A DAY'S EXPEDITION
IN VIRGINIA.

BY THE COUNTESS OF MEATH.

Some few years ago Lord Meath and I were staying in Washington, then fast developing into one of the finest cities in the United States. Not only is it the seat of Government, but as it enjoys a milder winter climate than the more northern towns, its attractions are great during the cold season of the year. Rows of magnificent houses were springing up at the time of our visit, not unfrequently intercepted by the negro's wooden shanty, which somewhat spoiled the symmetrical appearance of the streets, but the humble abodes were fast disappearing beneath the builders' hand. However, the black man, as well as his habitation, added not insconsiderably to the interest of the city, in the eyes of a stranger. True it is that notwithstanding all the care which he is prepared to lavish upon his personal appearance—more especially on Sundays—the darkie cannot be considered as beautiful. His thick lips, far from aquiline nose and woolly hair are not conducive to satisfying our ideas of beauty of countenance—some of the mulattoes have very handsome features—but what the negro may lack in his outward man is stoned for in a certain charm of manner. There is a childlike, joyous simplicity about him, coupled with a politeness refreshing in a country where the spirit of independence not unfrequently produces the "I-am-as-good-as-you-and-better" style of address, fatal to polish of manner. Moreover, the American one knocks up against when travelling—I am not now speaking of those whom, for want of a better expression, I must call the "upper" classes, though classes are not supposed to exist in the United States—are sometimes so deeply engrossed in business affairs that they seem to have no time to be polite. The darkie gives himself more leisure. He has his faults; what race is free from them?—but they are not those which offend the strangers, who do not come closely in contact with him, and I for one confess to having a decided liking for the despised darkie who, I think, is not always as much appreciated by his white brethren as he might be.

Washington is a new city standing in a diminutive state of its own—the district of Columbia—and in the closest proximity to Virginia, which has tales to tell of days now lost only to the ears of the monarchial government held sway. Its cities still have thoroughfares bearing names, such as King Street, Prince Street, etc., to remind the stranger of years gone by never to return.

Whilst we remained in Washington I made one or two pleasant expeditions into Virginia. One thing I will venture to describe. During the course of our stay in the capital we had come in for an amount of rain, which proved that more weather was not a monopoly of our fertile British Isles. It was raining when I left the house of the kindliest of entertainers; an attempt was made to detain me, but I was by no means engaged. One of my friends accompanied me to the river-side where a fine boat awaited those who, like myself, wished to.

All rights reserved.]
steam down the yellow waters of the Potomac. The steamer was named the *Coronet*, after a most liberal benefactor who had done much for Washington. The United States are rich in such men. Wealth is in many cases rapidly accumulated and it is thought good to remember them in Washington's time, articles as similar as possible were substituted, and enough of the original furniture remained to render the place as near a perfect museum as possible to the public. The visitors take advantage of its being open to the public to inspect rooms which are full of memories of the past.

The ladies appointed from each State—there are two for each, if I mistake not, have bestowed on them the proud name of "Regent,"—there is no lack of fondness for titles even in a Republican country—and they are treated with great respect when, on business, they make an expedition to Mount Vernon. On a former occasion we came across two of them and were presented in true form; we felt almost as highly honoured as when we shook hands with the President himself ruling over 60,000,000 souls.

The thing of restoration has been very judiciously carried out; it is the old familiar with the look of old-fashioned English houses which have been left undisturbed. And the modern upholsterer: indeed, these rooms with their stiff unfinished furniture, chairs made for people to sit upon in an upright posture, and four-post bedsides in the manner of certain apartments in a country house in Scotland with which I was once very familiar. But to return to the *Coronet*. It only brought us to a little landing-place soon after we had sighted a long, white, wooden building, admirably situated on a hill overlooking the river. A bell begins to ring in solemn fashion as the boat approaches; whether this is to remind people that George Washington is no more, and that his tomb must not be lightly approached, I know not, but any way it serves to tell those on land of the arrival of the steamer and of expectant visitors. An individual who acts as guide receives them on the steps, and has plenty of valuable information to impart. On the occasion of this my second visit to Mount Vernon I was met by a clergyman who was to carry me off to my place of accommodation, and I could not be close to the door of so famous a dwelling, without looking in. On the way to it we passed the spot where the hero and his faithful wife lie side by side, and heads are bowed when the tomb is approached. My visit to this historic house was a rapid one. I had seen Mount Vernon on a previous occasion, and so I was not wholly unacquainted with it. A long broad piazza is in front, where doubtless many an earnest conversation was held in the days when George Washington, his family and friends, sat out sheltered from the heart of the sun. There is one touching fact about one of the rooms in the house. A very small attic is pointed out as having been inhabited by Mrs. Washington after her husband's death. At first it seems strange that so humble an apartment should have been selected by her, until one learns that by the little window she is thought to have sat so that she could look down on the spot where all that remained of him who was dear to her lay buried, and where she too was one day to rest. If this be the fact, the angel of death was perhaps not unwelcome when he came to remove her with him "whom she had loved and lost awhile." Before leaving Mount Vernon a few flowers were given me, a pleasant reminiscence of the garden in which George Washington took great interest.

There are few historic homes capable of holding two persons, was ready to convey us to Accotink. It was well that this little trap was well adapted for the roads which we had to traverse, for a duly-appointed English carriage and pair, with a swell coachman and footman would have been at a discount for a drive in the wilds of Virginia, the roads might have puzzled both man and beast. Just as long as we were in the grounds of Mount Vernon all went smoothly. At the gates were two extra-sized sentry-boxes which were lodges. Out of one of them peered an array of funny little negro baby faces. Once this entrance was left well behind, driving was carried on under considerable difficulties. The angles which the carriage assumed were of a very acute nature, but nevertheless our little horse trotted bravely on through mire and marsh. Only once he paused, and this was in the bed of a small river. No wonder, it must have been pleasanter for our steed to rest than to drag a carriage along so deeply-rutted a road. The fear might have been that he could have wished to lie down and thus leave us in a very awkward predicament. Happily he was far too well-behaved a beast not to answer to his master's remonstrances, and so on he went, master and horse seeming to understand one another. The weather was not favourable for admiring scenery; but in spite of the drizzling
A DAY'S EXPEDITION IN VIRGINIA.

misty rain there was much that was to be appreciated, and I was quite sorry when our drive came to an end, the village of Acotink having been reached. We alighted at a plainly-constructed wooden house where hospitality was to be offered us. We received a friendly welcome from both host and hostess. Acostomed as I had been to the luxury of American city houses, the simplicity of this rural abode struck me forcibly. The apartment which did duty as drawing-room—parlour it would probably have been termed—was not overlaid with furniture. A large iron stove caught the eye on entering. There were a few rocking-chairs and a sofa standing straight up against the wall, which certainly would not have tempted luxurious loungers to recline on it. At first I wondered what might be the social standing of my entertainers, a most difficult point to ascertain in a country where the village carpenter may chance to live in greater style than the parson, and where the labouring man of ten or twenty years ago may, in the meanwhile, have amased a fortune and be receiving his guests not without some grace of bearing. Our host was evidently a man of culture; eventually I discovered that he was the local medical man. We had some pleasant talk before luncheon was served.

We were seated on a black parlour-maid, at least a negro was acting in that capacity, though I daresay other duties fell to her share. As I had expressed a wish to rest before the actual business of my day commenced, I was allowed to go up by a narrow steep staircase to a room where I could be quite undisturbed. It was equally plainly furnished. There is a charm all its own about simplicity, and men and women brought up under its influence must in many ways needs be better fitted to face the hard struggles of a life than they to whom luxury has been all too familiar from their cradle.

There are wise people who hold that a rock ahead of the American nation is the enormous wealth which is accumulating in the hands of the few. The friendly doctor was himself my chracter when it was time to set out for a meeting which was to be held on behalf of the "Ministering Children's League," the cause of my visit to Acotink. We had not a very great distance to go before a large square building came to view, which I was told was Polish church. Washington's talents were doubtless many and great, but after seeing this ecclesiastical pile designed by him, I should scarcely be inclined to reclassify architecture as his forte. Anyway it is a capacious church, and answers the purpose for which it was erected, to shelter many earnest worshippers, during the hours of service, from the inclemencies of the weather.

The building, moreover, is regarded with much veneration on account of its history, and many would be willing to give money to support this church, who would not give anything towards one far more perfect in design, for was it not here that their beloved George Washington bowed his honoured head in prayer? Outside the church door was a strange sight to my unaccustomed eye. After the heavy rains the roads were simply impassable to all those who were not content to wade ankle-deep in mire, and so all the "buggy's" and "wagon's" of the neighbourhood seemed to have been in requisition, and their respective horses were left pretty well to their own sweet will, their drivers having alighted and hitched them up to weights carried for the purpose in the vehicles. It would have been rather a dangerous experiment to leave some of our English horses in such independence, but American steeds seem to behave admirably under these circumstances. In the United States churches are used for meetings of a charitable and religious character, and the Ministering Children's League, a union for work and prayer for the young, was of this nature, and thus it came that the gathering was held in church. I cannot say that I think this custom, except in rare cases, is a good one, but in the wild tracts of woodland in Virginia there must be few places where a meeting could be held, and I hope I did nothing amiss in addressing the children assembled in Polish Church on this occasion.

It was prettily decorated with flowers, and I found amongst the young folks most attentive listeners. There were a good many elders present, for the "Ministering Children's League" had won favour in Acotink, where it had been the means of effecting much good. Moreover, the advent of an English lady was probably an event in the lives of the country people. Almost before I had done speaking a dear little maiden had brought me a lovely bouquet of flowers, and then, in American fashion, nearly everybody came to shake hands with me. There is something very friendly about the custom, especially when a stranger comes from a distance, not knowing whether he or she may ever chance to meet those assembled again. I am glad I received the grasp of strong honest hands accustomed to labour as well as that of the "Ministering Children," who, through the bonds of our association, were already linked to me. I carried away a happy impression of our gathering. The darkness outside was intense when it was time to leave, and it was a wonder that we found our way safely to the Rectory, where refreshing tea was provided, and there once more the carriage was in requisition to take me to the station. It was as well that I had been assured beforehand that the roads that we were to travel that evening was superior to that which we had come by in the morning, otherwise it is very doubtful if I should have discovered it for myself. A lantern had, however, been loosely hung on to the "buggy," and this was of material assistance in helping to safely surmount the difficulties of the road. My peace of mind was, however, destined to be greatly disturbed by the shrill of an approaching engine, and by the information that my train was arriving. Our good steady horse was urged, in consequence, into what might be termed, under the circumstances, a break-neck speed. What the bumping became my pen cannot describe, suffice it to say that with one of the latches out went our lantern. I felt many inward tremors, but it would not have done for a representative of the British Lion to show...
the white feather on what was once his own soil. However, I will confess to a great feeling of relief when my skilful driver suddenly grasped the fact that the train, which any way we should have missed, was not, after all, the one wanted. Once more our good doblin subsided into a jog-trot, and no further excitement was experienced until we reached two wooden huts set down on each side of the railway which represented the station. In one of these, a number of men, who seemed to have been working on the line, were assembled by the fire, but they politely made room for me, for women in America are, as a rule, treated with much chivalry by men of all classes. The clergyman had most kindly volunteered to escort me to Washington, but I had declined the offer, unwilling to take up more of his time, and so I bade him adieu at the station. When the train arrived I found that the workmen were to be my fellow passengers. There are no first, second, or third class-carriages in America, but there are, for longer journeys, the Pullman cars which have been adopted in England. Extra payment is required from passengers making use of them, and so it ends, after all, in that which is practically a separation of classes, as only the rich are willing to incur the additional expense. In the train by which I was travelling, no Pullman car was attached, and so we all went together. The navvies were a well-conducted set of men, but
we chanced to pick up, on the way to Wash- 
ington, an individual whose behaviour was 
anything but satisfactory, for he began by 
using bad language on entering the carriage. 
I soon suspected that which afterwards proved 
to be true, that he was the worse for drink.
However, he did not molest me in any way, 
and if his conduct had been obnoxious to me 
personally, no learned vocabulary could 
have gallantly interfered on my behalf, and 
there was a conductor close at hand. The 
offender was decidedly clad, and was probably 
a victim of the drinking-saloons, which in 
America must often prove as much of a curse 
as the public-houses do in our own land. In 
justice to the United States I ought per-
haps to add that I do not think that drunken-
ness is as prevalent as in the British 
Isles, but the abhorrence with which we remember 
that the temptation to drink in a bright exhilar-
ating climate is not the same as in our 
more damp atmosphere. Those who 
America, do successfully to the healthful vice 
are said to suffer terribly from its effects, 
and delirium tremens with all its attendant 
horrors often brings its victim's life to a 
merable end. In the meantime my train 
had been speeding on its way to Wash-
ington. This city by daylight can be sighted 
from afar, its high-domed Capitol and tower-
ning monument, raised in memory of the man 
after whom the town was named, form land-
marks visible from a considerable distance. 
Soon we have arrived, once again a kind 
friend meets me, and ere long I am in a 
cozy drawing-room, and we are having a merry 
chat about the adventures of a happy day 
spent in Virginia.

M. J. MEATH.

MERMAIDENS.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LIFE IN A FRENCH CHATEAU.

HYACINTHE BEAUFROI took us first to 
some old friends of his mother's in 
Marseilles. Their name is De Rochefaut, 
who could not speak English, while our 
French was still of a limited description. 
Our scholar who had dearly loved know-
ledge for its own sake was gone. But 
kindness has a language of its own, and 
demands no learned vocabulary to en-
press it. The old demoiselles carried their 
kindness the length of one of them 
accompanying us all the way to Languedoc, 
in order that our journey might be 
pleasanter and more according to their 
spirit of propriety.

You will laugh when you hear that our 
only source of information with regard 
to the scenery of the South of France 
was Mrs. Radelcliffe's novel of The 
Mysteries of Udolpho, which everybody 
read with breathless interest and ad-
miration when I was young. I must 
lay Mrs. Radelcliffe's descriptions of 
France and Italy are not only elegant, 
they are wonderfully graphic considering 
that when she wrote them she had never 
set her foot out of England. Lovely 
Languedoc, where the vintage was now 
good on muscatel; would in any circum-
stances have been novel and delightful 
to us. Its fruits—melons, almonds, figs, 
etc., were well-nigh as luxuriant as those 
of the tropics. Its flowers, myrtles, 
jasmines, oleanders, roses in infinite 
profusion, wild lavender and caper 
plants were sweeter if less gorgeous. 
Its chestnut groves afforded an exquisite 
green shade. Its rivers sparkled in 
their gildings. The Cevennes mountains rose 
up like dimly glowing peaks against the deeper blue of the cloudless sky. As 
a change after life on ship-board, after 
our exposure on the sea, it was like 
heaven on earth. Château Beaufroi was 
the old traditional manor-house of 
France at one end of the old traditional 
riege, with its mill, its arsine, its 
little church—at Beaufroi it was a 
Huguenot temple—it's priest's or pastor's 
dwelling. It was an old bit of landscape 
that is familiar to most of us in those later 
years when sister-countries were closed 
are thrown open to us. It includes a 
meadow in which a tree of liberty—a 
full-grown tree—was planted, a slip of a 
thing, during the Revolution. Sheep 
grazing peacefully beneath the tree's 
shadow. There is a babbling brook in 
which the same sheep are duly washed, 
a bosky group of chestnuts, a stretch of 
high rocky ground from which the brook 
comes down singing and dancing, where 
the village goats and kids pasture 
within an acea of focals, which carefully 
protects from their nibbling teeth a flange 
of quince and plum trees, pink and white 
in their spring blossom, russet and purple 
when bending under their autumn fruit. 

The coquet d'or is so dainty, homely, so 
gaily picturesque that it is not without a 
touch of the prettiness of genteel comedy 
and of operatic effect. It is very charm-
ing, nevertheless, to all gentle, graceful, 
homely-loving natures, and it was on this 
model that the most pathetic of toys 
poor Marie Antoinette's "Petit Trianon," 
was built.

The French manor-house, even when 
dignified with the name of castle, was 
always less pretentious than the English 
manor-house, while it was in its earlier 
days still more patriarchal. It still had 
its stationalness as well as its 
homelessness—a stationalness which gave it a distinct 
characteristic, and its prosperous 
abodes of its humbler neighbours. Its 
courtyard with its fountain, on the old 
stone brim of which white, blue, and 
cinnamon-coloured pigeons were 
constantly strutting and its terraced 
gardens, its fourreles or little terraces 
rising above the steep roof—all belonged 
to the native gentry of the provinces.

In the case of Château Beaufroi there 
had been no awful convulsion rending 
masters and servants apart. The Beau-
fois with their peasant retainers, no less 
than their household, had been rebels in 
the cause of the old Albigenses. They 
had been of the same Protestant faith, and 
were united by the memories of the 
bitter persecutions which they had en-
dured in common. Hyacintbe Beaufroi's 
remote ancestors had followed the 
leadership of the gallant Counts of 
Toulouse, and all had been furnished with 
them before the swords of the De Mont-
forts. In more recent years the Revo-
cution of the Edict of Nantes had fallen 
with an all but crushing force 
on gentilhomme and peasant-proprietor. 
But while they had been alike repeatedly 
exiled and impoverished, the bonds 
between them had been knitted together 
with a strength which no mad fury of 
revolution had been able to weaken or 
destroy. Whatever changes had come, 
whatever causes of complaint had arisen, 
there was a link between village and château—loyal as it 
was among the distant cities—was not an 
Eden of milk and honey, it belonged to a 
race stiff-necked and pragmatical 
throughout the classes, as I think even 
men are apt to be when hunted down, 
brandied, and weaged by themselves.

In addition the Huguenots 
had the fiery Gallic blood in their veins. 
Yet the small had spared the great 
who had been one with them in tempêtes, 
short little of the whirlwind which swept 
the country of king and nobles. 
The great were not likely to forget the 
Fidelity which had stood by them in the 
evil day of their class in France. Thus 
Beaufroi, château and village, retained 
unaltered many of the better features of the 
feudal system in the old régime, 
such as one seldom sees after the first 
empire has succeeded the republic and 
the Orleans monarchy the first empire.

Sally and I were surprised and entertained 
with all we saw. The old people 
were not like even the more 
old-fashioned country people at home. The men 
had long coats and were knee- 
breakers. The women wore white caps, and 
from borders, blue or white fichus and 
tight short gowns. The sabots of both 
were more uncouth than our heaviest clogs. 
Men and women sat in the evenings on the 
door-steps, or on a bench round a 
half-shattered sycamore on the village 
green. The women stitched and darned, 
made lace and gossiped. The men 
smoked, and whittled wood, the scholars 
among them read newspapers to 
themselves or to each other. The 
people often went up among the rocks and 
the bracken to milk the goats or to prevent 
them from straying and committing 
mischief. The girls wore demure adap-
tations of their mothers' caps. Some of 
the girls even had wild marguils stuck 
in the dark hair clustering behind their 
ears. They had trim bodices and gay 
aprons. The lads carried bunches of 
ribands at their knees and clutched the 
ends of their caps, and had scarlet or green 
vests. Lads and lasses tripped lightly 
up and down the steep winding path among 
the rocks and the broom, in spite of the 
sabots which were no incumbrance even 
to the merry little children with their close 
white cows like comical imitations of the 
caps of their mothers and grand-