

BRIGHT TOBACCOS

A TOUR THROUGH SOUTH VIRGINIA AND NORTH CAROLINA

BY F. CHARLAN

VIRGINIA.

The object of this trip was to ascertain the nature of the soils on which bright tobaccos are produced, the varieties grown and the methods of curing in use. One of the best growers of the district, to whom we had been directed on the strength of letters of introduction from Canadian tobacco manufacturers, put himself entirely at our disposal, and gave us an opportunity to study the curing of two crops, from beginning to end.

Soils.—There are two distinct classes of soils in the district, known respectively as 'red soils' and 'grey soils.' The red soils, thus called on account of their deep red brick colour, are more or less light or heavy according to the districts. The gray soils are much lighter in colour, and some of them have a yellow hue. The subsoil generally consists of clay mixed with a rather large proportion of gravel. The surface soil is comparatively shallow. Nothing has been done to keep up the supply of humus, the land having been cropped for years without any returns being made, and the depth of tillable soil, or ploughed land, is not increasing, owing to the shallow ploughing in use (5 or 6 inches).

For the growing of tobacco, the lightest loams, as light coloured as possible, and poor in lime, are selected. These soils, which consist of rather fine sand, of a light yellowish gray colour with a clayey and almost impervious subsoil, are found among the gray soils.

However, the drainage offers no difficulty, as the country is very uneven, and the tobacco is generally grown on slightly inclined hillsides. Sometimes also, red soils, more or less deep in colour, are used for the growing of tobacco, but it has been observed that the products obtained are coarser, and do not easily take the required colour while curing.

We experienced a great deal of difficulty in getting farmers to name the varieties they were growing. Generally speaking, the growers have produced their own seed for a number of years, and an average type appears to have become established in the district. However, the various varieties grown in the vicinity of Danville: Big and Little Oronoko, Warne, Sweet Oronoko, White Oronoko, White stem Oronoko, and even Flanagan,—can all be traced back to one primitive type—'the Oronoko.'