

**THE CAVALIER DISMOUNTED
: AN ESSAY ON THE
ORIGIN OF THE FOUNDERS
OF THE THIRTEEN COLONIES**

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The cavalier dismounted : an essay on the origin of the founders of the thirteen colonies by
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WILLIAM HENRY WHITMORE

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AN ESSAY

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE
THIRTEEN COLONIES.

"We are the gentlemen of this country,"

ROBERT TOOMBS, in 1860.

"Our Plantations in America, *New England excepted*, have been generally settled, 1, by Malcontents with the Administrations from Time to Time; 2, by fraudulent Debtors, as a refuge from their Creditors; and by Convicts or Criminals, who chose Transportation rather than Death."

Dr. WILLIAM DOUGLASS, 1749.

BY

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P R E F A C E .

This essay is an enlargement of an article which appeared in the *Continental Magazine* for June, 1863. The additions are mainly of authorities quoted, and though but a portion of the writer's collections are here printed, it is presumed that there are enough to substantiate his assertions. Two points are intended to be discussed. The first is the proportion of native-born citizens in the United States, descended from the inhabitants in 1790. The second is the origin of the ancestors of the colonists.

The result of investigations of the first point, differs widely from the opinion of recent journalists. In the *New York Shipping List* for Sept. 24th, 1864, will be found a statement, that the natural increase of the colonists of 1790, would amount to only eight millions out of nearly thirty millions, now inhabiting the United States. If there be no mistake in the table prepared from the official Census of the United States, the reverse of this statement is the truth. Twenty millions of our citizens were in 1860 descended from our original colonists, and only six and one half millions were foreign-born or descended from immigrants arriving here since 1790.

This question is one of too great importance to remain thus doubtful. Our nationality is a stubborn fact; and the question is to be solved whether we are formed from a heterogenous collection of all nationalities, or have in reality one predominant race which gives its tone to the whole. The opinion herein expressed is, that the English race predominates here, and that the reason of its influence is to be found in the fact that New England was so intensely English. If the figures be correct, New England has contributed one quarter or one third of the population of the country, and this portion has constantly allied itself to the English part of the remainder of our population. Hence the preponderance of the English language, laws and national characteristics.

As to the second point, our investigations have been mainly directed toward the correction of false statements made by the Rebel emissaries and press. It is not a grateful task to be obliged to ex-

pose any blemish in our origin as a nation. For many years it has been customary to take the assertions of the Southerners as truth, because these statements were gratifying to our pride. We should even have been most unwilling to commence an attack upon our Southern citizens on any point of ancestral dignity; but when the assault has been from them, it is impossible to refrain from exposing the weakness of their position. Their reckless assertions have compelled us to vindicate our ancestors from an imaginary stain, and the process has led us to examine the antecedents of our accusers.

Let no one so far misinterpret the object of this Essay as to imagine that an undue importance is attached to the claims of gentle descent. We simply accept our opponents' opinion of the value of a long and distinguished pedigree; and we exhibit our genealogies only when we are told that we are disgraced by possessing none.

When the history of this war is written dispassionately, one of the first problems to be discussed will be the cause of the diversity of the social structure of the free and the slave states. Should the facts here presented be then examined, it may prove that an oligarchy was possible in the Southern states, because that there had never been any true equality there, and because so great a proportion of their inhabitants sprang from the ignorant and vicious portion of the European nations. It may also prove that the Northern states rose to the necessities of their position as the forlorn hope of republicanism, because their citizens inherited the bold spirit of freedom from ancestors whose rights had been for centuries untrammelled; because two centuries of self-government, and freedom of thought and action had enabled our portion of the English race to outstrip every other nation in its perception of the truth, that "freedom is the birth-right of every human being."

CLAIMS OF THE SOUTHERNERS.

One of the most monstrous assertions of the leaders of the rebellion, was that which arrogates to the inhabitants of the seceding States a superiority over their Northern brethren in respect to their ancestry. Not only did they claim to be a nation peculiarly free from intermixture with foreigners, but they claimed one and all to be of English Parentage, and deduced their pedigree exclusively from one class of Englishmen, the gentry. The inhabitants of the Loyal States were described not only as mongrel in race, but the English portion of it was declared to be of the most ignoble extraction. I will not weary my readers by the details of these accounts, yet fresh in their memories. It is perhaps sufficient to say that the cry of "Cavalier and Puritan" was again raised, and English sympathy was evoked in behalf of the oppressed gentlemen.

I propose in this sketch to prove the utter falsity of both assertions; to prove that the South is not homogeneous and its English element is not of gentle origin; to show that New England is in the highest degree a purely English community, and that its colonists were not of the lowest rank.

I shall confine myself to authorities whose statements were made long before the commencement of our civil war, in order that no reproach of partiality may attach to them; and in most instances, I shall be able to use the words of Southerners, writing of matters in which they had a strong personal interest.

This matter of purity of race is one of no trivial importance. It would be contrary to the spirit of our institutions for us to attempt to give to ancestral claims the importance which attach to them in monarchical countries; and yet this very rebellion teaches us that there are important problems connected with the subject which even republicans cannot ignore.

We have seen in one portion of our Union, a dominant class, small in number, but allied in interest, successfully leading astray multitudes whose true interests were diametrically opposed to any revolt; and we have seen in the other portion, vast communities holding firm allegiance to written laws, yielding unswerving obedience to their duly appointed authorities, and, despite apparent diversities of origin and interests, maintaining themselves in the bonds of an imperishable union.

The Southerners and their English allies have claimed that their unanimity proceeded from their common origin and gentle parentage; the unanimity of the North they have long denied and can now regard only as inexplicable. We hold on the contrary that the North is united because that it is homogeneous, and that the apparent unanimity of the South is only enforced by a vigorous tyranny, founded upon centuries of oppression and possible only through the faulty construction of its early institutions.

That there has been a wide diversity in the construction of society, North and South, from the commencement of the colonies of Virginia and New England, is undisputable. Accident has brought these original peculiarities in antagonism, but we must not be misled as to their true significance.

In the Southern Colonies, as will be proved, society received a form somewhat analogous to that of the England of two centuries ago; an aristocratic form, a base and spurious imitation of a bad original, was imposed upon the infant settlements. In England in 1630, the rank of the gentry was established, and it had a certain meaning and cause. This modified form of feudalism had a reasonable foundation. The great land-owners were a distinct class from

their tenants and inferiors; they were the natural leaders and rulers according to the rule of progression which had elevated the entire community from the barbarism of the feudal ages. The country gentleman, whose family had been known and respected for four centuries, seemed a natural chief to those whose ancestors had during that period owned allegiance to the name. To this class had been confined nearly all of the wealth, valor and culture of the nation.

When Virginia and the other Southern Atlantic colonies were planted, however, the emigrants took with them but the empty form of their native customs. As will be proved, very few of them possessed any hereditary claim to the rank of gentlemen, and even these were without the indispensable body of hereditary retainers, in whom a reverential submission was a matter of faith.

In a country where a man's daily food depended upon his daily labor, where patents of land embraced leagues, and where equality was a necessity, what chance was there even for the best blood of England to establish an aristocracy?

In the true sense, in the signification yet attached to the word in Europe, they never did establish an aristocracy, yet they founded an imitation which has yearly become more despicable. Instead of tenants, the new aristocrats peopled their lands with black slaves, or white convicts bound to them for a term of years. As a natural consequence their aristocracy became composed not of those who had hereditary rank,—not of gentry in the English sense,—but of all those who could invest capital in flesh and blood. In Virginia and the Carolinas, the slave-owners usurped the name of gentlemen; they had a sufficient intermixture of that class to serve as a screen, and there were none to question their claims.

Yet it must be borne in mind that these absurd claims have been pushed offensively only within the last few years. We have yet to learn that during colonial times or the dark period of the Revolution, any superiority was claimed by the South over the North. It has only been since our national prosperity became so great, that these false aspersions