

The Cleavage between Eastern and Western Virginia. By Prof.

C. H. Ambler. *American Historical Review*, July, 1910.

In this paper, Prof. Ambler, of Randolph-Macon College, shows a keen appreciation of the geographic differences between transmontane and cismontane Virginia and the marked economic and political differentiation of these two districts largely as a result of their geographic contrasts. Prof. Ambler takes the Blue Ridge as the boundary between the two sections and describes eastern Virginia as a relatively level region with fertile soil, a deeply indented coast line and temperate climate, while western Virginia is described as having a more broken and mountainous or hilly surface, less fertile soil and a more rigorous climate. In the East was the plantation and its concomitant slave system, producing staple crops which found easy shipment at the deeply drowned river valleys of the tidewater region. As a result of the self-sufficing plantation system and the poor transportation facilities, villages and trade centers were not developed. In the West, the small farm operated by individual owners was the rule. Villages were relatively frequent and were centers of trade and influence.

Politically, the two sections were usually antagonistic. In the movement for independence, the western counties led the more conservative East. On national questions, the Piedmont and tidewater country were inclined to be individualistic. The mountain region, with its early need for protection against savages and its subsequent need for facilities to transport its coal and agricultural products, demanded a strong central government.

The author traces the struggle of the West with the East for political equality in the Assembly, a struggle so bitter that, from 1830 to 1850, there was a strong movement for a new commonwealth west of the Blue Ridge. Not until 1850 did the white population in western Virginia outnumber that in eastern Virginia and secure a fair representation in the Assembly. The slavery controversy appears not to have been strongly geographic. The people of western Virginia were in favor of allowing slavery, although the number of slaves was relatively very few. This section had voted against the resolutions of 1798 and the nullification movement, but the final dismemberment of Virginia was upon the question of secession. The mountainous west remained with the North while the Piedmont and Tide Water joined the South.

A geographer, perhaps, would wish that the geographic factors were more adequately described. A concise description of the rolling Piedmont, the smoothly sloping Coastal Plain with its drowned valleys, the maturely dissected plateau in West Virginia separated from the Blue Ridge by the level floored Great Valley, would give the reader a mental picture of the two contrasted regions. The climate of east and west Virginia is characterized respectively as "even" and

“uneven.” This fails to convey the contrast between the milder, shorter winters and the shorter frost season of the East and the larger range of temperature, longer winters and longer frost season of the west. F. V. EMERSON.

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