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Early Trade and Travel in the Lower Mississippi Valley

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EARLY TRADE AND TRAVEL IN THE LOWER
MISSISSIPPI VALLEY

BY WILLIAM O. SCROGGS

To give anything like a full and accurate picture of the travel and traffic in the lower Mississippi Valley before the nineteenth century is impossible. Traders rarely made records of their goings and comings, and it is only occasionally that we catch glimpses of adventurers threading their way from Virginia through the gaps of the Alleghanies or pushing out from Carolina around the southern foot of the Appalachian range in the direction of the Father of Waters. Mr. Roosevelt in his *Winning of the West* states that "at the outbreak of the Revolution they [the Americans] still all dwelt on the seaboard, either on the coast itself or along the banks of the streams flowing into the Atlantic. When the fight at Lexington took place they had no settlements beyond the mountain chain on our western border. It had taken them over a century and a half to spread from the Atlantic to the Alleghanies."¹ He thus intimates that the line of English settlements did not pass beyond the mountains until after the Colonies had achieved their independence. To this, the traditional view, however, Professor Edward Channing has recently opposed a flat denial by declaring that from 1713 to 1754 "the English occupation of the country from the Gulf to the Ohio and between the Alleghanies and the Mississippi is . . . difficult to trace, but it was none the less effective."²

Investigation shows that the Alleghanies did not entirely confine the English to the seaboard before the Rev-

¹ Edition of 1900, Pt. I, p. 37.

² Channing's *History of the United States*, Vol. II, p. 550.

olution. Before the middle of the eighteenth century English explorers and traders in the lower Mississippi basin were numerous, and a few adventurous pioneers had even dared to build their homes in this region. The first exploration from the Virginia coast beyond the Blue Ridge, of which there is any record, was made in 1671 by General Abram Wood. Acting under orders from Governor Berkeley to determine whether the westward-flowing rivers entered the South Sea, he reached the Alleghanies, found a stream which proved to be the largest tributary of the Kanawha, and returned home firm in the belief that he had been very near the Pacific.³

Other Governors of Virginia also displayed a great amount of interest in the western country. In a letter to the Lords of Trade, dated December 15, 1710, Governor Spotswood urged that the English should move up the James River, cross the mountains, and separate the French in Canada from those in Louisiana. In the autumn of this year the Governor sent out a party of explorers, who found the mountains about one hundred miles from the upper inhabitants and ascended one of the highest ridges on horseback. On their return, says the Governor, "they assured me that the descent on the other side seemed to be as easy as that they had passed on this, and that they could have passed over the whole Ledge (which is not large) if the season of the year had not been too far advanced." Six years later the Governor himself and a party of friends crossed the Blue Ridge and made a reconnoissance of the Shenandoah Valley, halting on the crest of the ridge to fire a few volleys of musketry and drink the health of the king and the royal family in champagne, Burgundy, and claret. It is very interesting

³ Johnston's *First Explorations of Kentucky*, in the *Filson Club Publications*, No. 13, p. vii.

⁴ *Official Letters of Alexander Spotswood*, Vol. I, p. 40, published as Vol. I of the *Collections of the Virginia Historical Society*.

to note that on descending the western slope of the mountain they followed trees which had formerly been blazed, and consequently they were not the first travelers in the region.⁵

There is considerable evidence that by 1750 traders had for years been crossing the Alleghanies. The explorer La Salle, as he descended the Mississippi River in 1682, came to the conclusion that the English were even then crossing the mountains and disposing of their wares to Indians along the river, for he could account in no other way for the numerous articles of European make which he found among the savages. The Frenchman even thought of closing the mountain passes in order to keep the English out of the Mississippi Valley.⁶ It was not, however, until 1748 that any concerted effort was made for actual settlement in this region from Virginia. In this year Thomas Lee, Lawrence and Augustine Washington, and others from Virginia and Maryland formed an association known as the Ohio Company and received a grant of a large tract of land between the Monongahela and Kanawha rivers, with the object of planting settlements and trading with the Indians. In the following year the company sent out Christopher Gist to explore the country, and he was occupied with this work until 1752. After completing his explorations, Gist was ordered to lay off a town and a fort at Shurtee's Creek on the east of the Ohio, a little below the present Pittsburgh. Gist then settled in the Monongahela Valley near the proposed town and was soon joined by eleven other families. In the meantime the Ohio Company had built a storehouse at Will's Creek (the present Cumberland, Maryland) and a road had been surveyed from this post to the mouth of the Monongahela River. Will's Creek was the

⁵ An account of this expedition is contained in the *Journal of John Fontaine*.

⁶ See Winsor's *Mississippi Basin*, p. 48.

centre of a flourishing trade with the western Indians.⁷

In 1749 the Loyal Land Company received from the Virginia assembly a grant of 800,000 acres west of the mountains in what is now the State of Kentucky. In the spring of 1750 the company sent Dr. Thomas Walker across the mountains through the Cumberland Gap to explore the grant and note the lands suitable for settlement. This was not Walker's first trip; he had been as far as the Holston River in 1748, and mentions his meeting in that year with a man named Stalnaker on his way to the Cherokee Indians.⁸ On his second journey Walker also met with evidences of the white man's movement in this region, in the form of trees blazed and cut with initials.⁹ At some point on the upper waters of the Cumberland River Walker built a house, and it is probable that he lived there for a number of years, as the dwelling is indicated on various maps of the period.¹⁰

Washington in his *Journal*, compiled during his tramp with Gist to the Ohio Valley in 1753, speaks of a Mr. Frazier's, at the mouth of Turtle Creek, on the Monongahela River. He also mentions Gist's new settlement, which, he says, "is west north-west seventy miles from Will's Creek", and states that during his journey he met an Indian trader named Brown and four French deserters on their way to Philadelphia. The face of the white man, then, was not such a rare sight in the western wilderness as has sometimes been supposed. Logan, in his *History of Upper South Carolina*, tells us that in 1758 one Anthony Park traveled several hundred miles

⁷ Gist's *Journal* may be found in Johnston's *First Explorations of Kentucky* in the *Filson Club Publications*, No. 13. For an account of his settlement, see Lowdermilk's *History of Cumberland*, p. 23, and Sparks's *Life of Washington*, Vol. I, p. 26.

⁸ Johnston's *First Explorations of Kentucky*, in the *Filson Club Publications*, No. 13, p. 42.

⁹ Johnston's *First Explorations of Kentucky*, in the *Filson Club Publications*, No. 13, p. 54.

¹⁰ Channing's *History of the United States*, Vol. II, p. 553.

west of the mountains and found there several white men who had lived among the Indians for twenty years, a few who had been in the region from forty to fifty years, and one who had been there sixty years. There is also a story of a Virginia trader named Daugherty who made his abode among the western Indians for the purposes of traffic as early as 1690.¹¹

It was in South Carolina, however, that western trade reached its fullest development. Many of the early Carolina fortunes were gained through this traffic with the Indians, and many of the most prominent men in the Colony were at one time engaged in this business.¹² From Charleston westward to the Mississippi there was an almost level route and a comparatively dense Indian population with which to barter.¹³ A map of North America, published by Dr. John Mitchell in 1755, and perhaps the most elaborate and accurate map of the country published during the colonial period, contains the statement that "The English have factories and settlements in all the towns of the Creek Indians of any note, except Alabamas; which was usurped by the French in 1715 but established by the English 28 years before." This of course means that English traders were on the Alabama River as early as 1687; that is, within seventeen years after the founding of Charleston, and fully twelve years before French settlers had landed on the Gulf coast.

In fact, it was the aggressiveness of the English in pushing out toward the Southwest that caused Louis XIV to renew the efforts at colonizing the lower Missis-

¹¹ Logan's *History of Upper South Carolina*, p. 168.

¹² McCrady's *South Carolina under the Proprietary Government*, pp. 345-347, and *South Carolina under the Royal Government*, p. 270.

¹³ Descriptions of the traders' trails to the Southwest may be found in Logan's *History of Upper South Carolina* and in a monograph by Peter J. Hamilton in the *Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society*, Vol. II, p. 41. An interesting description at first hand of these routes as they appeared in 1776 is given by William Bartram in his *Travels*, p. 306.

issippi Valley, which had been so suddenly interrupted by the death of La Salle.¹⁴ Two years before the sailing of Iberville, Rémonville, in a memoir addressed to Count de Pontchartrain, called attention to the English designs on the Mississippi, knowledge of which he had obtained from merchants trading with England.¹⁵ At the very moment when Iberville was exploring the lower Mississippi, Edward Randolph, that much-hated emissary of the English government, while at Charleston wrote to the Lords of Trade, under the date of March 16, 1699, that he had talked with a member of the Governor's Council, a great Indian trader, who had been six hundred miles west of Charleston, and who was willing to undertake the exploration of the Mississippi and to "find out the mouth and the true latitude thereof", "if his Majesty will please to pay the charge, w^{ch} will not be above £400 or £500 at most".¹⁶ Six days later, in another letter, he mentions the fact that Colonel James Moore had crossed the "Apalathean" mountains for inland discovery and the Indian trade. The news that a French expedition was headed for the Mississippi had already reached Charleston, he said, and had created much uneasiness among the Carolinians.¹⁷

Mitchell's map, referred to above, gives the route of a certain Colonel Welch to the Mississippi in 1698 and says that it was afterwards followed by other traders. This claim, that the English had reached the Mississippi

¹⁴ "Seule une prompte intervention de la France pouvait empêcher l'Angleterre de s'appropriier tout le fruit des découvertes de La Salle." — Heinrich's *La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes*, p. xxviii.

¹⁵ French's *Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida* (new series, 1869), pp. 1-10. Further indication of French anxiety as to the designs of the English upon the Mississippi is discovered in a letter of the Minister of Marine, Aug. 27, 1698. — See Margry's *Mémoires et Documents*, Vol. IV, p. 82.

¹⁶ Rivers's *South Carolina*, App., p. 445.

¹⁷ *Collections of the Historical Society of South Carolina*, Vol. I, p. 208.

from Carolina before the French had made their settlements on the Gulf, may be verified from French sources. In May, 1699, Bienville found the natives in a village on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain greatly disturbed because two days before they had been attacked by a party of Chickasaws led by two white men calling themselves *Englichi*.¹⁸ These were evidently Carolina traders. Some months later Bienville reports that "several Englishmen from Carolina are among the Chickasaws, where they trade in peltry and slaves". He says that these traders ascend a river to its headwaters and from there transport their goods by horses to the Chickasaw villages. It is his purpose, he says, to capture the traders by drawing them away from the Chickasaws on the pretext of commerce, but that he would not dare interfere with them in the presence of these Indians, who might thereby lose their friendship for the French.¹⁹

In this same year Le Sueur and Penicaut went up the Mississippi prospecting for minerals, and on the Arkansas River, eight leagues above its mouth, they found an English trader, who, says Penicaut, "gave us much assistance with his provisions, as our supply was nearly exhausted."²⁰ Le Sueur asked the trader who sent him there; he replied that he was sent by the Governor of Carolina, and showed the Frenchmen a passport from that official, who, he said, was the master of the river.²¹ French sources, therefore, seem to verify the statement of John Archdale, Governor of Carolina from 1694 to 1696, that "Charlestown trades near one thousand miles into the continent."²²

The fear of the French that the English would reap

¹⁸ La Harpe's *Journal Historique*, pp. 14, 15.

¹⁹ Margry's *Mémoires et Documents*, Vol. IV, p. 361.

²⁰ French's *Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida* (New series, 1869), p. 63.

²¹ Margry's *Mémoires et Documents*, Vol. V, p. 402.

²² Carroll's *Historical Collections of South Carolina*, Vol. II, p. 97.

the fruits of La Salle's discovery was not groundless; they not only found English traders among the natives, but in September, 1699, Bienville actually met an English frigate in the Mississippi River, twenty-eight leagues above its mouth, at a point which, from the fact that the ship turned back, is called the English Turn, or Bend, to this day.²³ According to La Harpe, it was the enterprise of the English on the Mississippi that led Iberville to establish his post on this river in 1700.²⁴

It was in the English traders that French Colonial schemes in the lower Mississippi Valley encountered an insurmountable obstacle. Sometimes by presents, sometimes by threats, and more particularly by the abundance, quality, and cheapness of their merchandise, adventurers from Carolina and Virginia kept the greater part of the savages friendly to themselves and consequently more or less hostile to the French, and thus accomplished in the South results similar to those achieved by the British with the Iroquois in the North. In the Southern debatable land there were four great tribes or nations. The northernmost, and the most civilized, were the Cherokees, occupying mainly the territory included in the present State of Tennessee; below them, between the Mississippi and Tombigbee rivers, and as far south as the Yazoo, lived the Chickasaws, reputed to be unusually brave and warlike. The Chickasaws had for their neighbors the Creeks on the east and the Choctaws on the south. The French seem to have had no difficulty in winning the Choctaws over to their side, and for a time they also counted the Chickasaws among their friends.²⁵

²³ Margry's *Mémoires et Documents*, Vol. IV, p. 361; La Harpe's *Journal Historique*, pp. 19, 20; French's *Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida* (New series, 1869), p. 59. These various accounts differ in details, but all agree that the Englishman turned back and left the French in possession of the river.

²⁴ La Harpe's *Journal Historique*, p. 25.

²⁵ La Harpe's *Journal Historique*, p. 80.

But if we may believe French accounts it was not long before English traders set these two nations against each other, with the result that the Chickasaws became favorable to the English, while the Choctaws, as a rule, remained the friends of the French as long as the latter held the country. Penicaut and La Harpe tell us that the ill-feeling between Choctaws and Chickasaws began in 1705, when the latter sold to English traders as slaves several Choctaw families that were visiting them; and if this statement is correct the traders committed a blunder very similar in its ultimate results to that committed by Champlain in the North a century before.²⁶

Whatever was the real cause of the Choctaw animosity, it is certain that the English could gain admission into the villages of this nation only at rare intervals, while at the same time they possessed the friendship of the Cherokees, Chickasaws, and, to a less degree, of the Creeks. After 1706 the English seem to have exerted every effort to gain the good will of the Choctaws, being lavish in promises and presents, and Bienville had to work hard to retain their loyalty. The French were especially concerned with regard to the Choctaws during Queen Anne's War, when there were rumors of preparations for an English attack on Mobile and of intrigues with the Choctaws for active aid or at least for permission to pass through their country.²⁷ These Indians, however, remained true to the French, and Louisiana came through the war unscathed, although the English could have taken it at any time. For some time before the close of this war the aggressiveness of the Carolinians in the Southwest was checked by a rising of the Tuscaroras and neighboring tribes; but with the return of peace the routes to the interior were again clear, and the English

²⁶ French's *Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida* (New series, 1869), p. 97; La Harpe's *Journal Historique*, pp. 89-95.

²⁷ Heinrich's *La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes*, p. liii.

traders resumed their efforts to win all the natives. They set up factories among the Chickasaws, set the Natchez and the Illinois to fighting against each other, so as to purchase their captives as slaves, and even entered the territory of the Alibamons (a portion of the Creek nation), where the French had just erected Fort Toulouse. Even the Choctaws finally yielded to their blandishments and admitted the English into some of their villages; and the traders, when ordered by Cadillac to leave, sent back word that they were not afraid of him and his forty or fifty French knaves. In despair the Governor declared that he preferred open war to a peace so full of treachery.²⁸

The English conquest, which Louisiana had escaped during the war, seemed now on the point of being accomplished in time of peace. The activity of the traders was, indeed, remarkable. In 1714 Penicaut made a trip to the Natchez country and was greatly astonished to find there three Englishmen, who, he says, had come to buy slaves.²⁹ La Harpe also says that there were at this time a dozen Englishmen among the Choctaws.³⁰ In 1715 Bienville wrote to Pontchartrain that three English officers were among the Choctaws with a large body of other Indians, and that they were bent on destroying villages which persisted in their loyalty to the French. Later he declared that there was a rumor upon the upper Mississippi that the Governor of Carolina was distributing presents among the savages to induce them to break French heads at Mo-

²⁸ Heinrich's *La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes*, p. lxix.

²⁹ Margry's *Mémoires et Documents*, Vol. V, p. 505; French's *Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida* (New series, 1869), pp. 123-126; La Harpe's *Journal Historique*, pp. 115-118. These accounts contain a very interesting story of the pursuit down the Mississippi and the final capture of one of these Englishmen, whom Penicaut calls "Mylord Master You."

³⁰ La Harpe's *Journal Historique*, p. 115.

bile.³¹ We are told that in this year Bienville took measures to break up the English trade on the Mississippi, and that he heard of massacres of English traders; ³² but how far his actions were responsible for the massacres cannot be determined. It is probable that the massacres referred to had some connection with the great Indian revolt known in Carolina as the Yamasee War, which began in April, 1715. English aggressiveness was then at its height from the Lakes to the Gulf. The traders, intoxicated by their success, began to cheat, seize property for pretended debts, and charge exorbitant prices. Their brutality aroused the deepest resentment among the Creeks, Cherokees, Chickasaws, Yamasees, and other tribes; Spanish intrigue in Florida, and perhaps to some extent French influence in Louisiana also, fanned the flame. The English traders scattered among these various tribes were put to death, often with great torture; Carolina was overrun by savages, and its population took refuge in Charleston.³³

The Indian uprising, coming at so opportune a moment for preventing the English conquest of Louisiana, served to cast a suspicion upon the French of having aided and abetted the movement; but whatever may have been their desire, the Louisiana colonists were in no condition to give any really effective aid to the savages.³⁴

³¹ Heinrich's *La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes*, pp. lxi, lxx.

³² French's *Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida* (New series, 1869), p. 129.

³³ McCrady's *South Carolina under the Proprietary Government*, p. 353; Heinrich's *La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes*, p. lxxi.

³⁴ It is a fact worthy of note, however, that the French traders did not incur the resentment of the savages during these troubles. In one of the Chickasaw villages, for instance, there were fifteen English traders and a Frenchman occupying the same cabin. The Indians suddenly rose and slew the English, but their chief ordered the Frenchman to stand at his side and fear nothing. Shortly afterwards, however, two young warriors mistook the white man for an Englishman and slew him, "to the great regret of the whole nation." — La Harpe's *Journal Historique*, p. 120.

The insurrection had two results. The French, profiting as much as possible by the troubles of the Carolinians, sought to clear the Mississippi of the English, and in 1716 built Fort Rosalie at the site of the present Natchez. The Carolina proprietors, at the same time, perceiving the necessity of a more effective control over both Indians and traders, and tempted also by the enormous profits of the trade, had an act passed in 1716 giving the proprietary government the entire control of the traffic, which thus became a public monopoly. The trade had previously been conducted by private enterprise. In 1719, however, owing to complaints from the London merchants of the monopolistic nature of the trade, the act was repealed.³⁵ About 1717, with the return of peace and quiet in Carolina, the western routes were reopened and Louisiana was again menaced with English invasion.

L'Épinay, the new Governor, knowing nothing of the Indian character, had disappointed the savages by not distributing the usual presents, and the English were not slow to take advantage of this blunder. The Indian chiefs grumbled mightily at L'Épinay's niggardliness, and called him such things as an old woman who never went from home and a mangy dog sent over by the great French chief because he was dying of hunger in his own village.³⁶ At this time Sir Robert Montgomery received a grant of a portion of Carolina south of the Savannah River, to be known as Azilia, and had settlements been planted in this region as contemplated, Louisiana would have been further endangered. Fortunately for the French, however, Carolina was again disturbed by Indian troubles, followed by a revolution which overthrew the proprietary government, and the colony was consequently too busily

³⁵ Logan's *History of Upper South Carolina*, ch. X; McCrady's *South Carolina under the Proprietary Government*, p. 629.

³⁶ Heinrich's *La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes*, p. 142.

absorbed with domestic affairs to maintain its aggressive policy toward its western neighbor.

The fear of the French on the Mississippi was given as one of the reasons why the people of Carolina desired to be under the protection of the British Crown; and whether this fear was real or feigned, the colonists by various means made such an impression upon the Lords of Trade that they instructed Francis Nicholson, the first royal Governor, to make special efforts to regain the friendship of the Indians. Accordingly, with the establishment of royal government in Carolina, we find the English more aggressive in the Southwest than ever before.³⁷ Unlicensed persons were prohibited from trading with the Indians.³⁸ The Cherokees and the Creeks were each summoned to a great council, at which Governor Nicholson made them presents, marked the boundaries of their lands, regulated weights and measures, appointed an agent to look after the affairs of each nation, and had both to choose a head chief to deal directly with the Governor.³⁹ In 1730 Sir Alexander Cuming arrived in South Carolina, and at a great meeting of the Cherokee chiefs secured an acknowledgment of their allegiance to the British Crown. Later he carried seven of the chiefs to London, where a treaty was drawn up stipulating that the great king had ordered his children in Carolina to "trade with the Indians, and furnish them with all manner of goods they want, and to make haste to build houses and plant corn from Charlestown, towards the towns of the Cherokees behind the great mountains." The Cherokees, on their part, were to "take care to keep the trading path clean, that there be no blood on the path where the English tread, even though they should be accompa-

³⁷ Heinrich's *La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes*, p. 152.

³⁸ McCrady's *South Carolina under the Royal Government*, p. 38.

³⁹ Carroll's *Historical Collections of South Carolina*, Vol. I, pp. 258, 272, 278.

nied with other people with whom the Cherokees may be at war: 'That the Cherokees shall not suffer their people to trade with any other nation but the English, nor permit white men of any other nation to build any forts or cabins, or plant any corn among them.'" The Indians also agreed to return the fugitive slaves of the planters, and for every slave returned were to receive a reward in the form of a gun and a watch coat.⁴⁰

The renewed activity of the English in the Southwest was noted by Charlevoix on his journey down the Mississippi in 1721. He declares that the Chickasaws are angered at the French for allying themselves with the Illinois, and that the English of Carolina are striving to increase the resentment. Two Frenchmen following Charlevoix were slain by Chickasaws as soon as they left the Illinois country.⁴¹ On reaching Biloxi in 1722 he hears of an English interloper there named Marshall, who had considerable dealings with the French; and during his stay there a Choctaw chief came to Bienville and declared that the English were making his people great promises and trying to induce them to have no more trade with the French.⁴²

While the English were thus making headway, the French were almost idle. In 1712 Crozat had received a monopoly of the trade of Louisiana; in 1717 practically the same privileges were conferred upon the Company of the West, which two years later was transformed into the Company of the Indies. The trade with the Indians was entirely in the hands of the company, which fixed arbitrarily the prices at which its goods were to be sold and the prices to be paid for the furs of the natives. Carolina traders, unfettered by such restrictions, could

⁴⁰ Carroll's *Historical Collections of South Carolina*, Vol. I, p. 278.

⁴¹ Charlevoix's *Journal d'un Voyage dans l'Amerique Septentrionale*, Vol. III, p. 257.

⁴² Charlevoix's *Journal d'un Voyage dans l'Amerique Septentrionale*, Vol. III, p. 483.

easily undersell their competitors. The personal qualities of the French should undoubtedly have given them an advantage in bartering with the natives; the savage was as much attracted by the affability and adaptability of the Frenchman as he was repelled by the *hauteur* of the Briton.⁴³ But in the long run, as a means of gaining the friendship of the aborigines, French manners proved far less effective than English merchandise. Under the régime of the Company of the Indies the French officials were continually hampered by a dearth of goods, and much of the stock sent by the company was so old that the savages did not care for it.⁴⁴ The Lords of Trade in 1721 declared that the French could never compete with the English in furnishing the Indians with European commodities at honest and reasonable prices,⁴⁵ and Charlevoix himself at the same time stated that the English

⁴³ The Lords of Trade, in a memorial to the king in 1721, called attention to the great advantage which the French in America possessed through their intermarriage with the natives, "whereby their new Empire may be peopled without draining France of its inhabitants", and recommended that the British colonial Governors should be instructed to encourage such intermarriage in their provinces! — See *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, Vol. V, p. 626.

The French seem to have been fully aware of their personal advantage over the English in dealing with the natives. — Charlevoix in his *Journal d'un Voyage dans l'Amérique Septentrionale*, Vol. III, p. 80, says: "Les Anglois Amériquains ne veulent point de Guerre, parce qu'ils ont beaucoup à perdre; ils ne ménagent point les Sauvages parce qu'ils ne croient en avoir besoin. La Jeunesse François, par des raisons contraires, déteste la Paix, et vit bien avec les Naturels du Pays, dont elle s'attire aisément l'estime pendant la Guerre, et l'amitié en tout tems."

Baudry des Lozières, in his *Second Voyage à la Louisiane*, Vol. I, p. 397, says: "J'ai dit que les sauvages ont un penchant naturel pour les Français, et je le tiens d'eux-mêmes j'ai même entendu dire à ceux qui ont des relations commerciales avec les North-Américains, qu'ils y tenaient ainsi aux Anglais, sous le seul point de vue d'intérêt."

⁴⁴ Heinrich's *La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes*, p. 208.

⁴⁵ *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, Vol. V, p. 626.

were selling the savages goods cheaper than were the French.⁴⁶

Governor Spotswood of Virginia wrote in 1719 that the Indians with whom the English traded "have hitherto been kept in our interest by being more plentifully supplied with goods than the French could afford them",⁴⁷ and in the following year we find the Alibamons complaining that the French do not pay them as much for their peltry as they receive from Carolina traders, and also that French goods are sold to them at an advance over English prices.⁴⁸ In the middle of the eighteenth century Governor Glen of South Carolina declared that the tranquillity of his province depended on the retention of the Indians in the British interest, and that this would be impossible without a continuation of traffic with them in the articles for which there was the greatest demand — "both arms and amunition, as well as Cloaths and other necessaries."⁴⁹

English traders, therefore, gained to their side all the great tribes of the lower Mississippi Valley except the Choctaws; and the latter were frequently so wavering in their allegiance to the French as to become to them a source of great anxiety. As their general defection would have meant ruin to the Colony, Bienville, in order to keep them loyal, once or twice found it necessary to foment a war between them and those stanch friends of the English, the Chickasaws.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, Bienville was recalled to France just when his services were most

⁴⁶ Charlevoix's *Journal d'un Voyage dans l'Amérique Septentrionale*, Vol. III, p. 257.

⁴⁷ *Official Letters of Alexander Spotswood*, Vol. II, p. 331 (*Collections of the Virginia Historical Society*, Vol. II).

⁴⁸ La Harpe's *Journal Historique*, p. 228.

⁴⁹ Carroll's *Historical Collections of South Carolina*, Vol. II, pp. 245, 246.

⁵⁰ Heinrich's *La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes*, pp. 152, 163, 164.

needed, as he alone of the French officials seemed capable of counteracting English influences. The Company of the Indies pursued a niggardly policy; presents for the Indians and soldiers for the forts cost money, and it was cheaper to send missionaries, who were indeed the keenest rivals of the British trader.⁵¹ While the English were most aggressive, French depots were empty, and Périer called in vain for goods. When he asked for troops to strike a sudden blow and intimidate the English and their allies, he was accused of seeking to enhance his own reputation at the expense of the Company.⁵²

Who then, during this period, were the real masters of the lower Mississippi Valley? According to good modern French authority, the English traders in 1728 had almost reached the point where with a word they could have turned nearly the whole Indian population against the French.⁵³ In Louisiana, indeed, there were forts and soldiers and towns, so that technically the Company of the Indies held possession of the territory for France; but an examination of the character of these forts, garrisons, and settlements shows that the Company's hold upon its vast domain was pitifully weak. All of the forts were unfinished; the guns were unmounted; and the pieces were sometimes of one calibre and the balls of another. The soldiers were fit inmates of such posts.

⁵¹ One of these missionaries, the Jesuit De Guyenne, went as far east in the direction of the English settlements in 1726 as the Chattahoochee River, and built a cabin in the Indian village of Coweta, within the limits of the present State of Georgia. Later the English showed their fear of his influence by persuading the Indians to burn his cabin and drive him back to Toulouse. — See Hamilton's *Colonial Mobile*, p. 158.

There is also evidence of French attempts to extend their influence into Georgia as late as 1750, when one Daniel Clark, a trader, reported that on reaching "Cowetaw Town" he found the French colors set up in the square and the whole town "taken up in entertaining" officers and soldiers from Fort Toulouse. — See *Georgia Colonial Records*, Vol. VI, p. 341.

⁵² Heinrich's *La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes*, p. 227.

⁵³ Heinrich's *La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes*, p. 225.

Few in numbers, poorly armed, almost naked, usually fed on scant rations of rice and maize, quartered in miserable huts covered with bark, sleeping on the damp ground and thereby becoming afflicted with various distempers, they soon lost what little capacity for military service they once might have had. Desertions were frequent, the Carolina settlements offering a safe retreat.⁵⁴ To cap the climax, the Natchez Indians, always more or less troublesome, rose in revolt in November, 1729, and wiped out the settlement at Fort Rosalie, one of the most prosperous in the Colony. The French planned a summary vengeance, but were never able fully to carry it out. Most of the Natchez finally took refuge among the enemies of France, the Chickasaws; and the failure of the French to exact full reparation lost them the respect of many of their Indian allies. The Natchez massacre was followed by a severe drought, which almost destroyed the crops. The Company was discouraged, and its colonists all seemed animated with one single desire — to get out of the country.

On the English side at this time there was unusual prosperity.⁵⁵ In October, 1729, there were said to have been one hundred and twenty packhorses with English goods among the Choctaws alone, and in the following year was negotiated the important treaty of alliance with

⁵⁴ In 1721 the entire garrison at Fort Toulouse mutinied on account of lack of food and with arms and baggage took the road to Carolina. One of the officers escaped to the Indians, and with their aid ambushed the mutineers and killed or captured the whole party. — La Harpe's *Journal Historique*, pp. 261, 348.

⁵⁵ The years 1721-1743 were the most prosperous period for the trade in peltry. In 1748 the value of beaver and deer-skins exported from Charleston amounted to about \$300,000 of our present money, and up to this time only one other Carolina export (rice) had exceeded the value of the skins sent to Europe. — See Carroll's *Historical Collections of South Carolina*, Vol. II, p. 234; McCrady's *South Carolina under the Proprietary Government*, pp. 345, 346; and McCrady's *South Carolina under the Royal Government*, p. 270.

the Cherokees, already described. Between the spiritless colonists of Louisiana and the traders from Carolina there was a striking contrast. The latter cleared no fields, sowed no crops, and built no towns in the lower Mississippi Valley; but their supplies of gew-gaws, firearms, and fire water won them the favor of the savage, and their physical prowess and expert marksmanship inspired his respect. The trader was often something more than a mere higgler; frequently he was a man of superior intelligence. Unlike the English settler, who usually regarded the Indian as a pest to be exterminated as soon as possible, and whose advent often filled the savage with dismay, because it meant the restriction of his hunting-grounds, the trader was welcomed by the natives; for his arrival meant the satisfaction of their primitive wants.

The predominating influence of the English over the native population in this region before 1755 was due mainly to the activity of the trader, but it was perhaps enhanced by the lack of land-hungry Anglo-Saxon pioneers. It should be borne in mind, however, that the presence of the trader among the aborigines was by no means an unmixed blessing; in fact, he was everywhere the source of debauching and demoralizing influence. The Indian acquired from him all the vices and none of the virtues of the white man, and suffered as much injury from the pampering of the trafficker as he did later from the crowding of the settler.

In January, 1731, the Company of the Indies came to the conclusion that its policy in Louisiana had been a failure and surrendered its holdings to the French Crown. The royal government at once set itself to work to improve matters in the Colony and sent over soldiers and supplies; but the Company's policy had given Louisiana such a bad name at home that it was for a long time a difficult matter to induce colonists to emigrate. In the

meantime English influence in the Southwest had been greatly strengthened through the founding of Georgia and the treaties made by Oglethorpe with the western Indians. In July, 1732, to the great joy of the colonists, Bienville was again made Governor of Louisiana, and in December he sailed with supplies and soldiers, and with instructions to expel the Chickasaws from French territory, to regain the good will of the Choctaws, and to prevent all trade between the Indians and outsiders. He was instructed to check English encroachments by peaceful measures, such as the resumption of trade and the despatching of interpreters to the principal posts.⁵⁶ Bienville's slender resources, however, were entirely inadequate for the great work confronting him. There was no cessation in the activity of the English; on the contrary, while the province of Louisiana was languishing, Virginia and Carolina were receiving constant accessions of immigrants, who pushed farther and farther into the western woods.

The new Governor finally perceived that there could be no hope of peace in Louisiana until he drove out or subdued the troublesome Chickasaws, and that a prompt and decisive blow was needed to regain even the respect of the copper-hued allies of the French. In 1736, therefore, he organized an expedition against the Chickasaws, and advanced beyond Tombeche, where he found the enemy strongly fortified in several villages. Over one of these the English colors were flying, and English traders were also seen preparing the savages to meet the attack.⁵⁷ It requires no wild flight of the imagination to see in these intrigues and hostilities in the southern forests the preliminaries of the great struggle for a continent which began twenty years later. Bienville's war on the Chickasaws was a miserable failure, and though a peace

⁵⁶ Heinrich's *La Louisiane sous la Compagnie des Indes*, pp. 276, 277.

⁵⁷ Baudry des Lozières's *Voyage à la Louisiane*, pp. 60, 61.

was patched up with them in 1740 they continued their depredations. The rivalry for the mastery of the southern back country continued until England and France resolved to decide the question by the wager of battle.

In the long struggle that followed Louisiana remained in constant dread of an English attack which never came. The very weakness of the Colony was to it perhaps a source of protection; for the energies of the English were devoted to the reduction of the more menacing French establishments in the North. Nevertheless, when the treaty of peace was signed in Paris, in 1763, the region from the Ohio to the Gulf and between the Alleghanies and the Mississippi came into the possession of that people who had already controlled it in a commercial way for half a century. But the country was not to be definitely won without a struggle with the natives. French intrigue and English blunders during the war precipitated an uprising of the Creeks and Cherokees which it required two years to subdue.⁵⁸ Even after the treaty of peace an English officer who spent some time among the Cherokees declared that he found them still in sympathy with the French and reconciled to the rule of the English only through the advantages of their trade.⁵⁹

In view of the fact that English influence in the lower Mississippi Valley was for such a long period in the ascendant, the question naturally arises why the southern English colonists did not follow the example of their brothers in New England and attempt to complete the conquest of French territory during Queen Anne's and King George's wars. The answer may be given, I think, in a few words. The southern Colonies were never menaced by the feeble settlements in Louisiana as were their northern neighbors by the feudal military organization

⁵⁸ McCrady's *South Carolina under the Royal Government*, pp. 302-304.

⁵⁹ Winsor's *Mississippi Basin*, pp. 411, 412.

of New France. It was the Spaniard in Florida rather than the Frenchman in Louisiana whom the Georgians and Carolinians dreaded. Again, the Indians with whom the French in the South intrigued were milder than those in the North, and their incursions were not so greatly feared. Lastly, the religious fanaticism — the hatred of English Puritan for French Catholic — so manifest in New England, was lacking in the South.

The general feeling of the southern colonists toward their neighbors in the West seems to have been well expressed by Governor Glen, when he wrote: "If ever the French settlements on the Mississippi grow great, they may have pernicious effects upon South Carolina, because they produce the same kind of commodities as are produced there, viz.: Rice and Indigo; but hitherto the only inconvenience that I know of is their attempting to withdraw our Indians from us, and attacking those who are most attached to our interest. . . . It is easy for me at present to divert the French in their own way, and to find them business for double the number of men they have in that country."⁰⁰ From a military invasion of Louisiana, even if it had been entirely practicable, the southern colonists would have had nothing to gain; a commercial conquest they had already achieved.

⁰⁰ Carroll's *Historical Collections of South Carolina*, Vol. II, p. 247.

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