THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE: AN HISTORICAL STUDY FOR EIGHTH GRADE PUPILS

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The Missouri Compromise: An Historical Study for Eighth Grade Pupils by N. C. Heironimus

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AN HISTORICAL STUDY

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BY

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Mrs. Edward Channing

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

A word of explanation as to the purpose of this brief paper on the "Missouri Compromise" may be necessary. It is not claimed that it throws any new light upon that much argued question; it was written almost wholly from secondary sources. Nor is it supposed that this and similar papers on other topics could replace the usual text-book in history. It was written "to fill a long felt want," not in schools generally, but in the writer's own class-room. An attempt to lead eighth grade pupils into a more detailed study of some important topics than is possible with the ordinary text-book, revealed the fact that there is but little material available for such work. Anything more pretentious than the school text seems to be adapted in language and thought only to mature students. This paper was designed to furnish material for the writer's classes in their work on this topic.

To explain more definitely the use made of this and similar papers, it is necessary to briefly outline the entire plan of history work. After the study of some definite period in the text-book, the work is reviewed by studying series of related topics. Thus the period of the Revolution is reviewed by a study

THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE.

INTRODUCTION.

As a preparation for a study of the Missouri Compromise, a short review of the condition of our country at the time of that famous struggle may not be amiss. The growth in different lines between 1776 and 1820 had been most marked. At the close of the Revolution our treaty with England gave us an area of 827,844 square miles, bounded on the north by Canada and the Great Lakes, on the west by the Mississippi, on the south by the Spanish provinces of Florida and West Florida, and on the east by the Atlantic; by 1820 we had increased this area to 1,811,281 square miles, with Canada and the Great Lakes on the north, Mexico and the Rockies on the west, Mexico and the Gulf on the south, and the Atlantic on the east. Florida was not actually in our possession, but the treaty of purchase was awaiting ratification by the Spanish government and there was no doubt but that the formal transfer would be made. In addition to this extended territory the work of the explorers, Gray, Lewis and Clark, and the settlement of Astoria by the Pacific Fur Company, had given us good grounds for claiming the rich region known as the Oregon Country.

According to the census of 1790 the United States had 3,929,214 inhabitants; the census of 1820 showed this number to have increased to 9,633,822. The increase in wealth had probably been more rapid than the increase in numbers. Thirteen states had declared their independence in 1776; on January 1, 1820, the stars of our flag numbered twenty-two.

But signs were not wanting of trouble ahead. Instead of being more alike in its different parts, the country had come to contain two widely dissimilar sections, a North and a South. The cause of this unfortunate division was to be found in slavery.

Both the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution left it to the people of each of the states composing the Union to decide for themselves whether the state should be slave or free. Seven of the original states had freed their slaves before 1820; these were Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York and New Jersey. To these seven had been added the new states of Vermont, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, making in all eleven free states. The land now comprising the states of Michigan, Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota was free territory by the Ordinance of 1787, and was evidently destined to become free states. The six states of Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia retained their slaves, and to these had been added

five new slave states, Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, again eleven in all. It was well understood that Florida was to form a slave territory as soon as she came into our possession. When Louisiana was purchased, in 1803, slavery was legal in the whole of it, and up to this time the law in this regard had not been changed. But the people of the free section by no means thought all this was to continue slave territory; they intended that when organized into states and territories a fair share, at least, should be secured for freedom.

At the time of the adoption of the Constitution the two sections of the country were nearly equal in wealth and population. In 1790 the North had a population of 1,968,455, the South 1,961,372; but in 1820 the population of the North had increased to 5,152,372, while the South lagged behind at 4,485,819. The equal number of states gave the sections equal power in the Senate; but in the House of Representatives, whose members are apportioned to population, the North could count 123 votes to 90 of the South. In wealth and general progress the North was also much in advance of the South.

But the most dangerous feature of the situation was the different standards of life in the two sections, the different ideas of the people. The North, with free labor, had not only grown wealthy, but