

A CINGHALESE GENTLEMAN.
VIEW FROM THE BULLER, NEW ZEALAND.

GREATER BRITAIN.

*A RECORD OF TRAVEL IN ENGLISH-SPEAKING
COUNTRIES DURING 1866-7. BY CHARLES
WENTWORTH DILKE. TWO VOLUMES IN ONE. WITH
MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.*

PHILADELPHIA: J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO. LONDON:
MACMILLAN & CO. 1869.

TO MY FATHER I Dedicate THIS BOOK.
C. W. D.

PREFACE.

In 1866 and 1867, I followed England round the world: everywhere I was in English-speaking, or in English-governed lands. If I remarked that climate, soil, manners of life, that mixture with other peoples had modified the blood, I saw, too, that in essentials the race was always one.

The idea which in all the length of my travels has been at once my fellow and my guide—a key wherewith to unlock the hidden things of strange new lands—is a conception, however imperfect, of the grandeur of our race, already girding the earth, which it is destined, perhaps, eventually to overspread.

In America, the peoples of the world are being fused together, but they are run into an English mould: Alfred's laws and Chaucer's

tongue are theirs whether they would or no. There are men who say that Britain in her age will claim the glory of having planted greater Englands across the seas. They fail to perceive that she has done more than found plantations of her own—that she has imposed her institutions upon the offshoots of Germany, of Ireland, of Scandinavia, and of Spain. Through America, England is speaking to the world.

Sketches of Saxondom may be of interest even upon humbler grounds: the development of the England of Elizabeth is to be found, not in the Britain of Victoria, but in half the habitable globe. If two small islands are by courtesy styled “Great,” America, Australia, India, must form a Greater Britain.

C. W. D.

76 Sloane Street, S. W. 1st November, 1868.

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PART I. AMERICA.

GREATER BRITAIN.

CHAPTER I. VIRGINIA.

FROM the bows of the steamer *Saratoga*, on the 20th June, 1866, I caught sight of the low works of Fort Monroe, as, threading her way between the sand-banks of Capes Charles and Henry, the ship pressed on, under sail and steam, to enter Chesapeake Bay.

Our sudden arrival amid shoals of sharks and kingfish, the keeping watch for flocks of canvas-back ducks, gave us enough and to spare of idle work till we fully sighted the Yorktown peninsula, overgrown with ancient memories—ancient for America. Three towns of lost grandeur, or their ruins, stand there still. Williamsburg, the former capital, graced even to our time by the palaces where once the royal governors held more than regal state; Yorktown, where Cornwallis surrendered to the continental troops;

Jamestown, the earliest settlement, founded in 1607, thirteen years before old Governor Winthrop fixed the site of Plymouth, Massachusetts.

A bump against the pier of Fort Monroe soon roused us from our musings, and we found ourselves invaded by a swarm of stalwart negro troopers, clothed in the cavalry uniform of the United States, who boarded us for the mails. Not a white man save those we brought was to be seen upon the pier, and the blazing sun made me thankful that I had declined an offered letter to Jeff. Davis.

Pushing off again into the stream, we ran the gantlet of the Rip-Raps passage, and made for Norfolk, having on our left the many exits of the Dismal Swamp Canal. Crossing Hampton Roads—a grand bay with pleasant grassy shores, destined one day to become the best known, as by nature it is the noblest, of Atlantic ports—we nearly ran upon the wrecks of the Federal frigates *Cumberland* and *Congress*, sunk by the rebel ram *Merrimac* in the first great naval action of the war; but soon after, by a sort of poetic justice, we almost drifted into the black hull of the *Merrimac* herself. Great gangs of negroes were laboring laughingly at the removal, by blasting, of the sunken ships.

When we were securely moored at Norfolk pier, I set off upon an inspection of the second city of Virginia. Again not a white man was to be seen, but hundreds of negroes were working in the heat, building, repairing, road-making, and happily chattering the while. At last, turning a corner, I came on a hotel, and, as a consequence, on a bar and its crowd of swaggering whites—"Johnny Rebs" all, you might see by the breadth of their brims, for across the Atlantic a broad brim denotes less the man of peace than the ex-member of a Southern guerrilla band, Morgan's, Mosby's, or Stuart's. No Southerner will wear the Yankee "stove-pipe" hat; a Panama or Palmetto for him, he says, though he keeps to the long black coat that rules from Maine to the Rio Grande.

These Southerners were all alike—all were upright, tall, and heavily moustached; all had long black hair and glittering eyes,

and I looked instinctively for the baldric and rapier. It needed no second glance to assure me that as far as the men of Norfolk were concerned, the saying of our Yankee skipper was not far from the truth: "The last idea that enters the mind of a Southerner is that of doing work."

Strangers are scarce in Norfolk, and it was not long before I found an excuse for entering into conversation with the "citizens." My first question was not received with much cordiality by my new acquaintances. "How do the *negroes* work? Wall, we spells nigger with two 'g's,' I reckon." (Virginians, I must explain, are used to "reckon" as much as are New Englanders to "guess," while Western men "calculate" as often as they cease to swear.) "How does the niggers work? Wall, niggers is darned fools, certain, but they ain't quite sich fools as to work while the Yanks will feed 'em. No, sir, not quite sich fools as that." Hardly deeming it wise to point to the negroes working in the sun-blaze within a hundred yards, while we sat rocking ourselves in the veranda of the inn, I changed my tack, and asked whether things were settling down in Norfolk. This query soon led my friends upon the line I wanted them to take, and in five minutes we were well through politics, and plunging into the very war. "You're a Britisher. Now, all that they tell you's darned lies. We're just as secesh as we ever was, only so many's killed that we can't fight—that's all, I reckon." "We ain't going to fight the North and West again," said an ex-colonel of rebel infantry; "next time we fight, 'twill be us and the West against the Yanks. We'll keep the old flag then, and be darned to them." "If it hadn't been for the politicians, we shouldn't have seceded at all, I reckon: we should just have kept the old flag and the constitution, and the Yanks would have seceded from us. Reckon we'd have let 'em go." "Wall, boys, s'pose we liquor?" closed in the colonel, shooting out his old quid, and filling in with another. "We'd have fought for a lifetime if the cussed Southerners hadn't deserted like they did." I asked who these "Southerners" were to whom such disrespect was being shown. "You didn't think Virginia was a Southern State over in Britain, did you? 'cause

Virginia is a border State, sir. We didn't go to secede at all; it was them blasted Southerners that brought it on us. First they wouldn't give a command to General Robert E. Lee, then they made us do all the fighting for 'em, and then, when the pinch came, they left us in the lurch. Why, sir, I saw three Mississippi regiments surrender without a blow—yes, sir: that's right down good whisky; jess you sample it." Here the steam-whistle of the *Saratoga* sounded with its deep bray. "Reckon you'll have to hurry up to make connections," said one of my new friends, and I hurried off, not without a fear lest some of the group should shoot after me, to avenge the affront of my quitting them before the mixing of the drinks. They were but a pack of "mean whites," "North Carolina crackers," but their views were those which I found dominant in all ranks at Richmond, and up the country in Virginia.

After all, the Southern planters are not "The South," which for political purposes is composed of the "mean whites," of the Irish of the towns, and of the Southwestern men—Missourians, Kentuckians, and Texans—fiercely anti-Northern, without being in sentiment what we should call Southern, certainly not representatives of the "Southern Chivalry." The "mean whites," or "poor trash," are the whites who are not planters—members of the slaveholding race who never held a slave—white men looked down upon by the negroes. It is a necessary result of the despotic government of one race by another that the poor members of the dominant people are universally despised: the "destitute Europeans" of Bombay, the "white loafers" of the Punjab, are familiar cases. Where slavery exists, the "poor trash" class must inevitably be both large and wretched: primogeniture is necessary to keep the plantations sufficiently great to allow for the payment of overseers and the supporting in luxury of the planter family, and younger sons and their descendants are not only left destitute, but debarred from earning their bread by honest industry, for in a slave country labor is degrading.

The Southern planters were gentlemen, possessed of many

aristocratic virtues, along with every aristocratic vice; but to each planter there were nine “mean whites,” who, though grossly ignorant, full of insolence, given to the use of the knife and pistol upon the slightest provocation, were, until the election of Lincoln to the presidency, as completely the rulers of America as they were afterward the leaders of the rebellion.

At sunset we started up the James on our way to City Point and Richmond, sailing almost between the very masts of the famous rebel privateer the *Florida*, and seeing her as she lay under the still, gray waters. She was cut out from a Brazilian port, and when claimed by the imperial government, was to have been at once surrendered. While the dispatches were on their way to Norfolk, she was run into at her moorings by a Federal gunboat, and filled and sank directly. Friends of the Confederacy have hinted that the collision was strangely opportune; nevertheless, the fact remains that the commander of the gunboat was dismissed the navy for his carelessness.

The twilight was beyond description lovely. The change from the auks and ice-birds of the Atlantic to the blue-birds and robins of Virginia was not more sudden than that from winter to tropical warmth and sensuous indolence; but the scenery, too, of the river is beautiful in its very changelessness. Those who can see no beauty but in boldness might call the James as monotonous as the lower Loire.

After weeks of bitter cold, warm evenings favor meditation. The soft air, the antiquity of the forest, the languor of the sunset breeze, all dispose to dream and sleep. That oak has seen Powhatan; the founders of Jamestown may have pointed at that grand old sycamore. In this drowsy humor, we sighted the far-famed batteries of Newport News, and turning-in to berth or hammock, lay all night at City Point, near Petersburg.

A little before sunrise we weighed again, and sought a passage through the tremendous Confederate “obstructions.” Rows of iron skeletons, the frame-works of the wheels of sunken steamers,

showed above the stream, casting gaunt shadows westward, and varied only by here and there a battered smoke-stack or a spar. The whole of the steamers that had plied upon the James and the canals before the war were lying here in rows, sunk lengthwise along the stream. Two in the middle of each row had been raised to let the government vessels pass, but in the heat-mist and faint light the navigation was most difficult. For five and twenty miles the rebel forts were as thick as the hills and points allowed; yet, in spite of booms and bars, of sunken ships, of batteries and torpedoes, the Federal monitors once forced their way to Fort Darling in the outer works of Richmond. I remembered these things a few weeks later, when General Grant's first words to me at Washington were: "Glad to meet you. What have you seen?" "The Capitol." "Go at once and see the Monitors." He afterward said to me, in words that photograph not only the Monitors, but Grant: "You can batter away at those things for a month, and do no good."

At Dutch Gap we came suddenly upon a curious scene. The river flowed toward us down a long, straight reach, bounded by a lofty hill crowned with tremendous earthworks; but through a deep trench or cleft, hardly fifty yards in length, upon our right, we could see the stream running with violence in a direction parallel with our course. The hills about the gully were hollowed out into caves and bomb-proofs, evidently meant as shelters from vertical fire, but the rough graves of a vast cemetery showed that the protection was sought in vain. Forests of crosses of unpainted wood rose upon every acre of flat ground. On the peninsula, all but made an island by the cleft, was a grove of giant trees, leafless, barkless, dead, and blanched by a double change in the level of the stream. There is no sight so sad as that of a drowned forest, with a turkey-buzzard on each bough. On the bank upon our left was an iron scaffold, eight or ten stories high,—"Butler's Lookout," as the cleft was "Butler's Dutch Gap Canal." The canal, unfinished in war, is now to be completed at State expense for purposes of trade. As we rounded the extremity of the peninsula an eagle was seen to

light upon a tree. From every portion of the ship—main deck, hurricane deck, lower deck ports—revolvers, ready capped and loaded, were brought to bear upon the bird, which sheered off unharmed amid a storm of bullets. After this incident, I was careful in my political discussions with my shipmates; disarmament in the Confederacy had clearly not been extended to private weapons.

The outer and inner lines of fortifications passed, we came in view of a many-steeped town, with domes and spires recalling Oxford, hanging on a bank above a crimson-colored foaming stream. In ten minutes we were alongside the wharf at Richmond, and in half an hour safely housed in the “Exchange Hotel,” kept by the Messrs. Carrington, of whom the father was a private, the son a colonel, in the rebel volunteers.

The next day, while the works and obstructions on the James were still fresh in my mind, I took train to Petersburg, the city the capture of which by Grant was the last blow struck by the North at the melting forces of the Confederacy.

The line showed the war: here and there the track, torn up in Northern raids, had barely been repaired; the bridges were burnt and broken; the rails worn down to an iron thread. The joke “on board,” as they say here for “in the train,” was that the engine-drivers down the line are tolerably cute men, who, when the rails are altogether worn away, understand how to “go it on the bare wood,” and who at all times “know where to jump.”

From the window of the car we could see that in the country there were left no mules, no horses, no roads, no men. The solitude is not all owing to the war: in the whole five and twenty miles from Richmond to Petersburg there was before the war but a single station; in New England your passage-card often gives a station in every two miles. A careful look at the underwood on either side the line showed that this forest is not primeval, that all this country had once been plowed.

Virginia stands first among the States for natural advantages: in climate she is unequaled; her soil is fertile; her mineral wealth in

coal, copper, gold, and iron enormous, and well placed; her rivers good, and her great harbor one of the best in the world. Virginia has been planted more than two hundred and fifty years, and is as large as England, yet has a free population of only a million. In every kind of production she is miserably inferior to Missouri or Ohio, in most, inferior also to the infant States of Michigan and Illinois. Only a quarter of her soil is under cultivation, to half that of poor, starved New England, and the mines are deserted which were worked by the very Indians who were driven from the land as savages a hundred years ago.

There is no surer test of the condition of a country than the state of its highways. In driving on the main roads round Richmond, in visiting the scene of McClellan's great defeat on the Chickahominy at Mechanicsville and Malvern Hill, I myself, and an American gentleman who was with me, had to get out and lay the planks upon the bridges, and then sit upon them, to keep them down while the black coachman drove across. The best roads in Virginia are but ill kept "corduroys;" but, bad as are these, "plank roads" over which artillery have passed, knocking out every other plank, are worse by far; yet such is the main road from Richmond toward the west.

There is not only a scarcity of roads, but of railroads. A comparison of the railway system of Illinois and Indiana with the two lines of Kentucky or the one of Western Virginia or Louisiana, is a comparison of the South with the North, of slavery with freedom. Virginia shows already the decay of age, but is blasted by slavery rather than by war.

Passing through Petersburg, the streets of which were gay with the feathery-brown blooms of the Venetian sumach, but almost deserted by human beings, who have not returned to the city since they were driven out by the shot and shell of which their houses show the scars, we were soon in the rebel works. There are sixty miles of these works in all, line within line, three deep: alternations of sand-pits and sand-heaps, with here and there a tree-trunk

pierced for riflemen, and everywhere a double row of *chevaux de frise*. The forts nearest this point were named by their rebel occupants Fort Hell and Fort Damnation. Tremendous works, but it needed no long interview with Grant to understand their capture. I had not been ten minutes in his office at Washington before I saw that the secret of his unvarying success lay in his unflinching determination: there is pith in the American conceit which reads in his initials, "U. S. G.,” “unconditional-surrender Grant.”

The works defending Richmond, hardly so strong as those of Petersburg, were attacked in a novel manner in the third year of the war. A strong body of Federal cavalry on a raid, unsupported by infantry or guns, came suddenly by night upon the outer lines of Richmond on the west. Something had led them to believe that the rebels were not in force, and with the strange aimless daring that animated both parties during the rebellion, they rode straight in along the winding road, unchallenged, and came up to the inner lines. There they were met by a volley which emptied a few saddles, and they retired, without even stopping to spike the guns in the outer works. Had they known enough of the troops opposed to them to have continued to advance, they might have taken Richmond, and held it long enough to have captured the rebel president and senate, and burned the great iron-works and ships. The whole of the rebel army had gone north, and even the home guard was camped out on the Chickahominy. The troops who fired the volley were a company of the “iron-works battalion,” boys employed at the foundries, not one of whom had ever fired a rifle before this night. They confessed themselves that “one minute more, and they’d have run;” but the volley just stopped the enemy in time.

The spot where we first struck the rebel lines was that known as the Crater—the funnel-shaped cavity formed when Grant sprang his famous mine: 1500 men are buried in the hollow itself, and the bones of those smothered by the falling earth are working through the soil: 5000 negro troops were killed in this attack, and are

buried round the hollow where they died, fighting as gallantly as they fought everywhere throughout the war. It is a singular testimony to the continuousness of the fire, that the still remaining subterranean passages show that in countermiming the rebels came once within three feet of the mine, yet failed to hear the working parties. Thousands of old army shoes were lying on the earth, and negro boys were digging up bullets for old lead.

Within eighty yards of the Crater are the Federal investing lines, on which the trumpet-flower of our gardens was growing wild in deep rich masses. The negroes told me not to gather it, because they believe it scalds the hand. They call it "poison plant," or "blister weed." The blue-birds and scarlet tannagers were playing about the horn-shaped flowers.

Just within Grant's earthworks are the ruins of an ancient church, built, it is said, with bricks that were brought by the first colonists from England in 1614. About Norfolk, about Petersburg, and in the Shenandoah Valley, you cannot ride twenty miles through the Virginian forest without bursting in upon some glade containing a quaint old church, or a creeper-covered roofless palace of the Culpeppers, the Randolphs, or the Scotts. The county names have in them all a history. Taking the letter "B" alone, we have Barbour, Bath, Bedford, Berkeley, Boone, Botetourt, Braxton, Brooke, Brunswick, Buchanan, Buckingham. A dozen counties in the State are named from kings or princes. The slaveowning cavaliers whose names the remainder bear are the men most truly guilty of the late attempt made by their descendants to create an empire founded on disloyalty and oppression; but within sight of this old church of theirs at Petersburg, thirty-three miles of Federal outworks stand as a monument of how the attempt was crushed by the children of their New England brother-colonists.

The names of streams and hamlets in Virginia have often a quaint English ring. On the Potomac, near Harper's Ferry, I once came upon "Sir John's Run." Upon my asking a tall, gaunt fellow, who was fishing, whether this was the spot on which the Knight of

Windsor “larded the lean earth,” I got for sole answer: “Wall, don’t know ’bout that, but it’s a mighty fine spot for yellow-fin trout.” The entry to Virginia is characteristic. You sail between capes named from the sons of James I., and have fronting you the estuaries of two rivers called after the King and the Duke of York.

The old “F. F. V.’s,” the first families of Virginia, whose founders gave these monarchic names to the rivers and counties of the State, are far off now in Texas and California—those, that is, which were not extinct before the war. The tenth Lord Fairfax keeps a tiny ranch near San Francisco; some of the chief Denmans are also to be found in California. In all such cases of which I heard, the emigration took place before the war; Northern conquest could not be made use of as a plea whereby to escape the reproaches due to the slaveowning system. There is a stroke of justice in the fact that the Virginian oligarchy have ruined themselves in ruining their State; but the gaming hells of Farobankopolis, as Richmond once was called, have much for which to answer.

When the “burnt district” comes to be rebuilt, Richmond will be the most beautiful of all the Atlantic cities; while the water-power of the rapids of the James, and a situation at the junction of canal and river, secure for it a prosperous future.

The superb position of the State-house (which formed the rebel capitol), on the brow of a long hill, whence it overhangs the city and the James, has in it something of satire. The Parliament-house of George Washington’s own State, the State-house, contains the famed statue set up by the general assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia to the hero’s memory. Without the building stands the still more noteworthy bronze statue of the first President, erected jointly by all the States in the then Union. That such monuments should overlook the battle-fields of the war provoked by the secession from the Union of Washington’s loved Virginia, is a fact full of the grim irony of history.

Hollywood, the cemetery of Richmond, is a place full of touching sad suggestion, and very beautiful, with deep shades and rippling

streams. During the war, there were hospitals in Richmond for 20,000 men, and "always full," they say. The Richmond men who were killed in battle were buried where they fell; but 8000 who died in hospital are buried here, and over them is placed a wooden cross, with the inscription in black paint, "Dead, but not forgotten." In another spot lie the Union dead, under the shadow of the flag for which they died.

From Monroe's tomb the evening view is singularly soft and calm; the quieter and calmer for the drone in which are mingled the trills of the mocking-bird, the hoarse croaking of the bull-frog, the hum of the myriad fire-flies, that glow like summer lightning among the trees, the distant roar of the river, of which the rich red water can still be seen, beaten by the rocks into a rosy foam.

With the moment's chillness of the sunset breeze, the golden glory of the heavens fades into gray, and there comes quickly over them the solemn blueness of the Southern night. Thoughts are springing up of the many thousand unnamed graves, where the rebel soldiers lie unknown, when the Federal drums in Richmond begin sharply beating the rappel.

CHAPTER II. THE NEGRO.

In the back country of Virginia, and on the borders of North Carolina, it becomes clear that our common English notions of the negro and of slavery are nearer the truth than common notions often are. The London Christy Minstrels are not more given to bursts of laughter of the form "Yah! yah!" than are the plantation hands. The negroes upon the Virginia farms are not maligned by those who represent them as delighting in the contrasts of crimson and yellow, or emerald and sky-blue. I have seen them on a Sunday afternoon, dressed in scarlet waistcoats and gold-laced cravats, returning hurriedly from "meetin'," to dance break-downs, and grin from ear to ear for hours at a time. What better should we expect from men to whom until just now it was forbidden, under tremendous penalties, to teach their letters?

Nothing can force the planters to treat negro freedom save from the

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