much of the distance is traversed by the Mohawk river, and the highest elevation is only four hundred and forty-five feet above sea

level. To the north are the Adirondacks and to the south the Catskills. The valley is nature's gateway to the West, and as early as 1785 plans were considered for a canal through it. In 1825 they came to fruition when the Erie canal was completed from Buffalo, on Lake Erie, to Albany, on the Hudson. It had two branches, one to Lake Champlain on the north and the other to Lake Ontario, at Oswego. It conducted the commerce of a large area to the port of New York.

The Central New York Route.

The results were striking. In 1826 nineteen thousand boats and rafts were carried down these New York canals to the Hudson. Ship-building sprang up on Lake Champlain, Buffalo became a depot for the furs and other products of the Northwest which formerly found outside markets by way of the St. Lawrence, and the settlement of the lands south of the Great Lakes was given a great stimulus. In 1825 the freight rate from Buffalo to Albany was eighty-eight dollars a ton: twenty-six years later it was less than six dollars. The lake region was thus made tributary to New York, and out of this fact grew the industrial supremacy of that city. Up to this time Philadelphia was the leading American city: it fought hard to retain its supremacy, and its control of the best road to Pittsburg was an important factor; but access to the lake region was worth more in the future development of the country than reaching the Ohio valley. When railroads were invented these two passes were still of great importance. One line followed the Juniata to Pittsburg, and two were built across the level Mohawk plain to Buffalo, where the lack of steep grades makes operating expenses relatively low.

Results of Canal Construction.

Natural Resources

Natural resources have affected the history of the United States as much as means of communication. No colony could prosper without something which it could export for the accumulation of wealth. For the earliest comers such articles were furs and fish. They were in ready demand in Europe and attracted the attention of hardy adventurers before the New World was seriously thought of as a place for colonization. Fur traders and fishermen established temporary stations on the coast in advance of permanent settlements, and thus called the world's attention to the resources of the continent.

Early Importance of Furs and Fisheries.

Furs abounded in all parts of America, but they were better in the colder parts. The earliest traders came into harbors, usually at the mouths of rivers, where the natives met to barter skins for goods. As the trade developed they went up the rivers into the interior, generally establishing trading houses at the heads of navigation, as at Hartford on the Connecticut, Albany on the Hudson, and Richmond on the James.

Fur Traders as Pioneers in the Interior.

Next, individual traders went out from these centers to remote parts, gathering the furs from the natives rather than waiting for them to be brought to the stations. In every case the advent of settlements was the signal for the disappearance of the trade. To-day when the whole continent is known to man, furs are found only in the frozen parts of the north, where the climate forbids ordinary pursuits. In the interior, as well as on the coast, the fur trader marched in advance of the frontier. He explored unknown parts and revealed to the settlements the portions best suited for habitation, he discovered the best means of penetrating the interior, and he established important relations with the Indians.

Development of the Fisheries.

Even earlier than the fur trader was the fisherman. The many indentations of the Atlantic coast abound in mackerel and salmon; but more important still was the cod, whose proper habitat is the coasts of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. At the coming of the colonists this fish was found as far south as the cape which now bears its name. It was then already well known in Europe; for enterprising fishermen from England and France were taking it on the banks of Newfoundland many years earlier. "The knob headed, richly fat, and succulent codfish," as Weeden calls it, is probably the most popular of our food fishes. Its special advantage is its excellent keeping quality when salted and dried. With mackerel it was widely sold in the Catholic countries of western Europe, where fish was demanded for use on Fridays. The poorer cod and mackerel were sent to the West Indies, where planters bought them for their slaves. The New England fisheries developed rapidly from the first and became the basis of an important foreign trade.

Manner of taking the Cod.

Taking the cod supported an important sea-going population. The eastern towns of Massachusetts—Boston, Gloucester, Marblehead, Salem, Ipswich—were the centers of the industry. With the establishment of fishing on the coast the cod disappeared in that region; but the New Englander followed it north as far as the Newfoundland banks. A ship of fifty tons and a crew of seven were considered adequate for the business; and if fishing was good, they might expect to take six hundred quintals a year. The men served for shares, and the owner of the boat got a share for his capital. A ship's company was selected for steadiness, agility of mind and body, and companionable qualities. The association was apt to be renewed from season to season, and it promoted the development of reliable and efficient coöperation. The fisheries bred sailors for the merchant marine and later for the navy. With the advance of the eighteenth century capital played a relatively larger part in the cod fisheries; larger ships were used, and wealthy men who furnished outfits became a chief factor in the industry. Out of this form of fishing grew whaling, which the hardy

Whaling.