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SOME ELEMENTS IN THE MAKING OF THE
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SOME ELEMENTS IN THE MAKING OF THE UNITED STATES.

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The erection of a building requires the preparation of a quantity of material elsewhere. The national structure is no exception. The making of the United States was not begun when the first settlements were established on these shores; the materials were brought from far and wide. Many of the stones built into the foundation of this Republic were hewn out by the Reformation; the formation of the quarries reaches far back. It is not the purpose of this paper to examine the quarries or the work done in them; we will leave this research to others and to another time.

The making of the United States, it may fairly be said, was completed when the Constitution was adopted, and the States began life on that basis. The period prior to that was formative; the subsequent period is the preservation and development of the American Union. The legal existence of the United States dates, according to the decision of the Supreme Court, from the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, but we need to go a little farther before considering the United States made. In the Pennsylvania Convention of 1787, Mr. Wilson said: "By adopting this Constitution we shall become a nation; we are not now one."¹

¹ Elliott's *Debates*, vol. ii., p. 526. Says Mr. Bryce: "The acceptance of the Constitution of 1789 made the American people a nation. It turned what had been a League of States into a Federal State, by giving it a National Government with direct authority over all citizens."—*American Commonwealth*, vol. i., p. 29.

The United States as thus made was a nation of enlightened people with laws and religion, a vast territory, and the foundations and possibilities of great development.

Various elements entered into the making of this nation and into the establishment of our institutions, during the formative period. It is not within the range of a single short paper to compass them all, but the more important ones will be considered briefly.

RELIGION.

It is unnecessary to say here, except as a good starting-point, that the color and strength of the national fabric was woven in by those who came to these shores through religious motives, and by those whose characters were moulded by religious influences. Religion was the predominating element in the nation's making; it gave a strong and enduring warp for the weaving of the threads of national laws, education, and economic progress.

The source and character of the religious elements deserve the careful attention of the student of our history. By the convulsive throes of the Reformation communities of people were sent forth into the New World to develop and enlarge the ideas thus set free. The stormy Atlantic was a summer sea compared to the persecutions and conflicts through which they passed, and which developed in them vigor, energy, and determination. Pilgrims, Puritans, Huguenots, Scotch-Irish, Quakers, Moravians, and the like, came here to enjoy in freedom their religious beliefs which was denied them in their native lands. It is not to be supposed that they had no desire to better their condition temporally. They undoubtedly did, but they were so far animated by religious motives as to make that a dominating purpose. That being absent most of them would not have come. And many of those who came for gain and the betterment of their condition were not wanting in religious principles which had more or less control over their actions. Where religion was the motive or where it was prominent there were permanence and progress; otherwise, for the most part,

there was failure. It is not too much, then, to say that the religion of Jesus Christ dominating the hearts of men of intellectual ability, industrial skill, and great energy laid the foundations and built this Republic. Their influence is seen in the industry, intelligence, religion, and laws of the nation.

The religious principles and convictions of most of the colonists were of such a character as to influence the making of the nation in a very marked degree. Many a settlement was inaugurated with song and prayer. The foundation of our greatness and the germs of our national prosperity were laid with prayer and hymn and ordinances of worship. Religion had a direct part during the formative period of the colonies. The lives and the utterances of the leaders, as well as the character of the people in general, together with the fact of a state church in some of the colonies, show the place that religion occupied as an element in our making. From Massachusetts to Georgia, the Church had a first place in the colonies. Yes, there was austerity. An extract from a New England diary of 1716, records:

"Lord's Day, January 15. An extraordinary cold storm of wind and snow. Blows much as coming home at Noon and so holds on. Bread was frozen at the Lord's table; Mr. Pemberton administered. Came not out to afternoon exercise. Tho' 't was so cold, yet John Tuckerman was baptised. At six o'clock my ink freezes so that I can hardly write by a good fire in my wife's chamber. Yet was very comfortable at meeting. *Laus Deo.*"¹

No doubt there was a severity and a type of orthodoxy that would not be tolerated to-day, and an intolerance that was not confined to New England, but it is hardly more than is to be expected of those who had brought their faith through severe trials and many difficulties, and were zealously striving to maintain and perpetuate what they held dear. A severe indictment of Massachusetts is made by one of her own sons. He says: "In Spain it was the dungeon, the rack, and the fagot; in Massachusetts it was ban-

¹ Johnston, *The United States: Its History and Constitution*, p. 15, note.

ishment, the whip, and the gibbet. In neither case can the records be obliterated. Between them it is only a question of degree,—one may in color be a dark drab, while the other is a jetty black.”¹ It is no palliation, of course, but it ought to be remembered that there were other intolerances besides those in Massachusetts, and that the Plymouth colony was quite exempt from harshness and severe intolerance.

“Then it must be borne in mind,” says one, “that a colony is to be distinguished from a full-blown state. . . . The conditions of safety for a political community in its cradle are not the same as when it has outlived the days of weakness. . . . But whatever may be set down, fairly or unfairly, to their discredit, on the score of intolerance, it is undeniable that they founded great and enlightened commonwealths. That a better result would have ensued had they—the circumstances being what they were—pursued a system more consonant with modern ideas, is a speculative opinion, which of course it is impossible to bring to a practical test.”²

The American spirit as it may be called brought forth naturally and in due time religious freedom in the United States. When the Federal Constitution was framed, religious liberty was provided for. “The United States,” says Dr. Schaff, “furnishes the first example in history of a government deliberately depriving itself of all legislative control over religion.”³ Each State, however, was left free to deal with religion as it pleased. Some were slow in cutting the cord between church and state: Connecticut in 1818, Massachusetts in 1833.

Religious freedom was the natural outcome of the diverse elements making this nation.

The type of religion brought by the Huguenots while not so open to criticism was nevertheless potent. “They brought

¹ Chas. F. Adams, *Massachusetts: Its Historians and its History*, p. 34.

² Fisher, *Colonial Era*, pp. 107, 108. Mr. Doyle remarks: “We must not condemn the banishment of the Brownes unless we are prepared to say that it would have been better for the world if the Puritan colony of Massachusetts had never existed.”

³ *Church and State in the United States*, p. 23.

religious convictions that were not the less firm because accompanied by a certain moderation and pliancy in things not held of vital importance. They brought a love for liberty that was none the less sincere because associated with a tolerance learned in the school of suffering."¹ Undoubtedly the Huguenots made a large contribution to the formation of the religious character of the United States, whither they came "to adore and serve God with freedom."² They had become so numerous in New York in 1662 that the colonial papers and laws were published in French as well as Dutch and English.

The Scotch-Irish with their Calvinism brought a strength and energy to the middle and southern colonies, where they chiefly settled, that was very much needed. For while those who settled in the South were not so severely pious as the New Englanders, yet a religious tone and religious principles pervaded all the settlements. The place that religion held in Virginia is evidenced by the requirement of attendance upon parish worship.

The pulpit and the ministry were a very great power in those days, nor am I willing to grant that the power has been lost or lessened, though changed. The clergy as a teaching force and as guiding public affairs had a very large influence. Their work was by no means confined to things spiritual. The first written code of laws for Massachusetts under the charter of 1629 was drawn up by a minister. The electric appeal of John Witherspoon, President of Princeton, had much influence upon others signing the Declaration of Independence.³

There were, of course, freethinkers and no thinkers; there were baleful influences, but these were not potent in the laying of the foundations.

¹ Baird, *Huguenot Emigration to America*, vol. ii., p. 233.

² See Dorchester's *Christianity in the United States*, p. 32.

³ See Sloane, *The French War and Revolution*, p. 227; also *Proceedings of Scotch-Irish Society of America*, 1889, p. 183.

INDUSTRY.

Both by reason of their circumstances and because of their previous condition the settlers of the colonies were toilers; they handled the ax, the shovel, the hammer, and the plow. They preferred to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, and use them in this free land, than to remain and endure ceaseless persecutions. Among the Pilgrims, Puritans, Scotch-Irish, and Huguenots were many skilled artisans, and they used their skill to good advantage, laying the foundation by their labor and in their posterity for our remarkable industrial progress. "The people of America," says the Hon. Carroll D. Wright, "with all their faults and foibles, are more religious in the truest sense than any other people; and this, I am sure, is because amongst a democratic people, where there is no hereditary wealth, every man works to earn a living, or has worked, or is the son of parents who have worked; the notion of labor, therefore, being presented to the mind on every side as the necessary, natural, and honest condition of human existence."¹

This is a part of our goodly heritage. And while we give due weight to the influence of the colonists upon this country in religious principles, we must not fail to give full credit to their industrial contribution, which is so important an element in the making of the United States.

Of the Huguenots it is said: "In every department of labor they were fitted to excel by their morality, their intelligence, and their thrift."² And a French writer deplors the loss to Canada of excluding them.³ These industrious people were found in many colonies. Palfrey's estimate of one hundred and fifty families coming to Massachusetts after the Edict of Nantes, 1685, is probably too low.⁴

It is no less true of the others as of the Huguenots that they were workers having skill and energy. Any one at all

¹ Address on "Relation of Invention to Labor."

² Baird, *Huguenot Emigration to America*, vol. i., p. 240.

³ See *Histoire du Canada depuis sa Decouverte jusqu' a nos Jours*, Garneau.

⁴ *History of New England*, vol. i., preface.

familiar with the subject knows what the Pilgrims and Puritans did. The Scotch-Irish introduced the potato, the cultivation of flax, and the use of their little spinning-wheels into New England.¹ And wherever they settled they were no less active. The history of each colony is the history of toil, no mean element to be wrought into any nation.

INTELLIGENCE.

It is frequently remarked that one meets many college graduates among the pioneer settlers of the far west. The same thing was true in the settlement of this country. Intellect and culture were in the forefront of colonization. The early settlers brought with them an intelligence that was as remarkable as it has been valuable in the nation's making. "The educational spirit of the first colonists was intense."² They not only left institutions of learning from the common school to the college, but they left to their posterity an enthusiasm and a desire for education. "In the laws establishing common schools lies the secret of the success and character of New England."³ Graduates of Old-World universities gave of their best to the New World; Puritanism was cradled in Cambridge University. The important place that education held in their thought is seen in the fact that the free common school was established in Massachusetts by order of the General Court in 1647. "Forasmuch as the good education of children is of singular behoofe and benefit to any commonwealth." "The ends," says Cotton Mather, "for which our fathers chiefly erected a college were that scholars might there be educated for the service of Christ and his churches in the work of the ministry, and that the youth might be seasoned in their tender years with such principles as brought their blessed progenitors into this wilderness."⁴

Institutions of higher learning were early established, and the colleges and universities that have been founded since

¹ See *Proceedings of Scotch-Irish Society of America*, 1890, p. 140.

² Hurst.

³ Bancroft.

⁴ *Magnalia*.

are but the outcome of the intellectual spirit that was early implanted. New England was prominent in this matter.

"The first immigration into New England contained an unusually large proportion of English university men, particularly among the ministers. These fixed the mould into which their descendants have been run, and New England's influence in the United States has been due largely to them."¹

The Dutch also had as a direct aim to extend and preserve the blessings of education and religion. The Scotch-Irish were probably among the best educated colonists who came here.²

Berkeley wrote of Virginia in 1671, that every man according to his ability (and there was much) taught his own children, but there were no free schools.

The early settlers laid broad, deep intellectual foundations, and this element in the making has been well built upon.

LAWS.

From the drawing up of the compact on board the *Mayflower* in Cape Cod harbor onward large attention has been given to the making of laws for the wise and just government of the communities. Those who were instrumental in framing our laws were trained and prepared for their work amid conflicts that developed the truest ideas of liberty and religion. William Penn was not the only one who believed that "God was the beginning and the end of government," and thought of government "as part of religion itself."

We are wont to seek laboriously for the origin of our laws and institutions in far away places and times while the exigencies of the case are responsible for many of them. One has truly said, "Republican institutions in America were merely the result of the application, first and last, of practical

¹ Johnston, *The United States: Its History and Constitution*, p. 16.

² See a paper, "What the Scotch-Irish have Done for Education," by Prof. Macloskie, in *Proceedings of the Scotch-Irish Society of America*, 1889, p. 90 *et seq.*

shrewdness to the wants and circumstances of the people.”¹ Undoubtedly, however, the makers of the State constitutions and of the national Constitution had models and were influenced by other laws and institutions and writings, and yet, as Sir Henry Maine remarks, “the Constitution of the United States was the fruit of signal sagacity and prescience.”² Elaborate argument has been made to show that the New England town meeting is of Germanic origin.³ But it is one thing to show the similarity and quite another thing to prove the connection of one with the other. Dr. Griffis, the late Douglas Campbell, and others would supply the link for the argument through Holland. They not only find there the suggestion of the town, but also the common school, the written ballot, and other institutions. There is great weight to their arguments. It could not be otherwise than that the Dutch should largely influence those who sojourned in their land before coming here, and those in the regions where they went to live. The town meeting was the centre of wide influence in New England, the county meeting served much the same purpose in Virginia and the Southern colonies. These two different conditions were due to the different methods of colonization; the New Englanders came and settled as towns, the Southerners came attached to the colony.⁴

The full, free and general consideration and discussion of affairs produced good and just laws. It is unnecessary to say that the so-called “Blue Laws” of Connecticut are a fabrication except that ever and anon some one parades them for ridicule, thus displaying his own ignorance.

Religion had its effect in the making of our laws. In forming a confederation between the colonies of Massachusetts, New Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven, in 1643, it was affirmed: “Wee all came into these parts of America with the same end and ayme, namely, to advance the kingdom of

¹ Edward Eggleston, *Century*, vol. xxv., 358.

² *Popular Government*, p. 109.

³ See *Johns Hopkins University Studies*, vol. i., No. 2, p. 5.

⁴ See Johnston, *The United States: Its History and Constitution*, p. 9 *et seq.*

our Lord Jesus Christ, and to enjoy the liberties thereof with puritie and peace, and for preserving and propagating the truth and liberties of the gospel."

The part taken by the Scotch-Irish in making and maintaining our laws is second only to that of the Puritans. The Mecklenburg Declaration drawn up by Scotch-Irish antedated the Declaration of Independence and had its influence in the framing of it.¹

These elements of power, viz., industry, education, religion, and laws that entered into the making of the United States were contributed by Pilgrims, Puritans, Huguenots, Dutch, Scotch-Irish, Moravians, Quakers, and the like. Their intermingling meant the enhancing of their powers. "The Frenchman's quick wit gave a keener edge to the shrewdness of the Yankee. The perseverance of the Huguenot, fortified under the long strain of persecution, reinforced the energy of the New Englanders, sturdy and self-asserting."² We find the Huguenot, with his love of liberty, his industry, his cheerfulness, and his religion, in almost every colony from the Pilgrim settlement at Plymouth to the Carolinas and Georgia. Each colony, each community, gave its quota of influence.

"Every great European event affected the fortunes of America. Did a state prosper—it sought an increase of wealth by plantations in the West. Was a sect persecuted—it escaped to the New World. The Reformation, followed by collisions between English Dissenters and the Anglican Hierarchy, colonized New England. The Reformation, emancipating the United Provinces, led to European settlements on the Hudson. The Netherlands divide with England the glory of having planted the first colonies in the United States; they also divide the glory of having set the example of public freedom. If England gave our fathers the idea of a popular representation, Holland originated for them the principle of federal union."³

¹ Sloane, *French War and Revolution*, p. 194; Campbell's *Puritan in England, Holland, and America*, vol. ii., p. 486.

² Baird, *Huguenot Emigration*, vol. ii., p. 252.

³ Bancroft's *History of United States*, vol. ii., p. 256.

The welding together of the colonies in which there were the elements of industry, education, religion, and laws into one United States was a very large and long process. The full fusion did not take place until our own day, and some have their doubts as to whether even now it is accomplished.

An impetus was given towards it by the French and Indian War. It revealed to the colonists their strength; it helped to train officers and soldiers; it gave a vast territory; and, in the right to it being reserved by the Crown, was the germ of dissatisfaction that grew into a revolution.

Cords were snapped and new ones formed between the colonies; these increased and strengthened. The revolution and separation may well be said to have been inevitable, but it needed the cupidity and stupidity of the English Parliament and Crown to bring it to a consummation. And their friends in America were in large measure responsible by reason of their accounts of "treason" and "rebellion," and in stirring up enmities. The colonists were slow to separate, slow to declare their independence, but they may almost be said to have been forced to it. The blunders of the English ministry are accountable for the growth of the desire for a union among the American colonies.

The southern colonies, especially Virginia and the Carolinas, had their full share in the making.¹ Their characteristics are found in a blending of Scotch-Irish, Huguenots, and English. The three colonies demanding redress from England were Massachusetts, Virginia, and South Carolina.

Having gained their independence, the utmost wisdom and patience were necessary in gathering and preserving the results of it. The five years from the surrender at Yorktown to the adoption of the Constitution has well been termed the critical period. Some may doubt, however, whether it is the most critical.² The years preceding the Declaration of Independence were certainly very critical. But whether there were to be thirteen little republics jealous of each

¹ This subject is ably presented in Curry's *The Southern States of the American Union*.

² Fiske, *Critical Period of American History*, p. 55.

other, or one strong nation, was a question for wise statesmanship to settle. We were fortunate in having it, brought forth as a product of those elements we have been considering. Those who entered into the preserving and developing of the nation owed much to those who helped to make it, not forgetting the part that Providence had in the guidance, direction, and overruling of affairs. Other men labored, and we have entered into their labors.