

LIFE IN THE COLONIES.

206. Introductory. — The downfall of the French power in America (1763) marks the close of an era in the history of the English colonies. Now begins the story of quarrels with the mother-country, the long and bloody war of the Revolution, and the establishment of the Republic of the United States.

Before entering upon this period, so full of stirring scenes and momentous changes, we may pause a moment to consider the home-life of the people in the old colonial days, soon to pass away forever.

207. Geographical Limits. — Virginia, the oldest colony, had now been established 156 years; Georgia, the youngest, 31 years. There had been many changes in territorial limits. In some cases, colonies were formed from the union of other colonies, as Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Jersey. In other cases, new colonies were formed by dividing the territory of colonies already existing, as New Hampshire, Delaware, and the Carolinas. The settlements occupied a narrow strip along the Atlantic coast. The vast region west of the Alleghany Mountains was included, however, in the territory of the different colonies, their claims being based on royal grants or on explorations made by the colonists themselves. Virginia was the largest colony, and Georgia ranked next in size. The district of Maine was part of Massachusetts, and the present State of Vermont was claimed by New York and New Hampshire.

The map opposite page 211 will show the limits of the colonies at the close of the colonial period.

208. Population. — For nearly a century and a half after the founding of Jamestown, the growth of the colonies, as a

whole, was slow and beset with many difficulties. From about the middle of the eighteenth century, however, there was a rapid increase in population. At the close of the colonial period, the total population of the colonies was probably somewhat over 2,000,000 (about equal to that of New York City to-day). Virginia was the most populous colony, her inhabitants numbering half a million. Massachusetts and Pennsylvania ranked next to her, while New York came seventh, and Georgia thirteenth in population.

The Indians had nearly all been driven westward across the mountains. There were no cities, most of the people living on farms or in small towns. The largest towns were Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Charleston, but none of these contained over 20,000 inhabitants.

209. Slavery. — Negro slaves were found in all the colonies, and there was little prejudice against the system, North or South.¹ A Dutch vessel brought over the first cargo of African slaves. Afterward English and New England ships were active in carrying on the traffic. It proved extremely profitable, and was encouraged by the British government. At first the slaves were employed chiefly as house-servants; but it was soon found that they were best adapted to farm labor and a warm climate. In the northern colonies, with their commercial pursuits, small farms, and cold climate, slavery was not profitable, and the number of negroes was never large. In the southern colonies, however, the great tobacco and rice plantations created a demand for slave labor, and the number of slaves rapidly increased. At the close of the French wars there were nearly 500,000 slaves in the colonies, of whom eight-ninths were south of Mason and Dixon's line (§ 101).

¹ One of the agreements between the colonies forming the New England Confederation was that runaway slaves should be delivered up on demand.

210. Government. — The English colonies were all subject to the Crown, and the general features of colonial government were similar. Each had a governor and a law-making body composed of two branches,¹ the smaller body called the "Council," the larger the "Assembly." The Assembly was in all cases chosen by the people. With these resemblances there were certain differences. (1) Massachusetts,² Connecticut, and Rhode Island each had a charter from the king, giving them the right to elect all their officers. This made these colonies almost like independent republics, so far, at least, as their local government was concerned. They may be called the *Republican Colonies*.

(2) Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland also had charters, but these charters conferred the right of government upon the proprietors instead of upon the people. The proprietor appointed the governor and Council for his colony. These were called *Proprietary Colonies*.

(3) Of the remaining seven colonies, New Hampshire never had a charter, and the original charters of the others had been annulled. The governor and Council in these colonies were appointed directly by the king, and they were known, therefore, as the *Royal Colonies*.

211. Colonies Classified. — The life of the people in the various colonies differed greatly. This may be readily accounted for, when we remember the different classes of Englishmen who settled the colonies, the presence of a large foreign population in many of them, the varying local conditions, as of climate, soil, or relations with the Indians, and the infrequency of intercourse between settlements. Yet in each of the three great groups, — the New England, the Middle, and the

¹ But see § 233.

² After 1692 the governor of Massachusetts was appointed by the king, although the colony still had a charter.

Southern colonies, — we find a certain uniformity in character and institutions. Each group has one or more "parent" colonies of which the others are offshoots, and which, from their predominating influence, may be considered typical colonies of the several groups. Thus, in the Southern division Virginia is the representative; in the Middle division, New York and Pennsylvania; in the New England division, Massachusetts.

THE NEW ENGLAND COLONIES.

212. Occupations of the People. — With the exception of Connecticut, the soil of New England is generally rocky and unfruitful, and so offered the colonists little inducement to the pursuit of agriculture. Farming on a small scale, however, was everywhere followed, — grain, hay, vegetables, hemp, and flax being the principal products. The fisheries, especially whale and cod, were the source of greatest wealth. The forests contained an inexhaustible supply of valuable timber, which the colonists were not slow to utilize. Shipbuilding became a leading industry. New England ships carried a large part of the commerce of all the colonies. An extensive trade with neighboring colonies and the West Indies sprang up. Ships loaded with New England products would visit the West Indies and return with cargoes of sugar, molasses, and slaves. Part of the sugar and molasses was converted into rum and again exported. The New Englanders were skillful in all kinds of handiwork, and labor was greatly diversified. We find soap-boilers, tinkers, tailors, glovers, coopers, shoemakers, curriers, glaziers, millers, tallow-chandlers, and barber-surgeons,¹ all represented among the colonists.

¹ Before the days of regular physicians, barbers practiced a rude surgery. The barber's pole, with its red stripes, was first used as a sign of the bloody nature of the surgeon's work.

213. Town Life and Government.—In most of the colonies towns were a comparatively late growth, springing up gradually as population increased. In New England, on the contrary, towns existed from the first, and lay at the foundation of colonial life and government. There were no large plantations. The settlers built their homes near together around their "meeting-house." Each man had his share of land, and also certain rights of pasturage in the "common," an open field belonging to the whole community.

The term "town" included not only the village, but the surrounding district of small farms within convenient distance from the meeting-house. Each town had a representative in the colonial Legislature, besides the privilege of managing completely its local affairs. At stated times the "town meeting" was held in the church. Here every citizen (in Massachusetts, only church-members) had a vote and an equal voice in debate. Taxes were levied, laws passed, and the "selectmen" to whom their town's affairs were to be entrusted for the coming year were chosen. This town government still exists in New England, and as a system of local self-government deserves our study and admiration.

214. Religion.—The religion of the New Englanders filled a large share of their thoughts, and influenced every department of their life. In doctrine the Puritan Church was Calvinistic. In government it was Congregational; that is, the direction of church affairs was in the hands of the members of each congregation, and no higher authority was recognized. In spirit it was characterized by depth of conviction and bitter intolerance. Freedom of thought in religion was rewarded with stripes, imprisonment, or banishment.¹ The ministers were highly educated men, usually of marked ability and purity of life. They were looked up to by the community, and ex-

¹ Rhode Island was a notable exception in this respect.

erted a powerful influence in secular as well as religious affairs. The performance of religious duties was enforced by law. The people were summoned to church by the beating of a drum. Those who stayed away without good excuse had to pay a fine. Certain seats near the pulpit were reserved for the elders and deacons. The men were seated on one side of the church, the women on the other. Behind these were the children and negroes, and back of all the "tithing men," whose business it was to see that a properly reverent spirit was maintained. These last were armed with long rods, tipped with brass at one end, and a rabbit's foot at the other. As the sermon was often two hours long and the prayers in proportion, it not infrequently happened that the head of a restless boy was sharply rapped with the brass end of the tithing man's rod, or the nose of some sleepy old lady gently tickled with the rabbit's foot to rouse her from her slumber. No organ nor instrumental music of any kind was allowed. The clerk, or precentor, from his station in front of the pulpit read out one line at a time from the "Bay Psalm Book," while the congregation vigorously chanted it after him in different keys. This was called "singing by rule." Singing by note was introduced later.

215. The Sabbath.—Strict observance of the Sabbath (it was never called Sunday) was a marked feature of Puritan life. The Sabbath began at six o'clock on Saturday evening, and closed at sundown on Sunday. Laws to punish violations of the Sabbath were numerous and rigidly enforced. No work save what was absolutely necessary, no travel, no amusements were permitted.

216. Laws.—The laws were patterned after the Old Testament, and regulated minute details of life. In Massachusetts there were thirteen offenses punishable by death (not half so many, however, as in England at the same time). Among these were murder, arson, blasphemy, abuse of parents. Hang-

ing was the usual mode of capital punishment, but negroes were sometimes burned at the stake. Imprisonment was not a common punishment.

For minor offenses the stocks, the ducking-stool, pillory, and whipping-post were used. Sometimes



Ducking Stool.



Stocks.

the forehead or cheek of the culprit was branded with a hot iron, or he was compelled to wear, sewed on his garment, a large colored letter to indicate his crime. Great publicity was given to all kinds of punishment.

217. Grades of Society.— There were various grades of society among the New England colonists, with the difference between them plainly marked. These social distinctions were partly brought over from England, and were partly based on education, service to the state, and wealth. The classes, in order of rank, were gentlemen, yeomen, merchants, mechanics, indentured servants,¹ and negro slaves. Goodman and goodwife were the ordinary titles of men and women. Mr. and Mrs. could only be applied to those of the upper class, or order of “gentlemen.” We are told that Mr. Josias Plaistow, having been convicted of theft, was condemned thereafter to drop his title, and be known as plain Josias.

The seats at church were carefully arranged according to the social rank of the occupants. The order of names in the college catalogues was determined in the same way. It was not till 1772 that Harvard College substituted the alphabetical arrangement.

¹ These were persons who bound themselves to service for a term of years in payment of some debt, generally for their passage to America. For the origin of this use of the word “indentured,” see any standard unabridged dictionary.

218. Dress.— Ordinarily the men wore a homespun jacket with a belt around it at the waist, breeches reaching to the knees and tied, black stockings that came up to the knees, and coarse shoes. Both men and women wore tall, pointed hats. The women’s dresses were of coarse linen. They usually plaited their hair in a simple braid, but on Sunday it was coiled on top of the head and powdered. Among the wealthy classes of the large towns there was finer dressing, yet undue extravagance in dress was prohibited by law. A law of Massachusetts forbade the use of veils, “immoderate great sleeves,” and “slashed apparel.”



New England Colonist.

219. Social Life.— The early Puritans were a stern people, averse to social pleasure, though in later times this soberness melted to a considerable degree. The house-raising, husking, and quilting parties gave them an opportunity to help each other and indulge in social pleasures. They did not observe Christmas, because they associated it with Popish feast days. Their holidays were Thanksgiving Day, Fast Day, Election Day, and Training Day (for drilling the militia). Marriage was regarded as a



Interior of Settler's Home.

civil contract, and was usually performed by justices of the peace. Early marriages were common. One writer of the

period speaks of "Miss Wilkins, an old maid of twenty-six, looked on in Boston as a dismal spectacle."

At their funerals, in the small towns, the coffin was carried to the grave on men's shoulders. After the burial all returned to the home of the deceased, and closed the day with feasting and drinking.

The houses were built of logs, covered with rough boards. Each house had a large chimney, with its immense open fireplace, often large enough to hold a wagon-load of wood. As there were no stoves in those days, the cooking was done in these open fire-places.

220. **Education.**— From the beginning of their settlement, the men of New England took a deep interest in education. One of their first acts was to establish a system of free schools. In 1649 education was compulsory in every New England colony except Rhode Island, and few adults were unable to read and write. Seven years after the founding of Salem, the Legislature of Massachusetts appropriated a sum for establishing a college. Two years later Rev. John Harvard, of Charlestown, died, leaving his library and half of his estate, with which to aid the plan. In gratitude to its benefactor the new institution was called Harvard College, now the oldest college in the United States. Yale College was founded in Connecticut, at the beginning of the eighteenth century. At a later period Dartmouth College was established in New Hampshire, and Brown College in Rhode Island.

221. **Literature.**— At first the colonists had few books, and these were brought from England. The Bible was the one book most universally read, studied, and memorized. In 1639 the first printing press was set up at Cambridge, Massachusetts. It was the beginning of the next century before the first permanent newspaper in America, the "Boston News-Letter," appeared. No form of literature was more widely read than

Poor Richard, 1733.

A N

Almanack

For the Year of Christ

1 7 3 3,

Being the First after LEAP YEAR.

<i>And makes since the Creation</i>	Years
By the Account of the Eastern Greeks	7241
By the Latin Church, when ☉ est. ♀	6932
By the Computation of <i>W.W.</i>	5742
By the Roman Chronology	5682
By the Jewish Rabbies.	5494

Wherein is contained

The Lunations, Eclipses, Judgment of the Weather, Spring Tides, Planets Motions & mutual Aspects, Sun and Moon's Rising and Setting, Length of Days, Time of High Water, Fairs, Courts, and observable Days.

Fitted to the Latitude of Forty Degrees, and a Meridian of Five Hours West from London, but may without sensible Error, serve all the adjacent Places, even from Newfoundland to South-Carolina

By RICHARD SAUNDERS, Philom.

PHILADELPHIA:
Printed and sold by *B. FRANKLIN*, at the New-
Printing-Office near the Market

the almanac. "Poor Richard's Almanack," prepared and published by Benjamin Franklin, was perhaps the most popular of these. It contained scraps of history and poetry, anecdotes and epigrams. Some of the wise sayings of "Poor Richard" are familiar proverbs to-day. The "Almanacks" were carefully preserved, some households possessing a file of them for fifty years. The ministers of New England produced most of the writings. The books were nearly all on theological subjects. Jonathan Edwards's great work, "On the Freedom of the Will," is yet considered a masterpiece of logical reasoning. The Puritans were great versifiers, but produced little true poetry.¹

222. **Summary.**—It has been said that the characteristic features of New England life were her town meetings, schools, and churches. The most prominent traits which lay at the basis of these institutions were intense earnestness, intellectual activity, and hatred of all resemblance to priestly rule. The people were orderly and industrious. Their keenness of intellect, thrift, and experience in trade made them shrewd bargain-drivers, whose reputation remains to their descendants to-day. The influence of their religion on all departments of life, and their intolerance toward other sects, were marked features of their civilization. The gentle, imaginative, poetic side of their nature was not developed. The educational preëminence of colonial New England was pronounced. The same fixedness of conviction that led her people to ignore the rights of others

¹ The most popular book written in New England before the Revolution was a poem by Michael Wigglesworth, called the "Day of Doom." The following stanza from this "blazing and sulphurous" work describes the fate of the wicked:

"Then might you hear them tear and rend
The air with their out-cries:
The hideous noise of their sad voice
Ascendeth to the skies.
They wring their hands, their caitiff hands,
And gnash their teeth for terror;
They cry, they roar, for anguish sore,
And gnaw their tongues for horror.
But get away without delay;
Christ pities not your cry;
Depart to hell, there may you yell
And roar eternally."

made them tenacious of their own. In the approaching contest with England, Massachusetts and Virginia led the way, and the New England colonists furnished to that struggle, and to the national character, some elements of greatest strength.

THE SOUTHERN COLONIES.

223. **Occupations.**—The first settlers in the Southern colonies found a climate and soil admirably adapted to agriculture. The Indians being usually friendly, it was not necessary for them to live in towns for the purpose of mutual defence. Numerous inlets of the sea and navigable rivers afforded a convenient means for the transportation of their products to European or colonial markets. The introduction of slave labor increased the profits of agriculture. Accordingly, farming was from the first the universal occupation of the people. There were small traders, but no considerable merchant-class. Carpenters and mechanics were rare. On each plantation a few slaves were trained as blacksmiths, shoemakers, etc. The commonest articles of furniture were imported from England. A few iron furnaces were established in Virginia by Governor Spotswood, and among the North Carolinians the production of lumber, tar, and turpentine in a measure took the place of agriculture. The professions of law and medicine had few followers, and did not acquire any standing until near the Revolution.

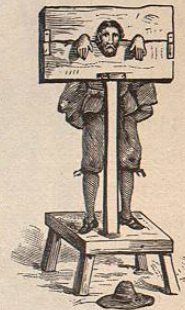
224. **Principal Crops.**—In South Carolina and Georgia, rice and indigo were the principal productions. Cotton was raised, but not in any great quantity. In Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina, tobacco was the universal crop. Its culture was so profitable that everything else was neglected, and it supplied the place of money as a medium of exchange. Taxes were levied in tobacco, and salaries were paid in tobacco. In later colonial days, grain became an important crop in Maryland, and large quantities of flour were exported from Baltimore.

225. Absence of Towns. — Absence of towns was characteristic of all the Southern colonies. Plantations lined the banks of the navigable streams, and each planter had a wharf on the river front, where ships laden with manufactured articles from England would land, and receive in return cargoes of colonial products. Thus every planter was his own merchant. Jamestown, for a long time the principal town of Virginia, consisted of a church, court-house, and about eighteen other houses. The county-seats, established by law for the administration of justice, were often located in the midst of a forest, and consisted of a court-house, a prison, a poorly-kept inn, and usually a church. The Legislatures of several of the colonies passed laws that towns should be established at specified places "for the encouragement of trade and manufacture." But these "paper towns" were failures. At the close of the colonial period, Charleston, with a population of about 15,000, was the principal town in the Southern colonies. Baltimore came next in size, then Norfolk, Virginia, with about 7000. Savannah, the largest town in Georgia, had 1200 inhabitants. In North Carolina only three places could be called towns, the largest, Wilmington, with a population of not over 600.

226. Slavery. — The culture of tobacco and rice, by making slave labor profitable, fastened the institution of African slavery upon the Southern colonies. Slaves were most numerous in South Carolina, where they outnumbered the whites two to one. In Virginia the slave and free population were about equal. The prohibition of slavery in Georgia was found to retard the growth of the colony, and was finally removed through the protests of the colonists and the influence of Rev. George Whitefield, who argued that the transportation of the negro from his savage home in Africa to a Christian land, where he would be humanely treated and forced to work, was a benefit to him. Alarm at the rapid increase of slaves, and dread of

an uprising of the negroes, led to the passage of extremely harsh laws concerning them. Yet, in general, the relation between master and slave was a kindly one.¹ The negroes were well fed, comfortably clothed, not overworked, and, as a class, were contented and happy.

227. Government. — At the close of the colonial period all the Southern colonies, except Maryland, had come under the Royal form of government (§ 210). The privilege of voting was usually restricted to land-owners. Political affairs were controlled by the large planters, who were cordially supported, however, by the small farmers. The county (instead of the town, as in New England) was the unit of local government, and was modeled after the English shire. Commissioners, or justices of the peace, were appointed by the governor for each county, to try offenses and administer such affairs as were not regulated by the Assembly. In some instances the church vestry, chosen by the heads of families, exercised certain powers of government. As a rule the people were not hampered by legal restraints upon the minor details of their conduct. The whipping-post was the common means of punishing violators of the law, though the pillory and ducking-stool were not unfamiliar objects. Cutting the ears was sometimes resorted to, as in the case of the faithless clerk of the Virginia Assembly (§ 92).



In the Pillory.

228. Society. — The planters were the ruling class socially as well as politically. They comprised two divisions, the large

¹ The little son of the planter might often be seen in the cabin "quarters" seated upon the knee of a gray-haired negro and listening with wonder and delight to the old "uncle's" tales of "Bre'r Rabbit" and "Bre'r Fox"; when bed-time found "little massa" thus, he was tenderly carried home in the arms of his black "mammy," as his nurse was called.

land-holders and the small planters. Separated from the planters by a broad social gulf was the comparatively small class of merchant-traders and landless laborers. At the bottom of the social scale, and cut off from the rest by an impassable barrier, was the great mass of negro slaves. The large planters, with their hundreds of acres and scores of slaves, gave an aristocratic air to southern life. One of these estates resembled a small village. In the center of a grassy lawn, dotted with stately trees, stood the mansion of the planter, built of



Southern Colonial Mansion.

wood or brick, two stories high, with its broad veranda supported by lofty pillars, its wide hallway, and low ceilings. Clustered around the mansion were numerous offices and storehouses, while a row of cabins, comprising the "negro-quarters," nestled in the distance.¹ The small planters lived in less style, and had fewer slaves. Bountiful hospitality characterized the people. There was usually one miserable tavern at each county-seat, but this was chiefly a resort for loafing and drinking. Only when court was in session did it have

¹ In the Southern colonies the law of entail provided that estates could not be divided, but were to be handed down to the eldest son.

any guests. "Court-days" were eagerly welcomed by the people as a release from their isolated life. Then the deserted county-seat became a scene of bustle and confusion. The free-men of the county, rich and poor, there met on an equal footing, cracked jokes, talked politics, engaged in athletic sports, "swapped" horses, or bet on the speed of a favorite nag. In fine weather barbecues were common, when whole oxen and pigs were roasted, and contests in fiddling, wrestling, and dancing were held. Once a year, when the Assembly met, the colonial capital was a gay social center. Then the planter and his wife and daughters, arrayed in their finest clothes, were whirled away in their coach-and-four to Annapolis, Williamsburg, or Charleston, where they listened to the speeches in the hall of burgesses, visited horse-races, or attended a grand ball at the governor's "palace." Marriages were performed by clergymen, usually in church. In Maryland a special tax was imposed upon bachelors. In Virginia it would seem that the modern practice of "flirting" was discouraged. Governor Wyat, of that colony, required that any man or woman "engaging to marry two several persons at one time" should be punished by whipping or a fine, "according to the quality of the person so offending."

220. Religion.—At the close of the colonial period the Church of England was the Established¹ Church in all the Southern colonies, although in Virginia alone did its members constitute a majority of the white population. Among dissenting sects, the most numerous and influential in Virginia and North Carolina were the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians; in South Carolina, Huguenots; in Maryland, Roman Catholics and Puritans; in Georgia, Lutherans, Methodists, and Baptists. Fining, imprisonment, and banishment were punishments sometimes inflicted for non-conformity to the Established Church. Maryland was the first colony to establish religious toleration, and

¹ That is, the State Church, supported by the government.