From North Carolina.

No. IV.

The editor, like Oliver Twist, has asked for more. I can only hope his readers will not regret that, unlike poor Oliver's, the request succeeded.

A run of 70 miles south from Raleigh, on the Seaboard Air Line Railway, brings you to the heart of the long-leaf pine belt of North Carolina,—a rolling upland region of pine forest interspersed with sandy desert thinly covered with scattered pine, scrub-oak and the picturesque flowering dog-wood. The soil, for the most part, is pure sand, from ten to ninety feet in depth. This is the habitat of the yellow or pitch pine; a source of wealth to an otherwise barren section of the country. Seven miles west of Southern Pines, a town on the railway, and connected with it by a private electric road, lies the unique community of Pinehurst, a model New England village, built and owned by a Boston millionaire, manufacturer of soda water fountains; surrounded by a high fence which conveys to the outside world an intimation that all within is private property; a miniature town, possessed of an excellent hotel, conducted on Northern methods, a departmental store, circulating library, post office, reading rooms, village hall and church, newspaper, model cottages and apartment houses, perfect water supply and sewerage system, electric light and tramway, telephones, gymnasium, and amusements of all kinds for all ages of humanity. Here is a cosmopolitan population of about 400 health seekers, rest seekers and time killers, (besides what I call "the crew"), who find themselves in a little community almost as self-contained as a ship at sea. Outside the encircling fence your horizon includes only the undulating sand hills and pine tops; but "on board," so to speak, (or within the gates), as if by a miracle of landscape gardening, the desert has almost literally been made to "bloom as the rose." Here in our oasis, which might well pass in a dream for a bit of Fairyland, one can count thirty-eight different varieties of flowers blossoming in the open air during March. The poet who sighed for a "lodge in some vast wilderness," may here have his wish. Nature at her roughest and art at her best are here in vivid contrast. You may take your choice by the opening of a gate. You may lie out in the pine forest with the deer browsing at your feet, communing the while with the solemn owl, who blinks at you close by, or with the lazy buzzard who poises over you wondering if you are really dead and so ready for his society. Or, if it is activity, physical or intellectual, that you seek, you simply lift the latch and find it within the charmed enclosure which Mr. Tufts, like another Alladin, has conjured from the desert. But Pinehurst is an exotic, and it behooves me to speak rather of the real North Carolina.

The forest and sand barrens of Moore County, surrounding Pinehurst, supply opportunities for observing the negro and the "cracker" (poor white) in their wretched "shacks," (sometimes a log cabin, sometimes a crazy board shanty), but the subject is not inviting. How they live is a mystery. One of our Yankee visitors remarked that the soil is so poor the natives could not "raise an umbrella." Yet their little patches of sand yield them a scant supply of sweet potatoes and corn, and the prolific, omnipresent razor-backed hog, who lives upon the most intimate terms with his owner, supplies enough animal food to keep body and soul together. The negro in his forest shack, removed from the civilizing touch of town or village life and the influences of education, is seen pretty much as he was forty or fifty years ago, or, rather, worse off than he was in the days of slavery, and tending to revert to a lower type. I am afraid the negro morals, under such circumstances, are as emancipated as they are said to be in the West Indies, since the restraints and wholesome tutelage of slavery were removed. I am not now speaking of the fanciful slavery of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and that sort of thing, but of slavery as it was in North Carolina. In the region to which I now refer, the negro is more poorly fed, worse clothed and worse housed than when he was a slave. In the old days he had no care; he could literally take no thought for the morrow. In sickness, his great value to his master ensured him the benefit of the same medical attendance and skill that was bestowed upon members of his owner's family. In health, his master, if only from similar motives of self-interest, fed him and his family well, and surrounded him with the safe-guards, physical, moral and religious, which his peculiarly dependent nature (unaltered still) constantly required. Now, thrown on his own resources, entirely bereft of the guidance of a superior controlling intelligence, indispensable to him as you find him today, isolated in the forests of this desert region, his lot is sad enough. The alarming increase of insanity among the negro population of the State at large is said to be principally due to the stress and strain of a struggle for the mere existence of themselves and their large families. The ladies of our party have visited some neighboring shacks in the woods and tried to minister to the sick and neglected babes. Their report of their conversations with the negro women and of what they have seen, suggest the conclusion that, in too many instances, the mothers (to put it mildly) are not anxious to preserve the lives of their offspring. The fathers, in such instances, are too various and too uncertain an element in the problem, to be considered. It is at least an open question whether emancipation has been, as yet, a blessing to all the children of the slave. In the end (which is not yet) it will no doubt prove such to the children of master and slave alike. Be it remembered, however, that I am now speaking of a stratum of negro life to which the various influences which make for elevation, referred to in my last letter, have not as yet penetrated to any appreciable extent.

Midway between Pinehurst and Southern Pines is an instance of what can be done in fruit culture by the application of scientific methods to the sandy part of this locality. Here is a peach orchard of over 650 acres, containing about 63,000 trees, besides thousands of apricot, plum and pear trees. About the middle of March, when the trees are in blossom, the sight is well nigh beyond the descriptive powers of our local newspaper editor, who, I can vouch, lacks neither adjectives nor imagination. The peach trees are only four years old, yet a yield of 28,000 crates last year was called only a quarter crop, because a late frost had damaged the trees. The crop this year promises to be enormous.

The long-leaf pine belt extends easterly from here, through the counties of Cumberland and Harnet, covering much of the Cape Fear district. Here, however, along the reaches of the Cape Fear River, and its tributaries from the west, and in the angles between these and the river, are wide tracts of gray, clayey, silty lands, and occasional strips of gum and cypress swamps. This Cape Fear country is an agricultural region, producing chiefly cotton, grain, Indian corn and tobacco. Pine lumber, with turpentine and the other pine products are staple exports.

I have spent a week touring through this section, chiefly travelling with horse and buggy. One day's drive of thirty-two miles took me through a magnificent forest of the pine for which this State is famous. To drive alone over the noiseless sand, carpeted with the fallen pine needles, in an atmosphere darkened by the density of the forest to a "dim religious light," threading one's way through long successive colonades of massive, arrow-straight columns of a hundred feet, arched high over head by a vault of the long needle foliage, induces the sensation of driving through interminable cathedral aisles, and a feeling akin to awe. The forest roads are but poorly defined. You follow the line of least resistance. It was easy, therefore, to lose myself as I did, and be obliged to throw myself upon the mercy of a "Tar-heel" guide, who, for accompanying me several miles, wanted no reward but a heavy draft on my stock of information about Canada.

This is the land of the mocking-bird and the whip-poor-will. The sky coon peeps at you from the swamps as you wade your horse through water that flows to your buggy floor over long stretches of road where picturesque plank walks on stilts are provided for pedestrians at the road side. The wily possum and the saucy fox squirrel observe you warily as you climb the pine ridges, while over the scrub-oak barrens as you drive along, scamper droves of the razor-backed hogs with innumerable litters of their young, ever keeping you company, while they suggest the unfailing "hog and hominy" which await you at your journey's end.

The turpentine stills scattered through the woods are interesting to a Northerner. Those I saw had a capacity for producing 80 gallons of turpentine per day, worth from 20 to 30 cents a gallon at the nearest railway station, from fifteen to twenty miles away. After the turpentine is distilled from the exudation of the yellow or long-leafed pine tree, the residuum is resin, which sells for from $1.50 to $3.00 per barrel according to grade. With a day's production of 80 gallons of turpentine, the still would yield about 15 barrels of resin. The raw material is obtained by cutting the bark off the tree, on one side at a time, and cutting in the tree, near the bottom of the "scrape," a cavity or "box" to receive the flow of sap. Most of this hardens on the tree as it exudes and is scraped off. Three or four repetitions of this process kill the tree, so the turpentine area is continually receding and diminishing, the still relentlessly following so as to keep near the raw material. But new forests are springing up in the path of this devastation for the distillers of future generations.

The Cape Fear country was largely settled by a colony of Scottish Jacobites, who after the Forty-five and the battle of Culloden, and having endured for a time the brutalities of the Duke of Cumberland, were given by the government of George the Second the opportunity to emigrate to America, with a very unpleasant alternative suggestion which but few of these proscribed adherents of the Stuart cause cared to entertain. The leader of this colony, which is variously estimated at from 300 to 600 persons, was "Black" Neill McNeill, my great grandfather's great grandfather, who brought with him descendants of two, perhaps three, generations. With this colony came that heroine of Scottish romance, Flora (or, as she wrote her name) Florey McDonald. The colony settled at Cross Creek, now Fayetteville, where I have recently visited the site of Florey's home. Here the clansmen beat their claymores into ploughshares; but only to beat them out again in the Revolutionary war, when they again took to wielding the broadsword, this time for the House of Brunswick. The descendants of this colony largely people Harnett county now. They retain to a remarkable degree their Scottish clannishness and pride of family, which continual intermarriage has done much to perpetuate. If they have any other characteristic as strong it is their tireless and genuine hospitality to strangers. Though mostly ruined by the war of secession, which was peculiarly devastating to their families, their homes and their property, they now uniformly present a realization of Agur's prayer or desire touching worldly prosperity as expressed in the Book of Proverbs. The large plantations of the days of slavery have been reduced somewhat in size. Side by side with the Scots has arisen a class of black peasant proprietors, their former slaves who have acquired small holdings of their late masters and are thriving, not only with the entire good will of their white neighbors, but also by their counsel and assistance. The negro of the Cape Fear region presents a more encouraging type than that found in the forest region of Moore county, because he has continued under the old influence. While emancipated in law he has in fact remained under the beneficent tutelage and guidance of his white landlord or neighbor from whom he has acquired his land, retaining thus, in effect, the advantages of the controlling intelligence superior to his own, of which emancipation in too many cases deprived his less fortunate fellow. This favored district is permeated too by the influence of the colored free schools. I met the intelligent young negro teacher of the McNeill's Ferry school, who is a worthy specimen of the educated negro youth turned out by such educational institutions as are referred to in my last letter.

A stranger cannot fail to observe in this section of the State the uniform politeness and good address of the negro, which he has derived from his environment. Like his white neighbors he always uses "sir" or "madam" in addressing you. Whether you know him or not, when he meets you he lifts his hat. If he approves your appearance he will likely address you as "captain" or "major" the next time he meets you, or perhaps promote you to a colonelcy. You rise in rank as you rise in his esteem. But, speaking seriously, I have met the patriarchal slave of forty years ago living still on the old family plantations along the Cape Fear, sages such as "Uncle Joshua" and "Uncle Ham," with more than a local reputation. I have mingled with their children to the third generation, and I can only concur with James Anthony Froude, who, in writing of the negro in certain of the West India Islands, remarks that there must have been something human and kindly about slavery when it left upon the character the marks of courtesy and good breeding. Froude sadly adds: "I wish I could say as much for the effect of modern ideas;" which is a touch of his Tory pessimism, of course.

It is curious how the New Testament idea of baptism persists among the negroes. Up at Raleigh, for example, in the Episcopal negro collegiate institution, the church authorities are obliged, by the demand for baptism by immersion, to maintain a baptistery below the altar of their chapel. Another instance I found in old "Uncle Jerry," near Raleigh, who, having been reared a slave in an Episcopalian family, deems it essential to be immersed at every recurring revival season, "to wash away de stain" (as he puts it) of his early training and associations.

It was my privilege to spend a Sabbath with the Scottish folk at a remote settlement upon a pine ridge overlooking the Cape Fear. The Methodists and Baptists are making inroads upon their Presbyterianism. Thus we had preaching by a Methodist itinerant and a Baptist lay preacher. In their church services I rejoiced in the hearty singing of the good old time familiar hymns; but in their social services I discovered a tendency to lapse into the waltz music of the new time revivalist. This Sabbath experience was a welcome respite from the exotic Sabbath exercises of Massachusetts Unitarianism which have been transplanted in Pinehurst by its proprietor. This cult seems still the same impotent, pitiable substitute for a religion that it was in the old Bay State when I first encountered it there sixteen years ago. A volume of Spurgeon's sermons which I have with me I find valuable as a spiritual disinfectant. In my wanderings through the Cape Fear I was unable to find a house with a cellar under it. The houses are built on brick or wooden piers and are quite open beneath. The North Carolinian is an inveterate lover of fresh air. He lives with his doors wide open, but with roaring fires of "lightwood" (resinous pine) and "black-jack," as he calls the scrub-oak, blazing on and-irons in huge cavernous fire places. He does his cooking in out-buildings, and often you are taken out to dine in detached dining rooms across the "flower yard" or garden. The old Dutchman John O'Groat who settled at the extreme Northern point of Scotland, found difficulty in adjusting a question of precedence among his numerous sons as to ingress and egress. To settle it he built a house with an external door to every son's room. The North Carolinians appear to have caught the idea, for they build their houses on the same principle. On one of the plantations where I spent a night, to reach my bedroom I was conducted out of doors, along a piazza, then up an open stairway to an upper gallery from which I entered my room. You retire for the night, if it is at all chilly, before a huge fire of lightwood which distils a layer of resin on your hearth stone. In a bedroom 25 feet square one enjoys the companionship of such a blaze.

I refrain from speaking here particularly of the unfailing kindness and hospitality of these sons and daughters of old Scotland to a denizen of the newer Scotia; for many of the people whom I visited on plantation and in village were my newly discovered kinsfolk. In discovering them I discovered that the old time Scot does not measure kinship by degrees.

The healthfulness of this section of the state is attested by the fact that here reside the oldest twins in the United States (as the New York "World" has recently declared in a biographical sketch of them,) Hugh and Hector McLean, who are 90 years of age. These young gentlemen drove twelve miles and crossed the Cape Fear in a high freshet, to return my call. Longevity here appears