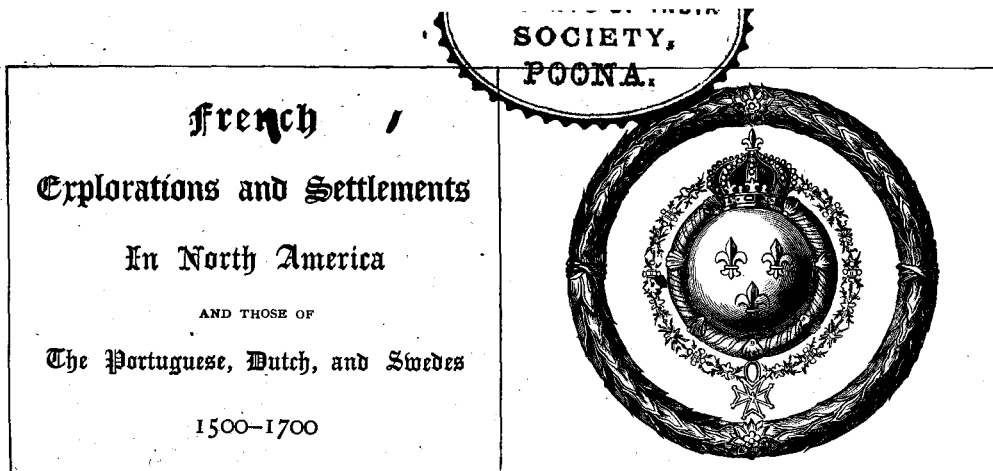


NARRATIVE AND CRITICAL
HISTORY OF AMERICA

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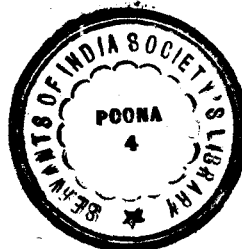
NARRATIVE AND CRITICAL
HISTORY OF AMERICA

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[The French arms on the title are those used by the Royal Printing-Office in Paris in the Seventeenth Century.]

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INTRODUCTION.

PHYSIOGRAPHY OF NORTH AMERICA.

BY NATHANIEL S. SHALER,
Professor of Palaeontology in Harvard University.

Part I.

PHYSIOGRAPHY OF NORTH AMERICA.

THE continents of the earth have two distinct types of form,—the one regular, symmetrical, triangular in outline ; the other without these regularities of shape. To the first of these groups belong the continents of Africa and Australia of the Old World, and the two Americas of the New ; to the second, the massive continent of Europe and Asia. Some have sought to reduce the continent of Asia to the same type as that of the other continents ; but a glance at a map of the hemispheres will show how different is this Indo-European continent from the other land-masses.

These general features of the continents are not only of scientific interest ; they are of the utmost importance to the history of man's development upon these several lands. It is not without meaning, that, while man has existed for a great length of time upon all the continents, the only original civilizations that have been developed have been on the lands of the Indo-European continent. Working on several different lines of advance, several diverse races — Aryan, Semitic, Chinese, and perhaps others — have risen from the common plane of barbarism, and have created complicated social systems, languages, literatures, and arts ; while on the four other continents, despite their great area, greater fertility, and wider range of physical conditions, no race has ever had a native development to be compared with that undergone by the several successful races of Asia and Europe.¹

In this great Old-World continent there are many highly individualized areas, each separated from the rest of the continent by strong geographical barriers ; it has a dozen

¹ Egypt may perhaps afford an exception ; but it is probable that the germs of its civilization came from Asia. All its relations are essentially Asiatic.

or so of great peninsulas upon its seaboard, many great islands off its shores, and the interior of the land is divided into many separated regions by mountain ridges or by deserts. It is a land where man necessarily fell into variety, because of the isolation that the geography gave. If we look at the other continents,—namely, the Americas, Africa, and Australia,—we find that they want this varied and detailed structure. They each consist of a great triangular mass, with scanty subordinate divisions. In all of them put together there are not so many great peninsulas as there are in Europe. If we exclude those that are within the Arctic Circle, there are but few on the four regular continents, none of which compare in size or usefulness to man with the greater peninsulas of the Old World. The only one of value is that of Nova Scotia, in North America.

These regular continents are all in the form of triangles, with their apices pointing towards the southern pole. Near either long shore lie the principal mountain systems that give definition to the coast line. The middle portion of each continent is generally a region of plain, somewhat diversified by lesser mountain systems. Along either shore is a narrow fringe of plain land to the east and west of the main mountain chains. Near the northern part of the continent, and aiding to define the base of the triangle, there is another system of mountains having a general east and west course. With the exception of North America, none of these regular continents have seas inclosed within their areas,—such bodies of water as form so striking a feature in the Asiatic continent, which is indeed a land of mediterranean seas.

In a word, these continents are characteristically as simple as the Asiatic continent is varied. Their mass is undivided, and their organic or human histories are necessarily less diversified than in such a land-mass as Asia.

The continent of North America is, of all the triangular continents, the most nearly akin in its structure to the great Old-World land. In the first place, it is the only one of these continents that has the same general conditions of climate; then it has a far greater diversity of form than the similar masses of South America, Africa, and Australia. North America has several considerable seas inclosed within its limits or bordering upon its shores; its mountain systems are more varied in their disposition than in the other regular continents. So that in a way this continent in its structure lies intermediate between the Asiatic type and what is considered the normal form of continents.

Although this varied structure of the continent of North America makes it more fit for the uses of man than the continents of Africa, South America, and Australia, there are certain considerable disadvantages in its physical conditions. To show the relation of these evil and fortunate features, it will be necessary for us to consider the general geography of the continent somewhat in detail.

The point of first importance concerns the distribution of heat and moisture over the surface of the land; for on these features depends the fitness of the land for all forms of life. The influences which principally determine the climate of a continent come to it from the neighboring seas. The moisture arises there, and finds its way thence to the land; and the heat or coolness which modifies the land climate comes with it.

North America faces three oceans. On the north is the extremely cold Arctic Sea, mostly covered by enduring ice: it is the extreme coldness of this sea, and its ice-clad character near the continent of America, that in good part causes the great severity of its winters. Where the Arctic Sea lies against Europe and Asia it is partly warmed by the Gulf Stream, and so is not completely ice-bound even in winter; but that part of it which lies near the northern coast of America is ice-bound the whole year, and the winds that come from it are many degrees below those that come over open water.

Both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans send streams of warm water against the American coast. But the Gulf Stream has actually very little direct effect upon our climate; it only touches the coast about the Gulf of Mexico, where the temperature is naturally so high that its warming power is not felt. It then leaves our coast, to give its warmth to the shores of Europe and to the European part of the Arctic Ocean. The Pacific current corresponding to the Gulf Stream is feebler than the Atlantic current, and sends its tide of waters against the northwest shore of America. Its effects on that coast are very noticeable; but they are limited, by the geography of that shore, within narrow bounds. In the first place, the passage of Behring's Strait is too small to permit its waters to have access to the Arctic Sea; then the high ranges of the Cordilleras fence off the interior of the continent, so that the warm winds that blow from the sea cannot penetrate far to the east. Confined to the shore, the heat of the Pacific Gulf Stream generates a large amount of fog; this fog shuts off the sun's rays, and so lowers the temperature almost as much as the current itself serves to raise it.

The distribution of moisture over the surface of the continent is effected in much the same way as is the distribution of heat. The Gulf Stream gives an abundant rainfall to the States about the Gulf of Mexico lying to the north of that basin; its effects on the rainfall are seen even as far north as the New England States, but they have little effect to the west of the Mississippi River. The high mountains of the Cordilleras cut off the Pacific winds from the centre of the continent, so that very little of the water which flows down to the Gulf of Mexico or to the Atlantic is derived from the Pacific. From the general conditions thus rudely outlined the following arrangement of climates arises. The northern half of the continent is more completely under the dominion of the Arctic Sea than any part of Europe or Asia; the only parts of it fit for the use of civilized man are the northern watershed of the St. Lawrence, the valley of Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan, and the west-coast region as far north as Alaska. The rest of the northern part of the continent is practically barred out from the life of the race by the intensity of the winter cold, and by the brevity of the summer season.

South of this domain of northern cold, North America divides itself, by its climate, soil, and topographical reliefs, into the following fairly distinct regions: (1) The eastern lowlands lying between the shore and the Appalachian range; these shade southwardly into (2) the lowlands of the Gulf States, which is the only part of North America in the immediate control of the Gulf Stream. These Gulf lowlands pass northwardly into (3) the great plain of the Mississippi Valley. Between these lowlands of the centre of the continent and the Atlantic sea-coast lie (4) the table-lands and moun-

tains of the Appalachian system. West of the Mississippi Valley lie (5) the region of the Cordilleras of North America; and finally on the western shore we find (6) a narrow region of low mountains, forming a slender fringe of shorelands.

The mountains of the Appalachian system are composed of two parallel series of elevations, an old eastern range of peaks which are worn down to mere shreds; so that in place of being as high as the Alps, as they once were, they have no peaks that rise seven thousand feet above the sea. This outer range is traceable from Newfoundland to Alabama; but it only rises above six thousand feet in the White Mountains of New Hampshire and the Black Mountains of North Carolina. In form these mountains are steep and rugged. Their steep sides hold the little tillable land that exists east of the Mississippi; their actual area is small, for the chain is very narrow, not exceeding a score or so of miles in width, except in the Carolinas and in the White Mountains, where it is somewhat wider. The total tillable area in this chain does not exceed twelve thousand square miles. West of this, the old Appalachian mountain system, separated from it by a broad, elevated, somewhat mountainous valley, lies the newer Alleghany range. This valley intermediate is one of the most fertile and admirably situated in the world; it extends from New Jersey to Georgia, with an average width of about forty miles and a length of about six hundred, having an area of over twenty thousand square miles. The Alleghany Mountains on the west are composed principally of round, symmetrical ridges, often like gigantic works of art, so uniform are their arches; none of them rise to more than five thousand feet above the sea, and their surfaces are so little broken that they generally afford tillable though as yet generally untilled land. Practically no part of this great range, which extends from near Albany to Alabama, is completely unfit for the uses of man, and it includes some of the most fertile valleys of America. The most important feature connected with this double mountain system of the Appalachians is the great area of table-lands which it upholds; these bordering uplands are found all around the mountain system. The greater part of the States of New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio owe the considerable elevation of their surfaces to the table-land elevations bordering the Appalachian mountain system. Taken altogether, this mountain system is perhaps the finest region for the uses of man that the world affords; its great length, of more than fifteen hundred miles from north to south, gives it a range of climate such as would be had in Europe by a mountain chain extending from Copenhagen to Rome. The total area of this Appalachian district, mountains as well as table-lands, is about three hundred thousand square miles. This is an area equal to near thrice the surface of Great Britain.

The Appalachian table-lands fade gradually into the Mississippi Valley. Their distinct character continues to near the borders of that stream where it unites with the Ohio. As we come upon the table-land system of the Cordilleras, soon after we pass west of the Mississippi, this great valley may be considered as made up of the table-lands of two great mountain systems, with only a relatively small area of alluvial matter between the mouth of the Ohio and the Gulf. Unlike the Ganges, the Amazon, and most other great rivers of the first class, the Mississippi River has a small

delta section: not over twenty to thirty thousand square miles has this character. By far the greater part of the basin is really table-land, and is thus free from the evil of low countries to a degree equalled by no other very great river basin. Its valley is characteristically a table-land valley, with a general surface of rolling plain, varying from three hundred to five thousand feet above the level of the sea. Outside of the Cordilleras and the Appalachians, this valley has few mountain folds within its ample space. The absence of included mountain systems is almost as noteworthy a feature as the small amount of delta. There are only two or three patches of mountains that lie far beyond the limits of the great mountain systems of the east and west; and only one of these, the Ozark Mountains of Missouri and Arkansas, is at any distance from the main ranges. This is an insignificant group of low hills having considerable geological but no geographical importance.

On the western border of the Mississippi Valley rise the vast ridges of the Cordilleras. This great mountain region is, next after the mountainous area of Central Asia, the most extensive region of great altitude in the world. From Mexico northward this system of mountains widens, until, in the parallel of forty degrees, it has a width of about one thousand miles. This system is made up of many ridges lying upon an elevated table-land. The valleys of the lesser streams are generally over seven thousand feet above the sea; the main peaks, to the number of many hundred, rise over twelve thousand feet above the sea level; many of them attain to about fourteen thousand feet of altitude. Its table-land extends east to near the Mississippi River. The great height and width of this mountain system produce a very marked effect upon the climate of the vast area that it incloses, and upon the country which lies within a thousand miles to the east of its mountain walls. The winds from the Pacific are to a great extent drained of their moisture in the western or Sierra Nevada section of these mountains, and have little moisture to give to the central and eastern chains; and when these winds emerge on to the western plains, they are as dry as those that blow over the Sahara.

Although these Cordilleras of North America afford access by their dislocations to a great supply of mineral substances, they are on the whole a curse to the continent. By the cold and dryness which their height entails, they reduce one third of the continent to sterility. Though here and there in their valleys we find oases of fertile land, and many regions of limited area may be made fertile by the use of irrigation, at least nineteen-twentieths of their lands are irretrievably barren. When their resources of precious metals are exhausted, as is likely to be the case within a hundred years, they will probably be to a great extent abandoned by man. Only the extreme northern section and a part of the central and border lands afford any other attractions to settlers than is found in their mineral wealth.

West of the Cordilleras of North America we have a narrow and mountainous coast region that is abundantly watered by the moisture from the Pacific, which penetrates some distance into the land over the lower ridges that border on them. Although this belt of fertile country cannot be compared in population-sustaining power with the Atlantic coast region, it is of great fertility, and has a climate of surpassing excellence.

On the borders of Mexico, within the limits of the United States, the mountains sink down to much less extreme heights, and the climate becomes less strenuous. This region is better fitted for the permanent occupation of man; but only a small part of the land is arable, — probably not one-tenth of its surface is or ever will be fit for the plough.

In Mexico proper we have a country that retains the character of the Cordilleras so far as its general elevation is concerned, but loses the lofty ridges which we find farther to the north. The loss of these barriers, combined with the narrowing of the space between the Atlantic and the Pacific waters, and its more southern position, increases the temperature and the rainfall; so that the fertility of the country augments in a rapid way as we go southwards, until finally in the isthmus part of the continent we have a tropical luxuriance of life. The lowland borders of the country gain upon the width of the table-land, until south of the Tehuantepec Isthmus the whole region is essentially unfit for the uses of our race.

The climate of North America south of the divide which separates the streams flowing toward the Arctic Circle from those entering the Atlantic south of Labrador may be said to resemble that of Europe in all important respects. The winters are far colder; but the summer seasons, which determine the usefulness of the soil to man, are as warm and quickening to plants as are those of the Old World. The more considerable cold of winter is a disadvantage, inasmuch as it limits the work of agriculture to a smaller part of the year, and requires a greater expense in the keeping of live-stock. This is a considerable evil, especially in the regions north of the parallel of forty degrees; but the cold is not greater than in Northern Germany or in Scotland. There can be no doubt that the body and the mind receive certain advantages from the tonic quality of the winters which compensate for this loss.

Nearly the whole of North America that is within the limits of the United States receives some share of frost. This secures it against the permanent occupation of contagious fevers, which from time to time find their way to it from the tropics.

North America, east of the 100th meridian (west of Greenwich) and north of thirty-five degrees, has a soil which is on the whole superior to that of Europe. Practically the whole of this vast area is tillable, and the variety of crops is very great, considerably greater than that of Europe. West of the 100th meridian the rainfall diminishes rapidly, being especially limited in the summer season. The winters become longer and more extreme throughout all the region within or under the climatic influence of the Cordilleras; the soil is thinner, and over vast regions almost wanting. In certain exceptional tracts as far westward as the Saskatchewan, and at points along the line between the United States and Canada to the south of that valley, there are considerable areas of good soil; but, considered in a general way, we may exclude all the region between the 100th meridian and the Sierra Nevada range from the hope of any great agricultural future. Even should the rainfall be increased by tree-planting in those regions where trees may grow, the quality of the soil in this district, even where soil exists, is often too poor for any use. Yet in some parts it is very good, and if tree-planting should increase the rainfall, some limited areas will be tillable.

Next to the quality of the soil, the forest covering of a country does the most to determine its uses to man. Although the Western prairies have the temporary advantage that they are more readily brought under cultivation than wooded regions, the forests of a land contribute so largely to man's well-being, that without them he can hardly maintain the structure of his civilization. The distribution of American forests is peculiar. All the Appalachian mountain system and the shore region between that system and the sea, as well as the Gulf border as far west as the Mississippi, were originally covered by the finest forest that has existed in the historical period, outside of the tropics. In the highlands south of Pennsylvania and in the western table-land north to the Great Lakes, this forest was generally of hard-wood or deciduous trees; on the shore-land and north of Pennsylvania in the highlands, the pines and other conifers held a larger share of the surface. The parts of the land bordering the Mississippi on the west, as far as the central regions of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri, are forest clad. Michigan and portions of Wisconsin and Minnesota have broad areas of forests, but the cis-Mississippian States of Indiana and Illinois, and the trans-Mississippian country west to the Sierra Nevada, is only wooded, and that generally scantily, along the borders of the streams. Data for precise statements are yet wanting, but there is no doubt that this area is untimbered over about seven eighths of its surface, and the wood which exists has a relatively small value for constructive purposes. North of the regions described, except along the Pacific coast, where fine soft-wood forests extend from near San Francisco to Alaska, the forest growth rapidly diminishes in size, and therefore in value, the trees becoming short and gnarled, and the kinds of wood inferior. So that the region north of the St. Lawrence and of the Great Lakes is not to be regarded as having any very great value from the forest resources it affords. In estimating the value of North America to man, the limitation of good forests to the region east of the Mississippi must be regarded as a disadvantage which is likely to become more serious with the advance of time. Undoubtedly the timberless character of the prairie country for at least two hundred miles west of the Mississippi is in the main due to the constant burning over of the surface by the aborigines. It seems possible that these regions may yet be made to bear extensive woods. The elevated plains that lie farther to the west seem to have too little rainfall for the support of forests.

The rivers of a country are a result and a measure of its climate. The generally large rainfall of the eastern half of North America is shown by the number and size of its streams, which, area for area, are longer and more frequent than those of the Old World, except on the eastern coast of Asia. The heaviest rainfall and the greatest average of streams is found about the Gulf of Mexico and the southern part of the Appalachian district. Hence, northerly, westerly, and northwesterly, the rainfall decreases in amount. The average of the region east of the Mississippi and south of the Laurentian Mountains is probably about fifty inches per annum, somewhere near one-third more than that of Europe. North America, despite the very dry district of the Cordilleras, has an average rainfall about as great as that of Europe, and probably rather greater than Asia; indeed its water-supply is rather greater than the average for lands situated so far from the equator.

The rivers of America have been of very great importance in the settlement of the land. They afford more navigable waters than all the streams of Asia put together. Without the system of the Mississippi, which has more navigable waters than any river except the Amazons, it would not have been possible for America to have been brought under the control of colonies with such speed.

The elevation of the surface of North America, at least of its more habitable portions, is very favorable to man. A large part of its fertile soils lie from five hundred to fifteen hundred feet above the sea. It has a larger part of its surface within the limits of height that are best suited to the uses of man than Asia, but less than Europe has.

In considering the fitness of this continent for the use of European races, it will not do to overlook the mineral resources of the country. It may be stated in general terms that North America is richer in the mineral substances which have most contributed to the development of man than any other continent. The precious metals may be briefly dismissed. They occur constantly in two areas: the Cordilleran,—which, from Mexico, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Colorado, has doubtless furnished more gold and silver than any other one mountain district,—and the Appalachian region, which has given about sixty million dollars to the world's store of gold. The precious mineral resources of the Cordilleran region are probably greater than those of any other continent. They have already exercised a very great influence on the commercial and political history of the continent, and are likely to become of more importance as time goes on, for at least half a century to come.

In the so-called baser, yet really more precious, metals this continent is even more fortunate. The supplies in the most important metal, iron, are very great,—certainly greater than in Europe. This metal is distributed with much uniformity over the country, there being scarcely a State except Florida that cannot claim some share of this metal. Especially rich in deposits of this metal are the States which share the Appalachian district, and the States of Missouri and Michigan. The Rocky Mountains also abound in iron ores, which there often contain a certain proportion of the precious metals; so that it is possible that the exploitation of the two metals may in time be carried on there together. There is probably no other continent that contains as large a share of iron,—the most important metal for the uses of man.

The other less used, but still commercially important, metals,—zinc, lead, and copper,—are found in considerable abundance in the Appalachian, the Laurentian, and the Cordilleran regions, especially in the last-named district. The only metal that is rarely found in North America, never yet in quantities of economic importance, is tin. Some specimens of bronze implements have been found in Mexico and Peru. They seem to afford the only evidence that the aboriginal peoples knew how to smelt any metals. Though the natives in the more northern districts used copper, they never discovered the art of smelting it.

Considering the useful metals as a whole, North America is proportionally richer than any other country that is well known to us.

The most considerable of the resources that the rocks of America offer, are found in the deposits of coal which they contain. These deposits are of vast extent, and

are excellently fitted for the various uses of this fuel. While the other mineral resources of the country are most abundant in the region of the Cordilleras, the best of these deposits of coal are accumulated in and about the Appalachian district. At least nine tenths of the coal of America lies to the east of the Mississippi River. New England, New York, South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana are the only States that are practically without coal; and even in New England, Rhode Island and the neighboring parts of Massachusetts have promising but essentially undeveloped fields. In the Cordilleran district coal deposits of small area occur; but the material is generally of poor quality, and is not likely to have a great utility.

As a whole, the resources in the way of subterranean fuel are far richer on this continent than in Europe. The area of coal-bearing rocks is at least eight times as great, and the deposits are much better disposed for working. No other continent save Asia is likely to develop anything like these coal resources; in China the coal area seems much larger than that of North America, but the richness of the field has not yet been fully proven: it is, however, undoubtedly great.

As the latent power of any modern society depends in an intimate way upon the buried stores of solar energy in coal-beds, the large area and good quality of the American coal-fields are very important advantages, and are full of promise for the economic future of its people.

Among the less important resources of the rocks in North America are the various classes of coal-oils which were first brought into commerce from its fields. Although these oils are not peculiar to North America, the small amount of disruption which its rocks have undergone have caused them to be retained in the subterranean store-houses; while in other countries, where the rocks have been more disturbed, these oils have been allowed to escape to the streams or the air. The areas where these oils occur on the continent are widely scattered. They are, however, principally confined to the Upper Ohio Valley; they are known to exist also in the Valley of the Cumberland River, in California, and in Western Canada north of Lake Erie. Besides these flowing oils there are immense areas of black shales, which yield large quantities of oil to distillation. These are not now of value, on account of the abundance of these flowing oils; but as in the immediate future these flowing wells are likely to cease their production, we may look to these shales for an almost indefinite supply of oil. In the Ohio Valley, extending eastward in Virginia into the valleys of the Atlantic streams, there is an area of over one hundred thousand square miles of this shale, which is on the average over one hundred and fifty feet thick, and yields about ten per cent of oil. In other words, it is equal to a lake of oil as large as New York and Pennsylvania, and fifteen feet deep,—a practically unlimited source of this material.

It is important to note that the sources of supply of phosphate and alkaline marls are very large. As these substances are subject to a constant waste in agriculture, and are the most important of all materials to the growth of the standard crops, the soil of America promises on the whole to be as enduring as is that of Europe, though, owing to the larger rainfall, it tends to waste away more rapidly.

The building stones of a country are of importance, inasmuch as they affect the constructions of a people ; in such materials, suited for the purposes of simple strength and durability, the country is very well supplied, being quite as well off as Europe. On the other hand, the stones that lend themselves to the more decorative uses, the pure white or variegated marbles, are not nearly as rich as the countries about the Mediterranean, which is of all known regions the richest in decorative stones.

It is not possible within the limits of this chapter to support by sufficient details the foregoing statements concerning the physical conditions of America. The necessary brevity of the work has made it difficult to find place for all the points that should be presented ; it may be fairly said, however, that the statements as made are to a very great extent matters of general information, which lie beyond the scope of debate, being well known to all students of American physiography.

Accepting the foregoing statements as true, it may be fairly owned that the general physical conditions of the American continent closely resemble those of Europe, and that in all the more important matters our race gained rather than lost by its transfer from the Old World to the New.

Part II.

EFFECT OF THE PHYSIOGRAPHY OF NORTH AMERICA ON MEN OF EUROPEAN ORIGIN.

In their organic life the continents of America have always stood somewhat apart from those of the Old World. This isolation is marked in every stage of their geological history. In each geological period they have many forms that never found their way to the other lands, and we fail to find there many species that are abundant in the continents of the Old World.

The same causes that kept the animal and vegetable life of the Americas distinct from Europe and Asia have served to keep those continents apart from the human history of the Old World. Something more than the relations that are patent on a map are necessary to a proper understanding of the long continued isolation of these continents.

In the first place, we may notice the fact that from the Old World the most approachable side of these continents lies on the west. Not only are the lands of the New and Old World there brought into close relations to each other, but the ocean streams of the North Pacific flow toward America. Moreover the North Pacific is a sea of a calmer temper than the North Atlantic, and the chance farers over its surface would be more likely to survive its perils. In the North Atlantic, over which alone the Aryan peoples could well have found their way to America, we have a wide sea,

which is not only the stormiest in the world, but its currents set strongly against western-going ships, and the prevailing winds blow from the west.¹ If it had been intended that America should long remain unknown to the seafaring peoples of Semitic or Aryan race, it would not have been easy, within the compass of earthly conditions, to accomplish it in a more effective manner than it has been done by the present geography.

The result is that man, who doubtless originated in the Old World, early found his way to America by the Pacific; and all the so-called indigenous races known to us in the Americas seem to have closer relations to the peoples living in northern Asia than to those of any other country. It is pretty clear that none of the aboriginal American peoples have found their way to these continents by way of the Atlantic.

Although the access to the continent of North America is much more easily had upon its western side, and though all the early settlements were probably made that way, the configuration of the land is such that it is not possible to get easy access to the heart of the continent from the Pacific shore. So that although the Atlantic Ocean was most forbidding and difficult as a way to America, once passed, it gave the freest and best access to the body of the continent. In the west, the Cordilleras are a formidable bar to those who seek to enter the continent from the Pacific. None but a modern civilization would ever have forced its barriers of mountains and of deserts. An ancient civilization, if it had penetrated America from the west, would have recoiled from the labor of traversing this mountain system, that combines the difficulties of the Alps and the Sahara. If European emigration had found such a mountain system on the eastern face of the continent, the history of America would have been very different. Scarcely any other continent offers such easy ingress as does this continent to those who come to it from the Atlantic side. The valleys of the St. Lawrence, the Hudson, the Mississippi, in a fashion also of the Susquehanna and the James, break through or pass around the low-coast mountains, and afford free ways into the whole of the interior that is attractive to European peoples. No part of the Alleghanian system presents any insuperable obstacles to those who seek to penetrate the inner lands. The whole of its surface is fit for human uses; there are neither deserts of sand nor of snow. The axe alone would open ways readily passable to men and horses. So that when the early settlers had passed the sea, all their formidable geographical difficulties were at an end,—with but little further toil the wide land lay open to them. I propose in the subsequent pages to give a sketch of the physical conditions of this continent, with reference to the transplanted civilization that has developed upon its soil. It will be impossible, within the limits of this essay, to do more than indicate these conditions in a very general way, for the details of the subject would constitute a work in itself. It will be most profitable for us first to glance at the general relations of climate and soil that are found in North America, so far as these features bear upon the history of the immigration it has received from Europe.

¹ It is likely that some part of the Aryan folk finding to the East must have been uncommon, and their way to the Pacific shore in Corea and elsewhere; but the Aryan migrations set- by this route small.

The climate of North America south of the Laurentian Mountains and east of the Rocky Mountains is much more like that of Europe than of any we find in the other continents. Although there are many points of difference, these variations lie well within the climatic range of Europe itself. On the south, Mexico may well be compared to Italy and Spain; in the southern parts of the Mississippi Valley we have conditions in general comparable to those of Lombardy and Central France; and in the northern portions of that area and along the sea-border we can find fair parallels for the conditions of Great Britain, Germany, or Scandinavia. As is well known, the range of temperature during the year varies much more in America than in Europe, but these variations in themselves are of small importance. Man in a direct way is not much affected by temperature; his elastic body, helped by his arts, may within certain limits neglect this element of climate. The real question is how far these temperatures affect the products of the soil upon which his civilization depends. In the case of most plants and domestic animals, their development depends more upon the summer temperature, or that of the spring season, than upon the winter climate. Now the summer climates of America are more like those of Europe than are those of the winter. So the new-won continent offered to man a chance to rear all the plants and animals which he had brought to domesticity in the Old World.

The general character of the soil of North America is closely comparable with that of Europe, yet it has certain noteworthy peculiarities. In the first place, there is a larger part of America which has been subjected to glacial action than what we find in Europe. In Europe, only the northern half of Great Britain, the Scandinavian peninsulas, a part of Northern Germany, and the region of Switzerland were under the surface of the glaciers during the last glacial period. In America, practically all the country north of the Susquehanna, and more than half of the States north of the Ohio, had their soils influenced by this ice period. The effects of glaciation on the soils of the region where it has acted are important. In the first place, the soils thus produced are generally clayey and of a rather stubborn nature, demanding much care and labor to bring them into a shape for the plough. The surface is usually thickly covered with stones, which have to be removed before the plough can be driven. I have estimated that not less than an average of thirty days' labor has been given to each acre of New-England soil to put it into arable condition after the forest has been removed; nearly as much labor has to be given to removing the forest and undergrowth: so that each cultivated acre in this glacial region requires about two months' labor before it is in shape for effective tillage.¹ When so prepared, the soils of glaciated districts are of a very even fertility. They hold the same character over wide areas, and their constitution is the same to great depths. Though never of the highest order of fertility, they remain for centuries constant in their power. I have never seen a worn-out field of this sort. Another peculiarity of the American soils is the relatively

¹ I have elsewhere (Introduction to the *Memorial History of Boston*) noticed the fact that this difficulty in clearing the glaciated soils led the early settlers of New England to use the poorer soils first. Along the shore and the rivers there is a strip of sandy terrace deposits, the soils of which are rather lean, but which are free from boulders, so that the labor of clearing was relatively small. All, or nearly all, the first settlements in the glaciated districts were made on this class of soils.

large area of limestone lands which the country affords. America abounds in deposits of this nature, which produce soils of the first quality, extremely well fitted to the production of grass and grains. Although statistical information is not to be obtained on such a matter, I have no doubt, after a pretty close scrutiny of both America and Europe, that the original fertility of America was greater than that of Europe; but that, on the whole, the regions first settled by Europeans were much more difficult to subdue than the best lands of Central and Southern Europe had been.¹

The foregoing statement needs the following qualification: Owing to the relative dryness and heat of the American summer, the forests are not so swampy as they are in Northern Europe, and morasses are generally absent. It required many centuries of continued labor to bring the surface of Northern Germany, Northern France, and of Britain into conditions fit for tillage.

Next to deserts and snowy mountains, swamps are the greatest barriers to the movements of man. If the reader will follow the interesting account of the Saxon Conquest given in Mr. Green's volume on *The Making of England*, he will see how the tracts of marsh and marshy forest served for many centuries to limit the work of subjugation. In America there are no extensive bogs or wet forests in the upland district, south of the St. Lawrence, except in Maine and in the British Provinces. In all other districts fire or the axe can easily bring the surface into a shape fit for cultivation. In taking an account of the physical conditions which formed the subjugation of North America by European colonies, we must give a large place to this absence of upland swamps and the dryness of the forests, which prevented the growth of peaty matter within their bounds.

The success of the first settlements in America was also greatly aided by the fact that the continent afforded them a new and cheaper source of bread, in the maize or Indian corn which was everywhere used by the aborigines of America. It is difficult to convey an adequate impression of the importance of this grain in the early history of America. In the first place, it yields not less than twice the amount of food per acre of tilled land, with much less labor than is required for an acre of small grains; it is far less dependent on the changes of seasons; the yield is much more uniform than that of the old European grains; the harvest need not be made at such a particular season; the crops may with little loss be allowed to remain ungathered for weeks after the grain is ripe; the stalks of the grain need not be touched in the harvesting, the ears alone being gathered; these stalks are of greater value for forage than is the straw of wheat and other similar grains. Probably the greatest advantage of all that this beneficent plant afforded to the early settlers was the way in which it could be planted without ploughing, amid the standing forest trees which had only been deadened by having their bark stripped away by the axe. This rough method of tillage was unknown among the peoples of the Old World. None of their cultivated plants were

¹ The slow progress of our agricultural exports during the first two hundred years of the history of this country, is in good part to be explained by the stubborn character of the soil which was then in use. The only easily subdued soils in use before 1800 were those of Virginia and Maryland. The sudden advance of the export trade in grain during the last fifty years marks the change which brought the great areas of non-glaciated soils of the Mississippi Valley and the South under cultivation.

suited to it ; but the maize admitted of such rude tillage. The aborigines, with no other implements than stone axes and a sort of spade armed also with stone, would kill the forest trees by girdling or cutting away a strip around the bark. This admitted the light to the soil. Then breaking up patches of earth, they planted the grains of maize among the standing trees ; its strong roots readily penetrated deep into the soil, and the strong tops fought their way to the light with a vigor which few plants possess. The grain was ready for domestic use within three months from the time of planting, and in four months it was ready for the harvest.

The beginnings in civilization which the aborigines of this country had made, rested on this crop and on the pumpkin, which seems to have been cultivated with it by the savages, as it still is by those who inherited their lands and their methods of tillage. The European colonists almost everywhere and at once adopted this crop and the method of tillage which the Indians used. Maize-fields, with pumpkin-vines in the interspaces of the plants, became for many years the prevailing, indeed almost the only, crop throughout the northern part of America. It is hardly too much to say, that, but for these American plants and the American method of tilling them, it would have been decidedly more difficult to have fixed the early colonies on this shore.

Another American plant has had an important influence on the history of American commerce, though it did not aid in the settlement of the country, — tobacco. That singular gift of the New World to the Old quickly gave the basis of a great export to the colonies of Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina ; it alone enabled the agriculture of the Southern colonies to outgrow in wealth those which were planted in more northern soil. To this crop, which demands much manual labor of an unskilled kind, and rewards it well, we owe the rapid development of African slavery. It is doubtful if this system of slavery would ever have flourished if America had been limited in its crops to those plants which the settlers brought from the Old World. Although African slavery existed for a time in the States north of the tobacco region, it died away in them even before the humanitarian sentiments of modern times could have aided in its destruction ; it was the profitable nature of tobacco crops which fixed this institution on our soil, as it was the great extension of cotton culture which made this system take on its overpowering growth during the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Another interesting effect of the conditions of tillage which met the early settlers upon this soil depends upon the peculiar distribution of forests in North America. All those regions which were first occupied by European peoples were covered by very dense forests. To clear these woods away required not less than thirty days' labor to each acre of land. In the glaciated districts, as before remarked, this labor of preparation was nearly doubled. The result was that the area of tillage only slowly expanded as the population grew denser, and the surplusage of grain for export was small during the first two centuries. When in the nineteenth century the progress westward suddenly brought the people upon the open lands of the prairies, the extension of tillage went on with far greater celerity. We are now in the midst of the great revolution that these easily won and very fertile lands are making in the affairs of the world.

For the first time in human history, a highly skilled people have suddenly come into possession of a vast and fertile area which stands ready for tillage without the labor that is necessary to prepare forest lands for the plough. They are thus able to flood the grain-markets of the world with food derived from lands which represent no other labor beyond tillage except that involved in constructing railways for the exportation of their products. This enables the people of the Western plains to compete with countries where the land represents a great expenditure of labor in overcoming the natural barriers to the cultivation of the soil.

There are many lesser peculiarities connected with the soils of North America that have had considerable influence upon the history of the people; the most essential fact is, however, that the climatic conditions of this continent are such that all the important European products, except the olive, will flourish over a wide part of its surface. So that the peoples who come to it from any part of Europe find a climate not essentially different from their own, where the plants and animals on which their civilization rested would flourish as well as in their own home.¹

We may note also that the climate of North America brought Europeans in contact with no new diseases. North of the Gulf of Mexico the maladies of man were not increased by the transportation from Europe. It is difficult to arrive at a satisfactory determination concerning the effect of American conditions upon the peoples who have come from Europe to live a life of many generations upon its soil. Much has been said in a desultory way upon this subject, but little that has any very clear scientific value. The problem is a very complicated one. In the first place it is very difficult, if not impossible, to separate the effects of climate from those brought about by a diversity of the social conditions, such as habits of labor, of food, etc. Moreover, the problem is further complicated by the fact that there has been a constant influx of folk into America from various parts of Europe, so that in most parts of the country there has been a constant admixture of the old blood and the new.

After reviewing the sources of information, I am convinced that the following facts may be regarded as established: The American people are no smaller in size than are the peoples in Europe from which they are derived; they are at least as long-lived; their capacity to withstand fatigue, wounds, etc. is at least as great as that of any European people; the average of physical beauty is probably quite as good as it is among an equal population in the Old World; the fecundity of the people is not diminished. The compass of this essay will not permit me, to enter into the details necessary to defend these propositions as they might be defended. I will, however, show certain facts which seem to support them. First, as regards the physical propor-

¹ It is an interesting fact that while America has given but one domesticated animal to Europe, in the turkey, it has furnished a number of the most important vegetables, among them maize, tobacco, and the potato. The absence of strong domesticable animals in America doubtless affected the development of civilization among its indigenous people. The buffalo is apparently not domesticable. The horse, which seems to have been developed on North Ameri-

can soil, and to have spread thence to Europe and Asia, seems to have disappeared in America before the coming of man to its shores. The only beast which could profitably be subjugated was the weak vicuna, which could only be used for carrying light burdens. But for the help given them by the sheep, the bull, and the horse, we may well doubt if the Old-World races would have won their way much more effectively than than those of America had done.

tions of the American people. By far the largest collections of accurate measurements that have ever been made of men were made by the officers of the United States Sanitary Commission during the late Civil War. These statistics have been carefully tabulated by Dr. B. A. Gould, the distinguished astronomer. From the results reached by him, it is plain that the average dimensions of these troops were as good as those of any European army; while the men from those States where the population had been longest separated from the mother country were on the whole the best formed of all.¹

The statistics of the life-insurance companies make it clear that the death-rate is not higher in America among the classes that insure than in England. I am credibly informed that American companies expect a longer life among their clients than the English tables of mortality assume.

The endurance of fatigue and wounds in armies has been proved by our Civil War to be as good as that of the best English or Continental troops. Such forced marches as that of Buell to the relief of the overwhelmed troops at Pittsburg Landing, or Shiloh, — where the men marched thirty-five miles without rest, and at once entered upon a contest which checked a victorious army, — is proof enough of the physical and moral endurance of the people. The extraordinary percentage of seriously wounded men that recovered during this war, — a proportion without parallel in European armies, —

¹ See for special information on these points for confirmation of the general statements made above. *the Investigations in the Military and Anthropological Statistics of American Soldiers.* By Benjamin Apthorp Gould, Cambridge, 1869, p. 655. The following table, compiled from Dr. Gould's report, is extracted from the "General Account of Kentucky" in my *Reports of Progress of Kentucky Geological Survey*, new series, Frankfort, Kentucky, 1877, vol. ii. p. 387: —

TABLE OF MEASUREMENTS OF AMERICAN WHITE MEN COMPILED FROM REPORT OF THE SANITARY COMMISSION, MADE FROM MEASUREMENTS OF THE UNITED STATES VOLUNTEERS DURING THE CIVIL WAR. BY B. A. GOULD.

| MEAN HEIGHT. | | | Mean weight in pounds. | MEAN CIRCUMFERENCE OF CHEST. | | Mean circumference of head and occiput. | Proportion of tall men in each 100,000 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|
| NATIVITY. | No. of men. | Height in inches. | | Full inspiration. Inches. | * After each inspiration | | |
| New England | 152,370 | 67.834 | 139.39 | 36.71 | 34.11 | 22.02 | 295 |
| N. Y., N. J., Penn. | 273,026 | 67.590 | 140.83 | 37.06 | 34.38 | 22.10 | 237 |
| Ohio, Indiana | 220,796 | 68.160 | 145.37 | 37.53 | 34.95 | 22.11 | 486 |
| Mich. Mo., Illinois | 71,196 | 67.822 | 141.78 | 37.29 | 34.04 | 22.19 | 466 |
| Seaboard Slave States | | | 140.99 | 36.64 | 34.23 | 21.93 | * 600 |
| Kentucky, Tenn. | 59,334 | 68.605 | 149.85 | 37.83 | 35.30 | 22.32 | 848 |
| Free States west of Miss. R. | 3,811 | 67.419 | | 37.53 | 34.84 | 21.97 | 184 |
| British Maritime Provinces | 6,320 | 67.510 | 143.59 | 37.13 | 34.81 | 22.13 | 237 |
| Canada | 31,698 | 67.086 | 141.35 | 37.14 | 34.35 | 22.11 | 177 |
| England | 39,037 | 66.741 | 137.61 | 36.91 | 34.30 | 22.16 | 103 |
| Scotland | 7,343 | 67.258 | 137.85 | 37.57 | 34.69 | 22.23 | 178 |
| Ireland | 83,128 | 66.951 | 139.18 | 37.54 | 35.27 | | 84 |
| Germany | 89,021 | 66.660 | 140.37 | 37.20 | 34.74 | 22.09 | 106 |
| Scandinavia | 6,782 | 67.337 | 148.14 | 38.39 | 35.37 | 22.37 | 221 |

* Slave States, not including Kentucky and Tennessee.

can only be attributed to the innate vigor of the men, and not to any superiority in the treatment they received. The distinguished physiologist, Dr. Brown-Séquard, assures me that the American body, be it that of man or beast, is more enduring of wounds than the European; that to make a given impression upon the body of a creature in America it is necessary to inflict severer wounds than it would be to produce the same effect on a creature of the same species in Europe. His opportunities for forming an opinion on this subject have been singularly great, so that the assertion seems to me very important. That the fecundity of the population is not on the whole diminishing, is sufficiently shown by the statistics of the country. In the matter of physical beauty, the condition of the American people cannot, of course, be made a matter of statistics. The testimony of all intelligent travellers is to the effect that the forms of the people have lost nothing of their distinguished inheritance of beauty from their ancestors. The face is certainly no less intellectual in its type than that of the Teutonic peoples of the Old World, while the body is, though perhaps of a less massive mould, without evident marks of less symmetry.

Perhaps the best assurance we obtain concerning the fitness of North America for the long-continued residence of Teutonic people may be derived from the consideration of the history of the two American settlements that have remained for about two hundred years without considerable admixture of new European blood. These are the English settlement in Virginia and the French in the region of the St. Lawrence; both these populations have been upon the soil for about two hundred years, with but little addition from their mother countries. In Virginia, essentially the whole of the white blood is English; the only mixture of any moment is from the Pennsylvania Germans, a people of kindred race, and equally long upon the soil. I believe that not less than ninety-five per cent of the white blood, — if I may be allowed this form of expression, — is derived from British soil. We have no statistics concerning the bodily condition of the Virginian people which will enable us to compare them with those of other States. The few recruits in the Federal army who were measured by the Sanitary Commission were mainly from the poorer classes, the oppressed "poor whites," and are not a fair index of the physical condition of the people of this State. We have only the fact that the Confederate army of northern Virginia, composed in the main of the small farmers of the commonwealth, fought, under Lee and Jackson, a long, stubborn, losing fight, as well as any other men of the race have done. No other test of vigor is so perfect as that which such a struggle gives. Where a people make such men as Jackson, and such men as made Jackson's career possible, we may be sure that they are not in their decadence.

In Kentucky and Tennessee we have little else than Virginia blood and that of northwestern Carolina, which was derived from Virginia, with the exception of the very localized German settlements along the Ohio River: practically the whole of the white agricultural population of these States is of British blood that has been on this soil for about two hundred years. I do not believe there is any other body of folk of as purely English stock as this white population of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee: it amounts to almost three millions of people, and there is scarcely any admixture of other blood. In Virginia, as before remarked, there are no statistics to show just

what the physical conditions of the population are ; but in Kentucky and Tennessee a large number of men who were born upon the soil were measured by the Sanitary Commission. The results were as follows : the troops from Kentucky and Tennessee were larger than those from any other State ; in height, girth of chest, and size of head, they were of remarkable proportions. The men of no European army exceed them in size, though some picked bodies of troops are equally large. We must remember also that these men were not selected from the body of the people, as European armies are, but that they represent the State in arms, very few being rejected for disability. We must also remember that the men from the most fertile parts of these States, those parts which have the reputation of breeding the largest men, went into the Confederate army ; while the Union troops were principally recruited from the poorer districts, where the people suffer somewhat from the want of sufficient variety in their food. The fighting quality of these men is well shown by the history of a Kentucky brigade in the Confederate army in the campaign near Atlanta in 1864, in which the brigade, during four months of very active service, received more wounds than it had men, and not over ten men were unaccounted for at the end of the campaign.¹ The goodness of this service is probably not exceptional ; it has for us, however, the especial interest that these men were the product of six generations of American life, — showing as well as possible that the physical and moral conditions of life upon this continent are not calculated to depreciate the important inheritances of the race.

Although it is only a part of the problem, it is well to notice that the death-rate in these States of old American blood is singularly low, and the number of very aged people who retain their faculties to an advanced age very great. The census of 1870 gave the death-rate of Kentucky at about eleven in a thousand, — a number small almost beyond belief. It should also be noticed that the emigration from Kentucky has for fifty years or more been very large, relatively almost as heavy as that from Massachusetts. It is a well-known fact, which is made most evident by the statistics of the Sanitary Commission above referred to, that the larger and stronger citizens of a State are more apt to emigrate than those of weaker frame, the result being that the population left behind is deprived of its most vigorous blood.

The Canadian-French population presents us with another instance in which a European people long upon the soil, and without recent additions of blood from the native country, have maintained themselves unharmed amid conditions of considerable difficulty. This French population has been upon the soil for about as long as that of Virginia ; that is to say, for two centuries and more. I have been unable to find any statistics concerning the numbers brought as colonists to America. I have questioned various students on this matter, and have come to the conclusion that the original num-

¹ The following statement concerning the history of this brigade during the campaign of 1864 was given me by my friend, General Fayette Hewett, who was adjutant of the command :—

“ On the 7th of May, 1864, the Kentucky Brigade marched out of Dalton 1140 strong. The hospital reports show, that, up to September 1, 1,850 wounds

were taken by the command. This includes the killed ; but many were struck several times in one engagement, in which case the wounds were counted as one. In two battles over 51 per cent of all engaged were killed or wounded. During the whole campaign there were not more than ten desertions. The campaign ended with 240 men able to do duty ; less than 50 were without wounds.”

ber did not exceed twenty-five thousand souls. This people has not perceptibly intermingled with those of other blood, so that its separate career can be traced with less difficulty than that of any other people. Race-hatreds, differences of language, of religion, and of customs have kept them apart from their neighbors in a fashion that is more European than American. This has been a great disadvantage to the race, for they have remained in a state of subordination as great as that in which the Africans of the Southern States now are. No other folk of European origin within the British Empire have remained so burdened by disabilities of all kinds as this remarkable people. The soil with which they have to deal is much more difficult than the average of America; most of it lies beyond the limits where Indian corn will grow, and much of it will scarcely nourish the hardier small grains. Despite the material difficulties of their position, their general illiteracy and intensified provincialism, this people have shown some very vigorous qualities; they have more than doubled in numbers in each generation; they are vigorous, exceedingly industrious, and have much mechanical tact. In New England they hold their own in the struggle with the native, so that it seems likely that the States of that district may soon be in good part peopled by the folk of this race. As near as I can ascertain, these Canadian-French of pure blood in Canada and the United States amount to about two and a half millions; if this be the case, the population has more than doubled each thirty years since their arrival upon American soil,—which is about as rapid a rate of increase as can be found among any people in the world, perhaps only surpassed by the population of Virginia; which commonwealth, starting with an original English emigration which could not have exceeded one hundred thousand, counts at the present day not less than six million descendants, or about twice as many as there would be if each generation only doubled the numbers of the preceding.

There is yet another separate people on the American soil which has been here for about six generations without any addition from abroad: these are the so-called Pennsylvanian Germans. I shall not take time to do more than mention them, for they, without recent European admixture, show the same evidences of continued vigor that is presented by the Virginian British and the Canadian French blood. Their progeny are to be counted by millions; and though they, like the Canadian French, have shown as yet little evidence of intellectual capacity, this may be explained by the extreme isolation that their language and customs have forced upon them.

Imperfectly as I have been able to present this important series of facts, it is enough to make it clear that they are mistaken who think that the recent emigrations from Europe have helped to maintain the vigor of the American people. It seems more likely that, so far from adding to the strength of the older stocks, the newer comers, mostly of a lower kind of folk than the original settlers, have served rather to hinder than to help the progress of the population which came with the original colonies.

These considerations may be extended, by those who care to do so, by a study of several other isolated peoples in this country,—the German colonies of Texas, the Swiss of Tennessee, and several others; all of which have prospered, and all of which have gone to prove that the climate of North America is singularly well fitted for the

use of Northern Europeans. No sufficiently large colonies of Italians, Spanish, or Portuguese have ever been planted within the limits of the present United States to determine the fitness of its conditions for the peoples of those States. There is no reason, however, to believe that they would not have succeeded on this soil if fortune had brought them here.

It is worth while to notice the fact that the European domesticated animals have without exception prospered on American soil. The seven really domesticated mammals and the half-dozen birds of our barnyards have remained essentially unchanged in their proportions, longevity, and fitness for the uses of man. As there can be no moral influences bearing upon these creatures, they afford a strong proof of the essential identity of the physical conditions of the two continents. Evidence of the same sort, though less complete, is afforded by the history of European domesticated plants on our soil. Speaking generally, we may say that with trifling exceptions they all do as well or better here than on their own ground. With the same care, wheat, rye, oats, barley, etc., give the same returns as in their native countries.

Imperfect as this *résumé* is, it will make it clear that we are justified in believing that the climate and other physical conditions of central North America is as favorable to the development of men and animals of European races as their own country. Those who would see how important this point is to the history of our race should consider the fact that the empire of India has proved utterly unfit for the uses of Europeans, though other branches of the Aryan race have attained a high degree of development within its limits.

I next propose to consider the especial physical features of the continent with reference to several settlements that were made upon it, the extent to which the geography and the local conditions of soil, climate, etc. have affected the fate of the several colonies planted on the eastern shore of North America north of Mexico.

Chance rather than choice determined the position of the several colonies that were planted on the American soil. So little was known of the natural conditions of the continent, or even of its shore geography, and the little that had been discovered was so unknown to navigators in general, that it was not possible to exercise much discretion in the placing of the first settlers in the New World. It happened that in this lottery the central parts of the American continent fell to the English people; while the French, by one chance and another, came into possession of two parts of the coast separated by over two thousand miles of shore. It will be plain from the map that these two positions were essentially the keys to the continent. The access to the interior of the continent by natural water-ways is by two lines, — on the north by the St. Lawrence system of lakes and rivers; on the south by the Mississippi system of rivers, which practically connects with the St. Lawrence system. Fortune, in giving France the control of these two great avenues, offered her the mastery of the whole of its vast domain. We have only to consider the part that the pathway of the Rhine played in the history of mediæval trade in Europe, to understand how valuable these lines would have been until railways and canals had come to compete with water ways.

The only long-continued and systematic effort that France made to perpetuate

her power in North America was made through the Valley of the St. Lawrence. Let us, therefore, consider the physical conditions of this valley, and their influence upon the colonies that were planted there. The St. Lawrence River system and the valley it drains is most peculiar. It is, indeed, without its like in all the world. At the mouth of the main river we have a set of rugged islands and peninsulas enclosing an estuarine sea, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, which gradually narrows in the course of three hundred miles to the channel of the great river. Ascending this river, the early explorers found a wonderful set of rapids; then a lake larger than any sheet of fresh water that had been seen by Europeans; then the swift channel of the Niagara River with its great Falls; then, above, a series of four great lakes, giving a real Mediterranean of fresh water. On the north was a rude and unpromising country, rising upward into low but sterile and rugged mountains; but on the south the natural boundaries of the valley about the Great Lakes hardly exist: indeed, it was possible in the time of rains for small boats to pass directly from Lake Michigan to the waters of the Mississippi without a portage. It is this absence of the southern bounding wall which constitutes the most peculiar feature in this region of geographical surprises.

Viewed on the map, this system of waters seems to afford the natural avenue to the heart of the continent; and when its geography became known, we may well imagine that the French believed that they had here the way to secure their dominion over it. Not only did it afford a convenient water-way to the heart of the continent, but also, by way of Lake Champlain, an easy access to the rear of the New-England settlements and to the Hudson. Thus it not only flanked and turned the English settlements of the whole continent, but it made the New-England position appear almost untenable.

Experience, however, showed that there were certain grave disadvantages attending the navigation of these waters. The river itself is not readily accessible to large vessels beyond the tidal belt. Its rapids and the Falls of Niagara are very great obstacles to its use,—barriers which were never overcome during the French occupation of the country. The Great Lakes are stormy seas, with scarcely a natural harbor, requiring for their navigation even more seamanship than do the open waters of the Atlantic. Moreover, these channels are frozen for five months in the year, so that all movements made by them are limited to about half the year.

Despite these disadvantages, the St. Lawrence system doubtless gave the French a vast advantage in the race for empire on this continent. When we consider that for a long time they had the control of the Mississippi as well, it seems surprising that their power was ever broken. The facilities which this water system gave to military movements that took the whole of the English colonies in the rear was not the sole advantage it afforded its first European possessors; though, on the other hand, it must be remembered that the strategic movements of the English were on interior lines, if largely indeed without water-ways. It was the key to the best of the fur-trade country, and to the best fisheries in America. For the first hundred years after the settlement of this country, furs and fish were the only exports of value from the region north of Maryland. The French settlements gave them control of the best fishery grounds, as also the trade with the Indians, who occupied the best

country for peltries in the world. As soon as the English came to possess it, this trade was greatly developed. Along with these advantages, the country had many evils that made the beginnings of colonies a matter of great labor and difficulty. The soil is made up of drift, and requires a great amount of labor to fit it for tillage. The greater part of it is north of the maize belt, so that this cheap and highly nutritious food was denied to the people. I have already said something concerning the singular advantages that this grain had for the pioneer in the American forests. I am inclined to believe that the want of this plant in the French colonies was one cause of their slow development. Another hindrance lay in the very long and severe winters. This limited the time which could be given to the tillage of land, and made the keeping of domesticated animals a matter of great difficulty. Something, too, must be attributed to the character of the colonists and to the nature of the land-tenure in this region. Their system of immigration gave a smaller proportion of natural leaders to the people, so that the colony always remained in a closer dependence on the mother country. There was always an absence of the initiative power which so marked the English colonies. The seigniorial systems of Europe have never prospered in America, and the early experiments in founding colonies by the mere exportation of men to this soil were failures even when the men were of English blood. The efforts to colonize the sea-board region of North Carolina without giving the fee of the land to the people, and without care in the selection of the colonists, resulted in a failure even more complete than that of the Canadian colonies. The Pamlico-Sound settlements showed so little military power that they were incapable of protecting themselves against the savages of the country, and without the help of Virginia they would have been annihilated. The French-Canadian colonists have always showed this incapacity to act for themselves, which cannot be attributed to physical conditions. As compared with the New-England colonists, with whom they came most in contact, they represented a colonizing scheme based on trading-posts; while their neighbors established and fought for homes in the English sense. The struggle for existence was in the English settler met with a vigor which grew out of political and religious convictions; in the Frenchman it was endured for lucrative trade. Anything higher was left to the missionary, who, while he led the pioneer life, failed in turn to develop it.

We may sum up what is to be said of the St. Lawrence Valley, that it is the best inlet to the continent north of the Mississippi River, affording an easy way to the heart of the continent for six months of the year. The valley is peculiar in the fact that it has no distinct southern boundary, and that a large part of its area is occupied by a system of fresh-water lakes. These sheets of water and this absence of a strong ridge separating this basin from the water-sheds which lie to the south of it would, if the French had been strong in a military sense, have given them an advantage in the struggle for the continent; but as long as this valley was held by a less powerful people than their neighbors on the south, these geographical features would no longer be advantageous to its occupiers.

The soil and climate of the St. Lawrence Valley are both rather against the rapid development of agriculture, requiring far more labor to make them arable, and giving

a more limited return than do the more southern soils ; so that, despite the very great advantage which came from the peculiarly open nature of this path into the interior of the continent, the French did not succeed in maintaining themselves there until its great military advantages could be turned to profit.

At the present time the existence of railways has greatly lessened the value of geography as a factor in military movements, and the St. Lawrence, closed as it is for nearly half a year by ice, has no longer any military importance. As it is, we may be surprised that it has not played a more important part in the military history of the continent than it has done. We cannot avoid the conclusion that if the conditions had been reversed, and the English settlements had occupied the Valley of the St. Lawrence, and the French colonies the country to the southward, the English colonists would have made use of its advantages in a more effective way.

The settlements at the mouth of the Mississippi did not come into the hands of the French until a late day ; but the use they made of this, the easiest navigated of all the great American rivers, was considerable. These settlements were pushed up the valley of the main stream and its greater tributaries, until they practically controlled the larger part of the shores of the main waters. The swift current of the Mississippi and its tributaries made ascending navigation difficult and costly. It was, in fact, only with small cargoes in little boats propelled by poles, or with the aid of sails when the winds favored, that the stream could be mounted. The effective navigation was downward towards the mouth. By way of the Mississippi the French power worked into the centre of the continent far more rapidly than by the St. Lawrence route ; indeed, the advance was so rapid that if, these Gallic settlements had not been overwhelmed by the stronger tide of the English people getting across the Alleghanies, a few years would have given them a chance to fix their institutions and population in this valley.

Throughout their efforts in North America, the French showed a capacity for understanding the large questions of political geography, a genius for exploration, and a talent for making use of its results, or guiding their way to dominion, that is in singular contrast with the blundering processes of their English rivals. They seem to have understood the possibilities of the Mississippi Valley a century and a half before the English began to understand them. They planted a system of posts and laid out lines for commerce through this region ; they strove to organize the natives into civilized communities ; they did all that the conditions permitted to achieve success. Their failure must be attributed to the want of colonists, to the essential irreclaimableness of the American savage, and to the want of a basis for extended commerce in this country. There were no precious metals to tempt men into this wilderness, and none of the fancy for life or for lands among the home people, — that wandering instinct which has been the basis of all the imperial power of the English race. Thus a most cleverly devised scheme of continental occupation, which was admirably well adapted to the physical conditions of the country, never came near to success. It fell beneath the clumsy power of another race that had the capacity for fixing itself firmly in new lands, and that grew without distinct plan until it came to possess it altogether.

The British settlements on the American coast were not very well placed for other than the immediate needs that led to their planting. They did not hold any one of

the three water-ways which led from the coast into the interior of the continent, as we have seen the French obtained control of the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi, and as is well known the Dutch possession of the Hudson, which constituted the third and least complete of the water-ways into the interior of the continent.

As regards their physical conditions, the original English colonies are divisible into three groups, — those of New England; those of the Chesapeake and Delaware district, including Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, and the central part of North Carolina; and those on the coast region of the Carolinas. Each of these regions has its proper physical characters, which have had special effects upon their early history. In New England we have a shore-line that affords an excellent system of harbors for craft of all sizes, and a sea that abounds in fish. The land has a rugged surface made up of old mountain folds, which have been worn down to their roots by the sea and by the glaciers of many ice periods. There are no extended plains, and where small patches of level land occur, as along the sea, there they are mostly of a rather barren and sandy character. The remainder of the surface is very irregular, and nearly one half of it is either too steep for tillage or consists of exposed rocks. The soil is generally of clay, and was originally covered almost everywhere with closely sown boulders that had to be removed before the plough could do its work. The rivers are mostly small, and from their numerous rapids not navigable to any great distance from the sea, and none of their valleys afford natural ways to the interior of the continent. In general structure this region is an isolated mass separated from the body of the continent by the high ridges of the Green Mountains and the Berkshire Hills, as well as by the deep valley in which lie the Hudson and Lake Champlain. The climate is rigorous, only less so than that of Canada. There are not more than seven months for agricultural labor.

The New-England district, including therein what we may term the Acadian Peninsula of North America, or all east of Lake Champlain and the Hudson and south of the St. Lawrence, is more like Northern Europe than any other part of America.

Nature does not give with free hands in this region, yet it offered some advantages to the early settlers. The general stubbornness of the soil made the coast Indians few in number, while its isolation secured it from the more powerful tribes of the West. The swift rivers afforded abundant water-power, that was early turned to use, and in time became the most valuable possession that the land afforded. The climate, though strenuous, was not unwholesome, and its severity gave protection against the malarial fevers which have so hindered the growth of settlements in more southern regions. Maize and pumpkins could be raised over a large part of its surface, and afforded cheap and wholesome food with little labor. The rate of gain upon the primeval forest was at first very slow; none of the products of the soil, except in a few instances its timber, had at first any value for exportation. The only surplusage was found in the products of the sea. In time the demand for food from the West Indian Islands made it somewhat profitable to export grain. Practically, however, these colonies grew without important help from any foreign commerce awakened by the products of their soil. Their considerable foreign trade grew finally upon exchanges,

or on the products of the sea-fisheries and whaling. Even the trade in furs, which was so important a feature in the French possessions, never amounted to an important commerce in New England. The aborigines were not so generally engaged in hunting, nor were the rivers of New England ever very rich in valuable fur-bearing species. The most we can say of New England is, that it offered a chance for a vigorous race to found in safety colonies that should get their power out of their own toil, with little help from fortune. It was very badly placed for the occupancy of a people who were to use it as a vantage-ground whence to secure control over the inner parts of the continent. But for the modern improvement in commercial ways, the isolation of this section from the other parts of the continent would have kept it from ever attaining the importance in American life which now belongs to it.

The settlements that were made along the Hudson were, as regards their position, much better placed than were those in New England. The valley of this stream is, as is well known to geologists, a part of the great mountain trough separating from the newer Alleghanian system on the west the old mountain system of the Appalachians, which, known by the separate names of the Green Mountains, Berkshire Hills, South Mountains, Blue Ridge, and Black Mountains, stretches from the St. Lawrence to the northern part of Georgia. In the Hudson district the Appalachian, or eastern wall of the valley is known as the Berkshire Hills and the Green Mountains, while the western or Alleghanian wall is formed by the Catskill Mountains and their northern continuation in the Hilderberg Hills. On the south the Appalachian wall falls away, allowing the stream a wide passage to the sea; on the northwestern side the Catskills decline, opening the wide passage through which flows the Mohawk out of the broad fertile upland valley which it drains. It appears likely that the Mohawk Valley for a while in recent geological times afforded a passage of the waters of Lake Ontario to the channel of the Hudson. This will serve to show how easy the passage is between the Hudson Valley and the heart of the continent. Save that it is not a water-way, this valley affords, through the plain of the Mohawk, the most perfect passage through the long mountain line of the Alleghanies. Before this passage could have any importance to its first European owners, it fell into the hands of the English settlers. The fertility of this valley of the Hudson and Mohawk is far greater than that of New England. A larger portion of the land is arable, and it is generally more fertile than that of the region to the east. The underlying rock of the country is generally charged with lime, which assures a better soil for grain crops than those derived from the more argillaceous formations of New England. The Mohawk is for its size perhaps the most fertile valley in America. The climate of this district is on the whole more severe than that of New England, but the summer temperature admits the cultivation of all the crops of the Northern States.

Though from Holland, the original settlers of the Hudson Valley were by race and motives so closely akin to the English settlers to the north and south of them that a perfect fusion has taken place. The Dutch language is dead save in the mouths of a few aged people, and of their institutions nothing has remained.¹

¹ It is worth while to notice that this Dutch settlements, which may be in part attributed to colony never had the energetic life of the English the effort to fix the Continental seigniorial rela-

The most striking contrast between the physical conditions of the New York colony and those of New England is its relative isolation from the sea. Staten Island and Long Island are strictly maritime; the rest is almost continental in its relations.

South of New York the conditions of the colonists as regards agriculture were very different from what they were north of that point. To the north the soil is altogether the work of the glacial period. It is on this account stony and hard to bring into cultivation, as before described; but when once rendered arable, it is very enduring, changing little with centuries of cropping. South of this point the soil is derived from the rocks which lie below it, save just along the sea and the streams. The decayed rock that happens to lie just beneath the surface produces a fertile or an infertile earth, varied in quality according as the rocks. On the whole it is less enduring than are the soils of New England, though it is much easier to bring it into an arable state. It also differs from glacial soil in the fact that there is an absolute dependence of the qualities it possesses upon the subjacent rock. When that changes, the soil at once undergoes a corresponding alteration. In certain regions it may be more fertile than any glacial soil ever is; again, its infertility may be extreme, as, for instance, when the underlying rocks are sandstones containing little organic matter.

In this southern belt the region near the shore is rather malarial. The soil there is sandy, and of a little enduring nature, and the drainage is generally bad. Next within this line we have the fringe of higher country which lies to the east of the Blue Ridge. This consists of a series of rolling plains, generally elevated four or five hundred feet above the sea. Near the Blue Ridge it is changed into a rather hilly district, with several ranges of detached mountains upon its surface; to the east it gradually declines into the plain which borders the sea. Within the Blue Ridge it has the steep walls of the old granite mountains, which, inconspicuous in New Jersey, increase in Pennsylvania to important hills, become low mountains of picturesque form in Virginia, and finally in North and South Carolina attain the highest elevation of any land in eastern North America. This mountain range widens as it increases in height, and the plains that border it on the east grow also in height and width as we go to the southward in Virginia. All this section is composed of granite and other ancient rocks, which by their decay afford a very good soil. Beyond the Blue Ridge, and below its summits, are the Alleghanies. Between them is a broad mountain valley, known to geologists as the great Appalachian valley. This is an elevated irregular table-land, generally a thousand feet or more above the sea, and mostly underlain by limestone, which by its decay affords a very fertile soil. This singular valley is traceable all the way from Lake Champlain to Georgia. The whole course of the Hudson lies within it. As all the mountains rise to the southward, this valley has its floor constantly farther and farther above the sea, until in Southern Virginia much of its surface is about two thousand feet above that level. This southward increase of elevation secures it a somewhat similar climate throughout its whole length. This, the noblest valley in

tions upon the land. It failed here as it failed in Canada, but it kept both colonies without the breath of hopeful, eager life which better land-laws gave to the English settlements. Nothing shows so well the perfect unfitness of all seigniorial land-systems to the best development of a country as the entire failure which met all efforts to fix it in American colonies.

America, is a garden in fertility, and of exceeding beauty. Yet west of this valley the Alleghanies proper extend, a wide belt of mountains, far to the westward. Their surface is generally rugged, but not infertile; they, as well as the Blue Ridge, are clad with thick forests to their very summits.

The shore of this, the distinctly southern part of the North American coast, is deeply indented by estuaries, which have been cut out principally by the tides. These deep sounds and bays,—the Delaware, Chesapeake, Pamlico, Albemarle, and others,—with their very many ramifications, constitute a distinctive feature in North America. Although these indentations are probably not of glacial origin, except perhaps the Delaware, they much resemble the great fjords which the glaciers have produced along the shores of regions farther to the northward. By means of these deep and ramified bays all the country of Virginia and Maryland lying to the east of the Appalachians is easily accessible to ships of large size. This was a very advantageous feature in the development of the export trade of this country, as it enabled the planters to load their crops directly into the ships which conveyed them to Europe, and this spared the making of roads,—a difficult task in a new country. The principal advantage of this set of colonies lay in the fact that they were fitted to the cultivation of tobacco. The demand for this product laid the foundations of American commerce, and was full of good and evil consequences to this country. It undoubtedly gave the means whereby Virginia became strong enough to be, on the part of the South, the mainstay of the resistance of the colonies to the mother country. On the other hand, it made African slavery profitable, and so brought that formidable problem of a foreign and totally alien race to be for all time a trouble to this country. Although the cultivation of cotton gave the greatest extension to slavery, it is not responsible for its firm establishment on our soil. That was the peculiar work of tobacco.

The climate of this region is perhaps the best of the United States. The winters want the severity that characterizes them in the more northern States, and the considerable height of the most of the district relieves it of danger from fevers. I have elsewhere spoken of the evidences that this district has maintained the original energy of the race that founded its colonies.

The Carolinian colonies are somewhat differently conditioned from those of Virginia, and their history has been profoundly influenced by their physical circumstances. South of the James River the belt of low-lying ground near the sea-shore widens rapidly, until the nearest mountain ranges are one hundred and fifty miles or more from the shore. This shore belt is also much lower than it is north of the James; a large part of its surface is below the level where the drainage is effective, and so is unfit for tillage. Much of it is swamp. The rivers do not terminate in as deep and long bays, with steep clay banks for borders, as they do north of the James. They are generally swamp-bordered in their lower courses, and not very well suited for settlements.

The soil of these regions is generally rather infertile; it is especially unfitted for the cultivation of grains except near the shore, where the swamps can often be converted into good rice-fields. Maize can be tilled, but it, as well as wheat, barley, etc., give not more than half the return that may be had from them in Virginia. Were it not for the cotton crop, the lowland South would have fared badly.

All the shore belt of country is unwholesome, being affected with pernicious fevers, which often cannot be endured by the whites, even after the longest acclimatization. The interior region, even when not much elevated above the sea, or away from the swamps, is a healthy country, and the district within sight of the Blue Ridge and the Black Mountains is a very salubrious district. This region was, however, not at once accessible to the colonists of the Carolinian shore, and was not extensively settled for some time after the country was first inhabited, and then was largely occupied by the descendants of the Virginian colonists.

The history of this country has served to show that much of the lowlands near the shore is not well fitted for the use of European peoples; they are likely to fall into the possession of the African folk, who do not suffer, but rather seem to prosper in the feverish lowlands. The interior districts beyond the swamp country are well suited to Europeans, and where the surface rises more than one thousand feet above the sea, as it does in western North and South Carolina, the climate is admirably well suited to the European race. It is probable that the English race has never been in a more favorable climate than these uplands afford.

This Carolinian section was originally settled by a far more diversified population than that which formed the colonies to the northward. This was especially the case in North Carolina. This colony was originally possessed by a land company, which proposed to find its profit in a peculiar fashion. This company paid contractors so much a head for human beings put ashore in the colony. One distinguished trader in population, a certain Baron de Graffenreid, settled several thousand folk at and about New Berne, on the swampy shores of the Eastern sounds. They were from a great variety of places, — a part from England, others from the banks of the Rhine, others again from Switzerland. There was a great mass of human driftwood in Europe at the close of the seventeenth century, the wreck of long-continued wars; so it was easy to bring immigrants by the shipload if they were paid for. But the material was unfit to be the foundation of a State. From this settlement of eastern North Carolina is descended the most unsatisfactory population in this country. The central and western parts of North Carolina had an admirable population, that principally came to the State through Virginia; but this population about Pamlico and Albemarle Sounds, though its descendants are numerous, perhaps not numerically much inferior to that which came from the Virginia settlements, is vastly inferior to it in all the essential qualities of the citizen. From the Virginia people have come a great number of men of national and some of world-wide reputation. It is not likely that any other population, averaging in numbers about five hundred thousand souls, has in a century furnished as many able men. On the other hand, this eastern North Carolina people has given no men of great fame to the history of the country, while a large part of the so-called "poor white" population of the South appears to be descended from the mongrel folk who were turned ashore on the eastern border of North Carolina.

South Carolina was much more fortunate in its early settlers on its seaboard than the colony to the north. Its population was drawn from rather more varied sources than that of Virginia, New York, or New England, but it would be hard to say that

its quality was inferior ; despite the considerable admixture of Irish and French blood, it was essentially an English colony.

On the whole, although the quality of the climate would lead some to expect a lowering of the quality of the English race in these southern colonies, it is not possible to trace any such effect in the people. Although the laboring classes of whites along the seaboard appear to occupy a physical level rather below that of the same class in Virginia and the more northern regions, they have great endurance,—as was sufficiently proven by the fact that they made good soldiers during the recent Civil War. In the upland districts of these States, in western North and South Carolina, and especially in northern Georgia, the physical constitution of the people is, I believe, the best in this country. In the district north of Pennsylvania, the elevation of the mountains, or the table-lands which lie about them, is not profitable to the dwellers in these districts ; each added height scarcely gives any additional healthfulness, and the additional cold is hurtful to most crops. In this southern region, however, the greater height and width of the Appalachian mountain system, including its elevated valleys, is a very great advantage to this region in all that concerns its fitness for the use of man. The climate of one half of the country south of the James and Ohio Rivers and east of the Mississippi is purified and refreshed by the elevations of this noble mountain system. It is the opinion of all who have examined this country, that it is extremely well fitted for all the uses of the race : an admirable climate, much resembling that of the Apennines of Tuscany, a fertile soil admitting a wide diversity of products, and a great abundance of water-power characterize all this upland district of the South.

A few words will suffice for all that concerns the mineral resources of the original colonies. At the outset of the colonization of America we hear a good deal about the search for gold ; fortunately there was a very uniform failure in the first efforts to find this metal, so that it ceased to play a part in the history of these colonies. Very little effort to develop the mineral resources of this region was made during the colonial period. A little iron was worked in Rhode Island, New York, and Virginia, some search of a rather fruitless sort was made for copper ore in Connecticut, but of mining industry, properly so called, there was nothing until the Revolutionary War stimulated the search for iron and lead ores. The discovery of the gold deposits in the Carolinas did not come about until after the close of the colonial period. These deposits were not sufficiently rich to excite an immigration of any moment to the fields where they occur.

Practically the mineral resources of what we may term the Appalachian settlements of North America never formed any part of the inducements which led immigrants to them. In this respect they differ widely from the other colonies which were planted in the Americas. The greater part of the Spanish and Portuguese settlements in America were made by gold-hunters. The state of morals which led to these settlements was not favorable to the formation of communities characterized by high motives. There were doubtless other influences at work to lower the moral quality of the settlements in Mexico and South America, but the nature of the motives which brought the first settlers upon the ground and gave the tone to society is

certainly not the least important of the influences which have affected the history of the American settlements.

To close this brief account of the physical conditions of the first European settlements in North America, we may say, that the English colonies were peculiarly fortunate in those physical conditions upon which they fell. 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 : climate, soil, contact with the sea, and a chance of dominion over the whole continent were given them by fortune. They had but the second choice in the division of the New World ; yet to the English fell the control of those regions which experience has shown to hold its real treasures. Fortune has repeatedly blessed this race ; but never has she bestowed richer gifts than in the chance that gave it the Appalachian district of America.

Nathaniel Southgate Parker

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