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### THE BEGINNINGS OF ENGLISH COLONIZATION IN AMERICA

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*“Imperial (British) Federation, and the Expansion of the United States are facts which . . . are secondary in importance to nothing contemporaneous.”*—MAHAN, “The War in South Africa,” p. 80.

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Settlement of Virginia, New England, Barbados—Capacity of English for Self-government

ENGLISHMEN commenced founding permanent colonies in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and we are still at the same work. England has, in times past, enacted for the government of her colonies laws quite as oppressive as those of Spain and has sought to enforce by violence a respect for them. Fortunately for our race she has rarely succeeded more than momentarily in such efforts. She who broke the power of Spain and wrested Canada from France, who treated Portugal as a vassal state and reduced Holland to a minor power, this same proud mistress of the seas was over and over again checked and mortified by a handful of her own children, who, whether in Barbados or Massachusetts, Maryland or Virginia, defended their political liberties with the stubbornness and sagacity of colonial Cromwells.

If, as we have seen, France, Portugal, and Holland

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owe their most vigorous colonizing success to irregular, not to say illegal, beginnings, it is still more noteworthy that England's empire on the Western Hemisphere was laid by Englishmen animated not merely by a love of liberty common to mankind, but by a respect for constituted authority and by a capacity for political organization almost unknown elsewhere at that time. It is the proudest triumph of Great Britain that she has sent forth her children into the wilderness, organized from the very start in self-governing political units.

In the France which I can recall as a child, citizens were forbidden to assemble together for the discussion of political questions, and the press could print only what was permitted by the police. When the Franco-German War made a republic of this helplessly brought-up body, men were suddenly called to office by popular vote who had, as a rule, less practical experience of parliamentary forms than the average Anglo-Saxon school-boy. In Spain the republic of Castelar was a mere debating society so far as its representative capacity was concerned. In Germany the feeble beginnings of Parliamentary government were from the outset (1848), and continue to be (1901) overshadowed by a very large and very-well organized force of soldiers and semi-military officials who look for their authority not to the representatives of the people, but to the one who commands the fighting forces. In Europe, England is the only great power whose people govern themselves, and it is the only great power whose colonies have risen up to comfort her declining years.

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The beginnings of English adventure in far-away seas, were, like those of Holland, influenced mainly by a desire to encroach upon the fabulous possessions of Spain and Portugal. North America was looked to not as a colonizing field, but merely as a stage on the way to the East Indies, and many early English navigators enriched geographical science, but wasted much money, in seeking through the Polar Seas a North-west Passage to the land of the Great Mogul.

In 1577, Sir Francis Drake started on the voyage which made him the first Englishman to sail round the world. It was a grand achievement, geographically, but politically even more notable from the extent to which he filled his ship with Spanish gold, and spread alarm up and down the coasts of South America. Spain protested energetically, but as her claims rested upon the bull of a theological ruler whose authority Queen Elizabeth as a Protestant did not recognize, it followed logically that, as she told the Spanish envoy, she would recognize Spain's right only where there was actual occupation.

In 1584, Elizabeth endowed Sir Walter Raleigh with the right to colonize every unoccupied part of America, in language marking distinctly the great gulf between Spanish and English colonial methods. Her words were: "The colonists have all the privileges of free denizens and persons native of England, in such ample manner as if they were born and personally resident in our said realm of England."

Under illiberal government and among helpless people, her charter might be abused, but with colonists such as her times produced, there was ambiguity

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enough to guarantee as much self-government and religious liberty as the colonists themselves deemed expedient. The destruction of the Spanish Armada in 1588, gave England the control of the seas, at least in the North Atlantic, and thus contributed enormously to the fostering of peaceful colonial schemes, as contradistinguished from those involving perpetual warfare with Spain in South America, or Portugal and Holland in the East Indies. It was obviously appreciated, even at court, that English colonial companies did their ample duty as subjects of the Crown, if they placed a check, to however small an extent, upon Spanish expansion from the south and French expansion from the north, to say nothing of the colonial wedge that Holland and Sweden threatened to drive between New England and Maryland.

In 1607, Jamestown, in Virginia, was settled by the assistance of an English company, which transported thither one hundred and five colonists, half of whom were "gentlemen," but with only a small sprinkling of mechanics, and only twelve agricultural laborers. The beginnings were not encouraging in this case, for these colonists came in anticipation of finding life easy. On the contrary, they found swamp fever and a breed of Indians that possessed neither treasures worth plundering nor qualities fitting them to be enslaved. But the settlement was not abandoned, and each year brought an accretion of membership. The company clamored for dividends, but got none; the colonists, on the other hand, found that, though they had to work hard, they had before them the prospect of independence if not fortune, and thus from the out-

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set the community developed a government which, while it reflected somewhat that of a landed aristocracy, nevertheless had enough of self-government to make every man in it feel a pride in the future of the commonwealth. There was a refreshing absence of legislation hostile to aliens or unorthodox creeds; and though, under the vicissitudes of domestic legislation, many illiberal laws were passed at Westminster, they were never able to over-ride the unwritten constitution of the colonies on the subject of religious and political liberty. In 1619, before the first Puritan had landed in Massachusetts, the Virginia colony had already a population of 4,000 whites and an annually convened legislature, which had already taken steps for establishing schools and churches—even going so far as to make ordinances against luxury.

The first negro slaves came in a Dutch ship in 1619—a cargo fraught with curse to America. The company which nominally owned the colony was already (1621) compelled to surrender its right to make laws excepting with the consent of the colonial legislature. The English common law was declared that of Virginia, and this happy state of political security was the means of attracting a steady stream of excellent newcomers, not merely from the mother country, but from Germany, France, Poland, and wherever tyranny drove men away from home.

Virginia was a total failure from the standpoint of the chartered company which founded it, for the success of that company could be measured only by the dividends of share-holders. In 1624 it was dissolved, after having spent £150,000 and transported 9,000

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colonists to Chesapeake Bay. The dissolution of the company affected, however, only the share-holders, for the colony itself was both self-governing and self-supporting, and went on flourishing in spite of all vicissitudes of the English Crown at home, and colonial troubles occasioned by Indians and other plagues.

In 1620 came a colonial cargo from England, likewise under license of a "chartered" company, but, no less than Virginia, resolved to govern itself. The little *Mayflower* reached the shores of Massachusetts Bay on November 11, 1620, and was permitted to remain there, although the King would give them no charter, and accident had driven them beyond the limits of the Virginia Company, which had originally granted them right of settlement. They survived the winter, at least forty-nine did, out of the one hundred. At one time all but seven were laid low on the sick-bed, and there were hardly strong men enough to bury the dead. For a whole year they were there alone, a little spark of humanity that seemed momentarily at the point of being stamped out.

In November of 1621 arrived the first relief-ship, bringing fifty more English. From the outset they governed themselves completely. The commercial company from whom they held their title did all in their power to extract dividends out of this community—but with scant success. The development of the community was very slow—in ten years it had but a population of three hundred all told, for that portion of New England was not attractive to the agriculturists, nor to anyone else who sought in a colony more than what the Puritans did.

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But in 1629 things took a turn for the better, Massachusetts Bay became a self-governing company by Royal Charter of Charles I., and thenceforth commenced to attract emigration. In 1630 arrived 1,500 colonists. In 1634 there were 4,000 whites in Massachusetts, scattered over twenty villages. From now on the progress of New England was uninterrupted, the parent colony soon furnishing the means of settling farther and farther inland and westward, until the Puritans came in conflict with the Dutch on the Hudson River and made their occupation so insecure and profitless, that when finally (in 1664) the English flag was hoisted over New York, the transfer occasioned no bloodshed. On the contrary, the Dutchmen remained for the most part contented with the new order of things, for under it they enjoyed freedom of worship and still ampler freedom of trade with their neighbors. We must not forget that, although from the outset the English in North America enjoyed practical if not nominal self-government, the impulse to colonial ventures was given by large privileged or "Chartered" Companies, which anticipated, even though they did not often realize, handsome dividends from the taxes they intended laying on colonial industry. There was much lobbying at the court of King James and of Charles I. for gifts of land in the new world, and these chronically impecunious monarchs were not loath to raise money by the granting of favors that cost them nothing but a piece of parchment. Fortunately for the sturdy men that settled these tracts, their aristocratic landlords had so much to do with fighting conflicting claims in the law courts at home and with raising

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money for necessary administration, that they were forced to neglect the internal affairs of their respective colonies for a long time.

It is not my purpose to detail here the history of English occupation in North America—merely to trace an outline and to point out that from the first occupation of the colonies, which subsequently became the thirteen Independent States of 1776, the different communities, while pretty constantly quarrelling, if not fighting, among themselves, were generally united in resenting the slightest infringement of their chartered rights by the mother country. The privileged companies which had originally organized for the purpose of exploiting them, one by one found the task unprofitable, went into liquidation, or retired from active control. By the opening of the seventeenth century the various colonies had already shown that they understood their joint as well as their several interests: and, though no union was made on paper, the representatives had already met to confer upon matters of common colonial welfare.

The West Indies were geographically too remote to act in common with the colonies properly called American: but, as they were founded at about the same time, and organized the same forms of self-government, they had their share in spreading the spirit of colonial independence which culminated in 1776.

Barbados, for instance, was granted in 1624 to a court favorite, but long before that it had been settled by independent Englishmen, who governed themselves and proved capable of taking care of their interests, even to repelling invasions of Spaniards or French.



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To-day little Barbados, no bigger than the Isle of Wight, has the densest population of any country in the world, and affords a cheering picture of white man's capacity to conduct a white man's government in the tropics. For nearly four centuries has that little tropical islet afforded religious and political liberty, under a government which not only cared for internal development, but proved equal to resisting the many attacks to which it was exposed by the quarrels of the mother country.