THE RISE OF AMERICAN CIVILIZATION

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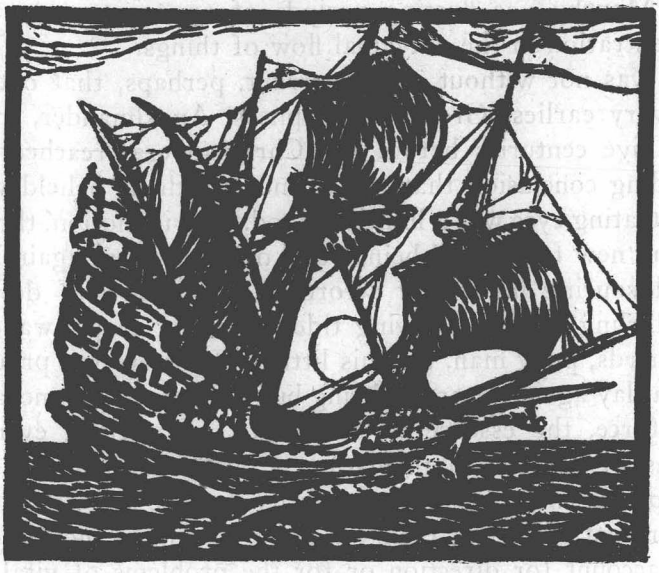

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CHAPTER I

England's Colonial Secret

THE discovery, settlement, and expansion of America form merely one phase in the long and restless movement of mankind on the surface of the earth. When the curtain of authentic history first rose on the human scene, tribes, war bands, and armies had already seared plains and valleys with their trails and roads and launched their boats on the trackless seas. Viewed from a high point in time, the drama of the races seems to be little more than a record of migrations and shifting civilizations, with their far-reaching empires—Babylonian, Egyptian, Persian, Abyssinian, Athenian, Roman, Mongol, Turkish,

and Manchu—as fleeting periods of apparent pause and concentration in the universal flow of things.

It was not without some warrant, perhaps, that one of the very earliest Greek philosophers, Anaximander, more than five centuries before the Christian era, reached the startling conclusion that the cosmos which he beheld with penetrating eyes was a limitless flood, ever in motion, throwing up new forms and beings and drawing them again into its devouring immensity according to the law of destiny —whirling worlds, swaying tides, growing crops, wandering herds, puny man, and his little systems erected proudly for a day against eternity being but symbols of an unchanging force, the essence of all reality. Conceived even in terms of modern mathematics, a purely mechanistic philosophy is engaging in its simplicity, but we are warned by one recent historian, Henry Adams, that mere motion cannot account for direction or for the problems of vital energy; and by another, Oswald Spengler, that "there is an organic logic, an instinctive, dream-sure logic of all existence, as opposed to the logic of the inorganic, the logic of understanding and of things understood—a logic of direction as against a logic of extension."

More than two thousand years after Anaximander, in the nineteenth century, the German philosopher, Hegel, seeking the solution to the endless changes of history, came to the conclusion that the evolution of humanity was, in its inmost nature, the progressive revelation of the divine spirit. Assuming, as necessary, God the unconditioned, creator and upholder of all, Hegel saw in the kaleidoscopic time-patterns of civilization, strewn through the ages, mere partial reflections of the grand Idea underlying the universe—"an infinite power realizing its aim in the absolute rational design of the world." Nations rising and declining were to him but pawns in a majestic game, each with its mission to fulfill, with its heroes as servants of their epochs carrying out that aspect of the Idea then fated for realization.

And according to this philosopher, the chosen method of the Absolute was movement by thesis, antithesis, and synthesis: every system, every concept, every situation calling forth from the vasty deep its opposite, its challenge; the conflict of the two finally reaching a reconciling synthesis or solution. Though logic would seem to imply that change must be unbroken in the future as in the past, Hegel in fact announced that the goal of the long process had been reached in Germany and the Prussian monarchy: God had labored through the centuries to produce the ideal situation in which Hegel found himself. But that naïve conviction did not prevent his great hypothesis from affecting deeply the thought of the modern age. If historians, working with concepts less ambitious—with concrete relations rather than with ultimates—have been inclined in recent days to avoid the Hegelian creed, theologians and statesmen have continued to the latest hour to find in it the weight of telling argument.

Near the close of Hegel's century, a German economist, Werner Sombart, seeking the dynamic of imperialism, reduced the process to the terms of an everlasting struggle among human societies over feeding places on the wide surface of the earth and over the distribution of the world's natural resources. While this doctrine is too sweeping in its universality, it is not without illustrations. For three thousand years or more the clash of ancient races and empire builders had, as its goal, possession of the rich valleys of the Nile and the Euphrates, where food for congested populations could be won with ease and ruling classes could be readily founded on servile labor. Every one of the strong empires that rose in those fertile regions and enjoyed a respite of security was in turn overwhelmed by a conquering horde which coveted its land and its accumulated wealth. The spoils of industry were the rewards of valor. When the Athenian empire was at its height, no fewer than a thousand cities paid tribute to its treasury and a lucrative commerce, spread over the Mediterra-

nean, swelled the opulence of its merchants. The age of Pericles had its price. The Carthaginian empire, embracing in its conquered area Northern Africa, Southern Spain, Corsica, Sardinia and half of Sicily, was first and foremost a trading state dominated by the idea of gathering from its subject provinces every particle of wealth that could be wrested from them by arms or squeezed out of them by monopoly.

Before the sword of Rome rich Carthage fell. When the two powers came face to face on the soil of Sicily, it was the hope of gain as well as fear of death that carried the vote for war in the Roman assembly. For this we have the authority of Polybius: "The military men told the people that they would get important material benefits from it." In this simple flash is revealed the powerful passion that drove the armies of the Republic beyond the borders of Italy and at length in many centuries of almost ceaseless aggression extended the empire of Rome to the sands of Arabia and to the snows of Scotland. Perhaps, as that modern pro-consul, Lord Curzon, has said by way of justification, the dominant motive was a search for "defensible frontiers"—something not yet found by any military commander anywhere on the globe. Still the noble lord had to confess in the same breath that Rome, having conquered a world, regarded her provinces "solely from the point of view of revenue." Varus, who was sent out a poor man to govern Syria, amassed a million in two years.

When Rome had grasped more than she could defend, her fair cities and fertile fields became spoils of victory for the German barbarians that had long beaten against her borders. For two hundred years at least the civilization of the Mediterranean world was at the mercy of migratory Teutons. Finally there were no more Roman provinces to seize; then feudal war lords employed their acquisitive talents for the next thousand years in fighting one another over manors and towns, pausing occasionally to unite against the Moslem, who threatened them

all with destruction. When, eventually, out of this struggle emerged five states—Spain, Portugal, France, Holland, and England—strong enough in armed might and rich enough in treasure to engage in larger enterprise, fortune opened for them, first, the Atlantic and then the world arena in which to deploy their unresting energies. As the grateful merchants of London long afterward carved on the tomb of William Pitt, that brilliant forerunner of modern imperialism, commerce was again united with war and made to flourish.

It was the age-old lure of substantial things that sent the path-breakers of the seas on their perilous journeys—Columbus across the Atlantic in 1492 and da Gama around the Cape to India six years later. Their adventures were only novel incidents in the continuous search for riches. Centuries before, the Romans had carried on an immense commerce with the gorgeous East; in Oriental markets they gathered spices, silks, perfumes, and jewels for the fashionable shops of the Eternal City, and from their treasure chests poured a golden stream of specie to pay for these luxuries. In vain did the stern Roman moralists—Puritans of that time—cry out against the thoughtless maidens and proud dames who emptied their purses buying gauds and trinkets brought at such cost from the ends of the earth. When the Romans passed, their Teutonic heirs gazed upon the spoils of the East with the same fascination that had gripped the grand ladies of the Via Sacra. All through the middle ages a traffic in the luxuries of the Orient continued with increasing volume, enriching the Mohammedan and Italian merchants who served as brokers for the bazaars of the Indies and the shops of Madrid, Lisbon, Paris, Bruges, and London. If the risks of the overland journeys were great, the gains of the dangerous business were enormous.

Inevitably, therefore, an ardent desire to enlarge their profits by direct operations seized the traders of Europe, driving first the Italians, then the Spanish, Portuguese,

Dutch, English, and French, out upon the wide Atlantic in a search for unbroken water routes to the Far East. It is true that Queen Isabella, on yielding to the importunities of Columbus, stipulated in the bond the conversion of heathens to the true Catholic faith; it is true that Catholic missionaries were pioneers in the economic penetration of unknown lands; but in the main the men who organized and commanded expedition after expedition into Asia, the Americas, and Africa had their hearts set on the profits of trade and the spoils of empire. In fact, Spain followed closely the example of Rome, mother of her civilization, when she sent forth military chieftains to conquer, enslave, rule, and exploit.

Nor were the English less eager to gather riches by this process. Sir Francis Drake, who looted his way around the world during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, swept treasure into his chests with a reckless disregard for the rights of private property that would have delighted the Gothic barbarians who plundered their way through the streets of Rome. Captain John Smith was ordered by his superiors to hunt for gold in Virginia and for a passage to the South Seas, where it was thought more booty awaited new vikings. His men too would have enslaved the Indians and ruled a subject population if the fierce, proud spirit of the natives had not baffled their designs. They tried and failed. Even the voyage of the Pilgrims, who fled to America for their conscience' sake had to be financed; and the capitalists who advanced funds for this hazardous venture expected to reap rewards for their aid.

Nevertheless, the story of human migration cannot all be told in terms of commerce, profits, conquest, and exploitation. A search for trade has not been the sole motive that has led wanderers into distant places, an empire of toiling subjects not the only vision before migratory bands. Unquestionably many of the Greek colonies which adorned the Mediterranean fringe rose on the sites of mere trading posts or were planted to make room for redundant

populations at home, but others sprang from domestic unrest and from the ambitions of leaders. Moreover, the Greeks went far beyond mere ruling and exploiting; they often peopled colonies with their own racial stocks, reproducing the culture of their homeland, and sometimes even improving on their inheritance. It was in outlying provinces that two of the greatest Greek philosophers, Thales and Pythagoras, set up their schools and it is on the ruins of tiny cities in lands remote from Athens that some of the noblest monuments of Greek taste are found to-day—mute testimony to a faithful reproduction of Hellenic culture.

Not even the German migrations into the Roman empire were purely economic in origin. They have been attributed by some writers merely to overpopulation; but the records that have come down to us do not bear out that simple thesis. The causes were varied, including the pressure of invaders driving Germans from their own lands, internecine quarrels ending in the flight of the vanquished over the borders into Rome, countless tribal wars springing from lust and ambition, and finally the lure of Roman luxury and peace. It was only in the final stages of the German invasions into Rome that direction of the process was taken by the organized war band rather than by the moving clan with flocks, herds, and household goods—the war band that conquered and settled down upon subject populations. Though the Spanish migrations which later carried Iberic civilization out into a new Latin empire eventually encircling the globe were an extension of the predatory operation, the heroic deeds of Catholic missionaries, daring for religion's sake torture and death, bore witness to a new force in the making of world dominion.

Into the English migration to America also entered other factors besides trade and conquest. Undoubtedly the political motive, though perhaps even it had economic roots, was a potent element in the colonization of the Atlantic seaboard, transferring the dynastic and national rivalries of the Old World to the New. Grudges and ambitions

that might have flamed up and burnt out on European battlefields now spread round the earth and precipitated contests for dominion in the four quarters of the globe. The settlement of Virginia under the English flag was, among other things, an act of defiance, directed against the sovereigns of Spain and Portugal to whom Pope Alexander VI had assigned the American continents.

In no relation can the religious motive in English expansion be neglected without doing violence to the record, even though dynastic and economic elements were mingled with the operations of Protestant missionaries as they sought to bring Indians into their own fold and to check the extension of papal authority. The first duty of Virginians, declared Captain Smith, was to "preach, baptise into the Christian religion, and by the propagation of the Gospel to recover out of the arms of the devil, a number of poor and miserable souls wrapt up unto death in almost invincible ignorance." Still more significant in English expansion than the work of preachers in quest of souls to save were the labors of laymen from the religious sects of every variety who fled to the wilderness in search of a haven all their own.

Thus it must be said that as faith in Mahomet inspired the armies that carried forward the scimitar under the crescent, threatening to subdue three continents, so faith in Christ inspired the missionaries who served with the forerunners of expanding Europe and mingled with the hopes and passions of the colonists who subdued the waste places of the New World to the economy and culture of the Old. And to this religious motive must be added the love of adventure, curiosity about the unknown, forced sale into slavery, the spirit of liberty beckoning from the frontiers of civilization, the whip of the law, and the fierce, innate restlessness which seizes uncommon people in rebellion against the monotonous routine of ordered life.

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Among the movements that have scattered the human race far and wide over the surface of the earth, the English migration to America was in one fundamental respect unique. Spain, like Rome, conquered and exploited, but the English, by force of circumstances, were driven into another line of expansion. They had no less lust for gold than had the Spanish, but the geographical area which fell into their hands at first did not yield the precious treasure. They would have rejoiced to find, overcome, and exploit an ancient American civilization—another Mexico or Peru; their work in India revealed the willingness of the spirit and flesh; and yet in the economy of history this was not to be their fate in the New World.

Instead of natives submissive to servitude, instead of old civilizations ripe for conquest, the English found an immense continent of virgin soil and forest, sparsely settled by primitive peoples who chose death rather than bondage. To this continent the English colonial leaders, like the Greeks in expansion, transported their own people, their own economy, and the culture of the classes from which they sprang, reproducing in a large measure the civilization of the mother country. Unlike the Spaniards and other empire builders, the English succeeded in founding a new state, which became vast in extent, independent in government, and basically European in stock. That achievement is one of the capital facts of world history.

How did it happen that the English, who came late upon the imperial scene, alone among the European powers achieved just this result? It was certainly not because they were first in the arts of exploration, war, and colonization. Far from it; the Italians were the pathfinders of the high sea. Three hundred years before the English ventured from their little island home to plant colonies in Virginia, Italian mariners had sailed out through the Straits of Gibraltar, and down the coast of Africa in search of a water route to the fabled markets of the East. It was an Italian, Christopher Columbus, who unfurled the flag of Spain

above a motley crew of many nationalities and made the fateful voyage of 1492 that discovered America. It was a Portuguese, Vasco da Gama, who rounded the Cape of Good Hope with the banner of Portugal flying at his masthead, visited the markets of India, and brought back treasure and tales that filled all Europe with commotions.

Before a single English sea captain dared the wide Atlantic, the impetuous Spaniard held in fee the West Indies, ruled huge empires on two American continents, and laid claims to fair domains in the Orient. More than half a century before Francis Drake bore Queen Elizabeth's pennant round the world, the expedition of the indomitable Portuguese, Magellan, under Spanish patronage, on the most perilous voyage in the annals of the sea, had circumnavigated the globe. When Henry VII, stirring from his insular lethargy for a brief moment, bethought himself in 1497 of high adventure beyond the Atlantic, it was an Italian, John Cabot, who took charge of the king's ships, directed the voyage that skirted the shores of Labrador, and gave England her lawyer's claim to the North American continent.

Three years previous to the planting of the first successful English post in America at Jamestown, the French had established a permanent colony at Port Royal on the banks of the Annapolis. Long before a single English ship had plowed the waters of the Indian Ocean or threaded its way among the spice islands of the golden East, the resolute Dutch had visited a hundred Indian ports, established trading factories, and planted the outposts of empire. Slowly indeed did the idea dawn in the minds of Englishmen that, while other nations might carry goods, religion, culture, and the sword across the ocean, they themselves could found great states, occupied and governed mainly by people of their own stock.

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The success of the English in this form of colonial enterprise was due to many factors of circumstance and policy. Their insular position freed them from the expense of maintaining a large army and required them to put their money into a navy for protection. The ships which protected them, unlike armies, could sail the seven seas, seize distant territories, and defend broad dominions. Early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, English statesmen saw with half an eye the sign of the sea power. They did not evolve a grand scheme such as Captain Alfred Mahan, long after the deeds, formulated in a coherent and cogent theory of words, but they discovered that lands beyond the seas could be permanently held only by a sovereign who also ruled the waves.

Acting on that understanding they laid the foundations of the navy which struck down the Spaniards in the battle of the *Armada* in 1588, the Dutch in a long series of conflicts, the French in two hundred years of warfare, and at last, in the fullness of time, the Germans who grasped for the trident. It was through the sea power that England was able to seize and hold the geographical theaters for her commercial and colonial empire.

Rivalries and jealousies of the continental states likewise served England's imperial fortune. Slowly, through their endless strife with rulers on the other side of the Channel, English statesmen worked out a flexible system known as "the balance of power," which made for safety at home and dominion in America, Asia, and Africa. With a skill that was a marvel to the seasoned chancelleries of Europe, they played the Dutch against the French, the French against the Dutch, the Prussians against the French, and the French against the Prussians.

By such means the governments of Europe that singly or in combination might have defied England on the sea were worn down to wrathful impotence. Dutch soldiers allied with England sent to their graves thousands of Louis XIV's best men who, if they had lived, might have built securely the groundwork of a French state in Canada. The power

of France that might have grasped India was broken by the shock of Frederick the Great's picked Prussian troops on the battlefields of Europe.

The political condition of the Continent, as well as its undying rivalries, was another factor that favored English colonial success. In the seventeenth century, all eastern Europe was landlocked and slumbering in ancient customs or engaged in local conflicts that had little or no bearing on trade and empire. Central Europe—the geographical region now occupied by Germany, Austria, Italy, and a number of minor states—was in chaos. Germany was an aggregation of petty feudal domains from which Prussia was just emerging under Hohenzollern mastery. Italy was not a nation, merely a "geographical expression"—a collection of warring principalities and jealous cities.

For various reasons, moreover, the Atlantic powers that might have frustrated English colonial designs were not prepared to supply people of their own stock to possess the soil of the New World. Though the Dutch were full of zeal and enterprise in both hemispheres, they were primarily traders, and the Hudson Valley, which was to be their New Netherland, was wrested from them by the English sea power. France had a population many times that of England, her people were ardent explorers, skillful traders in distant markets, and shrewd managers in commerce; but French monarchs wasted their substance in interminable wars on the Continent which promised the addition of new principalities or the aggrandizement of their families. The people, the money, the labor that might have made New France a living reality instead of a mere dream, were destroyed in futile fighting which yielded neither glory nor profit. Moreover, when in 1685 the French king outlawed all his Protestant subjects, he even denied them a haven in his American dominions.

Spain, whose warriors carried her flag around the world and whose missionaries counted no barrier insurmountable, was also a feudal and clerical power rather than a com-

mercial and manufacturing country; her peasants bound to the land in serfdom could not migrate at will to subdue with plow and hoe the soil won by the sword. Indeed while the English colonies in America were but mewing their infancy, the Spanish empire, majestic in outward appearance, was already racked by administrative incompetence and financial decay. Finally, Spain's resolute neighbor, Portugal, great enough to seize Brazil, was too small to overcome on the sea the might of Britain. So auspicious circumstances on the Continent lent favor to the English cause.

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Something more than strength at sea, ingenuity in manipulating the balance of power, and weakness among neighbors was, however, necessary to the planting of successful colonies across the Atlantic. Essentially that undertaking was civilian in character. It called for capital to equip expeditions and finance the extension of settlements. It demanded leadership in administration and the spirit of business enterprise. Relying largely upon agriculture for support, at least in the initial stages, colonization also required managers capable of directing that branch of economy. In all its ramifications, it depended upon the labor of strong persons able and eager to work in field, home, and shop at the humbler tasks which give strength and prosperity to society—clearing ground, spinning wool, plowing, sowing, reaping, garnering, and carrying on the other processes that sustain life.

Nor was that all. If the European stock was to preserve its racial strains and not fuse with Indians and Negroes, as was the case in large parts of Spanish-America, colonization could not possibly succeed without capable and energetic women of every class who could endure the hardships of pioneer life. Finally, being a branch of business enterprise, it could not flourish without a fortunate combination of authority and self-government: the one, guaran-

teeing order and coöperation; the other, individual initiative necessary to cope with strange and protean circumstance.

At the opening of the seventeenth century it was England, of all the powers of Europe, that was best fitted for this great human task. The English people were at that time far ahead of their Continental neighbors on the road from feudal to bourgeois economy, a long and dusty road marked by toil, revolution, and war. In concrete terms, just what did this mean? First of all, it meant the overthrow, or, at least, the social subjugation of the feudal and military class—a class nourished by landed estates and committed to the ideal that fighting was the noblest work of man.

With the decline of the feudal order went the downfall of the monopolistic clergy similarly sustained by landed property. Correlative with this social change was the emancipation of the smaller landed gentry, the yeomanry, and the peasants from the rigid grasp of their overlords —a process of individualization which affected women as well as men, giving to agriculture new forms of ownership and management. Finally through the dissolution of the old order there rose to power in England a class of merchants, traders, and capitalists, dwellers in towns, or "bourgs," from which, for the want of a more comprehensive and accurate term, the word bourgeois has been derived to characterize modern civilization.

With the decay of feudal and clerical authority went political and legal changes of vital significance. For the successful direction of business enterprise, the wayward and irresponsible conduct of absolute monarchs, accustomed to tax, imprison, and harass their subjects at will, was utterly impossible. Regularity in economy called for regularity in government—the standardization of the monarchy by rules of accountancy; hence the development of constitutional law—of political self-government for the classes capable of grasping and retaining it. Being secular in nature,