

Frank M. Bowers

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# THE OLD DOMINION.

FEBRUARY, 1873.

## CONTENTS:

CHERICOKE,.....	71
MARGUERITE AT THE CASTLE,.....	79
THY WILL BE DONE,.....	86
GETTING OUT OF AN ENGAGEMENT,.....	87
ROSA BELLEVUE,....	95
CLAUDE AND POUSSIN,.....	102
YEAR OF PROMISE,.....	107
FLORENCE VANE,.....	108
MEMORY,.....	114
ODDITIES OF NOMENCLATURE,.....	115
BULWER'S LETTER,.....	121
SKETCHES OF A SOLDIERS LIFE,.....	123
A SONG BY ELLA GRANT,.....	128
HENRY CAREY,.....	129
EDITOR'S TABLE,.....	135
LITTLE FOLK'S CORNER,.....	141
VIRGINIA HOUSEWIFE,.....	142

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# The Old Dominion Magazine.

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NO. 2.

## CHERICOKE.

BY T. B. BALCH, D. D.

IN DECEMBER, 1838, the writer found himself in the act of crossing the Mataponi from King and Queen to the county of King William. A short voyage—for the river was far from being broad. On reaching the strand of King William, a gentleman, tall and erect, walked out of the boat, keeping an acute eye on Pony.

"Were it not," he remarked, "that your animal is a mahogany bay, you might be taken for an old Mortality."

"True," I rejoined. "His was white as his office was sepulchral, and St. Columba rode one that was pale over the island of Iona, and among the Pictish Kings; but George Buchanan owned a bay. He lent it to the Regent Morton, who kept it so long, that Buchanan threatened to take off his head. And Bowles, the Sonneteer, rode an orange dun all over his Parish, and in visiting antique seats. Virginia has become to me rather more than a Parish."

"You should have said a Diocese," he replied.

We had not walked more than two hundred yards from the beach of the

river, before my new acquaintance suddenly came to a halt. A house was in sight from the road. It looked like an old edifice which had fallen into declension. Some decay must be looked for in all the works of man. Nomini Hall and Belair remind me of the ruins of Balcluthon, in England. The relics of Abbeys seem like white clouds fallen down on the green Earth. But this is no place for the introduction of the pensive. The writer would much rather have been the cheerful, than the melancholy man of Milton.

"Walk up with me," said the gentleman. "It's near the hour of dining. 'Tis not my residence, for I live in Hanover; but can promise you a cordial welcome."

"Thank you," I replied. "Your invitation is accepted, provided there be no fierce dog on the premises. Did you ever hear of the fight between Barrow, the Mathematical Professor at Cambridge, and one of the canine species? Barrow fought with great precision, and demonstrated his superiority to his assailant. Virginia gentlemen

have kept rabid dogs, but it is a flaw in their escutcheon. Would as leave encounter so many Suabian wolves."

By this time we had reached the dwelling, which, though somewhat dilapidated, bore evident marks of having once been a comfortable abode. The family appeared to be plain; but my Hanoverian friend was *Arbiter elegantiarum*.

After the repast, the writer was at a loss to find a subject on which to talk.

"Some of the Virginia seats, I remarked, are falling to pieces, though their walls were once embellished by the refined pictures of Guido, the landscapes of Gainsborough, the Portraits of Sir Joshua Reynolds, or the perfectly natural pieces of Wilkie."

"Yes," replied the gentleman, "my lamentations can well be mingled with yours; for though not myself an Artist, a brother of mine is wedded to the Pencil. His name is Cooke."

"Is it possible!" I rejoined. "Met with him the other day at a seat called Greenville, in the county of Price William."

"Was he well?"

"Entirely so, and just fresh from the Arno, that runs through the city of Florence, where he studied the works of Rubens, VanDyke, Rembrandt and Teniers. He must excel, for he is much devoted to his Art, and proud of it as Turner. Before sailing for Florence he had taken the Portrait of the Rosehill Mariner. But if the question be a fair one, to what are *you* wedded?"

"To Miss Berkley, of Hanover," he replied.

But my allusion, of course, was to his occupation or pursuit in life. The writer went on his way, though Pony

didn't like the rocking winds, and my friend warned me that the breezes of December were piping among the trees. Couldn't stay, notwithstanding his earnest solicitation. No one is respected in these modern times, unless he be willing to break his neck in Travel. Captain Grose, and Pennant, went over Scotland at their leisure, and they were wise men, as the sequel of this paper will evince.

We had not advanced a mile, before my being convinced of indiscretion in leaving a blazing fire. The cold was intense, the soil alluvial, and the sand blown to mounds. Mittens were but a poor protection to one's hands, in holding the reins of the bridle. The sun was quite swift to set of a December afternoon, and the thought occurred that it would be better to return. But "on to Richmond," though it was not my purpose to beseege that romantic city. Had that been my intention, Pony would have served me as his war-horse served Gen'l McClelland; *id est*, he ran his rider against a wall, and behaved himself like Balaam's celebrated mule. Night fell on all visible objects, and the traveler, who had never seen before a grain of Prince William sand, was not simply bewildered, but fairly lost. Riding on, a light in the distance struck my attention. Disliking dogs nearly as much as railways, we sent a loud call to the half-house from which the light had radiated.

"What do you call this settlement?" was my question.

"Akotink," which we took for an Indian name, was the reply, spoken in such a surly tone, as to preclude further inquiries. Onward, through rows of

leafless trees and forests stripped of all Summer foliage. Intersecting roads. Well, Chincho, take me where you please. After thinking three-fourths of an hour on the cardinal points of the compass, Pony reached a stately Mansion, the winter aspect of which need not be portrayed.

Uncle Hedgmond, chopping wood for the kitchen.

"Uncle, who lives here?"

"Marse Doctor Braxton."

"Is he at home?"

"No, but Marse Charles Braxton lives over yonder."

At that, a servant ran from the porch. "When did my Master send away a gentleman in July or in December? Get down Sir," and he led me into the lower part of the building, where, in the lines of Milton,

"The glowing embers through the room,  
Taught light to counterfeit the gloom."

But a lady appeared, "'Tis presumed, I said, that this is Mrs. Braxton. Will you please look at this letter, written for my behoof by Col. Mercer, of Fredericksburg, son to the Hero who fell at Princeton, in 1777."

"It may be as well, she replied, to mention your name."

"Certainly."

"Oh! we have read some of your ruminations in this retirement. Make yourself at home. Be self-possessed, for you seem to be agitated."

Rested well that night; but my son has just stepped to my studio to say that he had just seen the demise of Mrs. Braxton, of Chericoke, mentioned in the *Richmond Dispatch*.

"Very well," I replied, sorrowfully, "she has gone to where there are no bit-

ter December nights, and no traveling, save on Angelic wings, over green fields and among golden streets."

Resolved the next morning to spend a couple of days at Chericoke, for the weather was inauspicious. We went to the parlor. A blazing hearth.

"Is there not a piping tree somewhere in this vicinity, under which the Mattaponi and Pamunkey Indians used to smoke and send up their eaglewood incense among forest trees?"

Question affirmatively answered.

Puffing is a bad habit. There is a rivulet in Maryland, near Port Tobacco, which rises in the Mount of Misery; but there is a Tobacco Key in Honduras, which may unlock some of the honey brooks of that Island.

"Would you like to smoke?" said Mrs. Braxton.

"Never dream of such a thing," I replied, "in a handsome parlor, or in the presence of ladies. And yet, as grave a Divine as Ralph Erskine, of Dunfermline, has spiritualized the Art of smoking. A Knickerboker gentleman once sent me a box of Havana cigars, and during my absence from home my Sire gave a great entertainment, and his guests used up more than half, and of course, the feast ended in a puff and a considerable quantity of ashes. A servant told me that the heaps of ashes round the table were on a small scale, like the ridge of a mole."

"Wer'nt you very much incensed?" asked Mrs. Braxton.

"Not at all; but the company must have been, without a doubt. To keep in good humor is one of my stereotyped rules. Nothing irritates me but the smoke of a steamboat or a car, for

steam may one day conquer, not the Periodical to be called *Old Dominion*, but the grand Commonwealth of Virginia. Next to that, nothing provokes me so much as to hear Napoleon Bonaparte dubbed as a great man."

Peering about the room, my eye lighted on quite a large picture.

"Whose Portrait?" I inquired. "The subject must have been a portly, fine looking old gentleman."

"That is Charles Carter, of Shirley, who lived on James river below, Richmond."

"How came it here, Mrs. Braxton?"

"The father of my husband, and signer of the Declaration of Independence, was married to one of the Shirley daughters. We hold the likeness in great veneration. Not from his being a millionaire, but because he was the friend of the poor."

"A fine recommendation," I replied. "Who cares for Elwes, the Miser, who took a crust of bread to Parliament to escape the expense of dining at a London Inn."

In the preface to Shakespeare's *Tempest*, there is a curious incident stated. Chard, Waters and Christopher Carter, sole inhabitants of the Bermudas, found a block of Ambergris, worth ten thousand pounds. Waters and Chard began a pugilistic affair about the block, but Carter allayed the strife. "Blessed are the Peacemakers."

"Hope they allowed him a share of the spoil."

"Was Christopher a progenitor of the Virginia Carters?"

"I Thought so at one time; but Bishop Meade, in his book about old churches, mentions that John Carter

was the first of the name who appeared in Virginia. Johannes must have been a shrewd man, for the prosperity of his descendants has always looked like the amber shrub, that is an ever-green."

"Have none of the clan been in adversity?" asked my interlocutrix-

"A few of them," I replied, "but with all their liberality, the most of them have not forgotten the main chance. Have known many of them, and we highly appreciate their virtues."

"Are you an admirer of Shakespeare?"

"Yes, in an expurgated edition. His *Tempest* is one of the greatest of all mental creations. But some carry their estimate of him to a ridiculous extreme. Richter has foolishly said, 'give me any *three* words of the Avon Dramatist, and a volume would be the result.' Richter was a Humorist, but he must have intended this for the ludicrous. We can give him a whole play of Shakespeare, on which to write a Book, but we fear the Book would be as worthless as the Play. We once talked with a gentleman of taste, who alleged that he could quote a line from Shakespeare which would alone have made his name immortal."

"Let me hear that line?"

"How sweetly sleeps the moonlight on this bank."

"Immortality, then must be easily won, for Quarles or Colley Cibber, might have written that line, though neither could have invented the Drama in which it occurs."

"Be cautious, said Mrs. Braxton, or else about 1862, Longfellow, Whittier,

and Holmes, might send you to Fort Warren."

"Am not afraid of Whittier, for he is a non-combatant, and Holmes is busy in financering. He paid the war debt in a fourth of July Oration. Longfellow was very short in his Wayside Inn. He ought to have put up at a Virginia Inn, and his inspiration would have gushed forth like the fountain of Costalia."

Our circle was now unexpectedly joined by a young gentleman from the Chericoke neighborhood. He had studied Greek at the University of Virginia. He spelled hard to know my opinion of that noble Institution.

"Its programme of study is the best of any in the United States, and perhaps in England, Scotland or Germany. The student can choose the branch or branches congenial to his taste, and one profoundly thorough attainment, is worth a baker's dozen of superficial acquirements. The curriculum of our colleges is too various, and leads to mental confusion rather than to mental force. A boy that does not fancy Mathematics, is often dragged like Hector round the walls of Troy. Beattie disliked the science of quantity, but became a beautiful Poet. Robertson was in the same quandary, but made a great Historian—so with Coleridge, but he was a Metaphysian; and Boyle, the Dictionary Man, knew everything in the wide world, save Mathematics; so with Goldsmith, who turned Natural History into a Persian Tale, and found, of course, a multiplicity of readers. Porson devoted himself exclusively to Greek; but if he knew all Greece like a book, we will venture to say that he

became posted up in Italy, for the latter stole the arts of the former, and yet, Cicero never became such an Orator as Demosthenes, nor Livy such an Historian as Herodotus, nor Seneca such a Tragedian as Sophocles. Italy became the mere imitation of Greece.

"The praise of invention must ever lie with the sons of Hella. Zeuxis, so respected grapes that birds assailed the cluster, but flew off in despair. The Romans carried off the Grecian Arts, but could not rival the people by whom those matchless works were created.

"By the wise arrangement adopted at the University at Charlottesville, men of Letters will arise as well as Professional men. The Litterateur is a unique kind of person. He differs from Divines, Barristers, and Physicians. We confidently hope that our *alma mater* may nurse the genius of our State, and ere long produce some Thucydides, who will record our more than Peloponesian war; and some Grattan, or another Calhoun, to plead for his violated country; or some Scott, to immortalize our nooks; or some Milton, to embalm our scenery in the amber of evergreen Memory. Let us aspire to create, and not be satisfied with the creations of others, whether they be Ancients or Moderns."

We incline to think that the Alumnus of the University was satisfied with the views of the Chericoke guest.

"How far" said I, to the young Gent., "from this house to the Pamunkey, so circuitous in a part of its course?"

"Between three and four miles," he replied.

"Do you know, I continued, that Thomas Jefferson, once came near be-

ing drowned in that narrow stream? It had become broader than usual, perhaps, from the fall of rain, or the melting of snow. Had he been totally submerged, some History would have been lost."

"What History?" said my interlocutor.

"Why, the purchase of Louisiana, the money for which was paid to Pechion in 1803. Bonaparte allowed himself to be overreached in that bargain. It was like many other of his senseless acts."

"Was Pechion a clever man?"

"A perfect gentleman, and a warm friend, so far as friendship can exist between a man of forty and a small boy. He was from Lyons, on the Rhone."

"Did you approve the purchase?"

"Can't talk Politics," I rejoined, "but we may talk History. That purchase was against the genius of the Constitution. Jefferson was the last man, who ought to have sanctioned the contract. In fact, he hesitated long before the signing of the Bill. That he projected the scheme is incredible, or that he premeditated the purchase, for why then should he have entertained any scruples about his signature to the Bill?"

"What harm accrued from his signature?"

"Much, every way. Can't talk Politics, but I am not without a smattering of Historical lore. Louisiana was going too far from the centre of the Government. The old thirteen States, without additional territory, might have lived in *amity* far longer than the Republic of Iceland, or the Dukedom of Italy. We ought to have regarded

all people outside of the Constitution, made in 1787, as enemies in war, but friends in peace. President Jefferson was a State's Right's man. He was afraid that the Presidential mace, like Aaron's rod, might one day swallow up the thirteen Gubernatorial rods. And the danger is great that this result may take place at some future day."

"Did party spirit mount high in his administration?" inquired my young friend

"Yes, to fever heat. The contest was like that of the Hats and Caps in Sweden. Sweden had made a Treaty with Russia, and the Caps were for carrying out its provisions; but the Hats wouldn't throw up their Caps and clamor as we do at fourth of July speeches. So with Jays' celebrated Treaty, which Jefferson refused to send to the Senate. Great opposition to his embargo and his gunboats, which went by the name of the Lilliputian Navy. Americans will be humorous even in Party times. Gardenier accused the House of Representatives of being influenced by France. He was insulted, and a challenge to mortal combat, was the result. He was the handsomest man we have ever known, and it was a pity that he should have been disfigured by a bullet. A lady nursed Gardenier, till he got well, and than the fair daughter of Eve sent an arrow to the heart of Campbell, his antagonist, which was manufactured at the furnace of Cupid, and they were accordingly married."

"How was Jefferson in his manners?"

"He had seen a great deal of good society, both in Paris and Virginia, but



he always struck me as a plain, unpretending gentleman. He rode a large bay horse, with his name inscribed on a plate in the front of the bridle, but he would as leave have mounted my Pony, Chingo, could the little animal have carried his weight. He was the friend of Priestley, who died in 1804, on the Susquehannah. And Jefferson was fond of experimental chemistry."

"Did he accept many presents?" asked my interlocutor.

"Not many, we believe. The Yankees sent him the famous Mammoth cheese, from Connecticut, which created a good deal of merriment, and the Sultan of Constantinople, three splendid Arabians, which were paraded over the city, till sold by Congress. The ex-Bashaw of Tripoli gave him a goat, but before it could be disposed of *pro bono publico*, its spiral horn killed a youth, who was passing over the grounds of the White House. We think it likely that the ex-Bashaw gave him several pinches of snuff, for he offered his box to every one he saw. My Politics were not of the same type with those of Jefferson, but we are abundantly willing to commend his high sense of Constitutional obligations as a Ruler of the people. He looked upon the Constitution as the milky way, spreading itself through a constellation of Independent States in all things, except in the few powers which had been delegated. He kept that milky way as his constant cynosure. He was loth to disfigure it, and much less to send it from its elevated position and trample it under foot. He was the humane Protector of all Indian Rights, and the great Patron of the

Missouri Expedition, under the conduct of Lewis and Clark, and though Wilson complained bitterly of his apathy about his ornithological researches, yet, after the publication of those costly volumes, he was among their earliest purchasers. We wish he could have smiled on the forest rambles of the Perthshire Scotchman. It would have been a pleasant reflection in the retirement of Monticello, that he had done any thing in his high office to take captive the birds of the Mississippi, and to collect the random notes, which they had been pouring forth so long in the sunny groves of Louisiana. But perhaps, he was debarred by Constitutional objections, and not by indifference to science."

There was a pause in our colloquy, but renewed in the way which follows:

"If you would scribble off a large book," said my young acquaintance, "you might make a Chronicler like Froissart—a Diarist like Eyelyn, or a Gossip like Walpole, of Strawberry Hill, in the Shire of Middlesex."

"Hold!" said I, "for you have become hoisted up to the famous Blarney Stone. 'Tis my wish to be unpretending as the mouse that fed Baron Trenck, in the prison of Magdeburg."

"Couldnt you give us a few particulars," said my friend, "about our early Presidents? Don't wish to spur you into Politics."

"Never studied Politics an hour in my life, but have seen some of our Presidents in the halcyon days of the Republic.

"Madison, was rather diminutive in stature, but very genteel in his appearance. He was a man who occasionally

indulged in humor. Erskine so states, who was son to the great Advocate, and who was sent out to prevent, if possible, the war of 1812. He visited Madison, not only at the White House, but at Montpelier, in Orange. Our President was rather timid. He was afraid to cross the sea. He was a great Statesman, and doubtless led the Convention that formed our Constitution; but our Delegates were commissioners simply to amend the Articles of Confederation. Luther Martin was the most inflexible State Right's Man in that Convention. Mrs. Madison did much to sustain the popularity of her husband, by her condescending manners. Her carriage was drawn by a pair of iron grey horses. She was not a lady of various accomplishments, for she was reared in the society of Friends, but in her person, she was towering as was Dido, Queen of Carthage.

"Monroe, was a matter-of-fact man. He seemed entirely destitute of the imaginative faculty; he traveled both North and South. His administration was quiet. Party spirit was allayed; but the rumbling of Niagara was renewed in the four years' service of the second Adams. We need not say that he was a man of Letters—an early contributor to Dennie's Port Folio—a Rhetorician and a Statesman. His moral character was pure as that of Edmund Burke. He was particular in attention to his private affairs, but liberal in his donations. We have never conversed with a man of more extensive information. He had stowed away in his mind the contour of foreign cities, the shape of regal palaces, the population of countries, the curiosi-

ties of Nature, the fall of cascades and the length and breadth of Parks. In short, he was *helluo librorum*, and nothing escaped his notice."

"But have you nothing to say about old Hickory?"

"Rather decline," I remarked.

"When the *Old Dominion* shall become established at Richmond, party politics must be excluded from its pages. Literature and wrangling cannot draw in the same team. 'Tis true, that Addison and Steele had a little quarrel about some money, and a duel was projected between Jeffrey and Tom Moore; but the quarrels of Authors are nothing more than the ringing of sheep-bells in the pastures of Literature, compared to the crash of the great Moscow bell, the fall of which stunned the car of Napoleon. Look at Wilkes, what a fuss he made about his exclusion from Parliament. The fuss shook England to its centre.

"Disagreeing with Gen'l Jackson, in the whole of his term, any speech of mine might turn this parlor into an arena.

"But we will say that VanBuren was a man of elegant manners. We took tea with him on the tenth evening after his inauguration. It is impossible to say how the line of our future Presidents may run.

"Cleon, a currier, attained to the supreme power in Athens, and Bonaparte wormed his way into St. Cloud; and our Constitution wisely debars no citizen, however obscure, from the Presidential office.

"But of all Public men, John Randolph, of Roanoke, was always to me the most profoundly interesting. With

all his peculiarities, Virginia never produced a greater Statesman."

"Must be off."

"Can't you stay till Dr. Braxton's return?"

"No; have seen Richmond in its vernal dress, when clouds are bright and showers gave to every one grass in his field; but want to see it in its winter robe. But King William led me to think about the Pioneers of Virginia, and we could not help writing the following lines:

Across, across, Atlantic seas,  
To this new land our Fathers came.  
Who found a wilderness of trees.  
Where red men tracked their bounding game  
Behold! behold, their canvass spread!  
An unseen hand our Fathers led.

How small the flock of Albion's men,  
Who shed the separating tear:  
And yet, the feet, of ten times ten,  
Soon touched this Western hemisphere.  
Each footstep now the desert roams,  
Far, far, away from hedge-bound homes.

Our Sires, why left they England's strand?  
To wend their way through deserts dark.

Where each red man, with bow in hand,  
Could send his arrow to its mark!  
They came, they came, with fearless hearts  
To plant the germs of England's Arts.

And here they planted British Laws,  
And here established Human Rights,  
Nor did their children's children pause,  
In marching weary days and nights,  
To freedom's shrine on bleeding feet  
'Mid wintry snows and summer heat.

Then we, their children, must preserve,  
That jewel which their fingers wrought;  
Nor from the love of freedom swerve,  
Which at the price of blood was bought:  
Freedom, is worth Peruvian mines,  
And all the gems of Eastern shrines.

All honor to that chosen band,  
Virginia's daring Pioneers,  
Who came from off their native lands,  
To where its crest the Blue Ridge rears:  
For freedom here its bugle keeps,  
To rouse the Patriot when he sleeps.

Met Dr. Braxton returning to his home. Made myself known. Could have spent, Doctor, a lustrum of years at Cherricoke, but business is urgent. He smiled, and in parting, we shook hands.

## MARGUERITE AT THE CASTLE

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

SEVEN days after, the little mule, harnessed to a carriage of most rustic fashion, conveyed Doctor Norman, and his eldest daughter to the Castle of Serriere. This little long-eared steed, naturally troubled Marguerite's joy; it made her uncomfortable to have to drive up to the Castle in such an equipage; but her toilette was so becoming, her hopes so eager and intoxi-

cating, and her anticipations so delicious, that she soon ceased to care about the little mule and his rustic equipage.

Madame Lanoix had passed the evening with Denise, and had so pleasantly amused and occupied her and so skilfully upheld her sinking courage, that she did not experience the slightest regret at having missed the Ball.