

# WILEY



---

## Recent Books on the United States

Author(s): Élisée Reclus

Source: *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (Nov., 1895), pp. 448-453

Published by: geographicalj

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1773981>

Accessed: 24-06-2016 18:16 UTC

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



*Wiley, The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to The Geographical Journal*

the escarpment was lumpy, and probably consisted of sand-dunes, but the snow was too deep to allow us anywhere to see the ground.

The sled from Churchill turned back at this ridge, which is here about a day's journey within the limits of the continuous forest. The country south-west of the escarpment was lumpy and irregular, apparently underlain by till, and the snow was about 3 feet deep and very soft, so that the dogs had often more than they could do to haul the sledges even a few miles a day. We crossed some small lakes at the head of Owl river, and on December 8 reached a small tributary of Nelson river.

On December 12 we reached Musogetaiwi lake, where we saw the first rock in place since we left Churchill, the intervening country being evidently largely covered with drift. The next afternoon we reached Gull lake, on Nelson river, and from thence we ascended on the ice of the river to the trading port at Split lake, where we arrived on the morning of December 15. Here we obtained one fresh team of dogs, and then continued our tramp southward, reaching Norway House after dark on Christmas Eve, where four days were spent giving men and dogs a much-needed rest.

The remainder of the journey was down Lake Winnipeg to Selkirk, where we arrived on the evening of January 7, 1895, after an absence of six months and twenty-two days, during which time we had travelled 2900 miles, 1750 of which were in canoes, and 725 on snowshoes.

---

NOTE ON MR. J. B. TYRRELL'S MAP.—The work shown on this map helps to fill in the space between Mr. Tyrrell's two former journeys of 1892-93, an account of which appeared in the *Geographical Journal*, vol. iv. p. 437. Observations were taken at Du Brochet with the sextant and artificial horizon for latitude and the variation of compass. During the journey bearings were taken with the prismatic compass, a solar compass being used occasionally to correct the variation. When possible the latitude was observed daily, and a Massey's floating boat-log was employed to estimate the stretches of running water.

---

## RECENT BOOKS ON THE UNITED STATES.

By ÉLISÉE RECLUS.

It is said that the architect of the new library of Congress at Washington, warned by the masses of literature packed away in the cellars of the existing library, planned the new buildings with the purpose of making room for at least five million volumes. Nor is the estimate excessive, for the interminable stream of printed matter, including periodicals by the cart-load every day, threatens to fill the largest halls to overflowing. In this flood geography has a large share, and the special literature of the United States is increased every week by new works, good, commonplace, and valueless. Books of the first class are rare enough—

we are inclined to say fortunately, because the critic may find time to read them all and note their best points. The present article is concerned with the three most important works on the geography of the United States which have appeared in recent months.

The volume by Mr. J. D. Whitney \* is merely an appendix to his earlier book, which was originally written for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, but only published there in part, on account of its length. Being complementary to the previous work, this appendix naturally lacks artistic unity of design ; but it is of great interest, notwithstanding, for it deals with the statistics of the last census, and especially because of the space given to the question of irrigation in the Great West.

It is well known that during recent years the extension of irrigation works has won great stretches of good agricultural land from the arid deserts of the western plateaux, and the full discussion of the question, fortified by detailed statistics, forms one of the best features of Mr. Whitney's book. Yet it must not be forgotten that irrigation schemes have given birth to many speculative companies, and that many fraudulent transactions on the Stock Exchange have been preceded by reports of irrigation works which, if not absolutely untrue, were at least greatly exaggerated. In the thinly peopled region of those arid lands, it is easier than in most places to start false reports for the use of distant shareholders. Companies were quickly formed, and disappeared no less rapidly, but out of the many vaunted enterprises some at least were sound, as the scattered towns growing up in the ancient solitudes sufficiently testify.

Artesian wells appear to have been remarkably successful in different parts of Texas ; for example, those of Waco, where in 1891 nine wells discharged a total of 850,000 gallons per day. This water, coming from a depth of 1607 to 1896 feet, has a temperature of from 97° to 103° Fahr., and, although containing sulphates and carbonates in solution, is said to be "very pure and without appreciable taste." Near the town of Fort Worth artesian water wells up in abundance, sufficient to furnish a water-supply for a city of a million inhabitants. This water, too, according to Professor Hill, is "clear as a diamond and pure as melted snow," although a good chemical analysis would be more satisfying than the somewhat ambiguous metaphor. I must add that the "tall talk" natural to Americans, and especially to Western Americans, does not abandon them in discussing questions of subterranean hydrology. According to many of them, the melting snows of the Rocky Mountains, aided by the slight rainfall of the Great Plains, suffice to maintain a small ocean streaming under the superficial strata as "a mighty under-flow" towards the Gulf of Mexico. Under every river, the Plate, the Republican, the Arkansas, they affirm that another and greater river

---

\* 'The United States,' Supplement I.—Population, Immigration, Irrigation.  
No. V.—NOVEMBER, 1895.]

exists, which the farmers of the future will probably be able to lead back to the surface. Mr. Whitney thinks—and with good reason, as we believe—that such hopes are in great part chimerical. Enterprises infinitely easier have only been executed imperfectly or remain mere projects; such, for example, as the 147 reservoirs which the members of the Irrigation Survey have planned in California and the western States. These would together have an area of 166,000 acres, and could store enough water to irrigate 1,900,000 acres of land;\* but these vast works have not yet been undertaken. On the Upper Mississippi, several of the lakes and alluvial valleys which rise in successive tiers have been transformed by dams into reservoirs for the winter and spring floods, still it does not appear that these efforts towards regulating the river and maintaining its flow in dry weather have had appreciable results; besides, the lumberers who float timber down the Mississippi complain greatly that the regulated river has no longer a sufficiently rapid current at the time when it is most wanted for their work.

The two volumes entitled 'The United States of America,' and edited by Professor N. S. Shaler, form rather an encyclopædia of North America than a methodical work presenting the various questions dealt with in their proper place and in due proportion. There is not even a consistent editorial plan. The editor has put together several chapters which are not always in logical order, and then left to others the treatment of special questions, or of matters which seemed to him of secondary interest. There are even some chapters which would be out of place in any but a purely financial work, as, for example, that on "The place of corporate action in our civilization." We regret, also, that the authors have introduced into a work of which science and art should be the principal objects, illustrations of banks, factories, workshops, locomotives, steamers, sheds. These unattractive pictures abound, and the work would have gained much by their absence. It would have gained, also, if it were not embellished by maps and pictures taken from other books, from which the titles and the authors' names have been removed. Nothing could have been easier, in the scientific surroundings in which the editor lives, than to prepare original maps and illustrations.

The most important chapter in Professor Shaler's part of the work seems to us to be that devoted to marsh lands. Almost all the lakes which formerly occupied hollows in the primitive glacial deposits have been gradually filled up. Excepting only those lakes the waves of which are strong enough to prevent the growth of sphagnum and other

---

\* Report III. in Report of the Secretary of the Interior (52 Cong. 1st Session, Ex. Doc. 1, Part 5), containing Twelfth Report of the U.S. Geological Survey. Part II. Irrigation. 1892.

peat-forming plants, we find that the lateral creeks of such basins are diminishing. It may often be demonstrated that masses of muddy moss encroach on the water year by year as a sort of floating quay. Various species of rushes, water-lilies, and reeds grow thickly sufficiently far in front of the invading sphagnum to check the force of wind and waves, and so facilitate the growth of peat, which steadily advances. Seeds and broken vegetable matter fall to the bottom, which is gradually raised by the accumulation, and affords soil for the vanguard of growing vegetation. The lacustrine peat-beds of North America probably extend in cultivable regions to an area of at least 40,000 square miles, and may be entirely reclaimed by means of drainage and improvement. The important cranberry industry has lately developed on these old fresh-water marsh-lands. For this purpose the upper layer of peat is removed, and a bed of sand about 6 inches deep is spread in its place. The cranberry cuttings are planted at intervals of one or two feet, and in a few months they cover the soil with a continuous mantle of vegetation.

Like Mr. Whitney, Professor Shaler has a good deal to say about the effects of irrigation on agriculture in the Great West, and here he perhaps allows himself to be led astray by hopes which are not likely to be realized. It seems scarcely probable that, even counting the produce of the mines, "in twenty years from the present time the aggregate of commercial values which will be thus won from the great American desert will be as large as that obtained in any equal area of the continent."

We must also take exception to the author's statements about the French Canadians. Twice, on page 126 and on page 220, he asserts that the French Canadian race has a considerable mixture of Indian blood. This is not the case, as a very learned writer has clearly proved.\* No doubt the French immigrants who first penetrated into the forests of the interior took native wives, but they allowed their children to remain with the mother's tribe, even when they did not lapse into savagery themselves. The native Indians were crossed with French blood, and in many places gave birth to the remarkable ethnic groups of "Bois-brûlés," whose assistance in opening up the Great West has been so important. But the French-Canadian colonists, as a whole, married amongst their own people. During the period from 1608 to 1663, young girls from twelve to sixteen years of age were recruited in all the parishes of France, and when the white population of Canada rose to 2500, the equilibrium of the sexes was almost established. Only seven marriages of Frenchmen with Huronian or Algonquian wives are recorded.

The attentive reader of Professor Shaler's work will find many

\* Benjamin Sulte, 'Prétendue origine des Canadiens-Français.'

controvertible points, but he will, perhaps, be inclined to find most serious fault with the author because of a certain want of magnanimity in the treatment of high questions of political morality. In such questions one ought not to be satisfied with dull and trivial phrases, so wanting in relief that the true meaning of them must be sought for with an effort.

The penultimate chapter at least, on "The place of the individual in American society," prepared by Mr. Lyman Abbott, leaves nothing to be desired as a sincere and bold discussion of the subject. This fine chapter is thoroughly impartial in its tone, and quite free from the boasting spirit so natural in a people which has made such vast and rapid strides in material prosperity.

The second edition of the second volume of Professor Friedrich Ratzel's book on the United States\* is a work of the first order, admirably sustaining that high reputation which all his earlier works have won for their author. It is far from being a reprint of the first edition; originally prepared with scrupulous care, it has been corrected in the most conscientious manner. The statistics have, of course, been completely revised; but, besides that, the author has throughout given increased attention to the importance of the study of environment as well as race. He treats his subject in a strictly logical order; perhaps he has made it a little too much of a text-book, as if it were prepared to assist students to pass an examination, and the style is a little dull and colourless, not always even as clear as one could wish. Naturally, all the maps in the text and the Kultur-Karte at the end of the volume are specially engraved from original draughts. Taken as a whole, Ratzel's work must be considered a classic, perhaps the best and most complete treatise on the United States in any language.

Without taking notice of many small details which might be touched upon, we limit ourselves to calling attention to pages 172 and 173, in which the author speaks of the feeling for nature. He very rightly rebukes de Tocqueville for having denied the deep love and filial poetic feeling which most American authors display for their lakes, rivers, forests, mountains, and the thousand charms of the land they dwell on and the air they breathe. He cites the names of Cooper, Hawthorne, Bryant, Lowell, and above all that of the incomparable Thoreau. He might have mentioned equally well the delightful towns, the streets of which are married to beautiful gardens, flowery turf, and wooded fields. But if on one side he recognizes in the poets their deep respect for the beauties of nature, should he not, on the other, have referred to those industrial and business men—personages who bulk so largely in American

---

\* Friedrich Ratzel, 'Politische und wirthschaftliche Geographie der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika.'

society—whose contempt for nature is complete? There are few countries which are made hideous with a lighter heart than America. Its mines, factories, railway stations, make one fear that the nation is suffering from a barbaric suppression of the æsthetic sense analogous to the exhaustion of the soil. One recalls with a kind of horror some Oilville or Ironopolis, with its maze of intercrossing rails, its mounds of coal and slag, hideous buildings, derricks, sheds, its grimy hotels and filthy drinking-shops garnished with dingy banners.

Niagara City perhaps inspires the most painful feelings of the contrast between the fine sentiment for nature cherished by the poets, and the absolute contempt for beauty displayed by the mill-owners. On one side, fair woods and lawns respectfully surrounding the cataract; on the other, a frightful crowd of breweries and factories monopolizing the cliff and defiling it with their disgusting outflow.

---

## A JOURNEY IN PERSIAN KURDISTAN.

By WALTER B. HARRIS.

I LEFT Tabriz on May 12 of this year (1895), and, skirting between the slopes of Mount Sahand and the shores of Lake Urumia, passed the famous "marble springs" on the 14th, and some few hours later arrived at Maragha. This town possesses about 18,000 inhabitants, and was once one of the many residences of Hulaku, the Mongol chief (died 1265 A.D.); but I failed to detect the remains of the observatory of Nasr ed-Din, said to have been situated on a hill near. The tomb of one of Hulaku's wives was shown to me. It is a high octagonal brick tower with some very delicate and beautiful work in faience, and an inscription in blue tiles encircles the summit just below the dome. The building is elevated on a stone foundation. Within is a large stone chamber with well-faced walls. The viceroy and heir apparent, the Vali-aht, tried to throw down the tower in his search for treasure when he visited the spot some few years ago, but the skill of his workmen failed to do more than barely move one stone.

From Maragha I proceeded to Suj-bulak, *via* Miandab, which mud-built town is even now almost entirely in ruins owing to the Kurdish invasion in 1880 under Obeidullah. Suj-bulak is a bright, picturesque little town almost entirely populated by Kurds, whose gorgeous clothing and pleasant manner add a charm to the place. Here I first obtained an insight into the kindly hospitality I was to receive all through Kurdistan. I may add that I was not armed with any letters or official papers of any sort from the Persian Government, and this, I venture to think, aided me not a little.

After having made an excursion to the house of a Kurdish chief in the neighbourhood, I left Suj-bulak, with a Kurdish guide and my