

# ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

The People of the United States at the Close of the Revolutionary War—Striking Contrasts With the Present.

The second volume of John Bach McMaster's "History of the people of the United States from the Revolution to the Civil War," is even more interesting than the first volume. No such vivid presentation of the life of our ancestors at the beginning of this century has ever before been made or even attempted.

He is never weary of contrasting the past and the present of American life, and many are the striking comparisons which he is enabled to make in the progress of his work. Here is an example which is particularly interesting: "On the resignation of Samuel Osgood in 1791 the office of postmaster-general was bestowed on Timothy Pickens. So insignificant was the place and so light the duties that officer was to perform that Washington did not think him worthy of a cabinet seat. Yet there is now no other department of government in which the people take so lively an interest as in that over which the postmaster-general presides. The number of men that care whether the Indians get their blankets and their rations on the frontier, whether one company or two are stationed at Fort Dodge, whether there is a fleet of gunboats in the Mediterranean sea is extremely small. But the sun never sets without millions upon millions of our citizens intrusting to the mails letters and postal-cards, money-orders and packages, in the safe and speedy delivery of which they are deeply concerned. The growth of the postoffice in the last ninety years is indeed amazing. In 1792 there were 264 post-offices in the country, now there are 49,000. The yearly revenue which they yielded then was \$25,000; now it is far above \$45,000,000. More time was then consumed in carrying letters ninety miles than now suffices to carry them 1,000. The postage required to send a letter from New York to Savannah was precisely eighteen times as much as will now send one far beyond the Rocky mountains, into regions of which our ancestors had never heard." This passage is a very good example of Mr. McMaster's style. It will be seen at a glance that all the information might have been given with one-half the number of words. We can also see how the contrast has been heightened by rhetorical devices, but the passage attracts our attention, it interests us, we read it, and we probably remember it, when it put in a more condensed and statistical form it would leave no impression.

Mr. McMaster has a good deal to say at different times about the difficulties of travel and communication in the early years of the republic. This made negotiations with foreign governments peculiarly difficult. At the time the British treaty of 1794 was under discussion Monroe was minister at Paris. The proposed treaty was naturally most distasteful to the French government and Monroe was informed that "the moment the treaty was approved, that moment the directory considered the alliance with America at an end. The next day he dispatched the news to the secretary of state. The letter was still upon the sea when Washington proclaimed the treaty the supreme law of the land, and sent a copy to the house." Travel at home was done by the stage-coach. This "was little better than a huge covered box mounted on springs. It had neither glass windows nor doors nor steps nor closed sides. The roof was upheld by eight posts which rose from the body of the vehicle, and the body was commonly breast-high." In this uncomfortable conveyance a man might travel some four or five miles an hour. With the exception of some parts of New England, the wayside accommodation which the traveler found was miserably bad. Strangers were put together in the same room and the same bed. The bed clothes were changed not for new arrivals but at stated times. All sorts of extortions were practiced upon travelers. The genealogist who studies the history of American families has frequent occasion to note the compactness of those families up to about fifty years ago. For many generations the members of a family, with very few exceptions, will be found to have lived and died in about the same place, spreading somewhat in the manner of a thirly plant which slowly increases its area rather than that of an animal which roamed freely about. Many of these families which are the most widely scattered lived, previous to the introduction of the railroad, together in the same portion of the same state. We have given us many facts of interest concerning the early history of the steamboat. Fulton's Hudson river success was by no means the first occasion upon which American waters were navigated by steam-propelled vessels. The idea had been working in the minds of a few men for a number of years. As early as 1787 a rude plan of a steamboat had been presented to the constitutional convention. In 1789 a boat was constructed which traveled a mile in seven minutes and a half. A few months later a steamboat began to run regularly as a ferry in Philadelphia.

Agriculture, at the beginning of the century, was a simple matter. "Agriculture as we now know it can scarcely be said to have existed. The plow was little used. The hoe was the implement of husbandry. Made at the plantation smithy, the blade was ill-

formed and clumsy; the handle was a sapling with the bark left on." In Virginia horses were driven over the grain in the open field to thresh it, and it was ground with a rude pestle and mortar. "For a hundred years the farms, of precisely the same size, had been kept in the same families and cultivated with the same kind of implements in the same way. Year after year the same crops were raised in the same succession. When a patch of land became exhausted it was suffered to lie fallow."

On the subject of amusements Mr. McMaster has much matter of interest. Here is a picture of gay life at Louisville: "The favorite pastime was billiards, and every morning numbers of young women, escorted by the young men, gathered about the one billiard table in the town. If a stranger of note put up at the only tavern, and gave out that he was come to stay some time, he was sure to be called on, as the phrase was, to sign for a ball. When the night came the garrison at Fort Jefferson would furnish the music, and the managers would choose the dances. The first was generally a minuet, and till his number was called, no man knew with whom he was to dance. This over, each was at liberty to choose his own partner for the first 'volunteer.'" With New York people the battery was a favorite place of resort for amusement. There were other places of popular outdoor resort in hot weather without the city. New York seems to have been as uncomfortable in the summer time as it is now. In Philadelphia the assembly and the theater provided for amusement lovers. "The assembly-room was at Oeller's tavern and made one of the sights of the town. The length was sixty feet. The walls were papered in the French fashion and adorned with Pantheon figures, festoons and pilasters, and groups of antique drawings. Across one end was a fine music gallery. The rules of the assembly were framed and hung upon the wall. The managers had entire control. Without their leave no lady could quit her place in the dance nor dance out of her set, nor could she complain if they placed strangers or brides at the head of the dance. The ladies were to rank in sets and draw for places as they entered the room. Those who led might call the dances alternately. When each set had danced a country dance a cotillion might be had if eight ladies wished it. Gentlemen could not come into the room in boots, colored stockings, or undress."

One of Mr. McMaster's long chapters is devoted exclusively to the subject of the ordinary life of town and country, and is a rich storehouse of information concerning this very essential part of history. The matter of dress is treated in highly interesting fashion. "Dress became every season more and more hideous, more and more uncomfortable, more and more devoid of good sense and good taste. Use and beauty ceased to be combined. The pantaloons of a beau went up to his arm-pits; to get into them was a morning's work, and when in to sit down was impossible. His hat was too small to contain his handkerchief, and was not expected to stay on his head. His hair was brushed from the crown of his head toward his forehead, and looked, as a satirist of that day truly said, as if he had been fighting an old-fashioned hurricane backward. About his neck was a spotted linen neckerchief; the skirts of his green coat were cut away to a mathematical point behind; his favorite drink was brandy, and his favorite talk of the last French play. \* \* \* Even these absurdities were not enough, and when 1880 began fashion was more extravagant still. Then a beau was defined as anything put into a pair of pantaloons with a binding sewed around the top and called a vest. The skirts of the coat should be pared away to the width of a hat-band, and if he was doomed to pass his time in the house he would require a heavy pair of round-toed jack-boots, with a tassel before and behind. \* \* \* Women were thought worse than the men. To determine the style of their dress, fashion, decency, and health, the statement was, ran a race. Decency lost her spirits, health was bribed by a quack doctor, so fashion won." The theaters sought to provide for all tastes. We read of an occasion when the performance consisted of the "Beaux Stratagem," the "Federal Bow-Wow," a comic opera called the "Poor Soldier," a hornpipe, slack-roping, tumbling, and the pantomime of the "Death of Capt. Cook," all in one evening. "In the theaters at the north it often happened that the moment a well-dressed man entered the pit he at once became a mark for the wit and insolence of the men in the gallery. They would begin by calling on him to doff his hat in mark of inferiority, for the custom of wearing hats in the theater was universal. If he obeyed he was loudly hissed and troubled no more. If he refused abuse, oaths, and indecent remarks were poured out upon him. He was spit at, pelted with pears, apples, sticks, stones, empty bottles till he left the house. As the blades in the gallery were poor marksmen the neighbors of the man aimed at were the chief sufferers. On one occasion the orchestra was put to flight and some instruments broken." In New England the puritan sabbath still had a stronghold, although it was rapidly undergoing modification. "Pious men complained that the war had been a great demoralizer. Instead of awakening the community to a lively sense of the goodness of God the license of war

made men weary of religious restraint. The treaty of peace had not been signed, the enemy was still in the land, when delegates to the general court of Massachusetts boldly said the sabbath was too long. Country members demanded a sabbath of thirty-six hours; town members would give but eighteen, and had their way. The effect was soon apparent. Levity, profaneness, idle amusements, and sabbath-breaking increased in the towns with fearful rapidity. What, the sober-minded cried out, is to become of this nation? Before the war nobody swore, nobody used cards. Now every lad is proficient in swearing and knows much of cards. Then apprentices and young folks kept the sabbath, and, till after sundown, never left their homes but to go to meeting. Now they go out on the sabbath more than any other day in the week. Now the barber-shops are open, and men of fashion must needs be shaved on the Lord's day. They ride on horseback; they take their pleasures in chaises and hacks. How much better, they say, is this than sitting for two hours in a church hearing about hell? Who would not rather ride with a fine young woman in a hack than hear about the devil from Adams's fall? Equally interesting passages might be multiplied indefinitely from these pages, but enough have already been given to show how different is the conception of Mr. McMaster's work from that of ordinary histories and to convince our hearers that the book is well worth reading from first to last. Beginning about where the work of Bancroft leaves off, it carries on the narrative of our fortunes well into the national period, and has the fascination of a romance

## Railway Stations in England.

From "English and American Railways," in Harper's for August.

In the management of stations the English and American termini are about on a par, but their minor and country station are incomparably better managed than ours. The bar and refreshment counter is a prominent feature of every station of note, and has been wrought to a degree of importance that is wholly unknown under similar conditions in America. It is a great convenience to travelers, and conduces to much drinking, and to eating that is of a character quite as favorable to dyspepsia as anything known in America.

The country stations look for the most part like comfortable homes of favored and stalwart station-masters. There is generally some space about them that can be used as a garden, and this, however small, is frequently kept gay with flowers. Two of the great companies offer rewards for the best-kept stations and signal-boxes, and on these lines flowery stations are naturally most common, but on the other lines you may often see attempts to get rid of the inherent hideousness that clings to a railway. The usual garden is a narrow strip between the platform for passengers and the inclosing railing. It is enacted by Parliament that no post, rail or other obstacle shall come nearer than six feet from the edge of the platform, and this makes it necessary to inclose quite a wide space. Between the six feet of platform and the fence is the station-master's garden. The flowers that he grows differ according to the soil of the district. In a rich clay he will have standard roses as the principal feature; in a warm, light soil his strong point may be the chrysanthemums tied back against the palings. But as his object is to have plenty of color all the year round, you will generally find that the main part of the border is filled with fresh plants in each season, such as the gardener uses for his spring and summer beds. In the spring there are double daisies, red and white, that blossom from February till June, blue foregen-me-nots (*Myosotis dtsitiflora*) that keeps gay almost as long, pansies, wall-flowers and the yellow alyssum and white iberis—hardy cruciferous plants that grow in big clumps against the edging of tile or ornamental stone, breaking the stiffness of the line, and bringing a mass of flowers in early spring. In May or early June, when all danger of frost is over, he will plant geraniums, calceolarias lobelias and such like tender perennials, and his sweet peas, convolvuli, nemophila, and other annuals will come into blossom. But the gayest time of all is in late summer and early autumn, for then his garden is full of dahlias, nasturtiums trained up the fence, Chinaasters, marigolds (French and African), phloxes, and all the gaudy flowers that come into blossom after the kindly influence of a few warm months. These and many other plants are to be found in most of the gardens; but as all gardening that is done lovingly shows individuality, you will notice as you travel that each station has some particular flower by which you can remember it—the roses at Halton Junction, the dahlias at Milcote. There has been nothing more welcome in American railroad management than the imitation of our English brethren in their treatment of their stations, and nothing is regarded with a more lively or sympathetic interest than the horticultural ambitions and struggles of the station-masters on some of our leading lines.

An English mastiff, the largest dog of the kind ever exhibited, sold not long ago for the sum of \$1,500.

## Orange Growing in Florida.

Correspondence of the New York Sun.

"How long does it take an orange grove to come into bearing?" The question was asked by a northern man in an earnest, deliberate way, that was intended to evoke a candid reply from the orange grower to whom it was put.

"How long is a piece of string?" returned the orange grower.

If he had been disposed to attempt an answer he might have said truthfully that an orange grove will "come into bearing" in from six months to 15 or 20 years from the time of starting it, and that whether the interval is half a year or a fifth of a century depends almost wholly upon the wish of the owner.

There is a colored man in this town who has in his grove a number of trees whose topmost leaf is less than 18 inches above the ground, and whose tiny branches are now weighed down by young fruit. Their trunks are about half an inch in diameter. Kneeling down over one of these miniature trees, so as to have his subject well in hand, he said:—

"This tree is a sweet bud on a native stem. The sour stem was set out here a year ago last spring. It was a sprout one or two years old when I took it from the nursery. I don't know which. The bud was put in last September. In March the tree was so full of bloom that it looked like a bouquet. The life of a tree is counted from the time it was put in the ground—whether as a seed or a sprout—if it is a sweet tree, and from the time of putting in the buds if a sour tree. So you see here a tree that was in bloom, or 'in bearing,' when it was six months old."

Within half a mile of this colored man's grove is a grove in which are 50 or 60 sweet seedling trees that are 13 years old. The largest of them are about 15 feet tall, with tops 10 feet in diameter and trunks 16 inches in circumference. Only one of them has ever borne a blossom, and that one now has four oranges on it—its first crop. This grove has never been properly tended, and has had no fertilizer worth mentioning put on it.

An orange grower of considerable experience said: "A sweet bud cut from a bearing tree may have within itself 'the germ and potency' of twigs that will straightway bear blossoms, or it may not be such a bud. In the former case the twigs and the blossoms are bound to come out if the bud can be kept alive. If it could be kept alive inserted in the cork of a bottle I don't know but it would be possible to show a beer bottle bearing a full crop of young oranges within six months after it left the brewery. Now, if the roots of the sour tree are sufficient to supply nutriment in the necessary quantity to the young bud the little oranges may stay on and ripen, otherwise they will fall off. If the oranges on the colored man's six months' old bud don't drop off pretty soon the tree itself will drop off. The probabilities are that that tree, if allowed to have its own way, will drop its fruit for three or four years, and will then begin to ripen half a dozen oranges a year, growing less new wood each year, and finally standing still a stunted shrub that will bear maybe 50 or 60 oranges at a crop."

"Now about the big, sweet seedlings that have not begun to bear," the orange man went on. "They are an extreme case, as much as the colored man's half-year-old bearing grove is. They have been growing under the temporary disadvantage of almost entire neglect. Fortunately the soil had enough in it to keep them alive and making healthy wood, though slowly. Maybe next year, and maybe not till three or four years later they will show bloom. The first crop ought to be, perhaps 100 oranges to the tree, the second close to 500, and the third fully 1,000. If the colored man had planted a sweet seed at the same time he put the bud in his sour stem that is now 'in bearing,' as they say, the probability is that he would have got a profitable tree from the seed as soon as from the bud, in case the bud didn't begin bearing so early as to prevent it ever making a valuable tree."

"How soon would I expect to have a grove that would pay for taking care of itself and return a satisfactory profit on the investment if I began making it now? Well, in 10 years—provided oranges brought the same price then as they bring now."

The matter of fertilizing has a good deal to do with the growing of orange trees in all except the few favored spots where the soil does not require such reinforcement. The colored orange grower mentioned in the foregoing was unable to buy fertilizers; so he fertilized with fish caught in the St. John's river with a seine and drawn up on his mule cart. He conducted this work after the manner of an independent and original investigator.

"This yer tree, said he fondly patting the smooth yellow trunk of a fine seedling, 'is seven years old from the seed, and was raised on shad. Not a bit of fertilizer but fish, and not a fish but shad has ever been put on it. I always boil up the fish. Then I carefully dig away the earth, bury the boiled meat on the fine roots and cover it with earth. The liquid I use for watering the roots. This shad tree has 2,000 young oranges on it. Over there is a mullet tree. You see it has three trunks separating about eight inches from the ground. They were three little trees, standing several inch-

es apart, and I drew the bodies together with my finger and put a wire around them. You can just see a seam in the bark where it has joined. The trunk must be about nine inches through at the bottom, reckon. Just beyond is a three-year-old bud I am raising on catfish, and those little nursery trees are fed on chowder made of all kinds—shad, mullet, catfish, bass, perch, shiners, trout, and everything. I don't guess the kind of fish has anything to do with the flavor of the fruit. No; the shad tree's fruit don't have any of the flavor of a shaddock."

## LADY OPERATORS.

A Prediction that They will Soon Handle the Key to the Exclusion of the Men.

The telegraphic profession will, we predict, says the current number of the Telegraphers' Advocate, in the course of a few years, be composed of female members entirely. In every large office in the United States, the proportion of male and female employes is undergoing a slow but positive change. Ten years ago the ratio was about 30 males to one female operator; five years ago the ratio was reduced to about 15 males to 1 female, while to-day it is less than 6 to 1. At this same rate of growth, in the future, but ten years will be required to balance the scales. Fifteen years from to-day will find the female members in the majority, and twenty years hence it will be difficult for male operators to procure work at the key, at any price. The days of male operators are numbered. The talk that lady operators are physically unequal to the task of working heavy circuits, incompetent to receive press, etc., is mere bosh. They can be, and are rapidly being educated to meet the requirements of the profession. They are reliable, which at once gives them an advantage over the male members. The Western Union's heaviest circuits in the main office for years have been handled by women. Gradually the handful of women confined to a few city wires in a remote corner of the great operating room has grown to an army, spreading its usefulness to every section and department of the company. Five years ago 90 women were employed at 195, today there are over 275. In the city of New York, the Western Union force, five years ago, consisted of about 650 men and 100 women; to-day, notwithstanding the natural increase of business, it stands about 500 men and 350 women. While the force has been increased to the extent of 100 operators, the male portion thereof has decreased to the extent of about 150. These figures also apply to other sections to a greater or less degree. For instance, the heavy New York circuits in Albany are now in the hands of women, who receive \$30 and \$40 a month less than the men whose places they so recently filled. Of course the saving to the Western Union company is sufficient recompense for any inconvenience to which they may be subjected, while they persistently dwell upon the reliability of the women as compared with the men as a reason for making the changes.

## Snake Story.

"I'll tell you a sight I saw in Hindoostan," said a truthful traveler. "It sounds wild, but it's as true as that I exist. The railroad from Bombay to Calcutta is only second in length to that crossing the American continent, and stretches in a line across a level plain 2,200 miles long. The train hands are all Englishmen. One day I was riding on the engine when far ahead there seemed something on the track like low, brown, undulating waves. The engineer looked through his field glass and said it was snakes. This was their migrating and breeding season, when they were peculiarly vicious. He had seen them twice in fifteen years out there. They were the cobra de capella, a poisonous reptile that opens its mouth 2-1/2 inches when excited. They are four or five feet long when full grown. Down their side is a folded fin that projects half an inch when they are angry. We were running 25 miles an hour, and raised the speed to 40 and dashed into the mass. They were crawling four or five feet deep on each other, and covered the track for half a mile. Ugh! It sickens me yet when I recall their crunching under the wheels. We ran over them in patches for an hour. The wheels got so covered with grease and blood they slid along the rails, and we just had to stop in a clear place and wait for those ahead to pass. They clogged the wheels, and pretty soon began crawling up the train. We had to shut ourselves into the engine room and wait for them to crawl off. Not a brakeman or passenger dared stir. And there we waited four hours. When I say there must have been a million it is with no idea how many there were."

A recent visitor to Whittier's home at Amesbury says that in general appearance Whittier has changed but little in the last ten years. He is slightly deaf, but his full, dark eyes are as bright as ever, the tall form is as straight, and the mind is as alert. He does not impress one as an old man, for his interest in affairs is as great as in past years, and his conversation is an entertaining.