CHAPTER XX.

THE COLONIZATION OF AMERICA AND THE EAST INDIES.

During the administration of Sir Robert Walpole, the English colonies in America, and the East India Company's settlements began to attract the attention of ministers, and became of considerable political importance. It is, therefore, time to consider the history of colonization, both in the East and West, and not only by the English, but by the Spaniards, the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the French.

The first settlements in the new world by Europeans, and their conquests in the unknown regions of the old, were made chiefly in view of commercial advantages. The love of money, that root of all evil, was overruled by Providence in the discovery of new worlds, and the diffusion of European civilization in countries inhabited by savages, or worn-out Oriental races. But the mere ignoble love of gain was not the only motive which incited the Europeans to navigate unknown oceans and colonize new continents. There was also another, and this was the spirit of enterprise, which magically aroused the European mind in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Marco Polo, when he visited the East; the Portuguese, when they doubled the Cape of Good Hope; Columbus, when he discovered America; and Magellan, when he entered the South Sea, were moved by curiosity and love of science, more than by love of gold. But the vast wealth, which the newly-discovered countries revealed, stimulated, in the breasts of the excited Europeans, the powerful passions of ambition and avarice; and the needy and grasping governments of Spain, Portugal, Holland, France, and England patronized adventurers to the new El Dorado, and furnished them with ships and stores, in the hope of receiving a share of the profits of their expedition. And they were not disappointed. Although many disasters happened to the early navigators, still country after country was added to the possessions of European kings, and vast sums of gold and

silver were melted into European coin. No conquests were ever more sudden and brilliant than those of Cortez and Pizarro, nor did wealth ever before so suddenly enrich the civilized world. But sudden and unlawful gains produced their natural fruit. All the worst evils which flow from extravagance, extortion, and pride prevailed in the old world and the new; and those advantages and possessions, which had been gained by enterprise, were turned into a curse, for no wealth can balance the vices of avarice, injustice, and cruelty.

The most important of all the early settlements of America were made by the Spaniards. Their conquests were the most brilliant, and proved the most worthless. The spirit which led to their conquests and colonization was essentially that of avarice and ambition. It must, however, be admitted that religious zeal, in some instances, was the animating principle of the adventurers and of those what patronized them.

The first colony was established in Hispaniola, or, as it was afterwards called, St. Domingo, a short time after the discovery of America by Columbus. The mines of the island were, at that period, very productive, and the aggressive Spaniards soon compelled the unhappy natives to labor in them, under their governor, Juan Ponce de Leon. But Hispaniola was not sufficiently large or productive to satisfy the cupidity of the governor, and Porto Rico was conquered and enslaved. Cuba also, in a few years, was added to the dominions of Spain.

At length, the Spaniards, who had explored the coasts of the Main land, prepared to invade and conquer the populous territories of Montezuma, Emperor of Mexico. The people whom he governed had attained a considerable degree of civilization, having a regular government, a system of laws, and an established priesthood. They were not ignorant of the means of recording great events, and possessed considerable skill in many useful and ornamental arts. They were rich in gold and silver, and their cities were ornamented with palaces and gardens. But their riches were irresistible objects of desire to the European adventurers, and, therefore, proved their misfortune. The story of their conquest by Fernando Cortez need not here be told: familiarized as are all readers and students with the exquisite and artistic narra

tive of the great American historian, whose work and whose fame can only perish with the language itself.

About ten years after the conquest of Mexico, Pizarro landed in Peru, which country was soon added to the dominions of Philip II. And the government of that country was even more oppressive and unjust than that of Mexico. All Indians between the ages of fifteen and fifty were compelled to work in the mines; and so dreadful was the forced labor, that four out of five of those who worked in them were supposed to perish annually. There was no limit to Spanish rapacity and cruelty, and it was exercised over all the other countries which were subdued — Chili, Florida, and the West India Islands.

Enormous and unparalleled quantities of the precious metals were sent to Spain from the countries of the new world. But, from the first discovery of Peru and Mexico, the mother country declined in wealth and political importance. With the increase of gold, the price of labor and of provision, and of all articles of manufacturing industry, also increased, and nearly in the same ratio. The Spaniards were insensible to this truth, and, instead of cultivating the soil or engaging in manufactures, were contented with the gold which came from the colonies. This, for a while, enriched them; but it was soon scattered over all Christendom, and was exchanged for the necessities of life. Industry and art declined, and those countries alone were the gainers which produced those articles which Spain was obliged to purchase.

Portugal soon rivalled Spain in the extent and richness of colonial possessions. Brazil was discovered in 1501, and, in about half a century after, was colonized. The native Brazilians, inferior in civilization to the Mexicans and Peruvians, were still less able than they to resist the arms of the Europeans. They were gradually subdued, and their beautiful and fertile country came into possession of the victors. But the Portuguese also extended their empire in the East, as well as in the West. After the discovery of a passage round the Cape of Good Hope by Vasco de Gama, the early navigators sought simply to be enriched by commerce with the Indies. They found powerful rivals in the Arabs, who had heretofore monopolized the trade. In order to secure their commerce, and also to protect themselves against their rivals

and enemies, the Portuguese, under the guidance of Albuquerque, procured a grant of land in India, from one of the native princes. Soon after, Goa was reduced, and became the seat of government; and territorial acquisition commenced, which, having been continued nearly three centuries by the various European powers, is still progressive. In about sixty years, the Portuguese had established a great empire in the East, which included the coasts and islands of the Persian Gulf, the whole Malabar and Coromandel coasts, the city of Malacca, and numerous islands of the Indian Ocean. They had effected a settlement in China, obtained a free trade with the empire of Japan, and received tribute from the rich Islands of Ceylon, Java, and Sumatra.

The same moral effects happened to Portugal, from the possession of the Indies, that the conquests of Cortez and Pizarro produced on Spain. Goa was the most depraved spot in the world; and the vices which wealth engendered, wherever the Europeans formed a settlement, can now scarcely be believed. When Portugal fell under the dominion of Philip II., the ruin of her settlements commenced. They were supplanted by the Dutch, who were more moral, more united and enterprising, though they provoked, by their arrogance and injustice, the hostility of the Eastern princes.

The conquests and settlements of the Dutch rapidly succeeded those of the Portuguese. In 1595, Cornelius Houtman sailed, with a well-provided fleet, for the land of gems and spices. A company was soon incorporated, in Holland, for managing the Indian trade. Settlements were first made in the Moluccas Islands, which soon extended to the possession of the Island of Java, and to the complete monopoly of the spice trade. The Dutch then gained possession of the Island of Ceylon, which they retained until it was wrested from them by the English. But their empire was only maintained at a vast expense of blood and treasure; nor were they any exception to the other European colonists and adventurers, in the indulgence of all those vices which degrade our nature.

Neither the French nor the English made any important conquests in the East, when compared with those of the Portuguese and Dutch. Nor did their acquisitions in America equal those of

the Spaniards. But they were more important in their ultimate results.

English enterprise was manifested shortly after the first voyage of Columbus. Henry VII. was sufficiently enlightened, envious, and avaricious, to listen to the proposals of a Venetian, resident in Bristol, by the name of Cabot; and, in 1495, he commissioned him to sail under the banner of England, to take possession of any new countries he might discover. Accordingly, in about two years after, Cabot, with his second son, Sebastian, embarked at Bristol, in one of the king's ships, attended by four smaller vessels, equipped by the merchants of that enterprising city.

Impressed with the idea of Columbus, and other early navigators, that the West India Islands were not far from the Indian continent, he concluded that, if he steered in a more northerly direction, he should reach India by a shorter course than that pursued by the great discoverer. Accordingly, sailing in that course, he discovered Newfoundland and Prince Edwards', and, soon after, the coast of North America, along which he sailed, from Labrador to Virginia. But, disappointed in not finding a westerly passage to India, he returned to England, without attempting, either by settlement or conquest, to gain a footing on the great continent which the English were the second to visit, of all the European nations.

England was prevented, by various circumstances, from deriving immediate advantage from the discovery. The unsettled state of the country; the distractions arising from the civil wars, and afterwards from the Reformation; the poverty of the people, and the sordid nature of the king, — were unfavorable to settlements which promised no immediate advantage; and it was not until the reign of Elizabeth that any deliberate plans were made for the colonization of North America. The voyages of Frobisher and Drake had aroused a spirit of adventure, if they had not gratified the thirst for gold.

Among those who felt an intense interest in the new world, was Sir Humphrey Gilbert, a man of enlarged views and intrepid boldness. He secured from Elizabeth (1578) a liberal patent, and sailed, with a considerable body of adventurers, for the new world. But he took a too northerly direction, and his largest vessel was shipwrecked on the coast of Cape Breton. The enterprise

from various causes, completely failed, and the intrepid navigator lost his life.

The spirit of the times raised up, however, a greater genius, and a more accomplished adventurer, and no less a personage than Sir Walter Raleigh,—the favorite of the queen; one of the greatest scholars and the most elegant courtier of the age; a soldier, a philosopher, and a statesman. He obtained a patent, substantially the same as that which had been bestowed on Gilbert. In 1584, Raleigh despatched two small exploring vessels, under the command of Amidas and Barlow, which seasonably arrived off the coast of North Carolina. From the favorable report of the country and the people, a larger fleet, of seven ships, was despatched to America, commanded by Sir Richard Grenville. But he was diverted from his course by the prevailing passion for predatory enterprise, and hence only landed one hundred and eight men at Roanoke, (1585.) The government of this feeble band was intrusted to Captain Lane. But the passion for gold led to a misunderstanding with the natives. The colony became enfeebled and reduced, and the adventurers returned to England, (1586,) bringing with them some knowledge of the country, and also that singular weed, which rapidly enslaved the courtiers of Queen Elizabeth, and which soon became one of the great staple commodities in the trade of the civilized world. Modern science has proved it to be a poison, and modern philanthropy has lifted up its warning voice against the use of it. But when have men, in their degeneracy, been governed by their reason? What logic can break the power of habit, or counteract the seductive influences of those excitements which fill the mind with visionary hopes, and lull a tumultuous spirit into the repose of pleasant dreams and oblivious joys? Sir Walter Raleigh, to his shame or his misfortune, was among the first to patronize a custom which has proved more injurious to civilized nations than even the use of opium itself, because it is more universal and more insidious.

But smoking was simply an amusement with him. He soon turned his thoughts to the reëstablishment of his colony. Even before the return of the company under Lane, Sir Richard Grenville had visited the Roanoke, with the necessary stores. But he arrived too late; the colony was abandoned.

But nothing could abate the zeal of the most enterprising genius of the age. In 1587, he despatched three more ships, under the command of Captain White, who founded the city of Raleigh. But no better success attended the new band of colonists. White sailed for England, to secure new supplies; and, when he returned, he found no traces of the colony he had planted; and no subsequent ingenuity or labor has been able to discover the slightest vestige.

The patience of Raleigh was not wasted; but new objects occupied his mind, and he parted with his patent, which made him the proprietary of a great part of the Southern States. Nor were there any new attempts at colonization until 1606, in the reign of James.

Through the influence of Sir Ferdinand Gorges, a man of great wealth; Sir John Popham, lord chief justice of England; Richard Hakluyt, the historian; Bartholomew Gosnold, the navigator, and John Smith, the enthusiastic adventurer, — King James I. granted a royal charter to two rival companies, for the colonization of America. The first was composed of noblemen, gentlemen, and merchants, in and about London, who had an exclusive right to occupy regions from thirty-four to thirty-eight degrees of north latitude. The other company, composed of gentlemen and merchants in the west of England, had assigned to them the territory between forty-one and forty-five degrees. But only the first company succeeded.

The territory, appropriated to the London or southern colony, preserved the name which had been bestowed upon it during the reign of Elizabeth, — Virginia. The colonists were authorized to transport, free of the custom-house, for the term of seven years, what arms and provisions they required; and their children were permitted to enjoy the same privileges and liberties, in the American settlements, that Englishmen had at home. They had the right to search for mines, to coin money, and, for twenty-one years, to impose duties, on vessels trading to their harbors, for the benefit of the colony. But, after this period, the duty was to be taken for the king, who also preserved a control over both the councils established for the government of the colony, — the one in England itself, and the other in Virginia, a control inconsistent

with those liberties which the colonists subsequently asserted and secured.

The London Company promptly applied themselves to the settlement of their territories; and, on the 19th of December, 1606, a squadron of three small vessels set sail for the new world; and, on May 13, 1607, a company of one hundred and five men, without families, disembarked at Jamestown. This was the first permanent settlement in America by the English. But great misfortunes afflicted them. Before September, one half of the colonists had perished, and the other half were suffering from famine, dissension, and fear. The president, Wingfield, attempted to embezzle the public stores, and escape to the West Indies. He was supplanted in his command by Ratcliffe, a man without capacity. But a deliverer was raised up in the person of Captain John Smith, who extricated the suffering and discontented band from the evils which impended. He had been a traveller and a warrior; had visited France, Italy, and Egypt; fought in Holland and Hungary; was taken a prisoner of war in Wallachia, and sent as a slave to Constantinople. Removed to a fortress in the Crimea, and subjected to the hardest tasks, he yet contrived to escape, and, after many perils, reached his native country. But greater hardships and dangers awaited him in the new world, to which he was impelled by his adventurous curiosity. He was surprised and taken by a party of hostile Indians, when on a tour of exploration, and would have been murdered, had it not been for his remarkable presence of mind and singular sagacity, united with the intercession of the famous Pocahontas, daughter of a great Indian chief, from whom some of the best families in Virginia are descended. It would be pleasant to detail the romantic incidents of this brief captivity; but our limits forbid. Smith, when he returned to Jamestown, found his company reduced to forty men, and they were discouraged and disheartened. Moreover, they were a different class of men from those who colonized New England. They were gentlemen adventurers connected with aristocratic families were greedy for gold, and had neither the fortitude nor the habits requisite for success. They were not accustomed to labor, at least with the axe and plough. Smith earnestly wrote to the council of the company in England, to send carpenters, husband-

men, gardeners, fishermen, and blacksmiths, instead of "vagabond gentlemen and goldsmiths." But he had to organize a colony with such materials as avarice or adventurous curiosity had sent to America. And, in spite of dissensions and natural indolence, he succeeded in placing it on a firm foundation; surveyed the Chesapeake Bay to the Susquehannah, and explored the inlets of the majestic Potomac. But he was not permitted to complete the work which he had so beneficently begun. His administration was unacceptable to the company in England, who cared very little for the welfare of the infant colony, and only sought a profitable investment of their capital. They were disappointed that mines of gold and silver had not been discovered, and that they themselves had not become enriched. Even the substantial welfare of the colony displeased them; for this diverted attention from the pursuit of mineral wealth.

The original patentees, therefore, sought to strengthen themselves by new associates and a new charter. And a new charter was accordingly granted to twenty-one peers, ninety-eight knights, and a great number of doctors, esquires, gentlemen, and merchants. The bounds of the colony were enlarged, the council and offices in Virginia abolished, and the company in England empowered to nominate all officers in the colony. Lord Delaware was appointed governor and captain-general of the company, and a squadron of nine ships, with five hundred emigrants were sent to Virginia. But these emigrants consisted, for the most part, of profligate young men, whom their aristocratic friends sent away to screen themselves from shame; broken down gentlemen, too lazy to work; and infamous dependants on powerful families. They threw the whole colony into confusion, and provoked, by their aggression and folly, the animosities of the Indians, whom Smith had appeased. The settlement at Jamestown was abandoned to famine and confusion, and would have been deserted had it not been for the timely arrival of Lord Delaware, with ample supplies and new recruits. His administration was wise and efficient, and he succeeded in restoring order, if he did not secure the wealth which was anticipated.

In 1612, the company obtained a third patent, by which all the islands within three hundred leagues of the Virginia shore were

granted to the patentees, and by which a portion of the power heretofore vested in the council was transferred to the whole company. The political rights of the colonists remained the same but they acquired gradually peace and tranquillity. Tobacco was extensively cultivated, and proved a more fruitful source of wealth than mines of silver or gold.

The jealousy of arbitrary power, and impatience of liberty, among the new settlers, induced the Governor of Virginia, in 1619, to reinstate them in the full possession of the rights of Englishmen; and he accordingly convoked a Provincial Assembly, the first ever held in America, which consisted of the governor, the council, and a number of burgesses, elected by the eleven existing boroughs of the colony. The deliberation and laws of this infant legislature were transmitted to England for approval; and so wise and judicious were these, that the company, soon after, approved and ratified the platform of what gradually ripened into the American representative system.

The guarantee of political rights led to a rapid colonization. "Men were now willing to regard Virginia as their home. They fell to building houses and planting corn." Women were induced to leave the parent country to become the wives of adventurous planters; and, during the space of three years, thirty-five hundred persons, of both sexes, found their way to Virginia. In the year 1620, a Dutch ship, from the coast of Guinea, arrived in James River, and landed twenty negroes for sale; and, as they were found more capable of enduring fatigue, in a southern climate, than the Europeans, they were continually imported, until a large proportion of the inhabitants of Virginia was composed of slaves. Thus was introduced, at this early period, that lasting system of injustice and cruelty which has proved already an immeasurable misfortune to the country, as well as a disgrace to the institutions of republican liberty, but which is lamented, in many instances, by no class with more sincerity than by those who live by the produce of slave labor itself.

The succeeding year, which witnessed the importation of negroes, beheld the cultivation of tobacco, which before the introduction of cotton, was the great staple of southern produce.

In 1622, the long-suppressed enmity of the Indians broke out in