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THE OLD DOMINION.

SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, 1872.

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SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, 1872. Nos. 9 & 10.

DRYBURGH.

BY T. B. BALCH., D. D.

'Tis not important to] define the exact position of this establishment. We only remark in a general way that there is a small village in the county of Halifax bearing the designation of Dryburgh.—The settlement stands near Staunton river, which becomes the Dan and then the Roanoke. We say nothing about the localities in the neighborhood, for minuteness is at times irksome to the reader. The comfortable box was presided over by Mother Simkins, who was well posted in all things appertaining to the gentry of Halifax.

"The Carringtons," she said, "were the most enthusiastic people in the world about Virginny."

"How do they show their Virginianism?" I enquired.

"Why, if they go for ten days into Carolina, so soon as they cross the Virginny line in coming back, they dismount, knuckle down, and salute the sacred soil."

"That's equal," said I, "to the Greeks who wore grasshoppers in their hats that the Barbarians might see men who had jumped up from the fern of Greece. But you are right in your characteristics. Was at College with one of the name. He was tall, with fair hair and blue eyes. When he left College and touched the south side of the Potomac, he sprung from the stage and did exactly with his knees and mouth as you represent. An impressive ceremony."

Mother Simkins was fond of talk and we often chatted during my stay.

In calling at an inn, at seats of our gentry, or the homes of our millers, we cast our thoughts about to see if any mental associations be connected with the *locality*.—The habit gives play to the mind. We advise young Virginians to take this hint. It will multiply their topics for conversation. Dry-

burgh. The mind ran over to a small town on the Tweed, three miles from Abbotsford, in the shire of Berwick. Its Abbey is in ruins, for sheep browse on grass in proximity to Dryburgh. It is a spot greatly frequented by travellers since 1832, when Sir Walter Scott was buried among its fragments. Sir Walter was wrong in the erection of Abbotsford. Poets are not fond of costly edifices. Fairfax, translator of Gierusalemme Liberata, dwelt in a forest; Meikla of the Lusiad, in a stone manse; Drummond in a home set round with hawthorn; the Ettrick Shepherd in a shieling; Burns in a shanty, and so with the rest of the fraternity, but Sir Walter reared the palace of a Lord, though only a Baronet. But he sleeps quietly at Dryburgh after applying the fire of his genius to the old sort of Novels which were burnt up as if they had been the Alexandria Library. The district of Scotland in which Dryburgh stands is rather famous for its Abbeys. There is Kelso, on the north of the Tweed, renowned in the Border wars.—Melrose is on the south of the same river, and the ruins of Jedburgh Abbey are crumbling within a mile or two of the silver Tevoit, and but an inconsiderable distance from the Yarrow braes. Leyden went among the Malays of Java from Jedburgh, but never returned to the land of gowans.

“Have you any ruins in Halifax?” I enquired of Mrs. Simkins.

“Bless you not any, for Virginny

is young. Henry Carrington says that the person not content with this county don't deserve to live. We have Mount Laurel that will never wear away; Barksdale that will never get any higher without an earthquake; Bloomsburgh that will never fade; Harmony that keeps us all in good humor; or our riding parties can scamper to Spring Gardens, or over Chalk Level, in Pittsylvania, or to the Falls of the Dan, or across Pig river to the Rocky Mount of Franklin. Don't tell me about the red hills of New England, where the people live on ugly crabs. One of them would frighten me out of my wits. What must be the taste of people who can call crawfish and terrapins great delicacies?

‘Sweet Dryburgh, loveliest village of the plain,
Where smiling plenty cheers the laboring swain.’”

“Have been at a number of Virginny inns, but never heard an old lady talk so eloquently before, whether in prose or poetry. You must have been playing at Crambo with my friend Carrington.”

“The Carringtons,” she replied, “are among the best people in Halifax. They would have been Peers, except for the fourth day of July, 1776. But not indebted to them for my elegant education. An old field school took me to the Rule of Three, where the teacher told me to set up three instead of two pillars as marking the limits of human knowledge. He asked me how

Halifax got its name? 'Why, it's after some old English King.'— 'Not so,' he replied. 'How did Mecklenberg?' 'Why, was'nt he Powhatan's uncle?' 'And how Pittsylvania?' 'Why, she must have been the mother of Opechan-canough.' At that he lifted up his birch, but when my black eyes flashed like heat lightning, he laid it aside. 'And how,' said I, 'did the river Dan get its name?'— 'Why,' said he, 'Dan was one of the ten lost tribes of Israel, and it's possible that some of them might have come over to Virginny.'— 'Shade of Solomon!' said I, 'what an answer.'

"But, Mrs. Simkins," I rejoined, "your education was not defective, and yet this will not account for the briskness and accuracy with which you converse. You toss off towns, rivers and even uncouth Indian names without any effort."

"But you forget," she replied, "that this Tarbard inn of mine has been a rendezvous for great men."

"What great men?" I enquired.

"Chief Justice Marshall on his way to Carolina. Used to ask him about law points, and he never charged me a picayune. The same is true of Wirt, who was an imposing man in his appearance, but not in his fees. Watkins Leigh seldom came to Halifax, but Randolph, of Roanoke, once or twice dropped in on his way to Georgia, whither he was going about the Yazoo business. When a man becomes famous he carries others

along with him, for he always ordered a good supper for Juba."

"But surely," said I, "Southern gentlemen who were going to Congress via Richmond, did not dare to slight your inn?"

"Some of them," she answered, "like the Italians, went by the Piedmont route; but John C. Calhoun, Gaston, Lowndes, Haine and Preston, *cum multis aliis*, have honored my establishment. It occurred to me that they were all opposed to railways. Calhoun impetuously so, for he was an ardent, positive and fast speaking man. He held a high head when he talked. He was the greatest statesman that the country has ever produced. 'Run a network of railroads throughout the States,' he said, 'and you arrive by a short cut at consolidation, and the Confederacy becomes an Empire.'"

"Did the others agree with him in his opinions?"

"Yes; they seemed to lean that way."

"And how with yourself, Mrs. Simkins?"

"Mrs. Simkins is no politician, though good at the law, so far as my own rights are concerned; but John Caldwell was told plainly by his landlady as follows: 'Run your railroads and put up with the consequences. All the little inns that lend a tranquil charm to Virginia will be erased from her landscapes; there will be bridges over fords where the water is not ankle deep; you will be scooping out dark tunnels through our azure mountains;

custom must cease to those dear canopies that shelter the wayfar- ing man; widows will be turned out to toil in the fields, as they were in France when Bonaparte dragged his reluctant conscripts to the ashes of Moscow and into the flames of the Kremlin. The an- tique hospitality of our State will be buried in the tomb of all the Capulets, and the manners of our gentry will fall down to the level of Russian boors. Our servants will no longer be genteel like Elie- zer, who went after Rebekah all the way from Hebron to Haran. That miserable Wall Street, which twenty years ago was nothing but a row of shanty shops, will be pro- testing the grand Old Dominion.”

“Mrs. Simkins,” interrupted the writer, “did the Amphyctions make any commentary on your terrible philippic?”

“Oh, yes; in gliding out of the room the Vice President said: ‘Sen- ators and Representatives, if all the ladies possessed the clear head and prompt elocution of our host- ess, their rights would go up high as the Peaks of Otter.’ ‘They would indeed,’ rejoined Preston, but they being of Irish extraction, were thinking of Blarney Castle. Believe me, our education depends a good deal on the company we keep. Any body could become learned in a tavern. The cus- tomers talk on such a variety of subjects. We must be listeners all the while, and not lose even the Latin scraps. Preston was very fond of his Latin phrases. An inn

made Whitfield an orator and Shakespeare a poet.”

“Your arguments, Mrs. Simkins, are irresistible,” said her guest.

The balance of this paper could be filled out with the colloquies of my landlady. But some are fond of adventures. They would like to read all that took place at the Dry- burgh. This passion for marvels will justify me for introducing the following episode. Had retired to my room for the night. Could not sleep. Something seemed to be brewing. The moon shone in at my window. She had been late in rising, for the Queen of night had passed into her round silver saloon, beyond the first step by which she had entered.— There was a slight bustle below stairs, but the tramp of two horses was distinctly audible. Thought to myself it’s John Randolph, for he never rode from Georgetown to the Capitol without Juba.— Never mind, in due time Mrs. Sim- kins will explain. Columbus spent an anxious night at the Bahamas, but in the morning opened his eyes on the new world he had come to find. Rose early. Went in search of my landlady. Found her at the cowpen. This incident is men- tioned because the Northerners think that Virginy ladies lack in- dustry. When they go East they are interviewed at the windows by the Lowellites, as people that never darn a stocking or even thread a needle. Glad therefore to find Mrs. Simkins at the udders of a cow. It struck me that she would

have made a suitable consort for Dr. Jenner.

"Mrs. Simkins," said I, "there was a little eddy last night in the tranquil stream of our inn. Perhaps the great statesman and Juba have arrived."

"Why, don't you know that he's gone as plenipotentiary, not to Petersburg, in Dinwiddie, but St. Petersburg, in the north of Europe. He has shot kildares on the Delaware and Potomac, and he'll be at the bears on the Neva. He gave a horse to a Kinderhook gentleman. Virginians may offer, but it will be a dark day for the Republic when presents are accepted. Gifts are queer things. They turn the eye of the *donée* into prism, which flushes the donor into gorgeous offices, but the Roanoke Orator when he gave the animal thought no more of an Embassy than of riding the graceful creature around the circumference of the moon. He and Macoff were a pair of the most incorruptible men that ever broke bread at my inn."

"But, my good mother, your guest is well acquainted with all things pertaining to John Randolph. He knew all the coves in our mountains and hillside hollows in which political game may be found. That's not to the point.—That commotion or stir last night."

"Only a young lady and her brother who got in at an unseasonable hour. They missed their way to the Dryburgh. 'Tis always bad to be wrong in any thing. We like people to arrive a little after sundown,

For then the sheep wind onward to their fold
And coming stars appear like drops of gold,
and we sip our tea like birds at a
summer brook."

"But their names."

"Your curiosity," she replied, "is equal to that of Sir Isaac Newton who looked into the arcana of light. Their names you will know when Mrs. Simkins leads in the lady to breakfast. You are a scribbler, and she may be averse to your putting her in print. She may choose to be introduced under a fictitious name. A device common among what we call the irritable genius. Be patient."

The writer of course took the hint, though the temptation was great to keep an eye on the old lady in the act of milking. It was a creamlike sight.

Breakfast is the pleasantest of the three meals to which we are summoned from day to day. The coffee of the Dryburgh was of a mahogany hue, the cream of an orange tint, the sugar not brown but white, butter pure as a snowball, and bread which might have pleased Curran when he was Master of the *Rolls*.

"Wouldn't give a red cent," observed my hostess, "for a Yankee oven—no, not a *pin*, but mine was manufactured at Birmingham across the water. Wouldn't use Japanese ware on any account.—It's nothing better than poisoned tin, and as to the Yankee cups and saucers would as leave drink out of the crumpled horns of a cow."

"Don't you descend a little too

much in your denunciations, Mrs. Simkins?"

"No; my humble figures act in the way of contrast. They are foils to the gems that gush out when my mind is making the tour of the planets, or promenading the milky way or scouring the constellations which, dim to us, are brilliant to beings of a superior order."

To come down somewhat, the writer must disclaim being an epicure notwithstanding his allusion to breakfast. The heroes of Gæthe are always at their meals. In reviewing a work written by the Weimar author, Jeffrey has *itali-cised* all its breakfasts, dinners and suppers. What a number! The taste of this German litterateur was about as coarse as an Osnaburgh towel. But we musn't forget the ceremony of introduction. Mrs. Simkins has the honor of making Miss Raleigh and Sir Walter, who stands to her in a fraternal relation, acquainted with the nephew of a North Carolina gentleman who was number one in signing the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence on the 20th of May, 1775.

"That's a feather in the cap of my guest which North Carolinians know how to appreciate. Never liked Jefferson's Declaration. It says so many ill-natured things against King George who *stamped* us a little, but took off his foot before it got up to our eye lashes.—But draw chairs. A breakfast may grow cold in July. I am too fussy, and this tongue of mine will keep running on to the end of its life, con-

trary to the command of the Apostle James."

"That is true, Mrs. Simkins. You talk with rapidity, but what you say is not without force. You glance with ease from subject to subject. There is no necessity with you to demonstrate one proposition that the comma may be used in any other demonstration. There is a point in Chesapeake Bay. It seems at a distance to be something; but near it and it becomes no point. This cannot be said of your ratiocinative faculty."

"Thought," she replied, "that you were a Virginian to the manner born. Your ancestors must have been from Cork or Blarneytown."

"No," I responded, "but from Wales, and the Welsh are not given to flattery like the people of Erin-go-Bragh."

Have more than once felt under constraint in beginning to talk with strangers. But my diffidence wore off considerably in the course of the morning. Miss Raleigh was handsome, but we have nothing to say about auburn curls, blue or hazel eyes, or a riding dress like that of Die Vernon. Such things are played out long ago, and not likely we hope to be revived.

"'Tis presumed," I ventured to say, "that you are from the broad street city of Raleigh."

"Not at all," the lady replied, "for that lovely city is a good way off from the Dryburgh. We come from Oxford."

"Oh! then you come from a place renowned for its learning over the

whole world, and its first old field school was founded by Alfred the Great about the year 901. It stands on the Isis. Its colleges have fostered more great men than my memory could supply at present, being away from the hundred books out of which my mind has been fed from time to time. But we may name Locke, illustrious for his metaphysical researches, or Butler, author of the *Analogy*, or Johnson who nearly talked himself to death at Bolt Court, or Gibbon who wrote a voluminous history, or Addison who depicted English manners as they appeared in his day."

"Is it possible," said the lady, "that you own but a hundred volumes? That's not quite equal to the number of colonists who arrived in 1607 on James river, or the colonists of Sir Walter Raleigh who perished on Roanoke Island."

"Not more," I replied. "Nothing ever amused me so much as a letter from my learned friend Frank Cabell, of Liberty Hall, expressing a wish to examine my library. He came accordingly, and we spent together a most agreeable time.—Perhaps too many books may be read. The few colonists of whom you spoke expanded themselves over the mountains even into West Virginia. And we dare say you have read how Park, whose Christian name was Mungo, discovered just one tree in Africa, from the kernels of which butter is made superior, if possible, to that which comes from the churn of mother Simkins. We need germs and ker-

nels more than mere leaves in the pursuit of knowledge. Many of our novels are foliage dangling on fruitless trees."

"You are quite in error," remarked Miss Raleigh, "in supposing me to have come from the English Oxford. It's not polite to interrupt a gentleman in the act of illustrating any subject."

"Please then set me right. So uncertain is knowledge that we are all liable to mistakes. If you come from little Oxford in North Carolina, just South of the Halifax line, your ride to Dryburgh has not been severe. Strange that snug little town did not occur to me when you mentioned your place of residence. There you live, probably, in a cottage on the purlieus of the village, and carry on your studies without any help from the immense Bodleian Library at the old Oxford, or any suggestions to your fancy from the murmurs of the English Cherwell. Believe the friend now talking when he says that deep reflection on a few books is better than a million of books that inspire nothing beyond superficial thought. It grieves my soul to see any lady spending a day in reading the novels of Anna Maria Roche or those of Mrs. Radcliffe."

"We are not totally ignorant of your opinions at Oxford," replied Miss Raleigh. "More than one person has read your Picturesques. You may be slow to believe it that my unexpected meeting with the cosmopolite has arrested my ride till to-morrow morning."

"Can it be possible?" I replied. "Explain."

"In one of your scribblings, as you modestly call them, a doubt is expressed whether the mental powers of ladies be equal to those of gentlemen, or in other words whether Eve was fit to be the consort of Adam. The ladies of Oxford are highly incensed. Persons of your temperament are, like Tasso and Petrarch, fond of being crowned, but no laurel awaits you in North Carolina. Beware how you go to Oxford. Virginians may tolerate such a vicious opinion, but not the ladies of our ancient Commonwealth, who revere that pink of chivalry, Sir Walter, who spread his cloak before the feet of Queen Elizabeth."

"You alarm me, Miss Raleigh. Your voice at first was sweet as the harp of Orpheus, which could have set the pine trees of North Carolina to dancing, but you have raised it to a tone positively harsh."

"Well I may," she rejoined.— "Do you deny that a woman bore away the palm from Pindar at the olympic games, or that one of our sex wrote orations for Pericles, or that Queen Zenobia, and Christina, and Maria Schurman could write fourteen languages, or that the maids of Orleans and Saragossa could fight like Turks, or that De Stael had more sense than Bonaparte, or that Mrs. Browning reads Greek better than Porson or old Dr. Parr, or that you arrogant men don't comprehend La Place whilst Mary

Somerville translates his philosophy as easily as a hot knife divides butter. Why you are not more than a pipe stem in the logic of Mrs. Simkins, or a spark in the furnace of a Chaldean King."

"Enough, Miss Raleigh. It was a lapsus pennae that led me to express that erroneous sentiment.— Publicly made, it shall be publicly retracted. Was not acquainted with Mother Simkins at the time. Certain that your frown will be followed by one of your bewitching smiles."

"One indeed," she replied.— "After such a noble retraction you are entitled to smiles all the time. Leave it with me to make fair weather at Oxford. The swarm of exasperated bees shall be metamorphosed into one as inoffensive as the company that sat on the lips of Plato or the pen of Zenophon."

"Sir Walter," I said, "you are a knight. Can any addition be made to the amende?"

"None."

"Then," I continued, "may you escape the fate of your illustrious namesake who was murdered by a Stuart. 'Tis well that you are not higher than a Sir, for the Constitution forbids all titles of nobility. But it's a great honor to get into the same batch with Newton, Sir William Jones and Sir Christopher Wren. And you may add Sir David Wilkie, Sir Walter Scott and Sir Stamford Raffles. But we have an abundance of Colonels, Captains, Doctors of Divinity and Doctors of Learning and Laws."

Miss Raleigh set off next morn-

ing with Sir Walter. She looked most interesting. Her equestrian habit was neat, and the plume of her hat-tossed itself very gracefully, whilst she waved her adieus like the Queen of Scots. The Ox-bow bend in Connecticut river was not more striking than the curves of her politeness. But the whole affair at the inn seemed veiled in mystery, which induced me to seek the august presence of my hostess. Found her on the porch.

"Mrs. Simkins, you probably know something about the fascinating lady who left us this morning."

"Something," she replied.— "Know all about her, even to knowing her like a book. And if the tympanum of your ear be prepared for the disclosure—"

"Ready," I rejoined.

"Well then, you have taken a conceit that the fair lady is unintelligible. You are in a mist, trying to conjure up in your imagination a lady differing from all other daughters of Eve you have ever seen. What a pity that characters surpassing the common specimens of human nature should be so overdrawn in our tales and romances! She has confided to me all her affairs."

"You proceed, Mrs. Simkins, at a snail's pace?"

"To be sure," she replied.—

"'Tis necessary that you stipulate for the non-introduction of the lady into any of your scribblings about Virginia until many years shall have elapsed. You must wait till the 'Old Dominion' be established.

By that time she will have taken another name, for she is not without a whole host of admirers.— Perhaps 'tis wrong to be so candid, but a person so profoundly learned as myself cannot always be talking about the Pyramids, Cleopatra's barge, or the Tarpein Rook. Must go down to ordinary life or else give up my inn, though warm in winter and cool in summer, when the breezes of the Staunton never fail to come. Miss Raleigh took that name only for the great occasion. She is so modest that nothing could distress her more than being brought into the view of the reading public. Told her that you had never been guilty of indiscretion in a single one of your scribblings. You can safely write about the good old times in Virginny, and there can be no harm in reminiscences of antique ladies or Colonel Oldschools, who have gone off the tapis. Were it not for your chronicles in Stockton's paper they would have been forgotten."

"But, my kind hostess, please hurry on with your narration.— Don't approach the goal at so slow a pace."

"Know then," she replied, "that the lady who left the Dryburgh this morning, is the celebrated Theresa Hazlewood, the belle of Oxford, and the cynosure of many admirers. Her last admirer very indiscreetly insisted on the relinquishment of her equestrianism, when she said to him: 'Sir Knight, you may walk your chalks.' To evince her personal independence, she has gone

on a brisk ride to the Peaks of Otter, the Natural Bridge, and even to Weyer's Cave. Conditions are dangerous things in nuptial affairs. What business had Tom Gaston with her equestrianism? Domestic cares would soon have made her a keeper at home, but in single-blessedness she could circumvent a Yankee army if one were besieging Richmond. Her steed could pass Old Church in a twinkling, leap over brooks, swim the Chickahominy, and bear her into Richmond with purses of gold and haversacks of canned peaches dangling at his mane. By to-morrow evening she will have passed the northwest of Pittsylvania, and then make for Liberty, and the next sunrise be standing on the summit of the Peaks gazing on the Ivy bridge of the Otter. Gaston threw away his chance. It will teach him not to experiment with the affections of his next flame. In the same way your hostess came near to losing Simkins."

"Ah!" said I, "did he exact a condition?"

"He did; demanding the surrender of my pipe, as we sat talking under an apple tree. It soured me, and it occurred to me to send him off

to the crab apple orchard in East Tennessee. When just arranging my mouth to pronounce his irrevocable doom, it shot into my mind that Meg Sim was very eager to tack on *kins* to her name. Succumbed. And when shaking the hand of my poor husband for the last time, he begged me never to open another snuff box, though tobacco might become the staple of the Roanoke."

"But," said I, "did not our friend Theresa spite herself by sending off Gaston?"

"Not at all, for Theodore Iredell has won her hand, and exacts no conditions. They will live in a dell and purses of gold are found at the end of the Iris."

Intending to visit some other inns, it was necessary to settle with my hostess.

"Settle indeed," she called out in her quick way. "If you mention that again, I'll send you to Halifax scot free, if years after my decease you will scribble about the Dryburgh."

My promise is fulfilled. Took leave of Mrs. Simkins, whose learning was remarkably various, but this deponent knoweth not whether the Dryburgh be still standing.