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INTRODUCTORY

From Babel down a certain romance appears to attach to the rising of capitals.

On through the years in which to the music of Apollo's lute, great "Ilion, like a mist, rose into towers"; on through those when Dido encircled the Bursa with the Bull's Hide; and those in which Rome sprang on her Seven Hills above the She-wolf's Den, down to the founding of Washington, hovers something of this romance.

The capitals of most countries are the especial pride of their people. It is not so with us—at least, it has not been so in the past. Happily, it appears as though this condition were changing. It has, indeed, ever appeared to me strange that Americans know so little of and care so little for the capital of their own country. Nature, prodigal of gracious slope and curve and tone, has endowed it with, perhaps, more charm than any other national capital—at least, than any large European capital—and its founders laid it off on a generous plan which has left the opportunity of furthering what Nature presented, in a way to appeal to the pride of our people. Yet how large a proportion of Americans turn their eyes and their steps, not toward its majestic buildings, but to some foreign capital with its gaudy shops and commercial allurements, returning with an alien's ideas on many subjects and boasting of beauties which are not comparable to those of our own capital city.

Not long since, in a club in our chief commercial city, a group of gentlemen were discussing foreign cities with the familiarity of regular habitués, and a provincial visitor from a small territory on the banks of the Potomac suggested

that in the spring, at least, Washington might vie with any capital that he had ever seen.

"I have never been to Washington," said a member of the club, who was an annual visitor to nearly every European capital, and had, indeed, a familiarity with them second only to his familiarity with his native city.

"You mean that you have never visited Washington?"

"No! I have passed through Washington frequently going back and forth to Florida or some other Southern winter resort, but I have never spent an hour there."

"Come with me to-night, man, and see the most beautiful city in the world!" exclaimed his guest, gathering courage.

But he did not go.

Washington with its noble buildings; its charming parks; its sunlit stretches and shady avenues; its majestic monument bathed now in the sunshine, now reflecting the moonlight, now towering amid the clouds, meant nothing to him. Washington and its charming society, its cosmopolitan flavor; its interesting circles, social, political, scientific, artistic, diplomatic, meant nothing to him. Why was it?

"I have never been able to read a history of the United States," said one, not long since. "It is so dull."

Is this the answer? Has the history of Washington been too dull to interest our people? "Happy that people whose annals are dull!"

Washington has a unique life, though how long it will remain so, no one can tell. Fresh with the beauty of youth, situated at the pleasant mean between the extremes of heat and cold, possessing a climate which throughout the greater portion of the year admits of the only proper life—life in the open air, with sunshine as sparkling and skies as blue as Italy's—it presents, according to one's wishes, political, scientific, and social life, and soon it will offer a literary and artistic life, which, second to none in the New World, may possibly, in no long time, be equal to that of any in the whole world. In Washington one may, according to

taste, hear discussed the most advanced theories of science in every field, the political news of every country and enjoy a society as simple, cultured, and refined—or, if one prefers it, as pretentious, as empty and diverting— as in any capital of the globe.

It has a social life, if not as brilliant, at least as agreeable as that of any other national capital.

Commerce, we are assured by those interested in it, covers as wide if not as extensive a field as in any other metropolis, and we are promised soon an increase of manufacture, so that those who love it need not despair of having in time substituted for our present pure and uncontaminated air as filthy an atmosphere as that of the greatest manufacturing city in the country. As to the spirit which produces this, we already have that in abundance.

In fact, Washington naturally demands consideration from every standpoint. Historically, politically, and socially, it is a field for the investigator, the student, the lounger. And he will be hard to please who cannot find in its various and diverse activities as many varied objects of pursuit as he will find in the varied scenes amid its elegant avenues, lined with trees of every kind and variety.

Crossing the Potomac in a railway train, not long ago, as it reached the Washington side, with its broad green park along the river, bathed in the sunshine, with the White House beyond on one side, and the noble dome of the capitol on the other, while above the whole, towered the noble shaft of Washington—a splendid bar of snowy marble reaching to the heavens—a traveler exclaimed to the strangers about him, "What a wonderful city this will be fifty years from now. Think what the people who will come here then will see!"

"What a wonderful city it is now!" replied another.

"Think what we see. You may travel the world over and see nothing like this. More splendid cities perhaps, but none so beautiful and charming." And he was right. Fifty

years ago, travelers from abroad returned home with lurid accounts of slave auctions and highwaymen; with impressions of mud-holes and squalor and mediaeval barbarism. Travelers from all over the world go home to-day with impressions of a capital city set in a park, still unfinished, yet endowed by Nature with beauties which centuries of care would not equal and beginning to show the greatness which, designed by the founders of its plan, has, though often retarded by folly, been promoted from time to time by the far-sightedness of some of the great statesmen and by the genius of some of the great artists of our generation. Yet, even fifty years ago, the place must have had a beauty of its own, a beauty of trees and gracious slopes, which must have appealed to those who, unlike Mammon, were willing to lift their eyes from the pavements to the skies.

The capitol and the White House, the Treasury and the old Patent Office, stood then, as now, gleaming in the sunshine, with their beautiful proportions speaking of the genius of a race of architect-artists whose successors had not yet appeared; the gracious mansions lying in the part of the city to the southwest of the White House and crowning the heights of Georgetown, amid their noble groves, must already have given Washington a charm which made it worthy to be the capital of the nation; while below, the Potomac on its course to the sea, as though resting from the turmoil of its rapids, spread in a silvery lake which has no counterpart in the precincts of any capital of the world.

There is an ancient and honorable society in Washington known socially as the "Cave Dwellers," of whom more anon.

One who is familiar with Washington must recognize that to establish his title to speak of it with authority, he must go back a considerable distance. In the outset, therefore, I would say, if my right to speak of it be questioned, that in this history, I could an I would go back to the time of the "Mesozoic," when, to quote an eminent authority, "the bird

was but newly born of the reptile and the mammal of the fish, under the miscegenation of evolution," when "not only was the Colorado un-born; but when the foundations in which it has carved its colossal bed were not yet laid down." But as to this, I shall refer my questioners to Dr. W. J. McGee's interesting paper on the geologic antecedents of man in the Potomac Valley, and declare only on his authority that even in that age, the Blue Ridge towered higher than to-day on its mountain bases; the Potomac flowed near its present course, and has, indeed, given to "this episode" of cutting down the mountains and building up the lowlands through this period, its own name of the "Potomac Formation"; that during later eons, the mountains were cut down by the rivers, the ever energetic Potomac carrying away whole cubic miles of sand and mud into the ocean to build the broad bench of lowland stretching from Washington to the Coast, "and thus gradually the growing Continent rose until even the pebbly beach of the middle Mesozoic became an upland, and most of its pebbles were swept away, only remnants being left to crown the river bluffs and divides."

I shall not attempt to tell of the "Second Episode," so interesting to the archaeologist of the Potomac Valley; but shall still refer to the same authority for the history of "the period when "the previously mild climate chilled, the winters lengthened," when "a continuous mantle of ice swept down from the North"; when "the land sank until the ocean waters crept up the slopes flanking the Chesapeake and Potomac and finally swept over the hills among which the National Capitol is now embosomed"; when "the water level stood at 150, at 200, at 300 feet above the present tide-level and the ice-charged Potomac dropped boulders and mud within its expanded estuary, while the waves built terraces above the hill-tops." I shall not even undertake to go back to the more recent aboriginal history of the region where the federal capitol was finally established, on the

site of a capitol of a civilization of fishermen, hunters, and warriors, existing long before John Smith, in the summer of 1608, with his fourteen companions, ascended the "Potowmack" in an open boat, and found on the shores where now the capitol rises in its beauty, villages surrounded with cornfields and teeming with life. I shall only say that the explorer in this field will find that all along the Potomac Valley are the evidences to show that man existed here from the paleolithic age, and that eons before this prehistoric advent the region was alternately swept by the sea and the ice.

Along the Potomac banks, along the Anacostia and the Piney Branch, are the abundant proofs today, in hand-broken flints and stones, of the people that for ages lived their wild life in this valley, long before any city that has a surviving name had been reared on the globe.

When John Smith ascended the river, he found that Powhatan's sway extended even this far; but that it was weakened on his confines was shown by the fact that, while lower down Potomac explorers had met with a hostile reception from the "grim and stout savages" who, they reported, "boldly demanded what we were and what we would, above at Moyaones, Nacotchtant, and Toags, the people did their best to content us." Now "Toags," which appears on Smith's map as "Tauxanent," was at or near "Mt. Vernon," "Moyaones" appears from the same map to have been directly opposite on the Maryland side, just below the mouth of the Piscataway, while "Nacotchtant," or "Nacochtant," was on the same side just below the Eastern Branch, and within the present limits of the District. It stood where Benning's is now. (*The other villages identified as in the District bounds were: 1, Red Bank, on the west side of the Anacostia, southeast of the Reform School; 1, The Carrol Place in Washington, north of Garfield Park, and between First and Second Streets, Southeast; 3, The crest of the hill on the Virginia side of the Potomac at Chain*

Bridge; 4, Opposite the foot of Analostan Island on the Virginia shore; 5, Near the mouth of Four-mile Run, Va.; 6, On the farm of Isaac Crossman, at Falls Church, Va.; 7, "Narnaranghgnena," at the south end of Long Bridge; while a workshop of paleolithic man is on the north side of Piney Branch, below Fourteenth Street, extending to Rock Creek)

Nacotchtant was the residence of a chief and contained eighty warriors. They were of the Algonquin stock and spoke the language of the Powhatan Confederacy, from the Albemarle Sound to the Potomac.

The Jesuits who came over with Lord Baltimore in 1634 latinized the name of Anacostan, from which we get Anacostia—the name of the Eastern Branch of the Potomac, and also Analostan Island, opposite Georgetown. "Their houses," says John Smith, "are in the midst of their fields or gardens, which are small plots of ground —some 20 acres, some 40 acres, some 100 acres, some more, some less, sometimes from 2 to 100 of these houses together or but little separated by groves of trees. Near their habitation is but little wood or old trees on the ground; by reason of their burning them for fire." This touch of cutting down the trees is that which binds the ancient capital of the Algonquins to the modern capital of the Anglo-Saxons. Would that there were as worthy a motive in the latter case as in the former for the destruction of the beautiful forests along the Potomac!

We shall see, as we proceed further with the history of Washington, that the tree-cutting disease has raged with unabated virulence from that time to this, and in every step of its development the lament has gone up over the destruction of the beautiful forests and groves which once were the glory of this valley.

Jefferson, last of all men to crave unlimited power, once declared in his ire that he wished that he were a despot, so that he might visit swift punishment upon the miscreants

who so ruthlessly destroyed the trees that without reason were felled on all sides.

This spirit of vandalism had at times extended with disastrous force even to the destruction of the shrubbery in the parks. A score of years ago, some of the little parks in Washington were, with their flowering shrubs, bowers of beauty, not excelled by the Gardens of Oxford or the Backs of Cambridge. The greatest landscape architect possibly that the country has produced declared his happiness in having lived to see the western slope of Capitol Hill attain such beauty as then existed. They were all destroyed, as it were, in a day, by the order of a worthy and earnest official who sincerely believed that he was doing the State a service by this destruction.

Other early English visitors to the site of the capital of the nation were those composing an expedition of twenty-six men who, under Henry Spelman early in 1623, adventured in a pinnace belonging to John Pountis (or Poynts) up the river to trade for beaver and corn with the Anacostan Indian bands between Potomac Creek and the falls of the Potomac.

Leaving five men on board the boat, the others, presuming on the friendship of the Indians, landed at a point believed to be near the old mouth of the Tiber Creek, below Observation Hill. While they were absent the Indians in canoes surrounded the little vessel and proceeded to clamber aboard, when one of the sailors at random fired a cannon, which so frightened the boarding party that they all jumped overboard. A simultaneous attack appears to have been made on the men who landed, as the sailors left on board reported that they had heard the noise of conflict and saw a man's head roll down the bank, whereupon they weighed anchor and sailed to Jamestown.

Spelman was among the slain and Captain Henry Fleet was taken prisoner. Several years later, Fleet was ransomed and returned to England, where his long

association with the Indians and his knowledge of their language recommended him to the London merchants as a valuable interpreter and agent. Their interest in him was doubtless quickened by the stories he told.

A letter written of him states that "he reputeth that he hath often times been within sight of the South Sea; he hath seen Indians besprinkle their paintings with powder of gold; and that he hath likewise seen plenty of rare and precious stones among them, and plenty of black fox, which of all others is the richest fur." (*Later on we find him in trouble in England for having "restrained" his ship the Barque Warwicke. But yet later he appears to have been reinstated, at least in Virginia; for not only in October, 1644, do we find him invited to be at Jamestown at a meeting of the General Court to give advice as to an expedition against the Rappahannock Indians, and, in 1645, now with the title of Captain, sent to "trade with the Rappahannocks or any others not in amity with Opechancanough, but the following year we find him engaged in commanding an expedition sent out from Kiquotan, Hampton, to conquer a peace with Opechancanough." (Neill's "Virginia Carolorum," p. 189.) In 1652 he is authorized with Col. William Claiborne "to discover and enjoy such benefits, and trades, for fourteen years as they shall find out in places where no English have ever been and discovered, nor have had particular trade, and to take up such lands by patents proving their rights, as they shall think good."*

His memory is still perpetuated by "Fleet's Point" near the mouth of the Potomac, where he kept a house of entertainment, from which he not only turned out two of his guests for scandalous behavior, but had them presented to the Court, and had the woman given thirty lashes.

A little later we find his name connected with this region in an account given by Father White, a Jesuit Father who accompanied the first expedition which settled Maryland.

Of the Potomac River which they, with pious intent, made, "St. Gregories," the Father said that "this is the sweetest and greatest river that I have ever scene, so that the Thames is but a little finger beside it." He further relates how Governor Leonard Calvert after having visited the King at Patomecke Towne went up to visit the Emperor at Piscataway (which is in the southwest corner of St. George's County, Md.), with a view to arranging a settlement of his colony.

In this journey, says the good Father, "our Governor took Captain Henrie Fleet and his three barks, who had been a fire-brand to inflame the Indians against us."

Fleet, according to the account, "accepted of a proportion in our beaver trade for to serve 'My Lord etc., until having talked with Claiborne, another of our chief enemies, he revolted" and "traded again without leave.")*

This is interesting in connection with the history of this region; for he was the first Englishman who ever resided for any length of time where Washington now stands.

He appears to have been entrusted with the command of more than one boat and to have done considerable trading with the Anacostan Indians.

For the first account of the region of Washington, we are, however, indebted to Fleet himself. It appears that he had in 1631 "come in a bark called the Warwicke" from Massachusetts Bay into the Potomac and Chesapeake, for the purpose of obtaining a "cargo of corn" for the hard-pushed settlers in that colony, and had ascended the river as far as Yowaccomoco, where St. Mary's, the first capital of Maryland, was placed. "Here," he says, "I was tempted to run up the river to the heads, there to trade with a strange, populous nation called the Mohawks (man-eaters). After good deliberation I conceived many inconveniences that might fall out."

The chief one appears to have been the need of securing his cargo of corn. Proceeding, he describes his going up the Potomac River in 1632, after beaver skins, and finding that a certain Captain Harmon had been ahead of him and had obtained all the skins in that region. Ascending the river, however, he obtained 114 skins from the Emperor; yet this, he states, "was nothing in regard to the great charge at his town and at a little town, by him called the 'Nacostines.' (Anacostans). There is but little friendship between the Emperor and the Nacostines, he being afraid to punish them, because they are protected by the Massomeckes, or Cannyda Indians." "The Nacostines," he continues, "before here occasioned the killing of 20 men of our English, myself being then taken prisoner and detained for five years, which was in the time of Sir Francis Wyatt." (Governor of Virginia, 1621-1626.)

The Massomeckes alluded to appear to have been a populous and powerful tribe about the upper reaches of the Potomac River; for Fleet states that his brother, whom he sent to them, was seven days going to the Falls from their town, and five days returning. Fleet states himself that he had come to anchor about two leagues below the Falls at a point, of which he states:

This place without all question is the most pleasant and healthful place in this country for habitation, the air temperate in Summer and not violent in Winter. It aboundeth in all manner of fish. The Indians in one night will catch 30 sturgeon in a place where the river is not above 12 fathom broad. And as for deer, buffaloes, bears, turkeys, the woods do swarm with them and the soil is exceedingly fertile; but above this place the country is rocky and mountainous like Cannida.(*A Brief Journal of a Voyage in the Barque Warwicke to Virginia," by Henry Fleet (Neill's "Colonization of America," pp. 221-28.)*)

Following the expeditions of Fleet some forty years, a number of emigrants, mainly from Scotland and Ireland, established a settlement on the north bank of the Potomac, within the present limits of the city of Washington.

Documents relating to three tracts of land, all lying within the boundary of the city, are said to have come down to the present time. One of these, bearing the date of June 5, 1663, relates to a tract which embraces what is now Capitol Hill. The settler who occupied this tract was named Francis Pope, and it is said that with some humor he gave to his plantation the name of Rome, and to the little stream which wound around the western base of the hill, he gave the name Tiber Creek. However this may have been, Tiber was the name by which this little stream was long "called and known." And the stream is celebrated by this name in Tom Moore's line:

And what was Goose Creek then, is Tiber now.

Another of these documents of the same date refers to a tract laid out for Captain Robert Troop and named "Scotland Yard," which is believed to be the land now comprising the southeastern part of the city.

The third document bears the date 1681 and refers to a tract owned by William Lang, called the "Widow's Mite." On maps made later this is laid down as embracing the part of the present city lying generally west of Eighteenth Street.

From this time on, for two centuries, the history of this region is like that of the whole valley of the Potomac and all the neighboring country. The Anglo-Saxon race, having obtained gradually their power, and extended their sway up all the rivers that flowed from the western mountains, then took in all the regions between them, until in the middle of the latter half of the eighteenth century they met the Latin races along the banks of the Ohio and the Mississippi. Here they waited for a brief space, and then with a bound they