Or how brocaded dame and plumed grandee
  Saw your imperial-colored fruit heaped up
  On radiant salver or in chiseled cup,
Where some proud marble gallery faced the sea?

Or yet do your strange yearnings, loath to cease,
  Go wandering on, till dearer visions rise
  Of the pale temples and the limpid skies,
The storied shores and haunted groves of Greece?

Greece, where the god was yours, of such renown —
  That sleek-limbed reveling boy, supremely fair,
  Who, with the ambrosial gold of his wild hair,
Would wreathe your purple opulence for a crown!

Edgar Fawcett.

THE OLD RÉGIME IN THE OLD DOMINION.

It was a very beautiful and enjoyable life that the Virginians led in that ancient time, for it certainly seems ages ago, before the war came to turn old ideas upside down and convert the picturesque commonwealth into a commonplace modern State. It was a soft, dreamy, deliciously quiet life, a life of repose, an old life, with all its sharp corners and rough surfaces long ago worn round and smooth. Everything fitted everything else, and every point in it was so well settled as to leave no work of improvement for anybody to do. The Virginians were satisfied with things as they were, and if there were reformers born among them, they went elsewhere to work changes. Society in the Old Dominion was like a well rolled and closely packed gravel walk, in which each pebble has found precisely the place it fits best. There was no giving way under one's feet, no uncomfortable grinding of loose materials as one walked about over the firm and long-used ways of the Virginian social life.

Let me hasten to say that I do not altogether approve of that life, by any means. That would be flat blasphemy against the god Progress, and I have no stomach for martyrdom, even of our modern, fireless sort. I frankly admit in the outset, therefore, that the Virginians of that old time, between which and the present there is so great a gulf fixed, were idle people. I am aware that they were, when I lived among them, extravagant for the most part, and in debt altogether. It were useless to deny that they habitually violated all the wise precepts laid down in the published writings of Poor Richard, and set at naught the whole gospel of thrift. But their way of living was nevertheless a very agreeable one to share or to contemplate, the more because there was nothing else like it anywhere in the land.

A whole community with as nearly as possible nothing to do is apt to develop a considerable genius for enjoyment, and the Virginians, during somewhat more than two centuries of earnest and united effort in that direction, had partly discovered and partly created both a science and an art of pleasant living. Add to idleness and freedom from business cares a climate so perfect that existence itself is a luxury within their borders, and we shall find no room for wonder that these people learned how to enjoy themselves. What they learned, in this regard, they

remembered, too. Habits and customs once found good were retained, I will not say carefully, — for that would imply effort, and the Virginians avoided unnecessary effort, always, — but tenaciously. The Virginians were born conservatives, constitutionally opposed to change. They loved the old because it was old, and disliked the new, if for no better reason, because it was new; for newness and rawness were well-nigh the same in their eyes.

This constitutional conservatism, without which their mode of life could never have been what it was, was nourished by both habit and circumstance. The Virginians were not much given to traveling beyond their own borders, and when they did go into the outer world it was only to find a manifestation of barbarism in every departure from their own prescriptive standards and models. Not that they were more bigoted than other people, for in truth I think they were not, but their bigotry took a different direction. They thought well of the old and the moss-grown, just as some people admire all that is new and garish and fashionable.

But chief among the causes of that conservatism which gave tone and color to the life we are considering was the fact that ancient estates were carefully kept in ancient families, generation after generation. If a Virginian lived in a particular mansion, it was strong presumptive proof that his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather had lived there before him. There was no law of primogeniture, to be sure, by which this was brought about, but there were well-established customs which amounted to the same thing. Family pride was a ruling passion, and not many Virginians of the better class hesitated to secure the maintenance of their family's place in the ranks of the untitled peerage by the sacrifice of their own personal prosperity, if that were necessary, as it sometimes was. To the first-born son went the estate usually, by the will of the father and with the hearty concurrence of the younger sons, when there happened to be any such. The eldest brother succeeded the father as head of the house, and took upon himself the father's duties and the father's burdens. Upon him fell the management of the estate; the maintenance of the mansion, which, under the laws of hospitality obtaining there, was no light task; the education of the younger sons and daughters; and last, though commonly not by any means least, the management of the hereditary debt. The younger children always had a home in the old mansion, secured to them by the will of their father sometimes, but secure enough in any case by a custom more binding than any law; and there were various other ways of providing for them. If the testator were rich, he divided among them his bonds, stocks, and other personal property not necessary to the prosperity of the estate, or charged the head of the house with the payment of certain legacies to each. The mother's property, if she had brought a dower with her, was usually portioned out among them, and the law, medicine, army, navy, and church offered them genteel employment if they chose to set up for themselves. But these arrangements were subsidiary to the main purpose of keeping the estate in the family, and maintaining the mansion-house as a seat of elegant hospitality. So great was the importance attached to this last point, and so strictly was its observance enjoined upon the new lord of the soil, that he was frequently the least to be envied of all. I remember a case in which a neighbor of my own, a very wealthy gentleman whose house was always open and always full of guests, dying, left each of his children a plantation. To the eldest son, however, he gave the home estate, worth three or four times as much as any of the other plantations, and with it he gave the young man also a large sum of money. But he charged him with the duty of keeping open house there at all times, and directed that the household affairs should be conducted always precisely as they had been during his own life-time; and the charge well-nigh outweighed the inheritance. The new master of the

place lived in Richmond, where he was engaged in manufacturing, and after the death of the father the old house stood tenantless, but open as before. Its troops of softly shod servants swept and dusted and polished as of old. Breakfast, dinner, and supper were laid out every day at the accustomed hours, under the old butler's supervision, and as the viands grew cold his silent subordinates waited, trays in hand, at the back of the empty chairs, during the full time appointed for each meal. I have stopped there for dinner, tea, or to spend the night, many a time, in company with one of the younger sons, who lived elsewhere, or with some relation of the family, or alone, as the case might be, and I have sometimes met others there. But our coming or not was a matter of indifference. Guests knew themselves always welcome, but whether guests came or not the household affairs suffered no change. The destruction of the house by fire finally lifted this burden from its owner's shoulders, as the will did not require him to rebuild. But while it stood its master's large inheritance was of very small worth to him. And in many other cases the apparent preference given to the eldest son, in the distribution of property, was in reality only a selection of his shoulders to bear the family's burdens.

In these and other ways old estates of greater or less extent were kept together, and old families remained lords of the soil; and it is not easy to overestimate the effect of this upon the people. As there is nothing so successful as success, so there is nothing so conservative as conservatism; and a man to whom a great estate, with an historical house upon it and an old family name attached to it, has descended through several generations, could hardly be other than a conservative in feeling and influence. These people were the inheritors of the old and the established. Upon them had devolved the sacred duty of maintaining the reputation of a family name. They were no longer mere individuals, whose acts affected only themselves, but were chiefs and representatives of honorable houses, and as such bound to maintain a reputation of vastly more worth than their own. Their fathers before them were their exemplars, and in a close adherence to family customs and traditions lay their safety from unseemly lapses. The old furniture, the old wainscot on the walls, the old pictures, the old house itself, perpetually warned them against change as in itself unbecoming and dangerous to the dignity of their race.

And so changes were unknown in their social system. As their fathers lived so lived they, and there was no feature of their life pleasanter than its fixity. One always knew what to expect and what to do. There were no perplexing uncertainties to breed awkwardness and vexation. There was no room for shams and no temptation to vulgar display, and so shams and display had no chance to become fashionable.

Aside from the fact that the old and the substantial were the respectable, the social status of every person was so fixed and so well known that display was unnecessary on the part of the good families, and useless on the part of others. The old ladies constituted a college of heralds, and could give you, at a moment's notice, any pedigree you might choose to ask for. The goodness of a good family was a fixed fact, and needed no demonstration, and no *parvenu* could work his way into the charmed circle by vulgar ostentation, or by any other means whatever. As one of the old dames used to phrase it, ostentatious people were thought to be "rich before they were ready."

As the good families gave law to the society of the land, so their chiefs ruled the State in a more positive and direct sense. The plantation owners, as a matter of course, constituted only a minority of the voting population, at least after the constitution of 1850 swept away the rule making the ownership of real estate a necessary qualification for suffrage; but they governed the State, nevertheless, as completely as if they had been in the majority. Families naturally followed

the lead of their chiefs, voting together as a matter of clan pride, when no principle was involved, and so the plantation owners controlled directly a large part of the population. But a more important point was that the ballot was wholly unknown in Virginia until after the war, and as the large land-owners were deservedly men of influence in the community, they had little difficulty, under a system of *viva voce* voting, in carrying things their own way, in all matters on which they were at all agreed among themselves. It often happened that a whig would continue year after year to represent a democratic district, or *vice versa*, in the legislature or in Congress, merely by force of his large family connection and influence.

All this was an evil, if we choose to think it so. It was undemocratic, certainly, but it worked wonderfully well, and the system was good in this, at least, that it laid the foundations of politics among the wisest and best men the State had; for as a rule the planters were the educated men of the community, the reading men, the scholars, the thinkers, and well-nigh every one of them was familiar with the whole history of parties and of statesmanship. Politics was deemed a necessary part of every gentleman's education, and the youth of eighteen who could not recapitulate the doctrines set forth in the resolutions of 1798, or tell you the history of the Missouri compromise or the Wilmot proviso, was thought lamentably deficient in the very rudiments of culture. They had little to do, and they thought it the bounden duty of every free American citizen to prepare himself thus for the proper and intelligent performance of his functions in the body politic. As a result, if Virginia did not always send wise men to the councils of the State and nation, she sent no politically ignorant ones at any rate.

It was a point of honor among Virginians never to shrink from any of the duties of a citizen. To serve as road overseer or juryman was often disagreeable to men who loved ease and comfort as they did, but every Virginian felt himself in honor bound to serve whenever called upon, and that without pay, too, as it was deemed in the last degree disreputable to accept remuneration for doing the plain duty of a citizen.

It was the same with regard to the magistracy. Magistrates were appointed until 1850, and after that chosen by election, but under neither system was any man free to seek or to decline the office. Appointed or elected, one must serve, if he would not be thought to shirk his duties as a good man and citizen; and though the duties of the office were sometimes very onerous, there was practically no return of any sort made. Magistrates received no salary, and it was not customary for them to accept the small perquisites allowed them by law. Under the old constitution the senior justice of each county was ex-officio high sheriff, and the farming of the shrievalty — for the high sheriff always farmed the office — yielded some pecuniary profit; but any one magistrate's chance of becoming the senior was too small to be reckoned in the account; and under the new constitution of 1850 even this was taken away, and the sheriffs were elected by the people. But to be a magistrate was deemed an honor, and very properly so, considering the nature of a Virginian magistrate's functions. The honor was one never to be sought, however, by direct or indirect means, and to seek it was to lose caste hopelessly.

The magistrates were something more than justices of the peace. A bench of three or more of them constituted the county court, a body having a wide civil and criminal jurisdiction of its own, and concurrent jurisdiction with the circuit court over a still larger field. This county court sat monthly, and in addition to its judicial functions was charged with considerable legislative duties for the county, under a system which gave large recognition to the principle of local self-government. Four times a year it held grand jury terms, — an anomaly in magistrates' courts, I believe, but an excellent one nevertheless, as experience proved. In a large class of criminal cases a bench of five justices, sitting

in regular term, was a court of oyer and terminer.

The concurrent jurisdiction of this county court, as I have said, was very large, and as its sessions were monthly, while those of the circuit judges were held but twice a year, very many important civil suits, involving considerable interests, were brought there rather than before the higher tribunal. And here we encounter a very singular fact. The magistrates were usually planters, never lawyers, and yet, as the records show, the proportion of county court decisions reversed on appeal for error was always smaller than that of decisions made by the higher tribunals, in which regular judges sat. At the first glance this seems almost incredible, and yet it is a fact, and its cause is not far to seek. The magistrates, being unpaid functionaries, were chosen for their fitness only. Their election was a sort of choosing of arbitrators, and the men elected were precisely the kind of men commonly selected by honest disputants as umpires, — men of integrity, probity, and intelligence. They came into court conscious of their own ignorance of legal technicalities, and disposed to decide questions rather upon principles of "right between man and man" than upon the letter of the law; and as the law is, in the main, founded upon precisely these principles of abstract justice, their decisions usually proved sound in law as well as right in fact.

But the magistrates were not wholly without instruction even in technical matters of law. They learned a good deal by long service, — their experience often running over a period of thirty or forty years on the bench, — and in addition to the skill which intelligent men must have gained in this way, they had still another resource. When the bench thought it necessary to inform itself on a legal point, the presiding magistrate asked in open court for the advice of counsel, and in such an event every lawyer not engaged in the case at bar, or in another involving a like principle, was under obligation to give a candid expression of his opinion.

The system was a very peculiar and interesting one, and in Virginia it was about the best, also, that could have been hit upon, though it is more than doubtful whether it would work equally well anywhere else. All the conditions surrounding it were necessary to its success, and those conditions were of a kind that cannot be produced at will; they must grow. In the first place, the intelligence and culture of the community must not be concentrated in certain centres, as is usually the case, especially in commercial and manufacturing States, but must be distributed pretty evenly over the country, else the material out of which such a magistracy can be created will not be where it is needed; and in the very nature of the case it cannot be imported for the purpose. There must be also a fixed public sentiment sufficiently strong to compel the best men to serve when chosen, and the best men must be men of wealth and leisure, else they cannot afford to serve, for such a magistracy must of necessity be unpaid. In short, the system can work well only under the conditions which gave it birth in Virginia, and those conditions will probably never again exist in any of these States. But the fact that under our system of government the people of each State are free to suit their local institutions to their local circumstances, so sharply illustrated in the peculiar constitution of the Virginian county courts, is one which no thinking man can contemplate with indifference. It is a matter of small moment to the citizen of Massachusetts or New York that Virginia once had a very peculiar judiciary; but it is not a matter of slight importance that our scheme of government leaves every State free to devise for itself a system of local institutions adapted to its needs and the character and situation of its people; that it is not uniformity we have sought and secured, in our attempt to establish a government by the people, but a wise diversity, rather; that experience, and not theory, is our guide; that our institutions are cut to fit our needs, and not to match a fixed pattern; and that the necessities of one part of the

country do not prescribe a rule for another part.

But this is neither a philosophical treatise nor a centennial oration; return we therefore to the region of small facts. It is a little curious that, with their reputed fondness for honorary titles of all kinds, the Virginians never addressed a magistrate as "judge," even in that old time when the functions of the justice fairly entitled him to the name. And it is stranger still, perhaps, that in Virginia members of the legislature were never called "honorable," that distinction being strictly held in reserve for members of Congress and of the national cabinet. This fact seems all the more singular when we remember that in the view of Virginians the States were nations, while the general government was little more than their accredited agent, charged with the performance of certain duties and holding certain delegated powers which were subject to recall at any time.

I have said that every educated Virginian was familiar with politics, but this is only half the truth. They knew the details quite as well as the general facts, and there were very many of them, not politicians, and never candidates for office of any kind, who could give from memory an array of dates and other figures of which the Tribune Almanac would have no occasion to be ashamed. Not to know the details of the vote in Connecticut in any given year was to lay one's self open to a suspicion of incompetence; to confess forgetfulness of the "ayes and noes" on any important division in Congress, was to rule one's self out of the debate as an ignoramus. I say debate advisedly, for there was always a debate on political matters when two Virginian gentlemen met anywhere except in church during sermon-time. They argued earnestly, excitedly, sometimes even violently, but ordinarily without personal ill-feeling. In private houses they could not quarrel, being gentlemen and guests of a common host, or standing in the relation of guest and host to each other; in more public places — for they discussed politics in all places and at all times — they refrained from quarreling because to quarrel would not have been proper. But they never lost an opportunity to make political speeches at each other; alternately, sometimes, but quite as often both, or all, at once.

It would sometimes happen, of course, that two or more gentlemen, meeting, would find themselves agreed in their views, but the pleasure of indulging in a heated political discussion was never foregone for any such paltry reason as that. Finding no point on which they could disagree, they would straightway join forces and do valiant battle against the common enemy. That the enemy was not present to answer made no difference. They knew all his positions and all the arguments by which his views could be sustained, quite as well as he did, and they combated these. It was funny, of course, but the participants in these one-sided debates never seemed to see the ludicrous points of the picture.

A story is told of one of the fiercest of these social political debaters — a story too well vouched for among his friends to be doubted — which will serve perhaps to show how unnecessary the presence of an antagonist was to the successful conduct of a dispute. It was "at a dining day," to speak in the native idiom, and it so happened that all the guests were whigs, except Mr. E——, who was the stanchest of Jeffersonian democrats. The discussion began, of course, the moment the ladies left the table, and it speedily waxed hot. Mr. E——, getting the ear of the company in the outset, laid on right and left with his customary vigor, rasping the whigs on their sorest points, arguing, asserting, denouncing, demonstrating, — to his own entire satisfaction, — for perhaps half an hour; silencing every attempt at interruption by saying, —

"Now wait, please, till I get through; I'm one against seven, and you must let me make my points. Then you can reply."

He finished at last, leaving every whig nerve quivering, every whig face burning with suppressed indignation, and every whig breast full, almost to burst-

ing, with a speech in reply. The strongest debater of them all managed to begin first, but just as he pronounced the opening words, Mr. E—— interrupted him.

"Pardon me," he said, "I know all your little arguments, so I 'll go and talk with the ladies for half an hour, while you run them over; when you get through send for me, and I 'll come and *sweep you clear out of the arena.*"

And with that the exasperating man bowed himself out of the dining-room.

But with all its ludicrousness, this universal habit of "talking politics" had its uses. In the first place, politics with these men was a matter of principle, and not at all a question of shrewd management. They knew what they had and what they wanted. Better still, they knew every office-holder's record, and held each to a strict account of his stewardship.

Under the influence of this habit in social life, every man was constantly on his mettle, of course, and every young man was bound to fortify himself for contests to come by a diligent study of history and politics. He must know, as a necessary preparation for ordinary social converse, all those things that are commonly left to the professional politicians. As well might he go into society in ignorance of yesterday's weather or last week's news, as without full knowledge of Benton's Thirty Years' View, and a familiar acquaintance with the papers in The Federalist. In short, this odd habit compelled thorough political education, and enforced upon every man old enough to vote an active, earnest participation in politics. Perhaps a country in which universal suffrage exists would be the better if both were more general than they are.

But politics did not furnish the only subjects of debate among these people. They talked politics, it is true, whenever they met at all, but when they had mutually annihilated each other, when each had said all there was to say on the subject, they frequently turned to other themes. Of these the ones most commonly and most vigorously discussed were points of doctrinal theology. The great battle-ground was baptism. Half the people, perhaps, were Baptists, and when Baptist and "pedo-Baptist" met, they sniffed the battle at once, — that is to say, as soon as they had finished the inevitable discussion of politics. On this question of baptism each had been over the ground many hundreds of times, and each must have known, when he put forth an argument, what the answer would be. But this made no manner of difference. They were always ready to go over the matter again. I amused myself once (for I was only a looker-on in Virginia, a Virginian by inheritance and brevet, but not by birth or early education) by preparing a "part" debate on the subject. I arranged the remarks of each disputant, in outline, providing each speech with its proper "cue," after the manner of stage copies of a play, and, taking a friend into my confidence, I used sometimes to follow the discussion, with my copy of it in hand, and except in the case of a very poorly-informed or wholly unpracticed debater, my cues and speeches were always found to be amusingly accurate.

The Virginians were a very religious as well as a very polemical people, however, and I do not remember that I ever knew them, even in the heat of their fiercest discussions upon doctrine, to forget the brotherly kindness which lay as a broad foundation under their card houses of creed. They believed with all their souls in the doctrines set forth by their several denominations, and maintained them stoutly on all occasions; but they loved each other, attended each other's services, and joined hands right heartily in every good work.

There was one other peculiarity in their church relations worthy of notice. The Episcopal church was once an establishment in Virginia, as every reader knows, but every reader does not know, perhaps, that up to the outbreak of the war it remained in some sense an establishment in some parts of the State. There were little old churches in many neighborhoods which had stood for a century or two, and the ancestors of the

present generation all belonged to them in their time. One of these churches I remember lovingly for its old traditions, for its picturesqueness, and for the warmth of the greeting its congregation gave me, — not as a congregation, but as individuals, — when I, a lad half grown, returned to the land of my fathers. Every man and woman in that congregation had known my father and loved him, and nearly every one was my cousin, at least in the Virginian acceptation of that word. The church was Episcopal, of course, while the great majority, perhaps seven eighths, of the people who attended and supported it were members of other denominations, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists. But they all felt themselves at home here. This was the old family church where their forefathers had worshiped, and under the shadow of which they were buried. They all belonged here, no matter what other church might claim them as members. They paid the old clergyman's salary; served in the vestry; attended the services; kept church, organ, and church-yard in repair; and in all respects regarded themselves, and were held by others, as members here of right and by inheritance. It was church and family instead of church and state, and the sternest Baptist or Presbyterian among them would have thought himself wronged if left out of the count of this little church's membership. This was their heritage, their home, and the fact that they had also united themselves with churches of other denominations made no difference whatever in their feeling toward the old mother church there in the woods, guarding and cherishing the dust of their dead.

All the people, young and old, went to church; it was both pleasant and proper to do so, though not all of them went for the sake of the sermon or the service. The churches were usually built in the midst of a grove of century oaks, and their surroundings were nearly always pleasantly picturesque. The gentlemen came on horseback, the ladies in their great, lumbering, old-fashioned carriages, with an ebony driver in front and a more or less ebony footman or two behind. Beside the driver sat, ordinarily, the old "mammy" of the family, or some other equally respectable and respected African woman, whose crimson or scarlet turban and orange neckerchief gave a dash of color to the picture, a trifle barbarous, perhaps, in combination, but none the less pleasant in its effect, for that. The young men came first, mounted on superb riding-horses, wearing great buckskin gauntlets and clad in full evening dress, — that being *en règle* always in Virginia, — with the skirts of the coat drawn forward over the thighs and pinned in front, as a precaution against possible contact with the reeking sides of the hard-ridden steeds. When I first saw young gentlemen riding to church dressed in this fashion, the grotesqueness of the thing impressed me strongly; but one soon gets used to the habitual, and I have worn full evening dress on horseback many a time, once even in a cavalry parade.

The young men came first to church, I said, and they did so for a purpose. The carriages were elegant and costly, many of them, but nearly all were extremely old-fashioned; perched high in air, they were not easy of entrance or exit by ladies in full dress, without assistance, and it was accounted the prescriptive duty and privilege of the young men to render the needed service at the church door. When this preliminary duty was fully done, some of the youths took seats inside the church, but if the weather were fine many preferred to stroll through the woods, or to sit in little groups under the trees, awaiting the exit of the ladies, who must of course be chatted with and helped into their carriages again. Invitations to dinner or to a more extended visit were in order the moment the service was over. Every gentleman went to dine with a friend, or took a number of friends to dine with him. But the arrangements depended largely upon the young women, who had a very pretty habit of visiting each other and staying a week or more, and these visits nearly always originated at church. Each young lady invited all the rest tc

go home with her, and after a deal of confused consultation, out of whose chaos only the feminine mind could possibly have extracted anything like a conclusion, two or three would win all the others to themselves, each taking half a dozen or more with her, and promising to send early next morning for their trunks. With so many of the fairest damsels secured for a visit of a week or a fortnight, the young hostess was sure of cavaliers in plenty to do her guests honor. And upon my word it was all very pleasant! I have idled away many a week in those old country-houses, and for my life I cannot manage to regret the fact, or to remember it with a single pang of remorse for the wasted hours. Perhaps after all they were not wholly wasted. Who shall say? Other things than gold are golden.

As a guest in those houses one was not welcome only, but free. There was a servant to take your horse, a servant to brush your clothes, a servant to attend you whenever you had a want to supply or a wish to gratify. But you were never oppressed with attentions, or under any kind of restraint. If you liked to sit in the parlor, the ladies there would entertain you very agreeably, or set you to entertain them by reading aloud or by anything else which might suggest itself. If you preferred the piazza, there were sure to be others like-minded with yourself. If you smoked, there were always pipes and tobacco on the sideboard, and a man-servant to bring them to you if you were not inclined to go after them. In short, each guest might do precisely as he pleased, sure that in doing so he should best please his host and hostess.

My own favorite amusement — I am the father of a family now, and may freely confess the fancies and foibles of a departed youth — was to accompany the young lady mistress of the mansion on her rounds of domestic duty, carrying her key-basket for her, and assisting her in various ways, unlocking doors and — really I cannot remember that I was of any very great use to her, after all; but willingness counts for a good deal in this world, and I was always very willing, at any rate. As a rule, the young lady of the mansion was housekeeper, and perhaps this may account for the fact that the habit of carrying housekeepers' key-baskets for them was very general among the young gentlemen, in houses where they were upon terms of intimate friendship.

Life in Virginia was the pursuit of happiness, and its attainment. Money was a means only, and was usually spent very lavishly whenever its expenditure could add in any way to comfort, but as there was never any occasion to spend it for mere display, most of the planters were abundantly able to use it freely for better purposes; that is to say, most of them were able to owe their debts and to renew their notes when necessary. Their houses were built for comfort, and had grown gray with age long before the present generation was born. A great passage-way ran through the middle, commonly, and here stood furniture which would have delighted the heart of a mediævalist: great, heavy oaken chairs, black with age and polished with long usage — chairs whose joints were naked and not ashamed; sofas of ponderous build, made by carpenters who were skeptical as to the strength of woods, and thought it necessary to employ solid pieces of oak four inches in diameter for legs, and to shoe each with a solid brass lion's paw as a precaution against abrasion. A great porch in front was shut out at night by the ponderous double doors of the hall-way, but during the day the way was wide open through the house.

The floors were of white ash, and in summer no carpets were anywhere to be seen. Early every morning the floors were polished by diligent scouring with dry pine needles, and the furniture similarly brightened by rubbing with wax and cork. In the parlors the furniture was usually very rich as to woods, and very antique in workmanship. The curtains were of crimson damask, with lace underneath, and the contrast between these and the bare, white, polished floor was singularly pleasing.

The first white person astir in the

house every morning was the lady who carried the keys, mother or daughter as the case might be. Her morning work was no light affair, and its accomplishment consumed several hours daily. To begin with, she must knead the light bread with her own hands and send it to the kitchen to be baked and served hot at breakfast. She must prepare a skillet full of light rolls for the same meal, and "give out" the materials for the rest of the breakfast. Then she must see to the sweeping and garnishing of the lower rooms, passages, and porches, lest the maids engaged in that task should entertain less extreme views than herself on the subject of that purity and cleanliness which constitute the house's charm and the housekeeper's crown of honor. She must write two or three notes, to be dispatched by the hands of a small negro, to her lady acquaintances in the neighborhood, — a kind of correspondence much affected in that society. In the midst of all these duties the young housekeeper — for somehow it is only the youthful ones whom I remember vividly — must meet and talk with such of the guests as might happen to be early risers, and must not forget to send a messenger to the kitchen once every ten minutes to "hurry up breakfast;" not that breakfast could be hurried under any conceivable circumstances, but merely because it was the custom to send such messages, and the young lady was a duty-loving maid who did her part in the world without inquiring why. She knew very well that breakfast would be ready at the traditional hour, the hour at which it always had been served in that house, and that there was no power on the plantation great enough to hasten it by a single minute. But she sent out to "hurry" it, nevertheless.

When breakfast is ready the guests are ready for it. It is a merit of fixed habits that one can conform to them easily, and when one knows that breakfast has been ready in the house in which he is staying precisely at nine o'clock every morning for one or two centuries past, and that the immovable conservatism of an old Virginian cook stands guard over the sanctity of that custom, he has no difficulty in determining when to begin dressing.

The breakfast is sure to be a good one, consisting of everything obtainable at the season. If it be in summer, the host will have a dish of broiled roe herrings before him, a plate of hot rolls at his right hand, and a cylindrical loaf of hot, light bread — which it is his duty to cut and serve — on his left. On the flanks will be one or two plates of beaten biscuit and a loaf of batter bread, *i. e.*, corn-bread made rich with milk and eggs. A dish of plain corn "pones" sits on the dresser, and the servants bring griddle-cakes or waffles hot from the kitchen; so much for breads. A knuckle of cold boiled ham is always present, on either the table or the dresser, as convenience may dictate. A dish of sliced tomatoes and another of broiled ditto are the invariable vegetables, supplemented, on occasion, with lettuce, radishes, and other like things. These are the staples of breakfast, and additions are made as the season serves.

Breakfast over, the young lady housekeeper scalds and dries the dishes and glassware, with her own hands. Then she goes to the garden, smoke-house, and store-room, to "give out" for dinner. Morning rides, backgammon, music, reading, etc., furnish amusement until one o'clock, or a little later. The gentlemen go shooting or fishing, if they choose, or join the host in his rides over the plantation, inspecting his corn, tobacco, wheat, and live stock. About one the house grows quiet. The ladies retire to their chambers, the gentlemen make themselves comfortable in various ways. About two it is the duty of the master of the mansion to offer toddy or juleps to his guests, and to ask one of the dining-room servants if "dinner is 'most ready?" Half an hour later he must send the cook word to "hurry it up." It is to be served at four, of course, but as the representative of an ancient house, it is his bounden duty to ask the two o'clock question and send the half past two message.

Supper is served at eight, and the ladies usually retire for the night at ten or eleven.

If hospitality was deemed the chief of virtues among the Virginians, the duty of accepting hospitality was quite as strongly insisted upon. One must visit his friends, whatever the circumstances, if he would not be thought churlish; and especially were young men required to show a proper respect and affection for elderly lady relatives, by dining with them as frequently as at any other house. I shall not soon forget some experiences of my own in this regard. The most stately and elegant country-house I have ever seen stood in our neighborhood. Its master had lived in great state there, and after his death his two maiden sisters, left alone in the great mansion, scrupulously maintained every custom he had established or inherited. They were my cousins, in the Virginian sense of the word, and I had not been long a resident of the State when my guardian reminded me of my duty toward them. I must ride over and dine there, without a special invitation, and I must do this six or eight times a year at the least. As a mere boy, half grown, I made ready for my visit with a good deal of awe and trepidation. I had already met the two stately dames, and was disposed to distrust my manners in their presence. I went, however, and was received with warm though rather stiff and formal cordiality. My horse was taken to the stable. I was shown to my room by a thoroughly drilled servant, whose tongue had been trained to as persistent a silence as if his functions had been those of a mute at a funeral. His name, I discovered, was Henry, but beyond this I could make no progress in his acquaintance. He prided himself upon knowing his place, and the profound respect with which he treated me made it impossible that I should ask him for the information on which my happiness, perhaps my reputation, just then depended. I wanted to know for what purpose I had been shown to my room; what I was expected to do there; and at what hour I ought to descend to the parlor or library. But it was manifestly out of the question to seek such information at the hands of so well regulated a being as Henry. He had ushered me into my room, and now stood bolt upright, gazing fixedly at nothing, and waiting for my orders in profound and immovable silence. He had done his part well, and it was not for him to assume that I was unprepared to do mine. His attitude indicated, or perhaps I should say aggressively asserted, the necessity he was under of assuming my entire familiarity with the usages of good society and the ancient customs of this ancient house. The worst of it was, I fancied that the solemn rogue guessed my ignorance and delighted in exposing the fraudulent character of my pretensions to gentility; but in this I did him an injustice, as future knowledge of him taught me. He was well drilled, and delighted in doing his duty, that was all. No *gaucherie* on my part would have moved him to smile. He knew his place and his business too well for that. Whatever I might have done he would have held to be perfectly proper. It was for him to stand there like a statue until I should bid him do otherwise, and if I had kept him there a week, I think he would have given no sign of weariness or impatience. As it was, his presence appalled and oppressed me, and in despair of discovering the proper thing to do, I determined to put a bold face upon the matter.

"I am tired and warm," I said, "and will rest awhile on the bed. I will join the ladies in half an hour. You may go now."

At dinner Henry stood at the sideboard and silently directed the servants. When the cloth was removed he brought a wine-tub with perhaps a dozen bottles in it, and silently awaited my signal before decanting one of them. When I had drunk a glass with the ladies, they rose and retired, leaving me alone with the wine and the cigars, and Henry, whose erect solemnity converted the great, silent dining-room into something very like a funeral chamber. He stood there like a guardsman on duty, immova-

ble, speechless, patient, while I sat at the board, a decanter of wine before me, and a tub of unopened bottles on the floor by my side. I did not want any wine, or anything else, except a sound of some sort to break the horrible stillness. I tried to think of some device by which to make Henry go out of the room, or move one of his hands, or turn his eyes a little, or even wink; but I failed utterly. There was nothing whatever to be done, and no order to give him. Every want was supplied and everything was at my hand. The cigars were under my nose, the ash-pan by them, and a lighted wax candle stood within reach. I toyed with the decanter, in hope of breaking the stillness, but its stand was too well cushioned above and below to make a sound. I ventured at last to move one of my feet, but a strip of velvet carpet lay between it and the floor. I could stand it no longer. Filling a glass of wine I drank it off, lighted a fresh cigar, and boldly strode out of the house to walk on the lawn in front.

On the occasion of subsequent visits I got on well enough, knowing precisely what to expect and what to do, and in time I came to regard this as one of the very pleasantest houses in which I visited at all, if on no other account than because I found myself perfectly free, there, to do as I pleased; but until I learned that I was expected to consult only my own comfort while a guest in the house, the atmosphere of the place oppressed me.

Not in every house were the servants so well trained as Henry, but what they lacked in skill they fully made up in numbers, and in hardly anything else was the extravagance of the Virginians so manifest as in their wastefulness of labor. On nearly every plantation there were ten or twelve able-bodied men and women employed about the house, doing the work which two or three ought to have done and might have done; and in addition to this there were usually a dozen or a score of others with merely nominal duties or no duties at all. But it was useless to urge their master to send any of them to the field, and idle to show him that the addition which might thus be made to the force of productive laborers would so increase his revenues as to acquit him of debt within a few years. He did not much care to be free of debt, for one thing, and he liked to have plenty of servants always within call. As his dinner-table bore every day food enough for a regiment, so his nature demanded the presence of half a dozen servitors whenever one was wanted. Indeed, these people usually summoned servants in squads, calling three or four to take one guest's horse to stable, or to bring one pitcher of ice-water.

And yet I should do the Virginians great injustice were I to leave the impression that they were lazy. With abundant possessions, superabundant household help, and slave labor, they had a good deal of leisure, of course, but they were nevertheless very industrious people, in their way. It was no light undertaking to manage a great plantation, and at the same time fulfill the large measure of duties to friends and neighbors which custom imposed. One must visit and receive visitors, and must go to court every month, and to all planters' meetings. Besides this there was a certain amount of fox-hunting, and squirrel and bird and turkey shooting, and fishing, to be done, which it was really very difficult to escape, with any credit to one's self. On the whole, the time of the planters was pretty fully occupied. The ladies had household duties, and these included the cutting and making of clothes for all the negroes on the plantation, a heavy task which might as well have been done by the negro seamstresses, except that such was not the custom. Fair women, who kept a dress-maker for themselves, worked day after day on coarse cloths, manufacturing coats and trousers for the field hands. They did a great deal of embroidery and worsted work, too, and personally instructed negro girls in the use of the needle and scissors. All this, with their necessary visiting and entertaining, and their daily attendance upon the sick negroes, whom they always visited and cared for in person, served to make the Virginian ladies

about the busiest women I have ever known. Even Sunday brought them little rest, as in addition to other duties on that day each of the ladies spent some hours at the "quarters," holding a Sunday-school.

But the Virginians had, notwithstanding, a good deal of leisure on their hands, and their command of time was a very important agent, I should say, in the formation of their characters, as individuals and as a people. It bred habits of outdoor exercise, which gave the young men stalwart frames and robust constitutions; it gave form to their social life; and above all it made reading men and students of many, though their reading and their study were of a somewhat peculiar kind. They were all Latinists, inasmuch as Latin formed the staple of their ordinary school course. It was begun early and continued to the end, and even in after life very many gentlemen planters were in the habit of reading their Virgil and their Horace and their Ovid as an amusement, so that it came to be assumed quite as a matter of course that every gentleman with any pretension to culture could read Latin easily, and quote Horace and Juvenal from memory.

But they read English literature still more largely, and in no part of the country, except in distinctly literary centres like Cambridge or Concord, are really good household libraries so common a possession, I think, as they were among the best classes of Virginian planters. *Expende Hannibalem! Quot libros in summo duce inveniit?* Let us open the old glass doors and see what books the Virginians read. The libraries in the old houses were the growth of many generations, begun perhaps by the English cadet who founded the family on this side of the water in the middle of the seventeenth century, and added to little by little from that day to this. They were especially rich in the English classics, in early editions with long *s*'s and looped *ct*'s, but sadly deficient in the literature of the present. In one of them, I remember, I found nearly everything from Chaucer to Byron, and comparatively little that was later. From Pope to Southey it furnished a pretty complete geologic section of English literature, and from internal evidence I conclude that when the founder of the family and the library first took up his residence in the Old Dominion, Swift was still a contributor to The Gentleman's Magazine, and Pope was a poet not many years dead. There was a copy of Tom Jones, and another of Joseph Andrews, printed in Fielding's own time. The Spectator was there, not in the shape of a reprint, but the original papers rudely bound, a treasure brought from England, doubtless, by the immigrant. Richardson, Smollett, Swift, and the rest were present in contemporary editions; the poets and essayists, pretty much all of them, in quaint old volumes; Johnson's Lives of the Poets; Sheridan's plays, stitched; Burke's works; Scott's novels in force, just as they came one after another from the press of the Edinburgh publishers; Miss Edgeworth's moralities elbowing Mrs. Aphra Behn's strongly tainted romances; Miss Burney's Evelina, which was so "proper" that all the young ladies used to read it, but so dull that nobody ever opens it nowadays; and scores of other old "new books" which I have no room to catalogue here, even if I could remember them all. Byron appeared, not as a whole but in separate volumes, bought as each was published. Even the poor little Hours of Idleness was there, ordered from across the sea, doubtless, in consequence of the savage treatment it received at the hands of the Edinburgh Review, bound volumes of which were on the shelves below. There was no copy of English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, but as nearly all the rest of Byron's poems were there in original editions, it seems probable that the satire also had once held a place in the library. It had been read to pieces, perhaps, or borrowed and never returned. There were histories of all kinds, and collected editions of standard works in plenty, covering a wide field of law, politics, theology, and what not. Of strictly modern books the assortment was comparatively meagre. Ma-

caulay's Miscellanies, Motley's Dutch Republic, Prescott's Mexico, Peru, etc.; stray volumes of Dickens, Thackeray, Bulwer, and Lever; Kennedy's Swallow Barn, Cooke's Virginia Comedians, half a dozen volumes of Irving, and a few others, made up the list. Of modern poetry there was not a line, and in this, as in other respects, the old library — burned during the war — fairly represented the literary tastes and reading habits of the Virginians in general. They read little or no recent poetry and not much recent prose. I think this was not so much the result of prejudice as of education. The schools in Virginia were excellent ones of their kind, but their system was that of a century ago. They gave attention, chiefly, to "the humanities" and logic, and the education of a Virginian gentleman resembled that of an Englishman of the last century far more closely than that of any modern American. The writers of the present naturally address themselves to men of to-day, and this is precisely what the Virginians were not, wherefore modern literature was not at all a thing to their taste. To all this of course there were exceptions. I have known some Virginians who appreciated Tennyson, enjoyed Longfellow and Lowell, and understood Browning; just as I have known a few who affected a modern pronunciation of the letter *a* in such words as master, basket, glass, and grass.

George Cary Eggleston.

THE SILENT TIDE.

A TANGLED orchard round the farm-house spreads,
Wherein it stands home-like, but desolate,
'Midst crowded and uneven-statured sheds,
Alike by rain and sunshine sadly stained.
A quiet country-road before the door
Runs, gathering close its ruts to scale the hill —
A sudden bluff on the New Hampshire coast,
That rises rough against the sea, and hangs
Crested above the bowlder-sprinkled beach.
And on the road white houses small are strung
Like threaded beads, with intervals. The church
Tops the rough hill; then comes the wheelwright's shop.

From orchard, church, and shop you hear the sea,
And from the farm-house windows see it strike
Sharp gleams through slender arching apple-boughs.

Sea-like, too, echoing round me here there rolls
A surging sorrow; and even so there breaks
A smitten light of woe upon me, now,
Seeing this place, and telling o'er again
The tale of those who dwelt here once. Long since
It was, and they were two — two brothers, bound
By early orphanage and solitude
The closer, cleaving strongly each to each,
Till love, that held them many years in gage,
Itself swept them asunder. I have heard
The story from old Deacon Snow, their friend,
He who was boy and man with them. A boy!
What, he? How strange it seems! who now is stiff
And warped with life's fierce heat and cold: his brows
Are hoary white, and on his head the hairs
Stand sparse as wheat-stalks on the bare field's edge!

Reuben and Jerry they were named; but two
Of common blood and nurture scarce were found
More sharply different. For the first was bold,
Breeze-like and bold to come or go; not rash,
But shrewdly generous, popular, and boon:
And Jerry, dark and sad-faced. Whether least