CHAPTER VIII

The Dutch Colonial Empire

THE Dutch Netherlands are a group of eleven provinces of which South and North Holland are by far the richest and most important. During the Middle Ages these lands by the North Sea enjoyed some prosperity but played rather a minor role in European affairs. By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however, their importance had grown. The provinces had developed a common language, essentially the Dutch or Nederlandsche spoken today, and showed some signs of developing a national consciousness.

In the fifteenth century the Netherlands fell under the control of the Austrian Hapsburgs, who early in the next century married their way to the Spanish throne. Charles V, who governed so much of Europe, was lord of both Spaniards and Dutchmen; he abdicated, partitioned his empire, and gave Spain and the Netherlands to his son Philip II.

The Dutch thus found themselves, by the process of imperial matrimony, subject to a Spanish king who grew steadily less bearable as time went by. They had considered Charles a tolerable ruler because he spoke their language and frequently lived among them. Philip, on the other hand, was a thoroughgoing Spaniard, speaking only Castilian and seldom leaving Spain. He was by no means the inhuman
monster sometimes depicted; it would be truer to say that he was a rather humble man whose stiffness was the result of diffidence. He had, however, an unswerving belief in the rectitude of his own policies and a conscience like that of John Calvin, whose followers he persecuted at every opportunity. Having no temperamental bonds of sympathy with his Dutch subjects, he governed them arbitrarily and with slight attention to local customs and institutions. By this time Protestant doctrines had made a great progress in the Netherlands, and Philip, ever the bulwark of Catholicism, considered the sword and the Inquisition the only means of checking the religious views he hated.

The Dutch rebelled in 1566, and both Catholics and Protestants generally supported the revolution, which gradually became an independence movement. After a confused preliminary period, several of the provinces formed the Union of Utrecht in 1579 and the others eventually adhered to it. The formal declaration of independence came when they substituted an oath of allegiance to the “United Low Countries,” for the old one to the king of Spain. After years of bitter warfare, the Dutch began to make headway. Their strongly walled cities could usually resist attack by the famous Spanish infantry, and presently the rebels took to the sea and carried the fight into Spain’s home waters. By 1595, the war for independence, though still dragging on, seemed as good as won. Spain made several later efforts at reconquest, however, and the fight raged at intervals until the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 formally recognized the independence of the provinces.

The sea phase of the Dutch revolt ushered in the great colonial empire of the Netherlands. Already the provinces
had a large merchant marine, which traded from the Baltic to Guinea. In 1580 Philip II had seized Portugal, following the death of a childless Portuguese king. For some years he did not try to stop the thriving trade that went on between Lisbon and his rebellious Dutch subjects. Then, thinking to deal the Netherlands a crippling economic blow, he passed a series of embargoes closing the Tagus River to their ships. This cut the Dutch out of any share of the spices that the Portuguese still brought back from the East. It also deprived them of their main supply of salt, which they had bought in Portugal and which they needed to cure their large catches of fish from the North Sea.

*Dutch Arctic Exploration*

The Spanish embargo on Dutch-Portuguese trade backfired on Philip. The Netherlands decided to cut loose from their European moorings and go to the East Indies for spices and the West Indies for salt. Of the two, the eastern islands had the greater interest for them. But they wished to do more than merely follow the Portuguese path to the East, they set out to see if other routes could be found. First they tried the northeast, an idea that the English had entertained and abandoned years before. Seeking the Northeast Passage meant sailing north of Scandinavia and groping along the Russian and Siberian coasts for a way to the Pacific. Only ignorance of the geographical difficulties involved gave early explorers the courage to try. It was not until 1878–1879 that the Swedish explorer, Baron A. E. Nordenskiöld, finally made this voyage, in the *Vega*. Beginning in 1594 the Dutch made three such attempts, their main achievements being the rediscovery of bleak Nova Zemlya and Spitsbergen, where
they suffered severely before returning home. This made the northern prospect look rather forlorn, but the Dutchmen did not quite lose hope.

In 1609 the Dutch East India Company hired the Englishman Henry Hudson, who had already sailed in Arctic waters, to try the northeast again. Hudson, in his famous little Half Moon, obediently started in the Nova Zemlya direction but soon decided that this quest would come to nothing. So he crossed the Atlantic and looked for the Northwest Passage instead. He found the bay of New York and the Hudson River, up which the Half Moon sailed as far as the site of Albany, and narrowly missed encountering Champlain, who was exploring near by. Since Hudson had made the voyage in Dutch service, his "discovery," though lacking originality by 1609, gave the Netherlands a claim to the region, which they later tried to colonize.

The Dutch in the Far East

Many Dutch seamen in the past had shipped aboard Portuguese fleets for India and some had returned to tell what they had learned. Especially important was the experience of Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, who sailed from Lisbon to Goa and who, once back in Europe, published an account of the route with full details. Utilizing his information, Cornelis de Houtman, commanding four Dutch ships, braved the Cape of Good Hope and the Indian Ocean in 1595 to reach Java. The three vessels that returned bore very slim cargoes, but the voyage, if no financial success, showed that Dutchmen, as well as Portuguese, could make the trip and return.

Optimism flourished to such an extent that in 1598 twenty-two ships put out of the Zuider Zee for the East Indies. Since the Netherlands had no part in the old
Spanish-Portuguese Treaty of Tordesillas, they were free to try both main routes to the East. Thirteen of their vessels turned the Cape of Good Hope, while the other nine elected to go through the Strait of Magellan. The bulk of the main contingent returned richly laden with pepper and nutmeg, but only one member of the Strait of Magellan group reached home. This lone ship, commanded by Olivier van Noort, escaped through the Indian Ocean after many hair-raising adventures with the Spaniards in the Philippines, to complete the first Dutch voyage around the world.

The Dutch East India Company

In 1602 the Dutchmen founded their highly capitalized United East India Company. Though a private concern, this corporation had a close connection with the Dutch government, now an aristocratic body of legislators known as the States-General. The Company received a monopoly of all Dutch trade east of the Cape of Good Hope and west of the Strait of Magellan—in other words a free hand in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Though not planned as an empire-building agency, it had power to carry on war with the Spaniards and the Portuguese and could also conduct negotiations with oriental princes. It rapidly gained the upper hand in the eastern islands, driving the Portuguese out of Amboina and dealing mercilessly with Englishmen who attempted to move in.

Jan Pieterszoon Coen was the real architect of the Dutch oriental empire. The city of Batavia, in Java, which he founded, became the eastern headquarters for the Company and dominated the whole trade of the Far East. Coen put down all resistance by the Javanese princes, conquered the Banda Islands, and replaced the Portuguese trade mastery of
the Moluccas with a Dutch one. When he died in 1629, there was no doubt about Netherlands control of the East Indies. Coen was one of the first Europeans to recognize the value of Japanese soldiers. He preferred them to any others as mercenaries and maintained that none could surpass them in bravery, though it is safe to say that he never foresaw the time, three centuries later, when they would take from the Dutch that very empire he had labored to build.

The Dutch, like the Portuguese before them, presently learned that oriental empires cost too much to be solely a matter of collecting profits. Some years the Company paid handsome dividends to the stockholders at home; at other times it had no gains to show. Often it produced spectacular military results or geographical knowledge, which investors considered a poor substitute for financial rewards.

Cape Horn

The Dutch now regularly used the Strait of Magellan as well as the Cape of Good Hope to reach the Indies, even though there was some danger from the Spaniards, whose power in South America and on the sea was still great. Cape Horn lies far south of the strait and forms the tip of an island below Tierra del Fuego. No one had yet discovered the cape, though Francis Drake had been somewhat south of it in 1578 during his voyage around the world. According to a European theory, which Drake had not dispelled, no such thing as Cape Horn could exist. Tierra del Fuego was thought to be a peninsula stretching up from a giant continent in the south, commonly called *Terra Australis*, much vaster than the Antarctic Continent that later was found. It was the Dutch who revealed that Tierra del Fuego was no
part of a continent, but an island with open water to the south.

Their discovery of Cape Horn grew out of a free-lance effort to break a monopoly. The States-General of the Netherlands had already given the East India Company the sole right to trade in the Orient by way of the Cape of Good Hope and the Strait of Magellan, thus cutting private merchants out of any share of eastern commerce. This, however, did not prevent many of them from wanting a part of it; and Isaac Le Maire, one of the malcontents, reasoned that if a new way could be found to enter the Pacific there would be no violation of the company's privileges. With this in mind he formed his own little company, with capital raised mostly in the town of Hoorn by the Zuider Zee, and sent out two ships. The commander, Willem Schouten, boldly sailed past the entrance to the Strait of Magellan, and in January 1616 he rounded the promontory "... whereat we were very glad, holding that a way had been discovered by us which had until then been unknown to man. ... It consisted entirely of high mountains covered with snow, and ends in a sharp corner, which we called the Cape of Hoorn, and which lies in latitude 57° 48'S." This was an error; it is really in 55° 59'S. The discoverers then made their way across the Pacific, but on reaching the East Indies fell into the hands of that jealous watchdog of the company's monopoly, Coen. He contemptuously rejected their nonsense about finding a new cape and accused them of trespass and violation of company rights. Schouten's one remaining ship was confiscated and the commander was sent home to stand trial in the Netherlands. Luckily for Schouten, his patron, Le Maire, proved a stout legal fighter who won the case and compelled
the company to hand back the ship and pay damages. The Cape Horn route now became an important factor in navigation, though many thought that it was merely another strait and that the great southern continent lay not far south.

Abel Tasman

An equally famous exploration was that of Australasia by Abel Janszoon Tasman some years later. Spanish and Portuguese voyagers had stumbled on parts of the Australian coast, and in the early seventeenth century a few Dutch ships had found land in the vicinity of Torres Strait and the Gulf of Carpentaria. But beyond the knowledge that some land lay there, the picture was very vague.

In 1642 Anthony van Diemen was governor of the Dutch East Indies. This energetic man, the ablest of Coen's successors, did not feel sure that all sources of Pacific trade had been found and so began explorations in several directions. To the north his ships went as far as the Kuril Islands beyond Japan. To investigate southward, Van Diemen selected the seasoned Captain Tasman and ordered him to explore the great land, already several times reported, with an eye to its commercial possibilities and any treasure it might contain. Tasman sailed from Batavia and first struck westward in the Indian Ocean to Mauritius, where a small Dutch settlement existed. Returning toward the east, he passed below Australia, missing the continent entirely and discovering Tasmania, which he named Van Diemen's Land. He could not be sure whether Tasmania was a separate island or part of the larger land mass, though he guessed it to be a peninsula of Australia. A theory among his men to the effect that the unseen inhabitants were giants prevented much land exploration from being done. Sailing still farther eastward, Tasman
found the two lands which he named New Zeeland (Zealand) after the Netherlands province. Again he could not be certain that these were islands, because he saw only their western coasts, and believed they might be parts of some larger mass. Passing northward, Tasman concluded his discoveries by finding both the Tonga and Fiji Islands before he returned to Batavia by way of New Guinea.

By sailing around the real Australia, Tasman had proved that it could not be part of the theoretical Terra Australis, with which European imaginations filled so much of the South Pacific. But he did not eliminate this mythical continent from future geographical calculation, for by finding the two New Zealand islands he raised the speculation that they were part of Terra Australis. Unfortunately no Dutch explorers followed Tasman to those regions, since the company chose not to waste ships and money on discoveries that seemed to promise no economic return. So Terra Australis, as distinct from the actual Australia and the Antarctic continent, lived on in men's imaginations for another hundred years and more, until the voyages of Captain Cook proved that it could not possibly exist.

The Dutch West India Company

Though the States-General had given to the monopolistic East India Company the Pacific and Indian Oceans, they did not award any rights in the Atlantic until 1621, when they established the Dutch West India Company. The new corporation received a trade monopoly and colonization rights in the New World and along the west African coast south of the Tropic of Cancer.

The West India Company was launched just at the moment when war with the king of Spain had been resumed.
Not having much capital, the new company meant to operate largely as a privateering enterprise, to enrich itself with spoils from Spanish and Portuguese ships, and to gain control of the profitable slave trade.

One of the early acts of the directors was to take over jurisdiction of the Hudson River. A few straggling Dutch settlers already lived scattered through this area, and the company assumed control of them. It sent out a few more, built Fort Amsterdam, and made the renowned twenty-four-dollar purchase of Manhattan Island from the Indians. With better management this Dutch venture could have grown. But the company directors and the settlers had little in common, and the history of their mutual relations is a story of incessant quarreling. The governors sent out were generally inept and always unpopular. The last of them, peppery, wooden-legged Petrus Stuyvesant, let the citizens know that if any man appealed over his jurisdiction to the home authorities he would "make him a foot shorter, and send the pieces home to Holland, and let him appeal that way." The system of patroon grants, which gave much of the best land on the lower Hudson to Dutch capitalists—Van Cortlandts, Van Rensselaers, and Schuylers—tended to keep immigrants away. Fur trade with the Indians, which was the ostensible reason for the colony's existence, proceeded very slowly. The settlers showed an occasional burst of energy against the English in Connecticut and the Swedes on the Delaware, but neither they nor the directors at home expressed much regret when England took over the colony in 1664.

From first to last the West India Company poured most of its men and money into Brazil and adjacent regions of the South Atlantic. The great plan of capturing the slave trade
meant securing both ends of the traffic: the supply in Guinea and Angola and the market in Portuguese Brazil. Sugar raising, which was the principal purpose of all this slavery, had by now become a giant factor in world economy.

In 1624 the Dutch captured Baía in Brazil, but lost the place almost at once. This costly failure cut deep into the company treasury, but a stroke of luck followed when Admiral Piet Pieterszoon Heyn took a Spanish silver fleet off Matanzas in Cuba. Encouraged and refinanced, the Dutch attacked Brazil again, this time capturing Olinda near Recife. They followed up their success by taking St. Eustatius and Curaçao in the West Indies. Within a few years further operations in Brazil brought the whole coast from Recife to the mouth of the Amazon into Dutch hands.

The company's governor in Brazil, the able Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen, was by disposition an empire builder who scorned such vulgar matters as financial reckonings. It may not be quite fair to say, as some do, that his plans failed only because of the penny-pinching of the directors at home; the whole adventure was certainly too ambitious for the resources of the company. Unquestionably, however, there was disagreement between the aristocratic Johan Maurits and the profit-hungry, bourgeois directors whose parsimony or poverty caused him to return home disgruntled in 1644. Even so, he remained in control long enough to start the other phase of the expansion program, the capture of Portuguese Angola in West Africa. The Dutch took São Paulo de Luanda, the main Angolan seaport, and seemed to have a bright future in the slave trade.

But now the tide turned. The Portuguese still held southern Brazil, and their morale was decidedly raised when their mother country revolted from Spain in 1640 and regained its
independence. After the retirement of Johan Maurits, the Portuguese took the offensive and recovered their Brazilian colonies one by one, along with São Paulo de Luanda and a few South Atlantic islands that the Dutch had recently seized from them.

The West India Company's South Atlantic empire thus collapsed as fast as it had risen. When New Netherland was lost in 1664, the Dutch found themselves without a single holding in continental America. In the West Indies they had only Curaçao and a few minor islands. Though a little later they managed to get Surinam, better known today as Dutch Guiana, this was poor compensation for what they had grasped and lost.

Dutch failure in the Atlantic, contrasted with Dutch success in the Orient, suggests that the West India Company directors did not manage as well as did their countrymen who controlled the East. It is easy today, by the use of hindsight, to discover all their mistakes. The company indeed neglected the Hudson Valley, while squandering Dutch resources in a well-nigh hopeless effort to take Brazil. But scarcely anyone in the seventeenth century saw that this was a mistake; even England attached more value to the tropics than to North America. If the slave trade proved a tempting bait to the Dutch directors, it furnished the same temptation to other Europeans. The real criticism to be leveled at the Dutch policy is that the slave trade was too large a business and altogether too competitive for one nation, let alone one corporation, to monopolize.

Certainly a major cause of the company's failure was the initial decision to make the whole enterprise a predatory one. Spanish and Portuguese plunder alone could not keep the treasury full. Sending marauding ships to sea was expensive,
and every one returning empty represented a dead loss. Though Heyn brought home a sum reported as 11,000,000 guilders when he took the Spanish plate fleet off Cuba, this great success was never repeated. The Spaniards and Portuguese improved their defensive measures and furthermore knew how to play the plundering game themselves.

South Africa

South Africa cannot be overlooked in surveying the colonial achievements of the Dutch. The Portuguese, in their heyday, had neglected the most important station on the India route, the Cape of Good Hope itself. The Dutch also neglected it until one of their ships was wrecked in Table Bay just north of the Cape on the Atlantic side. The crew survived and lived on friendly terms with the natives, growing their own food and carrying on a little trade. When these men were picked up, their story interested the directors of the East India Company. Acting on company orders, Jan van Riebeeck dropped anchor in the bay in 1652 with the purpose of founding a colony and pitched camp off the present site of Capetown.

Riebeeck, who had lived in the East, wished to settle the cape with Chinese, knowing them to be the cheapest colonists that could be had. When the authorities in Batavia refused to send him a coolie supply, he built his settlement with slaves and a handful of Dutch. Once founded, Capetown soon proved its value. East India Company ships, bound to and from the Orient, put in there to obtain supplies of fresh meat and vegetables. This helped keep down scurvy, which was a menace on any long voyage, and saved the lives of thousands of seamen. Not only did the Dutch profit from their handy way station; other Europeans sailing around the
cape soon were doing so as well. The Dutchmen, along with some French Huguenots, who colonized the southern end of Africa became the ancestors of the present-day Afrikanders or Boers.

*The Far East Again*

In the Orient, the Dutch more than held their own. By 1641 the old Portuguese stronghold of Malacca had been captured and the Netherlands had a firm foothold on the important strait. Later they pushed north to Macassar, while at the same time they increased the size of their possessions in Java and Sumatra. They ultimately drove the Portuguese from Ceylon and for a while held part of Formosa. The trading contact that they established with Japan remained the only European connection with the island empire until Commodore Perry ended Japanese isolation in the middle of the nineteenth century. Soon after 1700 the nature of the East India Company's economic activity changed somewhat with the introduction of coffee culture into Java from Arabia. Stimulated by a growing consumption in Europe, where coffeehouses for a time threatened to outstrip taverns in popularity, the berry rapidly became a major export of the East Indies.

*Decline of Dutch Power*

By the end of the seventeenth century the Netherlands were on the way to becoming a secondary power. A country so small was in the long run unequal to the task of competing with great nations like England and France. The Dutch had borne the brunt of the attack against the old monopolists, Spain and Portugal, and they above all others had brought low the mighty power of Spain. But when the Hollan...
attempted to continue the struggle for world mastery against both England and France, the wars with these countries pared down the magnificent navy and merchant marine that in the middle of the century had been the greatest in the world. For carrying on ocean trade the Dutch geographical position proved inferior to that of the English. England lay directly athwart the Dutch sea path, and when the two countries fought, British control of the channel and the waters north of Scotland forced the ships from the Zuider Zee to run an unpleasant gauntlet.

Other causes of decline, less easy to weigh and measure, were also present. There seems to have been some deterioration in Dutch leadership as the century progressed. For a while the Netherlands, by their superior business methods, navigational skill, and technical dexterity in the lading and handling of ships, became the leaders and envy of all Europe. The old phrase "to beat the Dutch" reflects the onetime ambition of the English to rival or surpass their neighbors across the North Sea. When ultimately they did beat the Dutch, the latter could never regain the lead they had lost. Most important of all, however, seems to have been the slow process of attrition, which just as in Portugal's case a century before, took its yearly toll of a small nation attempting the work of a large one. The Netherlands played their last great power role in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713), after which they seemed glad to subside to a secondary position.

The Dutch colonial empire was more economic and secular than were any of the others. All nations thought of colonies as fields of exploitation and sources of profit. But Spain, Portugal, and France felt the need to spread religion, and did so with varying degrees of success. Several of the
English colonies had a strongly religious basis. With the Dutch, strong Calvinists though they were at home, the zeal for conversion seemed lacking. Company directors had small interest in the souls of the natives who raised their cloves, nutmegs, and coffee berries. Those ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church who went to the colonies worked among their own people and left the East Indians and American Indians alone.

But if the Dutch had little missionary zeal they had great scientific curiosity. Of all colonial nations they learned most about the flora, fauna, and other natural features of their empire. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries their scholars were easily the leaders in geography, cartography, and oceanography.

This all illustrates the fact that the Dutch colonial empire was a business proposition. The home country has been likened to a large-scale trading corporation with the States-General as the board of directors. The comparison is a good one, even though in other lines the Dutch were proving themselves far more than mere materialists. The century that produced the East and West India Companies also produced Rembrandt, Vermeer, and Frans Hals. For all that, the typical Hollander of the seventeenth century was the stockholder and the merchant prince.
CHAPTER IX

The First English Colonial Empire

WHEN Columbus discovered America, England was slowly recovering from a series of national misfortunes. The Hundred Years' War with France, after putting a great strain on the country, had ended in disaster, only to be followed by the even more futile Wars of the Roses, in which the partisans of Lancaster and York slaughtered each other at home. When Henry VII (1485–1509) of the house of Tudor grasped the throne in 1485, he put an end to civil war, but many problems remained. Throughout his reign Henry worked tirelessly to build up an efficient absolutism and to replenish the treasury; strict economy had to be his watchword and he was in no position to waste much in adventures across the ocean.

England at the start of the Tudor era lay near the outer rim of the known world. Only Iceland, poor and backward, existed to the northwest, and nothing was known beyond Ireland to the west. The English had yet to build their seafaring reputation; their merchant marine was small and most of their trade was carried in foreign bottoms. Some native shipping plied between Bristol and Ireland, bringing home fish in exchange for wool and salt. But the Venetian galleys still made their annual voyages to England, and from across
the North Sea came the trading vessels of the Hanseatic League.

Records show, however, that a few Bristol merchants had plans for exploring the Atlantic by 1480, when one of them sent a ship to look for the legendary island of Brazil, commonly thought to lie west of Ireland. We likewise know that a few years later Bartholomew Columbus tried to interest Henry VII in his brother’s discovery plan. Though Bartholomew got a courteous hearing, nothing came of it, and not until John Cabot’s voyage did England’s government show a real interest in the western ocean.

**The Cabot Voyages**

Cabot was an Italian, born Giovanni Caboto in Genoa or some town near by. He was both a merchant and a skilled navigator and had once traveled eastward beyond Suez. By 1491 he had settled in Bristol, whose merchants are known, from evidence recently found, to have already discovered Newfoundland. In all probability, Cabot himself had thought of a voyage to the land of eastern luxuries.

By 1496 Bristol traders had made a partner of Cabot, whose knowledge of oriental trade they needed, and their joint decision was to use Newfoundland, which they called “Brasil,” as the first step toward trading ventures with Cipangu and Cathay, believed to lie farther south. King Henry invested no money in the voyage but did issue a patent giving the Italian the right to sail to any part of the world unknown to Christians.

The Bristol investors planned a good-sized expedition, but as their preparations took time, Cabot decided to make a cheap voyage of reconnaissance ahead of the main party. On May 2, 1497, he left Bristol in the little ship *Matthew*. With
a crew of eighteen men which included his son Sebastian, he crossed the Atlantic west of Ireland and probably sighted the New World around Cape Breton Island. The Matthew, according to a perhaps exaggerated report, coasted the American mainland for about 300 leagues, seeing no inhabitants but noting various signs of their existence. In exactly fifty-four days Cabot was back in Bristol. His return created a minor sensation, and the captain went up to London, where Henry VII, with characteristic frugality, gave him a royal welcome and a reward of ten pounds.

The next year Cabot sailed in command of the main expedition. Since the discoverers thought they were bound for the vicinity of Marco Polo's Cathay, their disillusionment with what they found can be easily understood. Nothing is known of the adventure beyond the fact that more coast was explored; and some have thought that Cabot lost his life in the voyage. More likely, however, the failure to find wealth and open trade finished his career; the next Cabot achievements were those of his son Sebastian.

Until near the end of Henry's reign there is little trace of further English voyages to America. The king, for family reasons, had every wish to keep on good terms with Spain; yet though he would not poach on Spanish discoveries he evidently saw no harm in exploring to the far north. Sebastian Cabot appears to have sailed up the Labrador coast in 1509 and to have found the entrance to Hudson's Bay; reaching 67° N. before the cold drove him back. He was obviously seeking a northwest passage to Cathay, since his father's voyages had shown that North America was not the region Marco Polo had visited and that to reach Cathay the new land must somehow be rounded. But Sebastian returned to England to find the king dead and the throne now
occupied by Henry VIII (1509–1547), who showed no interest in Arctic exploration. English service now had nothing for Sebastian Cabot, who with royal permission accepted an offer from Ferdinand of Spain. He won fame in Spanish employment, and became the third holder of the pilot major's office, previously filled by Vespucci and Solís.

**English Maritime Progress**

Henry VIII, that much-married monarch who engineered the English break from the Roman Church, paid no particular attention to discovery. During his thirty-eight-year reign, nevertheless, the Royal Navy expanded from an original seven ships to fifty-three and at the same time largely abandoned the outmoded galley in favor of sailing vessels. Great improvements came in seamanship, artillery, and gunnery. The pride of the navy was the newly built *Henry Grace à Dieu*, a four-masted ship of about 1,000 tons, bristling with guns and equipped with the latest type of sails. English warships gave good performances in battles up and down the channel with the French. Thus while Henry’s England failed to shine in exploration, its interest in the sea increased, in fortunate anticipation of a day when national salvation would depend on nautical prowess.

In 1548, the year following Henry’s death, Sebastian Cabot returned to England, still full of his youthful hope of finding a northern route to the East. Five years later he planned his last expedition, whose purpose was to find a northeast passage. He organized an association of English merchants interested in the new route he offered to Cathay. Cabot, now past seventy, was judged too old to sail, and when he defiantly demonstrated his vigor by performing a dance on deck just before the ships’ departure, he drew ap-
plause but no reversal of that decision. Sir Hugh Willoughby commanded the vessels, with Richard Chancellor as his subordinate. After the fleet had been separated by storms, Willoughby discovered Nova Zemlya, only to die in Lapland; Chancellor, with better luck, entered the White Sea and made his way to Moscow. Tsar Ivan the Terrible not only welcomed the Englishman graciously but sent him home with a letter suggesting that trade be started between their two countries. The original backers of the voyage now formed the Muscovy Company and sent as their agent to Moscow Anthony Jenkinson, who made another futile attempt to sail past the White Sea. Convinced that the Northeast Passage was out of the question and deciding to try a new way to the East, Jenkinson traveled by land across Russia to Bokara and managed to open a short-lived trade with Persia.

The Merchants Adventurers

The Muscovy Company was only one of several trading enterprises started in Tudor England. The Eastland Company was created for trade with Poland and the Baltic; the Levant Company for commerce with the eastern Mediterranean and Turkey. Finally, in 1600, shortly before the death of Queen Elizabeth, there came into existence the English East India Company, which in time was to prepare the way for another British queen to become Empress of India.

A natural assumption might be that these trading enterprises created wealth in England by tapping new sources of commerce. But the facts fail to bear out the assumption. Since the companies all existed for private profit and thought of nothing but their own gain, they tried always to organize monopolies that froze trade and killed off competition. The
merchants adventurers, as these overseas traders were called, proved no unmixed blessing.

*English Arctic Exploration*

During the forty-five year reign of Elizabeth (1558–1603), England became a power on the sea. The thrilling adventures of her sea dogs will always be remembered with pride by the English, but their deeds have been described so often elsewhere that only the briefest summary need be attempted here.

From 1576 to 1578 Martin Frobisher made three voyages to the vicinity of Labrador and Greenland in search of the northwest passage. Fondly believing that he had struck gold in southern Baffin Land, Frobisher brought home for assay a shipload of worthless dirt, which for decades was piled just inside the gate of the Tower of London to block traffic in and out. A colonial plan of his also fell through, and this gallant but unlucky explorer was forced to stop from lack of funds.

John Davis, following Frobisher to the north, gave western Greenland a more thorough exploration and discovered Davis Strait, up which he sailed to latitude 72° N. before being pounded back by a gale. A few years after Elizabeth's death, Henry Hudson, now back in English service, entered the great bay which bears his name and which Sebastian Cabot may have penetrated a century earlier. Hudson's career ended here, for his crew mutinied and set him adrift in a small boat. He was never seen again. It was left for William Baffin, who voyaged in 1615, to prove that, contrary to English bright hopes, Hudson Bay was not the coveted Northwest Passage. Having verified the discouraging fact, Baffin pressed still further north to enter
and chart Baffin Bay. This seemed to promise nothing, and following his return Englishmen for many years abandoned the search for the passage. Only in the twentieth century did the Norwegian, Roald Amundsen, in his stout little Gjoa, finally make the northwest voyage the old mariners had so long and painfully attempted.

Elizabethan Sea Dogs

Although the queen began her reign at peace with Spain, the religious issue and European politics led Elizabeth and Philip II to an estrangement that widened until undeclared war raged between them. The English at first made some effort to trade peacefully with Spanish America. John Hawkins came to grief when he tried to open slave trade between the Guinea coast and the Caribbean colonies of Spain. He was caught with six ships at Vera Cruz by a Spanish armada, which opened fire without warning. After Hawkins had limped back to England with a crippled remnant of his fleet, war was open and bitter between Spaniards and Englishmen in the New World, whatever lip service their rulers paid to peace in Europe.

The greatest sea dog of all was Francis Drake. Being one of the survivors of the Hawkins debacle at Vera Cruz, he burned for revenge and repeatedly exacted it in blood and treasure. After harassing the Spaniards in the West Indies, he broke into the Pacific through Magellan's Strait, and raided the coasts of Chile and Peru. Next, seeking the Strait of Anian, he passed northward to some point on the California coast, which he claimed for his queen and called New Albion. He left a brass plate near San Francisco Bay as witness to the claim, and in 1936 a picnic party from Oakland found a brass plate which answers to the description of
Drake's. Crossing the Pacific to the East Indies and sailing on through the Indian Ocean, he returned to England in 1580 loaded with plunder. As the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe, Drake was given a most gracious welcome by Elizabeth, his queen, who shared generously in the loot. This exploit stimulated another English commander, Thomas Cavendish, to enter the Pacific, play havoc with the Spaniards, cross the great ocean, and round the globe. Meanwhile, Drake and others redoubled their attacks on Spanish shipping in the Atlantic and the West Indies.

The Armada

Philip II, by 1587, had stood all he meant to endure from England. Slowly he began to collect his naval power in Atlantic ports to carry his armies across from the Netherlands to invade the hated island. The English had ample warning, and Sir Francis Drake, whom the queen had knighted for his famous voyage, delayed the attack somewhat by managing to destroy several of the best Spanish ships by a surprise attack at Cadiz. But "singeing the King of Spain's beard," as Drake himself described it, did not stop the preparations, and in 1588 the armada sailed.

The outcome is known to all. Philip's fleet, consisting of about 120 big ships, undermanned, ill-equipped, weak in fire power, and badly commanded, was attacked in the channel by the now expert English seamen and gunners and, if not destroyed, was at least driven past the appointed place of rendezvous with the Spanish Netherlands army and into the North Sea, where bitter winds compelled the ill-starred armada to sail completely around the British Isles in a cruise that cost further ships and men in the unfamiliar and treach-
erous waters off Scotland and Ireland. Less than half of the fleet returned to Spain.

Historians have tended to exaggerate the material effects of Spain’s defeat. It by no means ended Philip’s sea power, and the bitter lessons the Spaniards learned actually brought improvement in their ships and tactics. The English had been in less danger, probably, than they believed at the time; even had the plan of Philip worked to perfection it is doubtful whether his Netherlands army could have conquered or long held any large part of England. Still, the whole episode was wrapped in drama, and we cannot overlook the great uplift in English morale that came as a result of this triumph over the master of half the earth.

**English Colonization**

It is also an exaggeration to say that the sea dogs, by attacking Spain, cleared the way for later English colonization. Operating from an England which possessed limited capital and manpower, the seadogs directed most of their efforts toward get-rich-quick schemes involving either Spanish plunder or the discovery of gold. Sea dogging ate up capital, and every pound or shilling that went into this semipiracy was a pound or shilling taken away from something else. A few voyages, such as Drake’s, paid handsomely, but the average showed a loss. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the resources spent, and largely wasted, on plundering expeditions might have given England a solid foothold in America before Elizabeth’s death. As it was, the English had yet to plant a successful colony when the new century began.

Three small efforts had already been made. Sir Humphrey
Gilbert had tried to settle Newfoundland in 1582, and a little later Sir Walter Raleigh had twice made similar attempts at Roanoke. The endeavors all failed, and the mystery of the total disappearance of Raleigh’s second colony, numbering over a hundred, is still unsolved. Since the Indians living in the vicinity were warlike, a reasonable guess can be made as to the fate of these unfortunate people, but the problem still intrigues students of American history.

Gilbert and Raleigh had not worked in vain, and at the turn of the century the cause found a champion in Richard Hakluyt. A lifelong student of geography and a tireless collector of the earlier great narratives of discovery, as well as a member of the Virginia Company, he offered able and learned arguments for colonies. Far more contagious than his learning was his enthusiasm, which entitles him to be called the intellectual progenitor of the British Empire. Francis Bacon, too, although less enthusiastic than Hakluyt, wrote sagely on the subject of colonization, and his essay Of Plantations remains a classic. Pamphleteers, many of them anonymous, contributed opinions regarding colonies and their management which if not always expert were at least confidently expressed. And behind the theories lay the backlog of experience provided by sundry English attempts to settle the wastes of Ireland.

**Virginia and Plymouth**

The first permanent overseas English colony was founded on the James River in 1607 by the Virginia Company of London, whose managers believed gold could be found near Chesapeake Bay. For the first few years the colony seemed sure to fail, as disease, laziness, inability to raise food, and
Indian trouble almost wrecked the enterprise. At this crucial time the energy of Captain John Smith, whose colorful career had already taken him, as he declared, from Turkey to Morocco, proved decisive in saving the colony. More important than the adventure with Pocahontas, which has been doubted but never disproved, were his Indian diplomacy, his successful efforts to secure food, and his ability to manage the shiftless and dispirited colonists. Smith did not long remain in Virginia, but able governors took charge; and within a few years tobacco had been introduced as the staple crop, the colony had moved from the original Jamestown to a better site, and self-governing institutions had been started. Meanwhile, a branch of the Virginia Company began the settlement of the Bermudas, whose colonists soon threatened to outstrip the mainlanders as tobacco producers.

Captain John Smith continued to be a staunch advocate of colonization after his return to England. Somewhat later he became interested in fisheries north of Virginia and mapped a stretch of coast which he called New England. In 1620 a little party of English religious dissenters, some of whom had lived in the tolerant Netherlands, crossed the Atlantic in the Mayflower. Partly perhaps on the strength of Smith’s favorable New England propaganda, these colonists settled at Plymouth. The Pilgrim Fathers, to be quite frank, have a greater place in American lore than in American history. Their colony began small and remained small, to be soon overshadowed and finally annexed by its powerful neighbor, Massachusetts Bay. Yet as long as Thanksgiving remains an American holiday and as long as Myles Standish, John Alden, and Priscilla Mullens are remembered, the fame of this tiny settlement will live.
The Puritan Movement

On Elizabeth’s death, the English throne had passed to James I (1603–1625) of the Scottish house of Stuart. James was an opinionated man of some learning; “the wisest fool in Christendom,” as one of his contemporaries declared. Coming to London from poverty-stricken Scotland, he expected to reign in opulence, but found the absolutism of his Tudor predecessors impossible to maintain. Everything, including government, now cost more, partly because of the great amount of gold and silver Spain had poured into Europe from America. With the menace of Spanish conquest now gone, Parliament and the moneyed classes demanded reforms in government and in taxes. James had religious troubles as well. The Church of England, established in Tudor times, was already splitting badly. The Puritan faction had grown strong enough to demand that the Established Church be purged of bishops and all Roman forms and symbols. The Puritans were Calvinists in creed, being close in that respect to the Presbyterians, who had already gained the dominance in King James’s original home, Scotland. They did not, however, mean to leave the Church of England; they intended instead to remain in it and, by securing control, to “purify” it. Even those who ultimately moved to America postponed a formal secession for many years. The Puritans differed in this respect from the Pilgrim settlers of Plymouth; the Pilgrims, holding rigid Calvinist doctrines, had seceded bag and baggage from the Established Church and had gone to America as independents.

Parliament was swinging toward Puritanism, for the movement counted among its followers many merchants, gentry, and even nobles. This alarmed James, who had had
his fill of the Presbyterian form of Puritanism in Scotland and believed it to be wholly out of step with monarchical government. "No bishop, no king," he said, meaning that if the church grew democratic to the extent of abolishing bishops, the next blow would be at the throne itself. When the Puritans stated their case to him, he grew angry and declared, "If this be all they have to say, I shall make them conform themselves, or I will harry them out of the land."

Neither side had a monopoly of justice; James's arguments had some point, but as the king was no statesman, his tactlessness only made a bad situation worse. Yet he did not actually "harry" many dissenters out of the country; the real Puritan emigration to New England took place in the reign of his son Charles I (1625–1649).

In addition to the Plymouth Pilgrims, various stray Englishmen now lived on the New England coast. These suddenly became a small minority, as the Puritan newcomers poured in. The Massachusetts Bay Company, which in practice was a corporation of Puritans interested in moving to America, took charge of the main migration. John Endicott founded Salem in 1628, and two years later over 900 colonists followed John Winthrop from England to found Boston. For years both Puritan and non-Puritan Englishmen came by thousands to the colony. Land around Boston was quickly taken up; settlers moved farther inland and expanded into New Hampshire and Connecticut. After some initial hardships, New England had by 1650 become a fairly thriving place, engaged in agriculture, fur trade, fishing, and shipbuilding.

The religious intolerance of the Puritan theocracy, with the clergy dominating so many phases of public and private life, has been much described and somewhat exaggerated.
When Roger Williams, a pastor whose views were too un-orthodox for the Massachusetts ministers, founded Rhode Island, he received some secret aid from John Winthrop. A few Quakers who ventured into Massachusetts were given a bad reception and some were even hanged, but from the evidence it is hard to escape the conclusion that they went there chiefly to stir up trouble. A Puritan would have answered charges of cruelty by saying that his community and church were so important that no chance could be taken of having them wrecked by outside mischief-makers.

Maryland

The founding of Maryland also had a religious motive. The Spaniards had not only warred against Elizabeth; they had employed English Catholics in plots to kill or overthrow her. Since then Catholics had been as much out of favor in England as Protestant dissenters from the Established Church. George Calvert, First Baron Baltimore, was both a Catholic and a colonial promoter. Wishing to do something for his fellow churchmen in England and to increase his fortune besides, he acquired from Charles I a grant of land on Chesapeake Bay north of Virginia. After his early death the grant descended to his more devoutly Catholic son Cecilius, the second Baron Baltimore. Cecilius and his brother Leonard started the Maryland colony in 1634. Like Virginia, this became a tobacco-raising settlement, with the proprietorship remaining in the Calvert family until the American Revolution, except for a short interval in Cromwell's time. There was a mild Catholic flavor to Maryland, where some of the oldest families belonged to the Roman Church; but from the start most of the settlers were Protestant, and with religious feeling in England what it was, the Calverts would never
have been able to introduce persecution, even if they had so desired.

The West Indies

While the English were establishing this line of mainland colonies, they also moved into the islands of the West Indies. Arriving at the same time as the French and the Dutch, they soon found themselves caught up in bitter international rivalry. Led at first by speculative proprietors, the English established themselves in several islands of the Lesser Antilles: St. Kitts, Barbados, Nevis, Antigua, and Montserrat. Later, when Cromwell ruled England, Spanish Jamaica was added by conquest. Settlers, including Puritans, poured into the English islands, at first in far greater numbers than they entered the mainland colonies, with the result that some of the islands became overpopulated, in spite of the high tropical death rate that carried off the earliest comers in waves. The introduction of Negro slaves had the effect of stabilizing agriculture on the new plantations, but brought with it an early stratification of West Indian society. Many surplus whites were crowded out by the land monopoly of the plantation owners and became aimless drifters who frequently furnished crews for the piratical buccaneers who plied the adjacent waters.

Cromwell and the West Indies

The quarrel between King James and parliament over religion, taxation, and fundamental principles of government continued at a sharper tempo in the reign of Charles I. In 1642 there began an English civil war that lasted seven years and ended with the victory of the parliamentarians, who emphasized the triumph by removing their former monarch’s
head. England now became a republic, but effective power soon slipped into the capable hands of Oliver Cromwell, Puritan commander of the parliamentary army. In 1653 Oliver took the title Lord Protector, or in plain words dictator, and governed the country alone until his death five years later. He is thought of by many today as a fanatic interested mainly in blue laws and religious persecution; he should be remembered as a great man of action and, above all, as an English imperialist. The Lord Protector disliked Spain, as most of his countrymen did. His principal grudge was not against Spain’s religion but against the monopolistic trade policy that shut English commerce out of the Caribbean islands and mainland. Inspired by Thomas Gage, who had lived in the Spanish Indies as a priest but who had since turned Protestant, the Lord Protector planned a series of conquests to make England the paramount power in the Caribbean. As a beginning he intended to capture the city of Santo Domingo in the island of Haiti, and for this purpose sent a joint expedition in 1655 under Admiral William Penn and General Robert Venables. The attack was badly managed and was repulsed by the Spaniards. The two English leaders, not caring to face the formidable Protector empty handed, took the weakly defended island of Jamaica as a consolation prize, thereby adding a possession that would be of some importance later.

Cromwell, though disappointed, strove to make the best of Jamaica. To populate his new possession he seriously considered persuading the New Englanders to abandon their northern home and move to the tropical island. This idea never got past the planning stage, though it raises speculations as to how the Plymouth, Back Bay, and Connecticut
Puritans might have turned out had they elected to become Jamaica plantation magnates.

During Cromwell's regime the American colonies profited by another wave of migration from England. Just as Puritans had formerly left home because their faction was out of power, now many royalists, who for the time being were the underprivileged group, followed their example and migrated. Most of them went to the West Indies, but Virginia and Maryland, where Puritanism had little following, received some additional population.

The Restoration

After Cromwell's death, England and Scotland restored the Stuarts to the throne. The new king, Charles II (1660–1685), proved a poor substitute for the late Protector in foreign affairs, and for a secret cash consideration adopted the policy of truckling to the rich and powerful Louis XIV of France. Even so, the English empire continued to expand. Charles acquired Bombay as part of the dowry of a Portuguese princess whom he married in 1662, the Dutch settlements on the Hudson by conquest in 1664, and the colony of New Jersey by settlement a few years later.

Early in his reign a company of English speculators undertook to colonize Carolina, and in the far north another group, including the king's cousin Prince Rupert, founded the "Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay." The "adventurers" later set up fur-trading posts at a few strategic points along the bay from which, for nearly a century, the company was content to draw substantial profits from Indian fur trade without often venturing into the interior. In greatly altered and expanded form, the Hud-
son's Bay Company continues to exist and will celebrate its three-hundredth anniversary in 1970.

**Pennsylvania**

It was William Penn, Quaker son of the admiral who had conquered Jamaica for Oliver Cromwell, who founded Pennsylvania. With the large fortune that had come to him from his father, Penn inherited a claim for £16,000, which had been owed the admiral by the crown. As the acknowledged head of the Quaker sect, William Penn wished to follow Calvert’s example and found an American colony for his people. Quakers were then highly unpopular in England; they were pacifists who would neither pay tithes nor serve in the army. They refused to take oaths, they dressed peculiarly, and some of them had rather freakish ways of emphasizing their religious convictions. Hence the English discrimination against them, while unjust, was understandable.

As payment for the debt, Penn accepted the proprietary grant of Pennsylvania, named not for himself but for his father the late admiral. He called his project a “holy experiment,” and planned it with great enthusiasm. Before reaching Pennsylvania he sent a message to the Indians, saying “I have great Love and Regard towards you, and I desire to win and gain your Love and Friendship by a kind, Just and Peaceable Life.” In 1682 he personally laid out the site of Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love, after concluding a series of treaties of peace and friendship with the Indians. Though he meant his colony to be a haven for persecuted English Quakers, he promised religious toleration to all settlers who might wish to come. Immigrants, many of them non-English, flocked rapidly to Pennsylvania; the promise
of religious toleration was kept, and the prosperous colony remained a proprietary holding of the Penn family until the American Revolution.

Penn’s original grant included the small area today known as Delaware, which the Duke of York had leased to him for ten thousand years. Differences between the Delaware and Pennsylvania settlers caused the former to break away, although the proprietor’s family had some hold over them until 1776.

India

On the other side of the world, the English were beginning to build an empire in a totally different environment. Their East India Company had been started late in Elizabeth’s reign as a loose organization in which each trading voyage to the East was an independent venture. Soon, however, the enterprise became a joint stock company, with permanent shareholders and continuity of policy. English traders first coveted the rich spice-growing East Indies, but found the Dutch too solidly entrenched there to be dislodged, and the company transferred its main activity to Hindustan. Several factories (trading posts) were acquired on the west coast of India, Surat being for a time the most important. Presently the factory of Madras was founded to provide a foothold on the eastern coast; and Charles II’s marriage with the sister of a Portuguese ruler in 1662 was the occasion, as noted above, of the cession of the important city of Bombay in western India to Charles as part of the dowry.

Like its Dutch counterpart, the English corporation had been formed for trade with no intention of empire building. Not until the powerful Mogul Empire began to disintegrate in the years following 1707, leaving a vacuum of power in
the vast, disunited, overpopulated peninsula, did the French and English companies begin to advance from trade to politics and from politics to war. Then for some years there was a struggle between the two for paramount power in India, a struggle which finally was settled by the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) in favor of the English.

Summary

As the eighteenth century closed, the English controlled an overseas empire centering in the Western Hemisphere. A great imperial prospect was also opening for their country in the East, but this was a matter for the somewhat distant future, since India was as yet only a source of profitable trade.

In the year 1700 England had a chain of North American possessions stretching from the isolated posts on Hudson Bay to the frontier of Georgia, which was still being claimed by Spain. Population figures for this mainland area are somewhat unreliable, but by 1700 the colonists must surely have numbered a quarter of a million. Large uninhabited and Indian tracts separated the settled areas, and few colonists lived far from the coast or inland rivers, since virtually all intercolonial communication was by water. Not for at least a generation would many of the gaps between settlements be filled or any important migration to the interior begin. The colonists had already become important producers and exporters of a long list of articles that varied according to geography and climate. Ships, lumber, furs, rum, tobacco, fish, and foodstuffs were sent abroad; and in spite of English mercantile laws domestic industry had begun to make its appearance.
The colonies were divided into three groups; New England, Middle Atlantic, and Southern; each with characteristics dictated mainly by geography but partly by the character of the settlers. New England with its town life, the Middle Colonies with their diversification of agriculture and occupation, the southern settlements with their emphasis on plantation agriculture and rural aristocracy, were each by 1700 displaying those qualities which would be their chief contributions to the culture of the United States. Slavery was legal and existed everywhere, but showed a tendency to concentrate in the south. Religion had a strong hold on all the colonies, yet nowhere was it so strong as in New England, where the influence of the Puritan theocrats as yet had scarcely waned. The Middle Colonies, still consisting mainly of New York and Pennsylvania, were the most cosmopolitan and contained the largest percentage of people of other than English stock.

The English mainland colonies had been acquired through military conquest, chartered companies, and individual proprietors. But with the conspicuous exceptions of Maryland and Pennsylvania, which remained proprietary until the Revolution, the trend was toward royal colonies, whose political relationships were with royal officers in London. In spite of this, however, self-governing institutions existed in all the mainland colonies, whether royal or proprietary, and the populations lived in part by laws of their own making.

In the West Indies the process had been somewhat similar, though limitations inherent in the geography and economy of the islands restricted the amount of self-government that could be enjoyed. Where the trading companies still existed, in India and in Hudson Bay, problems of government
scarcely arose, since the companies were business concerns and did not care to expand their functions to include political administration.

The English colonies overseas, of whatever type or wherever found, were outposts to some extent of British interests, institutions, and even intellectual traditions. In many, it is true, the cultural heritage was slight and superficial, but in North America two colleges, Harvard and William and Mary, had been founded before the end of the century and another, Yale, was chartered immediately thereafter. The place of these institutions in the new rough-hewn world of their founders is simply described in a famous inscription which records:

After God had carried us safe to New England and wee had builde our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, rear'd convenient places for Gods worship, and setled the Civill Government: one of the next things we longed for, and looked after was to advance Learning, and perpetuate it to Posterity, dreading to leave an illiterate Ministry to the Churches, when our present Ministers shall lie in the dust.¹