

The Dismal Swamp and Lake Drummond. Early recollections.

THE DISMAL SWAMP AND LAKE DRUMMOND.

56 13?8

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

VIVID PORTRAYAL OF AMUSING SCENES.

BY ROBT. ARNOLD.

SUFFOLK, VA.

LC

NORFOLK, VA. GREEN, BURKE & GREGORY, PRINTERS.

1888.

Entered according to act of Congress in the year 1888, by R. Arnold, in the office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

LC

F232 ?7A71

INTRODUCTION.

This little volume is launched upon the sea of public favor. If it should stem the tide of criticism and reach a haven, my object in the writing of it will be accomplished. Being partially blind and physically unable to labor, I have adopted this as a means by which I might gain an honest assistance, a double object presented itself:

Library of Congress

1st. That I might give to its readers some idea of the Dismal Swamp and Lake Drummond as they were and as they now are.

2d. That I may from the sale of my book receive an amount that will place me beyond penury. The work will contain some interesting incidents, and in many instances will give the real names of persons now living who will be acquainted with the subject of which I write. Having said this much introductory of my book, I will now proceed with my task.

When I determined to indite the lines which compose this volume, I had, as has been stated, a double purpose in view. I thought I could not employ a portion of my leisure hours more profitably, certainly not more pleasantly, than by recounting some of the scenes, incidents and associations which carries my mind back to the days of "Auld Lang Syne." What more natural, then, than that my thoughts should revert to the friend of my early manhood—one who, by the uprightness of his character, geniality of his disposition, the chivalric impulses of his nature, deserves, as it is my greatest pleasure to accord, the dedication of this little volume; and I have said all when I mention the name of my esteemed friend Robert Riddick, Esq., of Suffolk, Va.

Suffolk, Va., January 1, 1888.

The Author.

CHAPTER I. DESCRIPTION AND SITUATION OF THE SWAMP—WASHINGTON THE OWNER.

The Dismal Swamp, of which but little is known, is a large body of dense woods, being situated and laying in Nansemond county, Virginia, and the county of Gates, in North Carolina. It contains, by survey, about 100,000 acres. I have been told by H. E. Smith, Esq., our county treasurer, that 45,000 acres were listed in the county of Nansemond. It is thickly set with juniper, cypress and other timber, which makes it very valuable. It came

Library of Congress

into the possession of General George Washington, and after the Revolutionary War a company known as the Dismal Swamp Land Company was formed, and arrangements made to manufacture the timber; hands were put in the Swamp and it was regularly opened. A large quantity of timber was manufactured, and Washington found it necessary to find some outlet for it, which could only be done by a canal or ditch. A suitable place was soon found, and Washington commenced in person to survey the route known as the Washington Ditch. He commenced at the northwest of the Lake, on lands known as "Soldiers' Hope," belonging to the estate of Col. Josiah Riddick, deceased, and running west to what is called the 6 "Reese Farm," on the Edenton road, about seven miles from Suffolk. A large quantity of juniper timber was brought through this ditch, which was hauled to the Nansemond river for shipment. We were told by one of the agents of the company, W. S. Riddick, Esq., that at one time all the business of the company was transacted at the "Reese Farm," that being the point at which the Ditch ended. This mode of getting the lumber to market was found too slow and tedious, and a more direct way sought. How long the Washington Ditch was used for bringing out the timber, we have never heard. That will make no difference, for after the Jericho Canal was cut the Ditch was abandoned, and a direct communication opened to Nansemond river by the way of Shingle creek. Millions of feet of timber was shipped annually. The shareholders at that time were few in number, and their profits were very large. The company consisted of a president, agent and inspector, he living at or near Suffolk, and had charge of the work in the Swamp. He employed the hands, furnished all the supplies, sold the lumber, received all monies, and paid all bills. He was, in fact, the principal officer of the company. At a stated period, annually, a meeting would be held for a general settlement of the year's accounts. The president would preside, and as there were no banks at that time in which to deposit money, the agent would have a very large amount to turn over to the stockholders. That place is no longer of much value to its owners, as it is a source of but little revenue. The shares have 7 been divided and sub-divided, until some of its holders get barely enough to pay the postage on a letter. Ex-Senator Wm. Mahone is probably the largest shareholder. The Swamp has been leased to Jno. L. Roper, Esq., of Norfolk, for several years, during

Library of Congress

which he has had employed a large number of hands, consequently most of the valuable timber has been cut off. When this Swamp was first opened, it became a harbor and safe refuge for runaway slaves, and when one reached that dense place, unless he was betrayed, it would be a matter of impossibility to catch him. Long before the war you could not take up a newspaper published in this part of the State but what you would see several cuts of a negro absconding with a stick on his shoulder and a pack on one end of it, with the following advertisement:

“Notice! \$500 Reward! Ran away from the subscriber, on the night of June 18th, my negro man, Simon. He had on, when last seen, a pair of light pants, with a black patch on the seat of the same. He is slue-footed, knock-kneed, and bends over a little when walking. He may be making his way to the Dismal Swamp. I will pay the above reward for his apprehension, or his lodgment in some jail, so that I can get him again.

“ Joe Jones. ”

I knew of an instance just before the late war where a gentleman by the name of Augustus Holly, Bertie county, N. C., had a slave to run away, who was known to be a desperate character. He knew that he had gone to the Dismal Swamp, and to get him, his master offered a reward of \$1,000 for his apprehension, dead or alive. The person who caught him is still living. I saw the negro when he was brought to Suffolk and lodged in jail. He had been shot at several times, but was little hurt. He had on a coat that was impervious to shot, it being thickly wadded with turkey feathers. Small shot were the only kind used to shoot runaway slaves, and it was very seldom the case that any ever penetrated far enough to injure. I know three persons now living who were runaway slave catchers, but the late war stripped them of their occupation. They were courageous and men of nerve.

CHAPTER II. TO GROW UP AGAIN IN A JUNGLE.

But little work is now done in the Dismal Swamp, and it will again soon become a howling wilderness, a hiding place for the bears, wild-cats, snakes and everything hideous. The

Library of Congress

bamboo and rattan will rule supreme, and, like the banyan tree, will form an impenetrable jungle. But a few years will be required for its accomplishment, and without an axe you could not move a foot.

G. P. R. James, the British Consul, who was stationed at Norfolk when he wrote his novel entitled "The Old Dominion," and which was a history of "Nat Turner's War," (as it is called) in Southampton county, states that a young mother, 9 with her infant, fled to the Dismal Swamp for safety. Mr. James must have drawn heavily on his imagination for a figure, to make the situation more horrible. I do not think any mother with an infant would flee to such a wild and desolate place as the Dismal Swamp, but; on the contrary, would keep far away.

I could relate many interesting stories that I have heard about the Swamp, but as I am writing from my own observation, will discard all such from my task. It is true that some very mysterious things have been seen at various times. I will, digressing a little from my story, relate one circumstance that was told me by a gentlemen who lived in Suffolk and was stopping at Lake Drummond Hotel, situated near the lake shore, and which was visited at that time by many persons from New York and other places. This gentleman remarked to me that he was standing near the Lake one morning, and happening to look across the Lake, to his great astonishment, saw come out of the woods, at a point so thick with reeds, bamboo and rattan, that you could not get three feet from the shore, a beautiful, finely-dressed lady; she walked out on a log about twenty feet into the Lake, with a fishing pole in her hand. I saw her bait her hook and throw it out into the Lake. He said he could also tell the the color of the ribbon on her bonnet. He watched the same place every day for several days, and at the same hour each day the lady appeared as before. I told my friend that he must have been laboring under an optical delusion at the time, as 10 the Lake was five miles wide at that place, and that it was impossible for one to distinguish objects at so great a distance with the naked eye. He replied that every part of the story was true.

Library of Congress

On another occasion, a gentleman, now living in Suffolk, told me that he was out hunting in the Swamp, and chancing to look to the front saw snakes coming from every direction, and quite near him he saw a lump of them that looked to be as large as a barrel. He supposed that there must have been as many as five hundred, all so interwoven that they looked like a ball of snakes. He said he was too close on them to shoot, so stepping back, he fired both barrels of his gun at the bunch, An untangling at once commenced, and he said, "consarned if he ever saw so many snakes before." Upon going to the place where he had shot, he found 150 snakes dead, and as many more wounded. He carried some of the largest of the dead out, procured a ten-foot rod, and on measuring found one that measured twenty-three feet. I have related this snake story several times, but was always very particular to know that the gentleman who told me was at some other place.

CHAPTER III. HEALTHFULNESS AT THE SWAMP.

Although the Dismal Swamp is so uninviting, it is one of the healthiest places in the United States. 11 Death from disease has never been known in that place, and it is impossible to tell what age one would attain if they would take up their abode in it. I have been told that instances were known where persons were found who were so old that they had moss growing on their backs, and who could give no idea of their age. I once knew a family by the name of Draper, who lived in the Swamp near the edge Of the Lake. What became of them I do not know; the spot where the house stood now forms a part of the Lake. The constant washing of the western shore causes rapid encroachments, and it is only a question of time when it will reach the high lands. It is in the Dismal Swamp that Lake Drummond was discovered, by whom I do not know, but is said to have been found by a man named Drummond, whose name it bears; that will make no difference with me, the question is, how came it there? Was it a freak of nature, or was it caused by warring of the elements, is a question for the consideration of those who visit it? That it was the effect of fire caused by lightning setting fire to the turf, or some dead tree, there can be no doubt. At what time in the Christian era this eventful period was, it is not, nor never will

Library of Congress

be, known. Suffice it to say, that it was found and is the wonder and admiration of all that have ever visited it. It is a broad sheet of water, covering an area of five by seven miles, and is surrounded by a dense growth of woods, so thick that you cannot see the Lake until you are within a few feet of it. Many visitors have visited it, all of whom were struck with astonishment at the sight. It is ten miles southeast of Suffolk. I will now relate some of the adventures of my first trip. It was on a bright morning, early in the month of May, 1832, that my father and I started for "Lake Drummond," or the Lake of the "Dismal Swamp," as some call it; and as all preparations had been made the night before, there was nothing to prevent us from making an early start. The idea of my going to the Lake had driven sleep from my eyes, and I was ready to start at any time; but it was not until the grey dawn of day that my father began to stir. He was soon ready, and providing himself with fishing poles, bait, lunch, and such other articles as were necessary for a two or three days' fishing excursion, then taking our leave of my mother and the other members of the family, we were off. The Portsmouth and Roanoke railroad (now the Seaboard and Roanoke railroad) was at that time graded as far as Suffolk. We followed the line of it as far as a place known as Peter Jones, where we left it and passed through "Bull Field," to the company's mill, which is but a short distance from the basin of the Canal, at which place we were to take a skiff for the Lake. On arriving at the basin we found Mr. James Woodward, grandfather of Hersey Woodward, Esq., of Suffolk, Va He was inspector of lumber for the "Dismal Swamp Land Company," and was on his way to the Lake. The drivers of the skiff, Tony Nelson and Jim Brown, were ready, and it being now about sunrise, Mr. Woodward and my father, soon got their traps aboard, then lifting me in, all was ready. The drivers adjusted their poles and away we went, all being a novelty to me, who had never before been in a boat on water. Everything appeared very strange, being but a very small boy as I was. Nothing happened to impede our progress, and in about five hours from the time of starting we arrived at the Lake. Then it was that our young soul began to thrill with joy, for we were at the Lake and would soon launch on its broad bosom. The gates of the Lock were opened and the skiff shoved in, then the first gate being closed behind us another gate opened. The water rushed in and soon our

Library of Congress

boat was on a level with the Lake. The drivers then took up the oars and were ready to cross to Jack's Landing, which was on the opposite side of the Lake. It being very rough at the time, some fears were expressed, but Mr. Woodward, who was well acquainted with the situation, said that he did not apprehend any danger, and the skiff was put in motion. As I said before, it was very rough, and when we had gotten about half-way across, it became more so; the waves began to break over the skiff and all thought that it would fill. Fortunately, too large wooden shovels or scoops were found in the skiff, and with them Mr. Woodward and my father kept her free, "Tony" and "Jim," in the meantime, plying their oars manfully. We soon arrived at "Jack's Landing," and disembarking proceeded to Jack's camp, which was but a short distance away, and known to every person who had ever visited the Lake. On our arrival the pious Mr. Woodward offered up to the Great Ruler 2 14 of wind and water a prayer for our safe deliverance from a watery grave. As we had not partaken of any nourishment since early morning, it was proposed that we should eat something, which was readily agreed to, and in a short time we had gotten through that part of our work, whereupon my father said he would try his luck fishing. So taking a small boat, which he found at "Jack's Landing," placing me in it and then getting in himself, he started for some good place to commence. He fished awhile at the "Forked Gum" without any success; moved to the "Stooping Pine" with a like result, He began to think that it was the wrong moon, and leaving that place he paddled for the "Three Cypresses," where he caught some very fine fish. It was now getting late in the afternoon, and as he expected to make an early start the next morning, he thought it best to return to the camp, heading his boat in that direction he soon reached the landing; having but a short distance to walk, we were not long in reaching it. Mr. Woodward had gone out to inspect some lumber and it was getting time for his return. We did not have long to wait. He soon came in, and looking at my father's "Fish Gourd," remarked: "Neddie, you have had fine sport; where did you catch so many such large Frenchmen?" "Friend Jimmy," my father replied, "when I started my first experiment was at the 'Forked Gum,' and I did not get a nibble. I left it and stopped at the 'Stooping Pine' with the same success. I began to think that I was fishing on the wrong moon." "Oh! Neddie," rejoined 15 Mr. Woodward, "there is nothing in the

Library of Congress

phases of the moon. You are not a good fisherman. I can take you to the 'Forked Gum' and 'Stooping Pine' and astonish you." "After leaving the 'Stooping Pine,'" continued my father, "I made for the 'Three Cypresses,' and it was there that I caught these fine perch." "Neddie," said Mr. Woodward, "you are not such a bad fisherman after all. Your success would do credit to the best." My father proposed to Mr. W. that we should have some of the fish cleaned and cooked for supper. The necessary order being given, in a short time a sufficient number were ready for the pan. A hot fire was made of juniper logs, and frying of fish commenced. In a short time we were told to get our shingles ready, that being the only kind of plate used in the "Dismal Swamp." And it is a well known fact that fish eat sweeter off a shingle than any plate on which it can be placed. The fish were very fine and greatly enjoyed by all.

Supper being disposed of, a general conversation was indulged in about the Lake and Swamp; but no one present could tell anything satisfactory about the origin of the Lake. One idea was announced and then another, throwing but little light upon the subject. "Tony" and "Jim," the drivers of the skiff, were sitting near the embers nodding, when Mr. Woodward, to have a little fun, said: "Tony, what is your opinion of the origin of the Lake?"

16

CHAPTER IV. ORIGIN OF THE LAKE DISCUSSED.

Old Uncle "Tony" made a rake in the embers with his pipe and said: "Yas, sar; my 'pinion 'bout dat place, boss, am dat it was dug out." Here Uncle Jim broke in. "What de matter wid you, Tony? How many niggers do you 'spose 'twould take tu dig a hole big huff tu hole all dat water?" "Dats a fac, Jim," cried Uncle Tony, "I forgot 'bout de water."

"Well, Jim," queried Mr. Woodward, "how do you account for it?" "Marse James," Uncle Jim sagely replied, "it 'pears to me dat somebody got under de groun' and dig de dirt out and de water mashed it down."

Library of Congress

“Jim,” exclaimed Tony, “you am de biggest fool dat I ebber seed. How's anybody gwine tu git under de groun' to dig. Whar's dey gwine tu put de dirt, and whar is de water to cum rum to mash it down?” Yah, yah, yah. “Go 'way nigger, I 'spec you bin mole huntin'.” “Dat am fac', Tony, I didn't tink 'bout dat,” said Uncle Jim, with an apologetic and crestfallen air. Here Tony gave his pipe another rake in the embers, took a few puffs, and fell off his log fast asleep.

It was now getting late, and preparations were being made to put me to bed, which was done by placing some hay on the floor of the camp and spreading some bed clothing which we had brought 17 along. The bed was soon ready, and I was snugly placed upon it, although I could not go to sleep, knowing that we were to go out early in the morning to see the sun rise on the Lake. I was called at the first dawn of day and told to get up; we soon had eaten our breakfast and everything made ready to leave for the Lake. We soon reached the landing, finding our boat ready. My father placed me in, and getting in himself took up his paddle and shoved off for a position in the Lake where we might see the great Orb of Day bathe his face in the cloudy water of “Lake Drummond.” We did not have to wait long. By the glow of light that began to show just under the eastern horizon, we were satisfied that our anticipations would soon be realized.

The morning was misty, just enough so as to hide the dense woods which stood on the eastern shore of the Lake, and at the same time served as a back ground to the grand display of nature, and make it appear as if the sun actually came up out of the water as it were. The mist in front was dispelled, and the rays of sun playing on the rippling water would cause you to think that it was one vast cluster of diamonds. The sight was grand beyond my power to describe it, and I never expect to behold such a scene again. Everything was lovely on that May morning—the balmy breeze, the air filled with perfume of the wild flowers, which grew around the Lake; birds carrolled forth sweet music as they flitted from limb to limb; squirrels could be seen and heard chattering among the trees. The shore 18 of the Lake was spread with a velvety green, and you would think that nature

Library of Congress

had done her best to make that morning lovely. Meditating on the beauty and grandeur that surrounded us on the broad bosom of the Lake, suddenly we were awakened from our reverie by the hoarse growl and lapping of the bears, and horrid cries of the wild cats, which would cause the blood to curdle in the veins. Thus with the sweet some sour always will be found. Occasionally, at the Lake, a noble stag will emerge from the trees, showing a stately head of horns, approach to the water and survey the prospect, then plunge in the Lake to swim to the other shore. He settles very low, and if you did not know you would take it for a floating bush. They are frequently caught when attempting to cross the Lake. Having reached a good place for fishing, my father stopped at the place known as the "Apple Trees," where he caught some very pretty fish. His bait getting scarce, he moved around the Lake to "Draper's Landing." Running the bow of the canoe upon the wharf log, which was nearly on a level with the water, left her, without tying, to look for some angle worms. It being rough on the Lake at the time, the rolling of the waves caused the boat to work off, and before he could return she had drifted well out on the broad waters of the Lake. We were too small to realize our situation. Not knowing how to paddle, we were left to the mercy of the waves. On the return of my father, seeing the great peril I was in, required but a single thought for him to know what to do. Being a 19 good swimmer he boldly plunged into the water, reached the boat and swimming towed it to the shore. Had he not returned in time, our fate could not have been told. We would have been capsized in the Lake and drowned, or have drifted ashore to be devoured by bears and other wild animals, or stung to death by the venomous reptiles that hung in clusters on trees around the shores of the Lake. This accident put an end to fishing for that day. My father was wet, and not having a change of clothing with him, proceeded to the camp, so that he could dry. We soon arrived at Jack's Landing, and on reaching the camp found Mr. Woodward, who remarked: "What is the matter, Neddie? Did a big fish pull you overboard?" He saw that my father was wet, and ordered a fire to be made, so that he could dry his clothes. A hot fire was soon made of juniper logs, and he was not long in drying.

Library of Congress

Feeling no inconvenience from his ablution, and drinking a cup of hot coffee, he related the circumstances as detailed above. "Well, Neddie;" said Mr. W., "you should at once return thanks to the Giver of all Good for this miraculous escape." The pious Mr. Woodward joined with him. It was now nearly dark, and preparations were made to have supper. When at the Lake it is expected that you will catch fish enough upon which to subsist, and my father being a good hand at angling, always had a good supply, and no one on the trip wanted for fish. The supper, which consisted of fish, bread and hot coffee, was soon ready. About this time Tony 20 and Jim, who had been loading their skiff at the landing, returned to the camp, and taking their seats at the ends of some juniper logs, were soon fast asleep. We ate our supper and were then ready for any kind of story that was told.

CHAPTER V. THE VISIT OF TOM. MOORE, AS RELATED BY TONY.

As Uncle Tony was, perhaps, the oldest person, and knew more about the Lake than any person then engaged at it, he was awakened, and Mr. Woodward said: "Uncle Tony, I want you to tell us about the man whom you said you brought to the Lake in 1821." "Who tole you 'bout dat boss?" inquired Uncle Tony, with an air of conscious pride. "It will make no difference, go on and tell us," returned Mr. Woodward. Tony scratched his head, then putting some tobacco in his pipe, took out his flint and steel (matches not being known in the swamp at that day,) and soon had fire enough to light his pipe. Drawing on it enough to get his "nigger head" tobacco to burn, and fixing himself on the end of his log, he commenced: "Boss, I shall nebber forgit dat time. One mornin' as I war gittin' my skiff ready to go to de Lake, a mity nice lookin' man cum up to me an said: 'Buck, ar' you de man dat will carry me to de Lake ob de Dismal Swamp, for which I will pay you one pound?' De gemman talked so putty, dat I tole him to git in my skiff, an' 21 I wud carry him to de Lake. I notice' dat he kep writin' all de way. When I got to de horse camps I stopped to get somfin to eat. He cum outen de skiff an' ax me what I stop for. I tole him I stop to eat some meat an' bread. He ax me if I wud hav' a drink. I tuk off my hat an' tole him dat I wud be much obleged to him for it. He foched a silber jug, wid a silber cup for a stopper,

Library of Congress

and said: 'My man, dis is Irish whiskey. I brung it all de way from home.' He tole me dat his name was Thomas Moore, an' dat he cum fom 'way ober yonder—I dun forgot de name of de place—an' was gwine to de Lake to write 'bout a spirit dat is seed dar paddlin' a kunnue. De har 'gin tu rise on my hed an' I ax him ef dat was a fac'. He sed dat he was told so in Norfolk. It was gin out dar data miry putty gal had loss her sweethart, an' had dun gone crazy, an' had gone to de Lake ob de Dismal Swamp an' drown herself, an' dat she ken be seen ebery night by de lite ob some sort ob fli." "I tell you, boss," continued the old man, "when he tole me 'bout dat gal paddlin' dat bote on de Lake at nite, I didn' want to go any funder wid him, but he tole me dar wud be no danger. I cud not see hur, so I carrid him on to de Lake. He rit like de gal had run away an' had been drowned rite here. I shal nebber forget dat gentman. I fotch him back an' he gin me de poun', which war five dollars, an' he lef' for Norfolk, bein' mitey glad dat I had carrid him to de Lake."

"Tony, did he tell you anything about his trip?" inquired Mr. Woodward.

22

"Yas, sar," replied the old man. "He tole me dat he had trabbled an' seen sites, but dar he nebber was so 'stonish befo'; he did not spec' to see at de end ob de kunel such a putty place; an' dat I wud hear sore time what he was gwine tu say 'bout it." "That was Tom Moore, the Irish poet," said Mr. W. "De who?" interrupted Tony. "He came to this country," continued Mr. W. "to visit the Lake, as being one of the wonders of nature, and you were fortunate in having to wait on such a distinguished person.

Tom Moore, after he had arrived in this country, no doubt heard of the Lake of the Dismal Swamp, and when he reached Norfolk, Va., and the story of the fair maiden and her lover being fresh, might have induced him to visit it, and it was on that occasion that he penned the following lines:

"They made her a grave that was too cold and damp, For a soul so warm and true."

Library of Congress

His poem on the "Lake of the Dismal Swamp," no doubt, is familiar with every person of ordinary information, and can be found in every library, and should be read by every person who has never done so.

CHAPTER VI. PORTE CRAYON'S VISIT, INCIDENTS, ETC.

At a much later date the Lake was visited by Porte Crayon, who was at that time writing for Harper's 23 Monthly. The account given of his trip, with his illustrations, are very life-like and interesting, and in the February or March number of that valuable book, for the year 1857, you will be greatly amused at the description there given. Two darkies, Eli Chalk and Jim Pearce, were the drivers of the pleasure boat furnished by W. S. Riddick, Esq., the then agent of the Dismal Swamp Land Company, in which he was carried to the Lake. He was there some two or three days, and his writings should he read to be appreciated. It was at the Lake that we saw Uncle "Alek," of whom a fac-simile likeness is given in the book above referred to. Uncle "Alek" was a superannuated old colored man, belonging to the Reverend Jacob Keeling, Rector of the Episcopal Churches in Nansemond county, Virginia. He was quite old, and retained his memory to a remarkable degree. He was called the "Bee Hunter" of the Dismal Swamp, and, if I am not mistaken, had a bag of bees in his hand when Porte first met him. He would follow bees for a long distance, cutting his way through the reeds for miles in a straight line, until he came to the tree in which was the hollow. Then he would take out the bees, put them into a bag and bring them out. In going to the Lake you could see numberless paths cut by Uncle Alek for that purpose. The opening through the reeds would look to be about two feet wide and ten feet high, which was almost the length of the reeds. Uncle Alek worked in the swamp nearly all his life, was a faithful hand, and in his old age the company gave him a house and a piece of land, as a home during his natural life. A mule was also given to him by the company, which mule I had the honor of riding at a tournament at Suffolk, Va., in 1860. How old he was no one could tell at that time. No account is given of any mules being in the Ark at the time that she settled on dry land, and where that mule came from will never be known. It

Library of Congress

is very certain that he appeared on this mundane sphere at some period after the flood. If he is dead I have heard nothing of it. He may be wandering about the Dismal Swamp. Old Uncle Alek and his mule were great curiosities, and whenever he came to town on his mule they attracted a great deal of attention. He was an exhorter in the Methodist Churches for colored people, and always had in his pocket a Testament or hymn book. He was perfectly conversant with the Bible, and could refer readily to any passage of Scripture that you might mention. He was born in 1783, and died a few years ago, having attained the age of one hundred years, his mind being as vivid and active as at any time. We shall never forget Uncle Alek and his mule. They were things of our earliest recollection, and, like many of the landmarks at the "Lake of the Dismal Swamp," have been washed away. I have been to it frequently since my first visit, and would notice the changes made by the rude hand of time.

I have examined several writers that have written about "Uncle Alek's Mule," and am satisfied that it was the same one that "Nat Turner" rode when 25 on his raid of murder in Southampton county, Va., in 1831. Looking over the diary of Colonel Godfrey for thirty years, we notice that he said "Nat Turner," when he appeared in the avenue of Dr. Blount, on that fatal night, he rode at the head of the column, mounted on a sorrel mule, with flax mane and tail. But the question arises, how that mule got into the Dismal Swamp, and how he came in possession of the Dismal Swamp Land Company. Col. Godfrey states that there were several guns in the house of Dr. Blount, and several visitors there at the time; that the young Blount loaded the guns, and that a strong fire was kept up on the advancing column. Nat Turner was thrown from his mule, then they became panic-stricken, and were dispersed. For the bravery displayed by young Blount on that occasion, he received a midshipman's warrant in the United States Navy. I will now quote from G. P. R. James' book, called the "Old Dominion," in which he states that a "young mother" with her infant fled to the Dismal Swamp for safety." It was several miles away, and it may be that she drove that same mule, and the probability is that she left the mule in the Swamp, and that he wandered about until he found Jack's Camp, where he was secured and became

Library of Congress

the property of the Dismal Swamp Land Company. How long the company worked him before he became the property of Uncle Alek, I do not know, but am satisfied that it was several years, and that his wind was injured by overloading I have the testimony of a gentleman well-known in 3 26 Suffolk, now living, who stated that he saw a cymling vine at Jack's Camp which was of spontaneous growth, and which covered more juniper trees than he could count, and from that vine there was gathered two hundred and fifty cart loads of cymlings. It may be that the hauling away of these cymlings so injured the mule that he was no longer of service to the company. There is no doubt he was turned over to Uncle Alek, which must have been during the year 1832. I was in the Swamp during that year and saw the cymling vine above alluded to, and no one could tell how it came to grow there. It will be impossible for me to tell how old Uncle Alek's mule was or what became of him. I have never heard that he died or was killed. He was no doubt the most remarkable mule that ever lived. The last that I heard from him was related by Uncle Alek himself, and which was no doubt true. I will relate as near as I can what the old man told me. He came to Suffolk one day and I noticed that he was very much excited. I said to him: "Uncle Alek, what has happened to you?" He answered: "Marse Robert I neber was in sich a fix befo' in all my life. I hay' fit bars, rattlesnakes, wild cats and bees, but I tell you sumfin' has happened to me to-day dat neber bin known to befall any one." "What was that Uncle Alek?" I inquired. "I'm terribly upsot, and I dunno what to do. I shall hab to mov' 'way frum my place; a whirlwind struc' my well dis mornin' an' has twisted it so dat I can't git de bucket down in de well, an' I can't git no water, an' what is wuss den all, my 27 mule has bin translated. He wus a good mule, and his loss ruins me." I saw Uncle Alek some time after that, when he told me that he was out in the Swamp hunting bees, when lo and behold! he heard his mule bray. He cast his eyes up and saw him lodged in the forks of a large tree. There was no way by which he could get him down, and left him as he thought to die. But his surprise can be imagined when he heard nuzzling at the door one morning, when, upon opening, what should he see but his mule. How he came down he could not tell, but said he should always believe that his mule could climb a tree. I said it must have been a Providential interference, and that the same Power which landed him

Library of Congress

in the tree was able to lift him out. "Dat is so," said the old man, "an' I will nebber agin' complain at de ways ob an Over-Rulin' Providence." I often think of Col. Godfrey and his remark, when he said that what best conduces to the happiness of mankind is right. Uncle Alek, knowing that his mule was at home with his head well in the crib, and he in the Swamp fighting bears and bees, was perfectly happy. Uncle Alek and his mule are both now dead, and I shall always have a lively recollection of them. I often think of them, and that I rode Uncle Alek's mule as Knight of the Dismal Swamp at a tournament, won the first honor, and was ruled out on account of my mule not making time, much to the mortification of Uncle Alek. As Uncle Alek and his mule will appear again, I will leave them for the present and relate an interesting conversation with Mr. Richard Hosier, who now 28 lives in Suffolk, and who is as well acquainted with the Dismal Swamp as any one now living. He is perfectly familiar with every part of it, and is, no doubt, correct in many of his statements. He informed me that long before the Lake was discovered by Drummond, two gentlemen from Elizabeth City, N. C., left for the Dismal Swamp on a hunting expedition, and having lost their way, wandered about until they came to what they discovered to be a large body of water. From it they traveled a due west course and came out at a farm on the Desert road, known as Mossy Swamp, and one of the men was taken sick and died; the other one returned to Elizabeth City. Mr. Hosier did not state when this was, but said it was long before Drummond made known that he had discovered a lake in the Dismal Swamp. It will be remembered that Mr. Hosier was arrested in Norfolk in 1863 by order of the Federal general then commanding that department, and was being carried toward the Indian Pole Bridge to be put to work on the defences of Norfolk. He was not disposed to do work in that way, and when well out from Norfolk he eluded the guard that had him, and directed his steps toward the Southern Branch of the Elizabeth river. On his arrival, seeing boats passing up and down, he secreted himself until the darkness of night had fallen, then making a bundle of his clothes and placing it on his head, he entered the river and swam to the other shore. He then pursued his way to the Deep Creek Canal, which he forded. Arriving at the "Feeder," he was not far from the Lake, and was 29 at a place with which he was well acquainted, and out of the reach of all danger of being

Library of Congress

recaptured. Resting himself a while, he then started for the Lake, and it was at that place he performed his great feat. He could not procure a boat, and the prospect before him was gloomy indeed. If he remained there he would, in all probability, have been devoured by bears and other wild animals in the Swamp, or perhaps, starve. Not being in the least daunted, he prepared himself to reach the western shore, which could only be done by swimming. It was seven miles across, but he nerved himself to the accomplishment of his object. He prepared himself as before by making a bundle of his clothes, which he placed on the top of his head, and was then ready to swim across or perish in the attempt. When he was about half-way across he was attacked by a large serpent, and had it not been for a school of gars that was following him, he would no doubt have been devoured. He reached the shore only to meet a more formidable enemy. It was a large black bear. In his scuffle with the serpent he had lost his bundle of clothes and had nothing but a large knife, which was buckled around his waist. Drawing his knife, he rushed forward and was met by the bear, when a regular hand-to-hand fight was commenced. He did not wrestle long before he found an opportunity to use his knife, and plunging it up to the hilt, he soon had the bear lying prostrate at his feet. Having lost all his clothes, it became necessary that he should do something in his nude state. The bear's skin was the only thing that he could get, so with his knife he skinned him, and getting inside the skin, he started to find some settlement. But his condition was as bad as before. The idea of his being able to get near enough to any person to tell of his condition was absurd. The very sight of him would scare every man, woman and child off the plantation. He could not get a living soul to come to him, and it was not until he had reached his own home, some few miles from Suffolk, that he could present himself as Mr. Hosier. I could write many very interesting incidents connected with the life of Mr. Hosier, which, in many instances, are thrilling. But as we are writing our own recollections, I shall only notice in a few cases what I have been told by others.

CHAPTER VII. MANY CHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE.

Library of Congress

It is pleasant to me that I can take a retrospective view of the past and note the many changes that have taken place within my recollection. Many sad changes have taken place within the past fifty years. Dynasties have arisen, lived and have had their day; they have fallen, and are known as things that were. But four of the companions of my school-boy days are living, and it is only now and then that we meet with one. The Rev. R. H. Jones, of Norfolk, is the only one that we have seen 31 or known away from Suffolk. The honored landmarks of the town are few, and soon must be less. Benjamin Riddick, the present mayor of the town, is perhaps the oldest citizen in it. Judge P. B. Prentice, the polished gentleman—his manly form can be seen on our streets, as he, with intrepid steps, passes along; he is the oldest native citizen and possesses a mind as active and vigorous as when young. John Hoffman, Esq., is another of the landmarks of the town. He has lived nearly his four-score years. Whitmill Jones, Esq., is another of our old friends. His steps are feeble and trembling. The last of the old pioneers of Suffolk whom we shall notice is James B. Norfleet, Esq. He is perhaps more generally known than any man who has ever lived in the place. He conducted for many years a very extensive mercantile and lumber business, but fell a victim to his generous impulses. The cypress that was known as the “apple tree,” which stood in the Lake a short distance to the left of the “Lock,” has been blown down or washed up with its roots, and in a short time nothing will be seen of it. The house which stood not very far from the western shore of the Lake and occupied by a family known as Draper, has been washed away and nothing left to show that a human habitation ever had any existence there. Before the late war a pleasure boat was kept by the company for the accommodation of parties that wished to visit the Lake, and it was customary for several parties to go in early Spring, commencing about the first of May, that being the most pleasant time 32 and nature about to put on her coat of green. But few parties now venture in owing to the inconvenience that attend, and when they do go they have to get in the best way they can. The pleasure boat and other boats in the canal were cut up by order of General Peck, commanding the United States forces at Suffolk, Va., and carried to the Black-water river to be used as pontoons across that stream. But I doubt if they were ever used for that purpose. After the surrender so great was the demand for

Library of Congress

boats by strangers that wished to visit the Lake of the Dismal Swamp that Capt. Busby, an energetic citizen of Nansemond county, Virginia, had erected near the Lake a hotel known as the Lake Drummond Hotel, and to invite visitors he had built a beautiful gondola, which was run daily to the Lake during the season. That old trojan, Capt. Jack Robinson, being in charge of the hotel, caused it to be well filled. It was very frequently the case that parties would come from Norfolk to go on from Suffolk, they having heard that the gondola left her wharf every day for the Lake. I recollect a party of three young gentlemen that came from Norfolk who wished to visit Lake Drummond. They stopped at the Exchange Hotel and made known the fact. The polite manager, Eddie S. Riddick, Esq., soon saw Capt. Busby, and his gondola was chartered to carry the party to the Lake. Mr. Riddick made every preparation necessary for them, but one of the parties heard that an alligator was on exhibition near the hotel, and thinking that it was brought from the Lake, at once provided himself with a rifle and a large quantity of fixed ammunition. All were then ready and they left for the canal, where they would take the gondola. She was then at her wharf, and everything being placed in, Capt. Busby took his stand at the wheel and gave orders to the first mate to have the gondola cast loose, which was at once obeyed, and, like a swan, she was gliding on in the canal at the fearful rate of about two miles an hour. To prevent any confusion if attacked, one of the most daring young men of the party, being one of the three from Norfolk, Va., placed himself in the bow of the gondola with rifle in hand and a box of ammunition conveniently nigh, awaiting an attack from any quarter. When passing what is known as "Paradise Old Field," one of the party cried alligator! The young man at the bow at once opened fire, and it was not until he had shot away a whole box of ammunition that he discovered the supposed alligator to be nothing more dangerous than a floating log. Quiet having been restored the captain struck two bells, and the gondola was on her way again, but unfortunately had not proceeded many miles when a snake fell in off an overhanging limb of a tree, and so near one of the young men that it caused him to jump over into the canal. The mate ordered one of the deck hands to throw the snake out, whilst others were fishing out the young man who had jumped overboard. Captain Busby, fearing that some other accident might happen before reaching the hotel,

Library of Congress

thought it best that passengers should Occupy their state-rooms until a landing was made 34 at the hotel. He said with so much confusion it would be impossible for him to land his gondola safely. Captain Jack, of the hotel, was watching the movements of Captain Busby and complimented him for his dexterity. He walked down from the hotel and escorted the guests up who had just arrived. The hotel is of the Irish style of architecture, with parlor, kitchen, dining and bedroom all in the same room, the whole being heated by a hot air furnace. I have not been to the Lake for some time, but hear that great improvements have been made, and it is the object of the proprietor of the hotel to turn the attention of Northern visitors to Florida every Winter in that direction, believing that it is the healthiest place in the United States. It is very accessible—the Norfolk and Western railroad passing through its northern boundary, and the Suffolk and Carolina Short Line or Grand Trunk railroad on its western, which by running a railroad from Skinnerville, on the Grand Trunk, would bring the Lake Hotel within a few minutes ride from Suffolk, and with little or no inconvenience to invalids coming from the rigid climate of the North. I am told that all snakes remain in a torpid state during the winter, and no danger might be expected from them, and as the floors of the hotel would be kept tight no vermin could crawl through. There can be no doubt that the Lake of the Dismal Swamp must become the great centre of health-seekers, and that at an early day. Its location and advantages, the known healthiness of the place, to say nothing of its beauty and former 35 renown, is sufficient to attract the attention of persons that seek the Sunny South from the cold and rigorous climate of the extreme Northern States of the Union. It is true that some writers pronounce the warm and genial climate of the Sunny South to be a fraud, practiced to allure the unsuspecting. That cannot be so. It is universally known that the Dismal Swamp is the healthiest place in the known world. Where can you find a location in which a death has not occurred in a hundred years? It cannot be named.

CHAPTER VIII. THE FUTURE FOR THE DISMAL SWAMP.

The Dismal Swamp in Virginia is the only place where a death from disease has never occurred. Railroads, like hog paths, are being run in every direction, and the time is not far

Library of Congress

distant when a railroad will be run direct to the beautiful Lake of the Dismal Swamp, and Northern invalids will flock to its beautiful shores, there to bathe in its juniper water and be healed from all diseases. True, at this time it is in a rude and wild condition, but with the Suffolk and Carolina Grand Trunk Railroad stretching across its western front, civilization must tend toward it, and when a communication direct is opened a city, Cincinnatus like, will spring along its shores, and its inhabitants can, by the light of the 36 glow worm of fire fly, watch the paddling of the white canoe, so beautifully described by Moore in his poem. Another very interesting place near the Swamp is a farm which at one time belonged to General Washington. It is at the extreme south, and is now owned by Mrs. John Trotman, and she has in her possession the original title deeds of every person who has owned the place at various times, from Washington down to the last purchaser, who was Burrell Brothers, Esq., of Gates county, N. C., and an uncle of the above-named lady. At his death it fell to his widow, who gave it to Mrs. John Trotman, its present owner. I have visited the place several times, and the cellars can now be seen where stood the first house. It is very certain that it was settled many years ago, from the fact that I saw a tombstone of a doctor from Waterbury, Connecticut, who died there in 1800. This stone has been seen by many persons. There is another place of some note that adjoins the Washington farm, it is known as Hamburgs. At this place a ditch or canal was dug, running east to the north-west Lock of the Dismal Swamp Canal, through which a vast quantity of grain and other produce raised by the farmers of Gates county, was shipped to Norfolk. An extensive mercantile business was carried on at Hamburg by Col. T. W. Smith, so well known, who afterwards removed to and now resides in Suffolk, Va. It was at Hamburg that so many refugees ran the blockade during the late war from Norfolk and other places, and a number of incidents could be related of persons that sought that 37 place to get in and out of the Confederate lines. Hamburg is a beautiful place and is owned by Mrs. S. C. Voight, who resides upon the premises It was at this place that Beast Butler, of the Federal Army, carried on a very extensive barter trade with the Rebs. It adjoins the Washington farm, as I said before, and may have been at one time a part of it. I knew nothing of the first settlement of the place. It has the appearance of being very ancient—no doubt dates

Library of Congress

back many years before the Revolution, or it may have been the headquarters of a roving tribe of Indians, as many arrow points and tomahawks have been ploughed up on the place. To my friend, T. H. Lassiter, Esq, of Gates county, North Carolina, I am indebted for much of the information gained of that locality, and I could relate a good deal told me by that gentleman which might be very interesting. Mr. Lassiter lives at a beautiful farm, on the main Edenton road, near the Silver Spring, a place of great resort for persons living in that part of the county.

I will relate a very interesting conversation which I had with a very old colored man that I met in the road near the Orapeake Mill, in Gates county, North Carolina, when on my way to Suffolk, Va., and not far from the beautiful village of Jonesville, lying on both sides of the Suffolk and Carolina Short Line or Grand Trunk Railroad. I said to the old man, "Uncle, where do you live?" "Boss, you ax me a hard question," replied the old man. "Git off your hoss an sot down, I'm gwine tell you sumfin. Do you smoke de pipe, boss." I replied 4 38 that I did, and handed him my bag of tobacco. He took from his pocket what I supposed he called a pipe. It was the butt end of a corn cob hollowed out, with something protruding at a right angle, which he called a stem. What it really was, I could not tell. He filled it with tobacco. I then handed him a match, when thanking me very kindly, he lighted his pipe, drawing it a few times to see that it was well lighted, said: "Boss, I will now tol you sumfin dat happen many years ago. Do you see dat mill pon' yonder?" alluding to the Orapeake. I replied that I did. "Well, boss, dat pon' was de cause of my trouble. One dark nite I was in dar strikin' at fish. I had just hit a large chub, when a white man, who was in dar strikin', cum up and sed: 'Boy, dat is my fish.' I tole him dat I kilt de fish, an dat it was mine. 'Bout dat time he was gwine to take de fish, an den I took up my hatchet dat I had in de bote, whar I split liteard wid and hit him on de head. He drapped down in de bote, and I seed dat I had done sumfin bad. De man was dead, and I wood be hung if dey cotched me. So I drug de man ober de side of de bote into the water, and mashed him down in the mud, an dat man never cum up any more. I didn't go home any more. An arter a while de white man was missin', an de peple gin to talk, an I gin to git skated. Do you see dat house up

Library of Congress

dar?" I said I did. "Well, Marse Luke Sumner libbed dar. De big house dat he libbed in is done torn down, and de small one made outen it. He is done ded now, and when he libbed dar is mor'n a hundred years ago. 39 His gran-son, Marse Joe Riddick, now own de place and libs at it. He mus be ni eighty year old. Well, dey fine de white man was done missin, an it bin dat I was strikin' fish in de mill pon' de same nite, dey 'gin to look for me, an my daddy tole me dat I had better go into the desart, which was de Dismal Swamp. I took his 'vice and lef. De run-away ketchers cure in dar to look for me, but didn't get me. I staid dar 'til de war was ober. I cum out and hab been lookin' 'bout dis place to see if I node anybody, but dey all gone ded, an nobody nose me. I tell you, boss, when you git in de desart ef nobody ses nuffin, de runaway ketchers can't kotch you. I am berry ole now, and my home folks are all ded an gone an I no nobody. De ghost ob de white man dat I kilt hants me all de time, wharebber I go, an I is a misable man. I am now on my way to de desart to hide myself an die." I asked him who he belonged to at the time he committed the murder. Replying, he said: "I longed to Capt. Richard Brothers, in de desert." "Well," I said, "did he ever know what became of you?" "I nebber heard any more from him arter I got in the desert. I heard dat he dide in 1817 ob de cole plague, or black tongue." "You are correct in what you have said, uncle," I replied. "I do not wish to interview you any longer on that subject. He was my grandfather and lived at the place mentioned by you. I hear the old people speak of the circumstances. You were his carriage driver at the time, and your name is "Long Davy." "Yas, sar, dat is my name, but don't tell anybody 'bout it. I 40 had a brudder libbing in de low parrish of Nansemond county, but he is ded. His name was George." I said, "Uncle Davy, you are correct. On one occasion, being at Driver's Store, in lower parrish of Nansemond, I saw a tall and very polite colored man drive up. I was struck with his appearance, and asking him his name, he said George W. Coston, sir. Then you are from Sunsbury, Gates county, North Carolina." "I was from that place," he replied, "but have been living in the lower parish since the breaking out of the war." "Were you a slave or free-born," I inquired. "I was a slave," he responded. "Who was your first owner that you recollect." "Capt. Richard Brothers, on the desart road, Nansemond county, Va., who died with the cold plague in 1817," he readily answered. "He appeared to be very much

Library of Congress

pleased when I told him that his first master was my grandfather. He looked at me very straight and asked me my mother's name, and upon my answering Margaret, he said he thought he could see a family likeness, and said my mother was the first mistress he ever had, she "drawing" him in the division of my grandfather's property. I left him at Driver's Store and never saw him again. I have since heard that he was dead. I often thought of the circumstances of the meeting. Such frequently occurs and brings up recollections that are buried in oblivion. The corroborative testimony of George satisfied me that "Davy" was true in what he related to me about what happened at Orapeake Mill Pond, in Gates county, North Carolina, near the beautiful village of Jonesville, on the Grand Trunk Railroad.

That the Lake of the Dismal Swamp is to become the great centre of attraction there can be no reasonable doubt. Recent demonstrations in that direction go to prove beyond cavil the fact. The visit of John Boyle O'Reilly, editor of the Boston Herald, Mr. Mosely, of Washington, and several other distinguished persons, go to prove the fact. Contiguous as it is to the celebrated Magnolia Springs, with its vast hunting grounds, will be a sufficient inducement to invite sportsmen from all sections. It is certain that a railroad will be surveyed and constructed, commencing at or near Magnolia Springs, which will tap the Lake near the famous apple tree, and as a grand hotel will be constructed at the Lake visitors will have the privilege of stopping there or at the Springs. A sufficient amount of capital can be had for all purposes necessary, and as the hotel will be built about one mile from the shore of the Lake, it will be free from yellow flies, fleas, mosquitos, snakes, alligators, bears, pole cats and other annoyances which more or less infest the hotel. The hotel being built on piles out in the Lake, could be reached by a bridge starting from the shore, with a sufficient number of draws, which, if left open at night, would prevent snakes, bears, alligators, pole cats, etc., from entering the hotel. A strict watch will be kept, and if by accident the draws should be left closed and an alligator, bear or snake should enter the hotel, or should a snake be found coiled up in bed with some sleeper, no alarm should be given, it might cause some nervous person to jump overboard and be devoured by alligators, snakes, etc. By giving notice at the office of the hotel these

Library of Congress

annoyances would be removed with but little or no excitement. The object of the company is to direct the attention of Northern invalids to Lake Drummond and Magnolia Springs, the medicinal qualities of whose waters have been tested and are pronounced to be superior to any known in this country. After drinking of these waters all that you have to do is to go to Lake Drummond, bathe in its waters and be healed. You will then be prepared to hunt bears, quail, deer, etc., at the Springs, and your sport will then commence. Before entering into the hunt you will supply yourself with a pole cat arrangement, which is furnished free by the company and will probably be of service to you. It is not expected that you will engage in any bear hunt on your first arrival, but will wait until you know something about the mode of hunting them. It frequently happens on the hunt that you come in contact with a rattlesnake. He will give you timely notice by springing his rattles, which you will do well to heed. It is a well-known fact that Northern invalids are not afraid of alligators, bears, snakes, pole cats or any of the poisonous insects that infest the Swamp and Lake. There are a few timid persons living near the Lake, on the edge of the Swamp, who are sometimes driven out of their houses by the appearance of bears and snakes, but they are few in number, and seldom or ever visit the Lake. The great bug bear that deter most of the visitors is the 43 fear of snakes falling in the gondola, as she passes along, from overhanging limbs of trees. If passengers would keep in their state-rooms on the gondola, snakes might fall into it and they would know nothing about it, as they would be thrown out as soon as found. Lizzards sometimes run up the pantaloons leg of some who are not on the lookout for such things; but that causes a fellow to run out of his trousers so quick that very few ever get bitten.

I have visited the Lake at various times and under different circumstances, but do not recollect that anything unaccountable happened to me but once, which I will relate: On one occasion as I was going down the canal, toward the Lake, the driver of the skiff exclaimed, "Boss, did you see dat?" "No," I exclaimed; "What was it?" "It was a ball of fire." "A what?" I said. "A jack-mer-lantern," said he. "And what is that?" I asked. "It's a sperit. I ceed dem ebery nite, an' when I go to kotch one dey ain't nobody." "Then you believe inspirits?" "Yes,

Library of Congress

sar; dat I dus. When I pass Paradise Old Field I kin always see dem.” “Have you ever been told anything about the ball of fire and Jack-mer-lantern, as you call them?” “Yes, sir;” dat I hab.” “Then let me hear what you have been told.” “Yes, sir; Boss, I’s gwine tu tell you de God’s trufe.” “Well, proceed.” “Boss, I’m gwine to tole you dey tole me dat long time ‘go dat a man by de name of Pluter was come up dar in dat field wid a ‘omun, an’ dat dey loss demselves, an’ hab neber bin seed since; and dat ebery nite wen you go by dar you kin see somfin. 44 One nite as I was gwine ‘long I thort data ball of fire wus gwine tu hit me in de face. I axed who wus dat; nobody said nuffin. I hit at it an’ it turned to a Jack-mer-lantern.” “And what was that, I asked. “I ‘spec dat it wus dat man Pluter, an’ de ball ob fire wus de ‘omun dat wus wid him.” “And they are what you call ‘sperits?’ Then you are a natural born fool; if you do not shove this boat along I will break your head with this pole.” “Boss, I shall always blebe in dem sperits.”

It is very true that some very mysterious and unaccountable things were seen when passing Paradise Old Field, by the side of the canal, by persons on their way to the Lake of the Dismal Swamp, but in very few instances, and then only by nervous persons of diseased minds. You might travel up and down the canal as often as you choose and outside of snakes and pole cats nothing would ever appear. Do not let snake stories deter you from visiting this wonderful and beautiful place, the Lake of the Dismal Swamp. As the boat was being driven along, the driver said: “Boss, did I nebber told you about de big watermillion that Mars. Caleb Busby foun’ near dis place?” “No; let me hear something about it.” “Well, sir, I will tole you. One day as Mars. Busby was gwine tu de Lake, an’ wen he got rite here he ceed on de side ob de cunnel a big snake trien tu swallow a raccoon. He tuk up sumfin’ to flo at de snake, an’ jes’ den he ceed in de bushes a nale keg, an’ wus glad dat he had foun’ a keg ob nales. But wen he got dar it wus a watermillion.” “How do you suppose that melon came 45 to grow there?” I asked. “My ‘pinion ‘bout dat, Boss, dat some nigger stole a watermillion frum sum farmer’s patch, an’ wen he got here he busted it gin a tree. Sum ob de seed fell on de ground an’ de watermillion gru dar.” “That is very probable. What did Mr. Busby do with it?” “He karid it home, planted sum ob de seed and

Library of Congress

his million weighed ober fifty pounds. He sole sum ob de seed, an' frum dem seed farmers rose de biggest watermillions ob eny in dis kintry." "Dat will do pretty well for you; drive the boat along." "Dus yu think dat I tole yu a story, Boss?" "Oh, no; I only thought that one of your 'Jack-mer-lanterns' had been after you, or that somebody had been throwing a 'ball of fire' at your head."

CHAPTER IX. SUFFOLK AND EARLY DAYS.

I will take the above railroad and return to Suffolk, when I will say something of my early recollections of that place. It was in the year 1830 that my father, with his family, moved to it. I was quite small at that time, but I recollect the time well. Suffolk was then a small village, situated on the Nansemond river, with a population of about five hundred, and increased very slowly in population until after the surrender, which was in April, 1865. Since that it has increased very rapidly in population 46 and growth. It was in Suffolk that Henry Herman commenced his business career; moved to Norfolk in 1832; and became one of her successful merchants. At his death his remains were brought to Suffolk, and now quietly rest in Cedar Hill Cemetery. I could mention many instances of successful business men of that town were it necessary. I will now write of things of more recent date—something within the recollection of many persons yet living. It will be recollected that a fire broke out in June, 1837, that destroyed the lower part of the town. There were no engines in the place and the flames raged with great fury. The Allen residence, at Rose Hill, about one half mile distant, was set on fire several times by the flying debris, and it was with difficulty that the house was saved. It was at Rose Hill that a large mercantile business was carried on, and no doubt a large quantity of juniper lumber was shipped from that point belonging to private individuals. A wharf was built at the mouth of Shingle creek (I imagine long before the Jericho canal was dug), and large quantities of lumber was hauled to it by persons living on the edge of the Dismal Swamp. I knew of several persons who owned large juniper glades on the edge of Dismal Swamp one in particular. His name was Thomas Swepston and lived not far from Suffolk, on the line of the Seaboard railroad, which divides his farm. He was agent of the Dismal Swamp Land Company for several

Library of Congress

years, and may have been the first after the Jericho canal was opened. The last agent, of whom I have any knowledge, was 47 W. S. Riddick, Esq., who died several years ago. The last inspector of lumber was J. E. Bonnewell. of whom it is my pleasure to notice particularly, Perhaps no man was more generally known and respected in Suffolk than he. He was a true friend, benevolent and kind, never refusing to bestow charity when called upon. He succeeded Mr. Joseph Hill as inspector for the company, which office he held until his death. It was during his term of office that it was made so pleasant to visit the Lake. By giving timely notice he would always give the parties the best boats and the most trusty hands as drivers, and would always be present when the boat left its landing and when it returned, and was anxious to know if any mishaps had occurred to any of the party. And if it should be reported that some lady had fallen into the canal, he would always very politely ask that she be carried into his house to be made more comfortable. Capt. Babel Ions, of Philadelphia, was his bosom friend. When the Captain was in Suffolk, they could always be found together. They both have passed away, and a generous people will do justice to their memory. Captain Connewell died leaving a rich heritage behind—a name that will live as long as it is called. But few have lived and died who was so much beloved and respected as he. He was proud but not haughty, and flexible to kind impulses. He was the soul of honor, and no one can say that he even failed to accord to every one their just dues. I knew him from my boyhood up and never knew a better man. He left an interesting family—Mrs. H. 48 R. Culley being his eldest daughter. I could write many noble traits in the character of that good man, but it is not necessary. There are but few of his compeers now living, and soon they will all have passed away. Such is the march of time.

Nothing very important transpired in Suffolk from 1837 until after the close of the late war, when she awoke from her slumbering condition; her watchword being progress. She brushed the dust from her eyes, and her advancement in every branch of industry can be seen in her rapid growth. She stands second to no town in a commercial point of view. Her manufacturing interests are considerable, and being a railroad centre she must prosper

Library of Congress

and grow. The disastrous fire which occurred June 7th, 1885, impeded business for a few months, but our men of capital at once commenced to repair the breach, and she is again on the road to fame and wealth. And it is to the Suffolk and Carolina or Short Line railroad that Suffolk is mostly indebted for her present prosperous condition. Penetrating as it does a country that is rich and fertile, she has already felt its influence and it should be fostered as one of the main arteries to her prosperity.

The Gay Manufacturing Company, before noticed, is perhaps the most gigantic enterprise ever projected at Suffolk. It has extended its operations as far South as Chowan county, N. C., and the amount of capital invested is no doubt the largest investment of its kind in Virginia, if not in the entire South. It has made large purchases of land in and around 49 Suffolk and has bought all the timbered lands on the Suffolk and Carolina Short Line or Grand Trunk railroad, giving employment to hundreds of hands, at fair wages, that would otherwise eke out a miserable existence. It also enables the land-owners, from the sale of their timber, to free themselves from debt and otherwise improve their condition. Under the direction of President W. N. Camp, it has had erected near Suffolk, on the line of the S. & C. R. R., one of the most extensive saw mills in Eastern Virginia, and with the aid of the Atlantic and Danville railroad penetrating the primeval forests of Southampton, Greensville and other counties of Virginia. Millions of logs will be brought on that road and manufactured for shipment to Northern markets. The company consists principally of Baltimoreans, who will reap a harvest commensurate with the capital invested. And in many instances it is owing to the mature judgment of President Camp that the efforts to establish this great enterprise has been crowned with such signal success. The advantages this company possesses, by its intimate connections with the S. & C. R. R., and A. & D. R. R., cannot be estimated, but it can be truly said that their intimate and close relations with each other, while each is a separate and distinct corporation, forms one of the grandest and far-reaching enterprises of its kind in the South.

Library of Congress

The Gay Manufacturing Company consists of William N. Camp. president; Charles F. Pitt, Jr., Chauncy Brooks, S. P. Ryland, John M. Denison and William N. Camp, directors; George L. Barton, 5 50 treasurer; Charles F. Pitt, Jr., secretary.

The A. & D. R. R. has made great internal improvement under the management of Major Charles B. Peck, of New York, and has progressed more rapidly than any road of which we have any knowledge. Its starting point is at West Norfolk, on the Elizabeth river, at the mouth of its western branch, the great trucking region of the State of Virginia which will supply it with thousands of dollars worth of freight annually. It runs diagonally across the Norfolk and Western and Seaboard and Roanok, railroads, both of which have already felt its effects, and when it shall have reached Danville the Richmond and Danville will then feel its withering influence, for this being the shortest and most speedy route to deep water, in one of the finest harbors in the world, it is natural that all produce will seek such a route and such a favorable shipping point.

CHAPTER X. ENTERPRISE AND PROSPERITY.

This railroad was projected by the energetic and far seeing W. H. Gay, Esq., of Suffolk, as a lumber road, who pushed it rapidly as far south as Sunbury, in Gates county, N. C. He soon saw that it was a grand enterprise, and associated with him several gentlemen of the city of Baltimore in its construction, who afterwards bought out Mr. Gay's interest, 51 and have constructed a road that will soon become one of the leading lines, connecting as it does, by a line of steamboats, the waters of Albermarle Sound and the Atlantic ocean, and bringing eastern North Carolina in direct communication with the city of Baltimore. Under the able management of Mr. H. B. Hubbell, the efficient vice-president of the company, and R. H. Thompson, Esq., as general manager, with the assistance of Colonel Harry McCleary, the road has been brought to its present flourishing condition, and the Gay Manufacturing Company, under President Camp. is one of its chief adjuncts This road now

Library of Congress

connects with the Norfolk and Western and the Atlantic and Danville railways, and soon large quantities of freight will be transferred from it to the above-named roads.

Suffolk is more particularly noted for her schools, colleges and other institutions of learning, all of which are in a very prosperous condition. The Suffolk Military Academy, under the direction of Joseph King, principal, with its professorship, is no doubt the best school for young men in Tidewater Virginia. The character and standing of it, with its location for health, is a recommendation that must tend greatly to its success.

Another school of high grade is the Suffolk Collegiate Institute, under the professorship of P. J. Kernodle. It is an institution that has been established for several years, and has received a liberal support from its friends. The course at this institution is thorough. Young ladies are taught the higher branches and are instructed in music, drawing, &c.

52

The West End Female Seminary, under the direct supervision of Col. W. H. Darden, formerly of Isle of Wight county, Va, with Miss Novella Darden as principal, with the assistance of Miss Lizzie J. King, gives to the school a reputation that must add greatly to its success. Young ladies at this school are instructed in all the higher branches, music, painting and drawing. It is eligibly located on College Avenue.

The Suffolk Female Institute, under the direction of the Misses Finney, is too well known to require a notice. It is the oldest established school in Suffolk, and enjoys a reputation that is enviable. It has probably received more favor than any other school which I have noticed.

The Nansemond Seminary, of which Mrs. Quimby is principal, is a school that recommends itself. It is limited in the number of its pupils. This should not be so. Throw open your doors wide and let your motto be "the greatest good to the greatest number." It has gained quite a reputation.

CHAPTER XI. THE OLD BRICK CHURCH AT BENN'S—SUFFOLK'S FIRST RAILROAD, ETC.

It is interesting to read of relics of the olden times and bring up associations connected therewith. I will now notice an antiquated old building in Isle of Wight county, Va., on the main road leading from 53 Suffolk to Smithfield, and about five miles from the latter place. It is called Old Benn's Church. At what time it was built I have never heard, but it must have been soon after the settlement of this country. The rude hand of time has reduced it to bare walls, and nothing is left of its interior to show that it was ever a place of worship. That it was built when this country was a colony there can be no question. There is a burying ground at the place, on which can be seen tomb stones of very ancient date, and if I mistake not, the first rector of the church or some of his family was buried in it. A tablet, noting the fact, could be seen set in the building. Bishop Meade, in his history of the Episcopal Churches in Virginia, mentions Benn's Church as being one of, if not the oldest, church in the State. It has been snatched from further decay by some benevolent ladies and will soon again become a place of worship. Let the names of these ladies form the future history of that sacred old church, and let future generations know that it was at one time from decay reduced to bare walls, and that by the humane efforts of some ladies it has been re claimed and once more presents the appearance of a house of worship, standing as a monument to its former renown and greatness. There are several Episcopal churches in this county that should not be allowed to go to decay. They stand as landmarks in Virginia; built long before the recollection of any one now living. I know of several places in this county that I have been told were Glebe property, and at one time were, and had erected on 54 them, Episcopal churches. In many places these churches have gone down, the land escheated and are now occupied by churches of other denominations. And it may have been so, as they are just such places as old Episcopal churches now stand, On elevated sites near running streams. I could state some very interesting facts connected with many places in this county which might appear very meritorious, nevertheless they are true, and form a part of the history of the county.

Library of Congress

I will now mention Mount Pleasant, the home of the Meades, of Virginia. This was at one time a very beautiful estate, on the west bank of what is now known as Smith's Creek, and is the southern branch of the Nansemond river. Long before the revolution this place was settled, and at the time very large vessels could navigate the creek as far as Mount Pleasant, it then being a wide and deep river, and I have been told that a direct foreign trade was carried on with that place. A grave yard can be seen at Mount Pleasant which is very singular, and has some curiously inscribed tomb stones in it of persons who died there many years ago. By the ruthless hand of time many of the tombs were mutilated, and it may be that little is left of them. I had the inscriptions of some of them, but gave them to a gentleman from Westmoreland county, Virginia. He wanted them on account of their singularity, and he being an antiquarian he said they would be quite an acquisition to his cabinet of curiosities. It is highly probable that Mount Pleasant was settled long before the Dismal Swamp 55 was known or heard of, and I doubt if any one thought that there could be found such a place as really was existing, and having hid in its dark foliage such a beautiful place as Lake Drummond.

The first great enterprise that was commenced in Suffolk after the surrender, was the building of the railroad of the Suffolk Lumber Company, which runs from Suffolk to Asher, in Gates county, North Carolina, where is the home of the Hon. C. A. Whaley. As soon as the road was completed as far as Whaleyville, in Nansemond county, Va., a town soon sprung up, and a mercantile business was commenced, which for time paralyzed business in Suffolk. It stopped the channel through which flowed the life-blood of the town from where it started. This road is owned by Governor Eliew Jackson, Co. & Brothers, of Maryland, and has from its commencement done a heavy business. It has been ably managed by W. M. Whaley, Esq, and Mr. D. B. Cannon. Whether it has been of any great good to Suffolk is a question that we are not prepared to answer, though the land holders through which it has passed have been benefitted. It brought their pine timber into market, which otherwise would have remained a primeval forest and a dead expense to its owners. The sale of it to Jackson & Co. has cleared many of debt, and to that extent the road

Library of Congress

has been a benefit. The company has bought large landed possessions in Alabama and Georgia, and will soon move their field of operations to those points. The quantity of wood and timber that has been transported over the road is 56 incredible. To say the least of Jackson & Brothers they started a spirit of enterprise, which, to some extent, has been a benefit. New ideas have been infused into the minds of our people, and instead of keeping their capital locked up they have invested it in various directions for the improvement and benefit of trade, thereby causing to spring up factories and machine shops, to say nothing of the many other advantages that are derived through patriotic motives.

CHAPTER XII. BEAR HUNTING IN THE DISMAL SWAMP—COLONEL GODFREY'S VISIT TO SOUTHAMPTON.

It is customary in the fall season to have what is called bear hunts in the Dismal Swamp, and parties are frequently made up to go on such hunts. Before going it is necessary that some preparation should be made. Bear hunting is very dangerous, and is sometimes attended with difficulty. Before starting you should provide yourself with a cowboy suit, a good rifle, a pair of revolvers, a bowie knife (16 inch blade) and sub-marine armor. When thus equipped you can enter the Swamp. You proceed cautiously along listening to hear the bears lapping, when you go in the direction of the sound. Bears move very cautiously, and you should be sure to keep a good lookout in your rear, as it sometimes happens that when you are going forward a drove of them are following you, and when least expected they make the attack, and if the parties should be the least separated, it often happens that all perish. I was told of a party that were out on a bear hunt in the Dismal Swamp, who supposed that they could face anything. The party consisted of eight good men. They had not proceeded very far in the Swamp when they heard in the distance the lapping of bears. Of course it is very exciting, and if one has any courage he is apt to show it at the time. A halt was made and the question asked, what should be done? They were not thinking of the danger that surrounded them. They did not think that bears were on their path. But it was too late. Whilst discussing what to do they were sprung upon from the rear, and six were badly lacerated, one rode off on the back of a bear and the last one

Library of Congress

retreated to the Lake for safety. Should you at any time go to the Dismal Swamp to hunt bears be exceedingly careful to have your rear well guarded.

Researches among old papers often bring to light subjects that long have been forgotten, and which, if cultivated, tends in many ways to the benefit of the rising generation. We often hear of events that have long since transpired, which at the time we pass unnoticed, but somehow or other an impression is made, and sooner or later something transpires that brings to our recollection a circumstance which refreshes our memory of some important event of which we have a slight remembrance. 58 Looking over the fourteenth volume of Col. Godfrey's work entitled "Important Discoveries," to see if we could find anything therein written by which we could identify "Uncle Alek's Mule," and if possible to define him, that there could be no reasonable doubt but that it was the same mule rode by Nat Turner, and that he was driven by the young mother in her flight with her infant to the Dismal Swamp, and if what G. P. R. James said in his Old Dominion be true, we must believe that Uncle Alek and Nat Turner rode the same mule. No other account was ever given that ever came to our knowledge, but it will make no difference as everybody knew that Uncle Alek had a mule. But as we have stated before, looking over the fourteenth volume of Col. Godfrey's work on Important Discoveries, many years ago we read in it an account of his first visit to the county of Southampton, Virginia, and the many important discoveries therein made. His visit to that county was on very important business, and being a man of great observation, he was careful and cautious. He was tracing some titles, and it was necessary that he should make many inquiries. The country was wild and sparsely settled at that time it was extremely difficult for one to get accommodation for man and horse. He was fearful at times that he would not be able to reach a shelter for the night. He had crossed at the South Quay Ferry at an early hour, and had been in the saddle all day and was very much fatigued and exhausted, besides he had ate nothing. Night was fast approaching and he in a strange country. He 59 reined up his horse, which caused him to increase his gait. He had not ridden many miles further when he thought he heard a cock crow. He listened and soon he heard the sound repeated. He was then

Library of Congress

satisfied that he was near some human habitation. What must have been his feelings, when he knew that he would soon reach a place where he probably would be able to stay for the night to rest and refresh himself. He rode on and in a short time came in sight of a very neat and comfortable looking house not many rods from the road. He arrived in front of it and found that everything about the house had the appearance of neatness and comfort, and that he would probably be accommodated for the night. So he dismounted from his horse and opened the gate and proceeded to the house. The proprietor must have been very fond of fox hunting from the number of hounds that made an attack on him as he rode up the avenue, and which was so sudden that it brought out the entire household. It was getting dark, but sufficiently light to see one approaching on horse back. The dogs were called off, and he heard a voice exclaim ride up. A very handsome picket fence surrounded the house, and upon arriving at the gate. he was met by a fine looking old English gentleman, who invited him to dismount and have his horse stabled. Thanking him for his kindness, he at once dismounted, and taking the extended hand of the old gentleman, said: "Sir, I am a benighted traveller, and a stranger in this section, and have sought your kindness for shelter for the night." 60 "You are heartily welcome," said the old gentleman. "Strangers, if gentlemen, are always welcome visitors to my house. So without any further ceremony walk in and rest yourself, for I imagine that you have been in your saddle for several hours and must feel quite fatigued." "I have been riding since early morning and was surprised to find the country so thinly settled. This is the first place that I have seen at which I could venture to stop." "Very true," he replied, "but you will, as you advance, find the country more thickly settled." We walked into the house and were met in the hall by a very fine looking and matronly old lady. Giving his name as Godfrey, the old gentleman grasped his hand and said: "Col. Godfrey, this is indeed a pleasure. Let me introduce you to my wife, Mrs. Ridley." "Ridley did you say?" "The same." "This is indeed most fortunate." "Say no more, Col. Godfrey; walk into the sitting room. You will find a cheerful fire, and as the air is a little chilly, a seat by the fire will cause you to feel more comfortable. Make yourself perfectly at home. You will excuse me for a short time while I give some directions to my head man, when I will rejoin you." "You are very excusable,

Library of Congress

Col. Ridley,” replied Col. Godfrey, “I do not wish you to let my appearance interfere in the least with your business arrangements.” The Colonel was not long away, and on re-entering the room remarked to Col. Godfrey: “This unexpected meeting is very mysterious to me, and the more so because my wife remarked but a very short time ago that some stranger was coming; 61 that she knew it from the incessant crowing of the chickens and the fierce howl of the hounds. I shall always hereafter believe in such signs. But Colonel, our supper is quite ready. You will be shown to a room where you may arrange your toilet.” Having performed this duty he was met in the hall by Col. Ridley, who said: “Colonel, it has been the custom at my house since my earliest manhood, just before eating to take a toddy, made of the juice of the Cider Berry, prepared in this county, and is the only medicine used in my family. The farmers of this county have a peculiar way of preparing it, and everybody that has used it speak of the good qualities which it possesses. Some say that its use, when you feel badly, will cause you to feel good, and to use it when you feel good will make you feel bad. It always makes me feel good, and I am remarkably fond of it. The oftener you take this medicine the better you will like it. There is sugar and honey; a little of either added will make it much more palatable, as honey is soothing and acts well for the lungs. I will try the honey.” This being disposed of they proceed to supper, Colonel Ridley leading the way to the supper-room, and on entering found the family all standing, waiting. They were soon seated, and on the table before them was placed a good old-fashioned Virginia supper. Addressing himself to Mrs. Ridley, Col. Godfrey said: “Madame, I fear that you have, on this occasion, put yourself to some unnecessary trouble on my account.” “Not in the least,” graciously responded that lady. Then turning to Col. 6 62 Ridley, Colonel Godfrey said, “You were quite right, Colonel, when you said that the ‘juice’ would make one feel good; it has had that effect on me already, and I feel that I can do ample justice to this fine supper.” “I am glad you think so,” returned Colonel Ridley; “nothing pleases me more than to see my visitors eat heartily; help yourself, it does appear to me that one who has been riding all day would not require any artificial means of inducing an appetite.” “Colonel,” said Mrs. Ridley, “I suppose this is your first visit to the county?” “No, madame,” replied Col. Godfrey, “I passed through a portion of

Library of Congress

it several years ago to locate some lands on the Nottoway river, and as there appears to be some dispute about the titles, I am on my way to look after it" "Yes," she said, "I heard you were coming and am truly glad you made it convenient to come this way, and besides you are on the direct road; do you apprehend any trouble?" "Not the least; my papers are authenticated, and I have only to present them." "I hope," she said, "that you will find it as you have stated." Supper being over they-all repaired to the sitting-room. Colonel Ridley had a daughter whose husband, a colonel of infantry, had been killed in the war of the Revolution and large tracts of land had been made by the Government to his heirs. "What was the name of the soldier?" inquired Colonel Godfrey. "Col. G. Bradley," answered Colonel Ridley. "Yes, sir; that was his name." "That is a part of the business which caused my visit in this direction, and Mrs. Bradley need have no fears as to the validity of her title. I have the papers with me that will place her in full possession of the estate. Besides, she is entitled to a large amount from the Government as half-pay for her husband's services during the Revolution, which she will receive on application through the proper channel." It was now getting late, and Col. Godfrey was told that his room was ready if he wished to retire. Feeling a little sleepy, after eating a hearty supper, and as he had to make an early start in the morning, he thought it best to go to his room, so bidding the family good night he followed a boy, who carried a lighted candle to the room to which he had been assigned for the night, in which a cheerful fire was burning. The boy entered the room, closing the door behind him, and said: "Mass boss, mammy told me to ax you ef you war eny kin to de man dat made the baby medicin?" "Who is your mammy?" inquired the now thoroughly interested Colonel. "She's de 'oman dat nusses all de babies on de plantashun." "Tell your mammy that I will see her in the morning." "Yas, sir," he said, and left the room. The Colonel soon retired, as he felt somewhat jaded. He awoke at an early hour, and having some moments leisure got up and dressed himself. About this time he heard a tapping at his door, and at the same time the voice of the boy exclaiming: "Ise got a pitcher of fresh water for you." "Bring it in," said the Colonel. The boy entered, showing two rows of white ivory. "Boss, will you hab a fire made?" "No," said the Colonel, "I will soon be ready to go down; is the Colonel up?" 64 "Yas, sir, an' is waiting for

Library of Congress

you.” “Then I will go down,” said the Colonel, which he did and was met at the foot of the stairs by Col. Ridley, who bade him a cheerful good morning, and expressed the hope that he felt much better after his night's rest. “Thank you, sir; I am glad to say that I feel very much refreshed.” “If you feel disposed,” said Col. Ridley, “we will take a walk out, the air is bracing and a little walk will give you an appetite for your breakfast, which will soon be ready.” They started, and as the old nurse of the plantation wished to see Colonel Godfrey, he proposed to his host that they should go to her quarters. They had but a short distance to go, as her house was very conveniently situated. When they arrived they found the old lady with a baby in her lap, evidently for some purpose. “Good morning, aunty,” said Col. Godfrey. The old woman looked very much excited; she wore a pair of spectacles, the lenses of which looked like two saucers. “Mornin', sir,” she replied. “What are you going to do with your baby?” inquired the Colonel. “I'm gwine to feed it, sir; its mammy is ded, an' I hab to feed it myself.” “What do you give it to eat?” “I char 'tater, spit it out on my finger an' wipe 'cross de chile's mouf, arter dat I make a sugar rag, put some sweet flag in it, put de rag in de chile's mouf and lay it down; it goes to sleep, an' wen it wakes up ef it cries I gin it some more 'tater.” “But,” queried the Colonel, “suppose it is sick?” “I kin always tell dat; ef it draws up its legs and kicks, I kno dat sumthin' is de matter, an' I den gib sum ciderberry juice wid 65 nutmeg grated ober it, an' in no time de baby cries fer more ob de juice. Sum folks gib dar babies ‘Godfrey's Cordial,’ but I dus not blebe in doctors' fisic; nine times out ob ten dey will kill de baby. I thort dat you war sum kin to Mr. Godfrey dat made de medicin', and wood ax you 'bout it.” “No, aunty, I am no kin to him.”

Being informed that breakfast was ready, Colonel Ridley proposed that they should return to the house, and that a little of the ciderberry juice would add much to the enjoyment of the meal, and as everything was convenient proposed that they should indulge. Col. Godfrey took some of the juice with honey, as before, and was then ready for breakfast. Col. Ridley led the way, and on entering found a hot smoking breakfast. Mrs. Ridley remarked, “Colonel, you are an early riser I see; I fear you did not rest well last night” “I assure you, madame,” the Colonel gallantly replied, “I could not have been more

Library of Congress

comfortable. My business being urgent, it was necessary that I should rise early." "You do not think of leaving this early?" "Yes, madame; you know that delays are dangerous. I have spent a very pleasant time, and hope, not long hence, to make a more extended visit. I was very much amused this morning at seeing the nurse of the plantation feeding a baby. It was quite a novel sight to me. The old woman does not appear to have much confidence in doctors." "No, sir," replied the lady, "we have been living here a long time and no doctor has ever been called, professionally, to see any one 66 at the place. The old woman, with her tater, sweet flag, sugar rags, ciderberry juice and Black Jack, keeps every one in a healthy condition." "She must be very valuable to you," said the Colonel. "Yes, sir," said Mrs. Ridley; "we could not do without her, and her loss could not be replaced." "It is getting late and I am admonished I must leave," said the Colonel, "for I have some distance yet to ride." He said it would be a great pleasure for him to remain longer under the hospitable roof of his kind host and hostess, but that it would not be possible for him to do so. He said further that he had some papers which he would hand over to Col. Ridley which would be of great service to his daughter, Mrs. Bradley, as they would secure her right to certain disputed property, and that he must bid them adieu. Then addressing himself to Col. Ridley, said: "These papers are valuable; take them and entrust them only into the hands of Mrs. Bradley, and that if he would now order his horse he would proceed on his way. Col. Ridley assured him that he would like to have him stay longer, but that of course he best knew his business; that it had been his custom to welcome all visiting and speed all departing guests. That should he happen to come that way again he would be delighted to have him stop, as he would always find a hearty welcome. Col. Godfrey thanked his new friend and said that should it be his fortune again to visit that neighborhood he promised not to pass him by. His horse was waiting, so giving the Colonel a hearty shake of the hand and bidding good-bye to all, he mounted and rode away.

67

After Col. Godfrey had left, a general conversation was commenced about his visit. It was evident that his business was with Mrs. Bradley, but he did not know at the time that

Library of Congress

she was the daughter of Col. Ridley, or he would have made known to her the object of his visit. She was absent at the time. As his papers were all properly avouched for he could leave them in the hands of her father, Col. Ridley. The old medicine woman of the plantation was much interested in the visit of the Colonel to her quarters, and was anxious to know if he was related to Mr. Godfrey that made the cordial. She was told that he was not. The old woman broke in and said: "Missus, I thort dat de gemman who axed me what I was doin' wid de baby in my lap, was a doctor, an' some kin to de man what made de Godfrey's cordial, but he tole me dat he was not. He like de way dat I doctored de chile, an' sed dat he would rite about it. He sed dat he had tried sum of de juice hisself an' dat it was good for babies. I tole him dat I did not blebe in doctors' physic; dey did not no what to do for babies. I tole him dat nex to de cider berry juice an' sugar rag, dat de Black Jack was de bes medcin dat I could use He sed dat de Black Jack seldom failed. Missus, when dat gemman 'peared at my do, I thort dat he was a specalader, an' dat you was gwine to sell me." "No, Aunt Barbara," said Mrs. Ridley, "if all the money of all the negro buyers were added together, it would not make an amount sufficient to buy you. Nothing but death can separate us. You area part 68 of my very existence. I have left in my bosom a spark of gratitude yet, which kindles into a flame when I remember what you have done for the family. I have not forgotten that it was you that gave the timely warning of the approach of Nat Turner and his column By so doing you probably saved the lives of the household. On another occasion you saved the life of my darling babe by a miracle wrought in your own way. Aunt Barbara, I would not give you and your nostrums, such as 'Cider Berry Juice,' 'Sweet Flag,' 'Taters' Sugar Rags' and 'Black Jack' for all the doctors in Christendom." "Missus, I'm glad dat you tink so much ob me. I has always done de bes dat I could. You know dat de chillun on de plantashun was bad, but wid my Black Jack I always made dem have deysself." "That is very true, Aunt Barbara, and they all love you for it. You know, Aunt Barbara, that the Good Book tells us, 'spare the rod and you spoil your child.'" "Missus, dats what I 'luded to all de time. I nebber struc' one ob dem little niggers a lic' amiss in my life, unless I struc' at him and didn't toch him." The old woman here saw a little nigger coming at full tilt, and knew that something was wrong. When he came up, she asked:

Library of Congress

“What on earth is de matter.” The boy was quite out of breath and couldn't speak at the time. The old woman gave him a rake with her Black Jack and said: “What is de matter wid you?” “I cum to tell you dat Judy's baby is mos ded, an' want you to cum 'mediately.” “When I cum to de house,” said the old woman, “I seed dat de chile 69 was bad off. I took it up an' seed dat it had de dry gripes. I give it some Cider Berry Juice an' tole its mudder to forth me a tater. I give de chile sum tater an' handed it to its mudder, an' tole her to put a sugar rag in its mouf with sum Sweet Flag an' lay it down, an' den I lef to jine de old folks at de house.” “Well, Aunt Barbara, I suppose there was nothing very serious the matter with the child,” said Mrs. Ridley. “Yas dar was, missus, an' I got dar jus in time. De chile was taken wid de dry gripes. I gin it sum Cider Berry Juice an' tole its mudder to fotch me a tater. I gin it sum of de tater an' put a sugar rag in its mouf. Dat chile has done gone sleep.” “Barbara,” said Col. R., “I suppose that if you were told that a child was dead and you were sent for in time you could, with your Cider Berry Juice, Tater, Sugar Rags, Sweet Flag and your Black Jack, bring the little sleeper to life. You talk of dry gripes; who ever heard of such a thing? What are they, and how is a person taken?” “Massa,” said the old woman, “I tole you 'bout dem when dey got hold ob you. You ses nuffin to nobody, but you goes to de side-bode an' git sum Cider Berry Juice. Dat make you feel good, an' arter a while you take sum mo' ob de juice. De baby dus not know dat, so it draws up its legs an' kicks like wrath. Den I know dat it has de dry gripes,” “Aunt Barbara,” said Col. R., “I did not take it in that light before. Your philosophy is good, and I shall say nothing about the practice of your profession again. I admit that I take the Juice quite often, but it is not for the dry gripes.” 70 “Yas, sir, dat medcin is good for all diseases, an' I take sum myself when dar is nuffin de matter wid me.” Mrs. Ridley, who was sitting listening to the conversation, happened to look toward the road gate, and saw some one coming in. All eyes were now turned toward the approaching stranger, and all were anxious to know who it could be. One said that it must be a preacher, another that it was a book agent. Aunt Barbara put on her specs, took a survey and said: “I spec dat it is a doctor cummin' here to sell sum of Godfrey's Cordial for de baby.” “You are all wrong,” said Col. Ridley, “it is our good friend, Col. Godfrey.” He was right. The Colonel had advanced near enough

Library of Congress

for all to see. Col. R. advanced to the yard gate as Col. Godfrey rode up. A boy was in waiting to take his horse. "Colonel, we are all glad to see you back again. Dismount and let your animal be stabled." Having dismounted, Col. R. took him by the hand and walked in the house. Mrs. R. was standing on the portico, and as Col. G. walked up she said: "Sir, I assure you that we are all very glad to see you. We had been talking about you at the time that you appeared at the road gate Walk in. We will talk about that later. Take off your overcoat and wrappings." "Thank you, madam," he replied.

"Colonel," said Col. Ridley, "to use a common-place expression, which is, 'talk about the devil and his imp will appear,' we had just been wondering who the rider could be. One said that he was a preacher; another that he was a book agent. Old 71 Aunt Barbara, the plantation nurse, said that he was a doctor coming to sell some of Godfrey's Cordial for the children, And I see I first discovered that it was you. I am rather disposed to think that you feel bad. I have some of the same Cider Berry Juice, and as everything is ready you will, without any further ceremony, walk up and take a little for the stomach's sake." "Thank you," said Col. G. "Since travelling over the county of Southampton I have had frequent occasions to try the juice. It is prepared and kept by most of the farmers, and the use of it acts like a charm." "If you would like to arrange your toilet, the boy will show you to your room. In the meantime I will see to having your horse properly cared for." The boy was the same that waited on Col. G. before, and was the son of the nurse of the plantation. "Well, Buck, how is your mammy now? How much Black Jack and Taters has she given you since I left?" He, he, he, giggled the boy. "I tell you what it is, boss, mammy wars me out mos every day, but she gibs me plenty taters an' I doan mine it." "Is Mrs. Bradly here?" "No sir. She did not stay here long arter marster gib her de papers dat you lef, an' I spec when she cure back she will hab lots o' money." "She will, no doubt, as she will only have to present the papers. I should like very much to see her. Is she handsome?" "I doan no what dat is, sar." "I mean is she pretty?" "Yas, sar, dat she is. It is gin out dat she is de puttiest 'oman in dis settlement, and I git so tired taking horses ob gemmen dat cum to see her." "Then I 72 expect she is bethrothed." "I doan no 'bout dat, but she ses dat de

Library of Congress

rite gemman hab not cum yit." "I must go down now, the Colonel may be waiting for me. Here is a dollar for you. Be sure to come to my room to-night." "Yas, sar, I will be dar sure." He had finished his toilet and proceeded down stairs. He was met by Col. R., who said: "Colonel, you will find a happy household. Your return has put a new phase on everything. The old nurse is perfectly happy since she found out that you are no negro buyer, and that you did not come to sell Godfrey's Cordial." "The old woman must be averse to doctors. She no doubt is right, as nine times out of ten, but very few of them know what they are doing." "Thinking that you had not dined, Mrs. R. has prepared something for you. Try a little more of the Cider Berry Juice and honey. You will feel better prepared to enjoy what the madam has set before you." "I assure you, Col. R., that since travelling in this county I have become particularly fond of the juice. I have called at several places where I was told they did not use the medicine, but always like to see it sitting convenient." "The juice that you are now mixing was prepared when our first child was born. It is very exhilarating in its effects, and you are fortunate in having the pleasure of testing it at this time. It is an honor that is extended to but few." "Col. R., allow me to drink to the very good health of your first born. Was it a male or female?" "It was a female, and I am glad to inform you that it was Mrs. Bradley. She is away at present, but I hope that you may make it convenient to stay until her return, which may be in a few days. A very neat and polite negro man made his appearance from the dining-room, and bowing very politely, said: "Marster, you can invite the Colonel in; everything is ready." "Colonel, walk this way. It is rather late for breakfast, but you will no doubt be able to make a repast of what is before you." "Make no excuses, Col. R., about what is before me, for it would satisfy the appetite of a king. That is the besetting sin of the Old Virginia matrons. They will load the table with everything that is good and palatable and say that they are sorry that they have nothing you can eat." "Col. Godfrey," said Mrs. Ridley, I see that you are disposed to indulge in a little flattery. It is true that we extend our hospitality to visiting strangers and friends, but not to that extent which you ascribe to us." "It has been my experience, madam, at every place at which I have had business in this neighborhood, and I infer that it was a general thing." "Then, Colonel," said Mrs. R., "you have had a very pleasant time since you left our house?" "I cannot say

Library of Congress

that it has been altogether pleasant, madam. When on the road I cannot say that it was pleasant, but anything else I assure you. My trip has been an exceedingly dangerous one. I found treachery lurking about, and I at once put myself on my guard." Having finished eating, the Colonel was invited into the sitting-room, where Col. R. was found reading a paper just received 7 74 from Washington, in which was announced the arrival of his daughter, Mrs. Bradley, of Virginia, and her son. Mrs. B., it will be recollected, was the widow of a distinguished revolutionary officer, and was in Washington on business with the Office of the Interior. "Take the paper, Colonel," said Col. Ridley, "you may find something which might be of interest to you." When scanning over its pages his eyes rested on the following:

"Arrived in this city to-day, by way of stage from Richmond, Virginia, the beautiful and accomplished Mrs. Col. Bradley, of Va. She is the widow of the brave and gallant Col. Bradley, who so distinguished himself during the revolution, being twice brevetted on the field for bravery. She is the daughter of Col. Ridley, of Southampton county, Va., so well known for his hospitality. Every attention will be paid to this distinguished lady. She will remain in the city for several days, as she has important business with the Secretary of the Interior. That functionary has already called on her, and she will have no trouble in that direction."

Col. R, having finished his out-door operations, returned to the house, and on entering the sitting-room found Col. Godfrey still looking over the paper. "Colonel," he remarked, "I imagine that you have been much interested in reading the papers." "Yes, sir. I notice that your daughter, Mrs. Col. Bradley, had arrived in the city of Washington, and had received much attention." "Yes, sir, and it was very gratifying to me to know that such was the case. I only hope that she will meet 75 with no very serious difficulty in the prosecution of her business." "I assure you, sir, that she can have not the least difficulty; besides, she will have no trouble. The Secretary of the Interior has been informed of her visit, and she will be aided by him in every way." "I hope that it may be as you have stated." "Rest assured, Colonel, what I tell you is so." Mrs. Ridley, having finished her domestic arrangements,

entered the room, when the conversation at once ceased. Addressing herself to Col. R., she said: "It is rather cold in the room, had you not better order some wood placed on the fire." "Excuse me, my dear, I was so much interested in the conversation of our distinguished guest that I paid but little attention to the fire. I will order the wood immediately." The wood was brought in, and soon the room was made very comfortable. Mrs. R. said: "Col. Godfrey, at the table just now you said that your journey after you left us, was in many instances, not very pleasant. You have rather raised my curiosity. I would like to have you give an account of your mishaps as you journeyed along. It will be very interesting, no doubt." "It is a great pleasure to me to impart to others anything that I may know that would prove of interest to them, and I do most willingly grant the request made by you."

76

CHAPTER XIII. THE ADVENTURES OF SMITH, JONES AND BROWN—JONES, HEARING THAT A SNAKE IS IN THE BOAT, JUMPS INTO THE CANAL.

In getting up a party to visit Lake Drummond, you will always find more or less of the party who are afraid of snakes. On this occasion the party consisted of only three—Smith, Jones and Brown—all citizens of Suffolk. They prepared themselves with the necessary outfit and started for the canal. Their boat being ready they embarked and soon were on the way. Smith being the most expert took the wheel, Brown placed himself at the bow, so that he could ward off approaching danger, and Jones, who was the timid one of the party, was put amidship the boat, with his back to Brown. I knew the parties well; they are all living, and I will narrate the snake story as I was told by Brown, who will vouch for its authenticity. They had not passed the great terror to all who go to the Lake (Paradise Old Fields), where can be seen everything that is hideous; a place that is dreaded, and if it could, would be shunned by every one who visits the Lake. Things of most unquestionable shapes have been seen by persons when passing it. No one has ever given any account of the history of the Field, which you are compelled to pass going to Lake Drummond, and which has deterred many 77 from venturing to it. Owing to the many snake stories that

Library of Congress

has been told by persons who said they were born to see spirits, there can be no doubt that there is a legend connected with that Field. Some have argued that the Field was at one time filled with grottos, and that the fairies of Lake Drummond would leave their realm and by a subterranean passage into it to bask in the beauties which surrounded it. Profane history informs us that it was at this place that Pluto and Proserpine left for the infernal regions. That will make no difference about the snake story that I will relate. A snake is a wonderful reptile, and it is not necessary for one to be seen that one should be frightened. The very mention, in some instances, is sufficient to scare those who are the least timid. So it was in this instance. Jones, as I have said before, was one of a party that were going to the Lake. He was afraid of snakes. Smith and Brown knew it and they determined to have a little sport at his expense. Jones was highly delighted with the grandeur of the scenery by the side of the canal, as they rode along, and was expatiating upon the wonders of nature. Smith was charmed with the romantic effusions of Jones, and paid no attention to Brown, who was sitting at the bow of the boat, here looked toward him, and seeing that he was intently searching for something, asked what was the matter. Brown answered that a snake was in the boat and that he was trying to find it. Here Jones commenced to twist and squirm. "Hallo!" said Brown: "here's another!" No sooner had he said another when LC 78 Jones sprang into the canal. He made several lunges and, Peter like, looked as if he was walking on the water. Smith added more steam to the boat and Jones was overhauled and taken into the boat, very much frightened. They had not gone very far when Brown said: "I believe that snake is in the boat yet," and at the same time threw at Jones a piece of rattan, which is good to scare one with—it's a veritable snake. He was again taken into the boat, quite exhausted and cold from his ablutions. Brown prepared some ciderberry juice for him, with some pepper and other things that they had along which, after taking, Jones became more quiet. Brown says that when he thinks about that snake story it fills him so with laughter that he has to buckle a strap around him to support his physical organization. Jones has not ventured to the Lake since that time, and Brown is afraid to tell him that the snake in the boat was only a piece of rattan.

Library of Congress

If you want to see snakes come to Suffolk and get Brown to go with you to the Lake of the Dismal Swamp, and he will amuse you to your heart's content.

To be continued, introducing several thrilling stories connected with the Dismal Swamp and Lake Drummond, together with bear hunting and the fearful consequences attending, and later accounts of the whereabouts of Uncle Alek's mule.

SUFFOLK MILITARY ACADEMY.

ESTABLISHED 1875.

The following constitute an able and experienced Faculty: JOSEPH KING, A. M., Principal (with 27 years' experience as a teacher). Rev. ROWLAND DOGGETT, A. M., (Randolph-Macon) Associate. P. ST. JULIEN WILSON (Virginia Military Institute). Dr. W. W. MURRAY (Dublin University). Dr. A. W. ELEY, Dr. E. D. PHILLIPS, Attending Physicians.

The testimonials (see catalogue) from distinguished educators at the University of Virginia, the Virginia Military Institute and other institutions—from leading members of the Virginia Conference—from its patrons in different States, and from the leading citizens of Suffolk, are a sufficient guarantee of the high character and standing of the school and the practical ability and fidelity of the teachers.

Boys and Young Men are here prepared for business or for college, and are surrounded by the best social and religious influences.

The military exercises (which take no time from regular study hours) are only intended to make boys healthy and strong, and to give them an erect and graceful bearing.

The Academy is supplied with Chemical and Philosophical Apparatus for Scientific Illustration; with Charts, Globes and Magic Lantern, to illustrate Geography, Physiology, Natural History and Astronomy; with new instruments for field work in Land Surveying and Civil Engineering; with two telegraph instruments and batteries for practice in Telegraphy,

Library of Congress

and other educational appliances for different branches of study. Handsome nickel-plated rifles and accoutrements furnished by the State.

All our arrangements are home-like, and conducive to health, comfort and mental and moral development.

Total expenses for one year, including neat navy blue uniform, from \$175 to \$190.

For twenty page catalogue, with view of buildings and grounds, address JOSEPH KING, A. M., Principal, Or Rev. ROWLAND DOGGETT, A. M., Associate, SUFFOLK, VA.

CHARTERED 1872.

SUFFOLK COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE!

SUFFOLK,-VA.

PREPARATORY, PRACTICAL OR FINISHING IN Classics, Mathematics, Sciences and the Fine Arts!

ADEQUATE FACULTY.

Discipline —Self-acting under Parental and Christian direction. *Character* is primary. *Conduct* is resultant.

Domestic Arrangements. —Economical, substantial, home-like.

Terms. —Reasonable. Both sexes admitted. Sessions begin middle of September and end the following June. For Catalogues and other information address PROF. P. J. KERNODLE, A. M., Principal.

CHARTERED 1881.

Library of Congress

SUFFOLK

Female Institute FOR Young Ladies and Little Girls.

BOARD AND LITERARY TUITION \$160 A YEAR

The Charter authorizes the Faculty to confer the regular Collegiate Degrees.

The eighteenth annual session opened in September, 1887, and closes the second Wednesday in June, 1888.

Students received at any time, but are advised to enter at the beginning of a term.

Suffolk is one of the healthiest and most accessible towns in Virginia.

The corps of teachers is efficient and experienced. The home training, moral and attractive. Fine advantages in Music, Art and Languages, at modern rates.

For catalogue apply to MISSES FINNEY, BOX 146. SUFFOLK, VA.

WEST END SEMINARY FOR Young Ladies and Girls. SUFFOLK, VA.

The first session of this institution commenced its exercises September 20th, 1887, with flattering prospects, being attended by young ladies from Surry, Southampton, Isle of Wight and Nansemond counties.

The large and commodious brick building, recently erected on Kilby street, by Dr. Skiles, has been secured for the purpose.

The course of instruction is such as to prepare young ladies for the various duties of life.

Special attention paid to moral and religious training, as well as social cultivation, thereby rendering this a home-like school.

Library of Congress

Terms very moderate.

For any desired information address

Col. WM. H. DARDEN,

Miss NOVELLA S. DARDEN, Principals.

Or Miss LIZZIE J. KING, Associate.

THE SUFFOLK & CAROLINA R'Y CO.

CHAUNCEY BROOKS, President.

WM. H. BOSLEY, Sec'y and Treas.

DIRECTORS:

CHAUNCEY BROOKS,

WM. N. CAMP,

JOHN S. GITTINGS,

WM. H. BOSLEY,

CHAS. F. PITT, JR.

S.P. RYLAND, JR.

H. B. HUBBELL, V. P. and Gen'l Manager.

Library of Congress

R. H. THOMPSON, Supt. and Auditor.

The road extends from Suffolk, Va., to Montrose Landing on the Chowan river, N. C.

Direct communication by water to all the rivers and sounds of North Carolina, and from Suffolk to Baltimore by the Suffolk Steamboat Company's regular line of steamers.

The shortest and most direct route from Eastern North Carolina to Norfolk and Northern cities. Makes close connections at Suffolk with the Atlantic and Danville road, the Norfolk and Western and the Seaboard and Roanoke roads.

By taking this route business men on the Chowan and Roanoke can visit Norfolk, spend several hours there, and be at home again the same day.