UNITED STATES

PART I—HISTORY AND CONSTITUTION.

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**I. COLONIZATION : 1607-1750.**

I. THOUGH the voyages of the Cabots (1497-98) along

the coast of North America were the ground which the English finally adopted as a basis for their claims on that continent, no very effective steps were taken to reduce the continent to possession until after 1606. Martin Frobisher (1576) failed in an attempt to explore Labrador. Sir Humphrey Gilbert (1578) failed in a similar attempt on the continent ; and in a second effort (1583) he was lost in a storm at sea on his return. In 1584 his half­brother Raleigh took up the work under commission from Queen Elizabeth. He sent two small vessels under Amidas and Barlow. They explored the south-central coast of what is now the United States, and returned with such flattering reports that the courtly Raleigh at once named the country Virginia, in honour of the queen, and sent out a colony. It was starved out in a year (1585). He sent another to the same place, Roanoke Island (1587), but it had disappeared when it was searched for three years after. Gosnold (1602) found a shorter route across the Atlantic, and spent a winter on an island off the present coast of Massachusetts ; but his men refused to stay longer. These are the official records of English explorations up to 1606; but it is pretty certain that fishing and trading voyages, of which no record was kept, were more common than has been supposed, and that they kept alive a knowledge of the country.

1. In 1606 James I. formed two companies by a single charter. To one, the London Company, he granted the North-American coast between 34o and 38o N. lat.; to the other, the Plymouth Company, whose membership was more in the west of England, he granted the coast between 41° and 45o N. lat. The intervening coast, between lat. 38o and 41o, or between the Rappahannock and Hudson rivers, was to be common to both, but neither was to plant a settlement within 100 miles of a previous settlement of the other. Each was to be governed by a council appointed by the king, and these councils were to appoint colonial councils of thirteen, with really absolute powers. Neither company did much in colonization : the London Company gave up its charter in 1624, and the Plymouth Company, after a complete change of constitu­tion in 1620, surrendered its charter in 1635. But the London Company at least began the work of colonization, and the Plymouth Company parcelled out its grant to actual colonists. Above all, the charter of the two com­panies had granted the principle to which the colonists always appealed as the foundation of English colonization in North America, as the condition on which immigrants had entered it, irrevocable unless by mutual consent of crown and subjects : “ Also we do, for us, our heirs and successors, declare by these presents that all and every the persons, being our subjects, which shall go and inhabit within the said colony and plantation, and every their children and posterity, which shall happen to be born within any of the limits thereof, shall have and enjoy all liberties, franchises, and immunities of free denizens and natural subjects within any of our other dominions, to all intents and purposes as if they had been abiding and born within this our realm of England, or in any other of our dominions.”
2. The London Company was first in the field. A ship­load of the adventurers then swarming in London was sent out under Christopher Newport. He found a fine river, which he named after the king, and on its banks, within the present State of Virginia, he planted the settlement of Jamestown@@1 (13th May 1607). Misgovernment, dissen­sion, mismanagement, and starvation were almost too much for the infant colony, and several times the colonists were on the point of giving it up and going home. Twelve years were required to put Virginia on a sound footing. By that time the liberal element in the London Company had got control of it, and granted the colonists a repre­sentative government. The year in which this house of burgesses met (1619) was the year in which African slaves were introduced into the colony from a Dutch vessel.
3. Separatists from the Church of England began the more northerly settlements. Driven from England, they found refuge in Holland. Thence returning for the moment to England, a company of 102 of them set sail for America in the “Mayflower,” landing (December 21, 1620) at Plymouth, in the south-eastern part of the present State of Massachusetts. The rigours of a new and cold country, combined with poverty and the payment of interest at 45 per cent., made the early years of the Plymouth colony a desperate struggle for existence, but it survived. It had no special charter, but a licence from the Plymouth Com­pany. Other little towns were founded to the north of this settlement, and in 1629 these were all embraced in a charter given by Charles I. to the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay. This was a Puritan venture, com­posed of men of higher social grade than the Plymouth Separatists, and was meant to furnish a refuge for those who dreaded the ecclesiastical policy of the crown. The next year the company took the bold step of transferring its organization to America, so as to be out of the imme­diate notice of the crown and its agents. Eleven vessels took more than a thousand colonists over, and the real colony of Massachusetts was begun.
4. The charter of the London Company was surrendered to the crown, as has been said, in 1624 ; and the king thereafter disposed of the territory which had been granted to it as he pleased. In 1632 the new colony of Maryland was carved out of it for Lord Baltimore. In 1663 the territory to the south of the present State of Virginia was cut off from it and called Carolina, covering the present States of North and South Carolina and Georgia. In 1729 Carolina was divided into North and South Carolina ; and in 1732 the last of the colonies, Georgia, was organized. Five distinct colonies were thus formed out of the original London Company’s grant.
5. When the Plymouth Company finally surrendered its charter in 1635, it had made one ineffectual attempt at colonization (1607) near the mouth of the Kennebec river, in Maine, and one complete colony, Massachusetts Bay, had arisen within its territory. Another colony, that of Plymouth, existed by licence. Massachusetts settlers, without even a licence, were pouring into the vacant

@@@1 The former settlement of Jamestown is now in James City county, Va., about 32 miles from the mouth of the James river. It was at first the capital of the colony, but began to decline when Williamsburgh was made the capital. Its death-blow was received when it was burned in 1676, during Bacon’s rebellion. It was not rebuilt, and has now almost disappeared. “Nothing remains but the ruins of a church tower covered with ivy, and some old tombstones. The river encroaches year by year, and the ground occupied by the original huts is already submerged.”