

American Historic Towns

HISTORIC TOWNS
OF THE
SOUTHERN STATES

Edited by

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Illustrated

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK & LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1900

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The Knickerbocker Press, New York



LOUISVILLE

THE GATEWAY CITY TO THE SOUTH

By LUCIEN V. RULE

BEAUTIFUL of situation is Louisville, the metropolis of Kentucky, and the Gateway City to the South. Built along the Ohio at the Falls, the river stretches away to the northeast in a sheet of water nearly a mile wide and six miles in extent with a scarcely perceptible current, making one of the finest harbors in the whole course of this "Rhine of America." Circling hills surround the city, and the parks upon them are unsurpassed in this section of the country. The avenues are broad and well shaded, and while the residences are, as a rule, handsomely modern, many splendid specimens of Colonial architecture are to be seen. The homesteads in the suburbs are delightful, dreamy retreats, and the river valley is as fertile as that of the Jordan.

As the visitor approaches over any one of the railroads leading into Louisville and looks upon the charming scene just outlined, he may recall the historic associations connected with it. Here, in the long ago, Daniel Boone loved to linger and hunt. It was here that George Rogers Clark, the famous Indian fighter and leader of western civilization, first won renown. Here John Fitch studied the problem of steamboat navigation, anticipating Robert Fulton many years, and so far succeeded that Fulton acknowledged him the original inventor of steam craft. Here the fathers of ornithology in the new world, Alexander Wilson and John J. Audubon, resided and labored, the latter first awaking to a realization of his marvellous genius in the Kentucky wilds. In this vicinity Zachary Taylor spent his childhood, learned the art of war, and returned at intervals of peace to reside, after achieving notable triumphs for the Republic on the hard-fought fields of Mexico and elsewhere. It was here that George Keats, favorite brother of the poet, John Keats, came to live, bringing with him from old England an atmosphere of classic culture and refinement which influenced the develop-

ment of intellectual Louisville. It was here, also, that Henry Clay often came to confer with his political colleagues, and to charm the people with his superb oratory. Here George D. Prentice, whose witty, trenchant paragraphs on the editorial page of *The Louisville Journal* made it the most widely quoted American paper in foreign realms, wielded his wonderful influence as the champion of the great Pacifist of Ashland. Near



GEO. D. PRENTICE.

FROM AN OLD PAINTING OWNED BY THE POLYTECHNIC SOCIETY OF KENTUCKY.

this city General Robert Anderson, the fearless hero of Fort Sumter in 1861, was reared, and hither he returned after its surrender and received the welcome plaudits of all parties for his memorable loyalty to the Stars and Stripes. In this city many of the ablest Federal command-

ers first came into national notice during the Civil War; and here resides now Henry Watterson, whose patriotic pen and eloquent lips in recent years have dispelled the last feeling of prejudice between the once estranged sections of the Union, and who, speaking for his fellow-citizens, cordially received the Grand Army of the Republic into the South on their first visit since they left its soil as conquerors.

In the evolution of nations struggle is unavoidable, but higher results ensue: and it is the peculiar pride of the State of Kentucky that though Lincoln and Davis, the two leaders of the Federal and Confederate governments while the fate of the Union was being decided on the bloody field, were her sons, nevertheless her conservatism, wise counsel and gentle forbearance — beginning in the speeches of Henry Clay long previous to the late unpleasantness, and continuing in the admirable efforts of Henry Watterson afterward — indicated the path to peace and prosperity. The motto of the Republic is "Many in one"; that of Kentucky, "United we stand, divided we fall"; and it has been the mission of our State to emphasize the vital political truth that many commonwealths with widely diverse institutions

may safely unite in the formation of one strong central government; that a multiplicity of peoples with entirely different interests and pursuits may still be one in sympathy, purpose and hope. Situated midway between the North and the South, not only is her climate a delightful mingling of both extremes, but the temper of her inhabitants is a dignified reserve and a spontaneous fervor of feeling happily proportioned. Able, on the one hand, to appreciate the spirit of progress which makes the North impatient of those conditions and tendencies which the South has wisely altered with caution; and, on the other hand, apprehending the principle of personal independence which causes the South to suspect Northern counsel as impelled by a desire to interfere with individual liberty, she has long occupied a position similar to that of Tennyson's sweet little heroine, Annie, who, sitting between Enoch and Philip, with a hand of each in her own, would weep,

“And pray them not to quarrel for her sake.”

Scarcely less sublime than Columbus pacing the deck of his ship at sea and looking wistfully westward in search of the new world he

so faithfully sought, seems Daniel Boone, in 1769, venturing forth from the quiet valleys of the Yadkin in response to the promptings of his restless spirit, unconsciously going to prepare



DANIEL BOONE.

FROM A PAINTING IN THE POSSESSION OF COL. R. T. DURRETT, LOUISVILLE, KY.

the way for the millions that were subsequently to follow him, and as if by magic to transform into fertile fields the pathless forests beyond the Alleghanies which he was the first to penetrate and explore.

Dauntless, noble souls they were who created our commonwealth; and Byron, fascinated with the refreshing fame of Daniel Boone, which extended throughout Europe as well as America, celebrated him and his fellow Kentuckians in a number of fine stanzas in the eighth canto

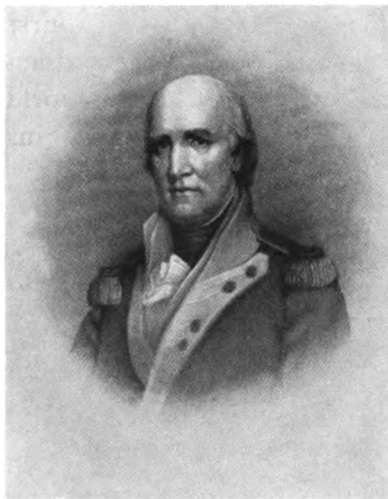
of *Don Juan*. Henry James, in his life of Hawthorne, laments the lack of historic inspiration for prose and verse in this country; yet Byron, sadly turning from the shams and hypocrisies of the Old World, which he scathingly satirized in his great production, burst into a beautiful strain of hope as he contemplated the uncorrupted heroes of the new world beyond the Atlantic. The description begins half humorously with the sixty-first stanza :

“ Of all men saving Sylla the man-slayer,
Who passes for in life and death most lucky,
Of the great names which in our faces stare,
The General Boon, backwoodsman of Kentucky,
Was happiest among mortals anywhere ;
For killing nothing but a bear or buck, he
Enjoyed the lonely, vigorous, harmless days
Of his old age in wilds of deepest maze.”

The reader cannot help smiling at the poet's mistake in leaving off the final letter of Boone's name and calling him “General,” when all Kentuckians, even including the illustrious pioneer, are “Colonels”; but the spirit of a master interpreter of Nature is in the stanzas that follow.

It was not until 1778 that Louisville, as it was then called, was founded, George Rogers Clarke

being a resident of Harrodsburg, Ky., during the years 1776 and 1777. The incidents connected with the settlement he established at the Falls are memorable in the annals of the



GEORGE ROGERS CLARK.

FROM A PAINTING IN THE POSSESSION OF COL. R. T. DURRETT, LOUISVILLE, KY.

West. The British leaders were seeking to strike an effectual blow at all the American frontier fortresses, and with this end in view were enlisting the sympathies and co-operation of the Indian tribes. Detroit, Vincennes, Kaskaskia and similar British stations were

well fortified, and plans were speedily forming for a descent on the unprepared and unsuspecting pioneers in the Ohio Valley. Clark instinctively discerned this scheme and secretly but courageously determined to thwart it. He

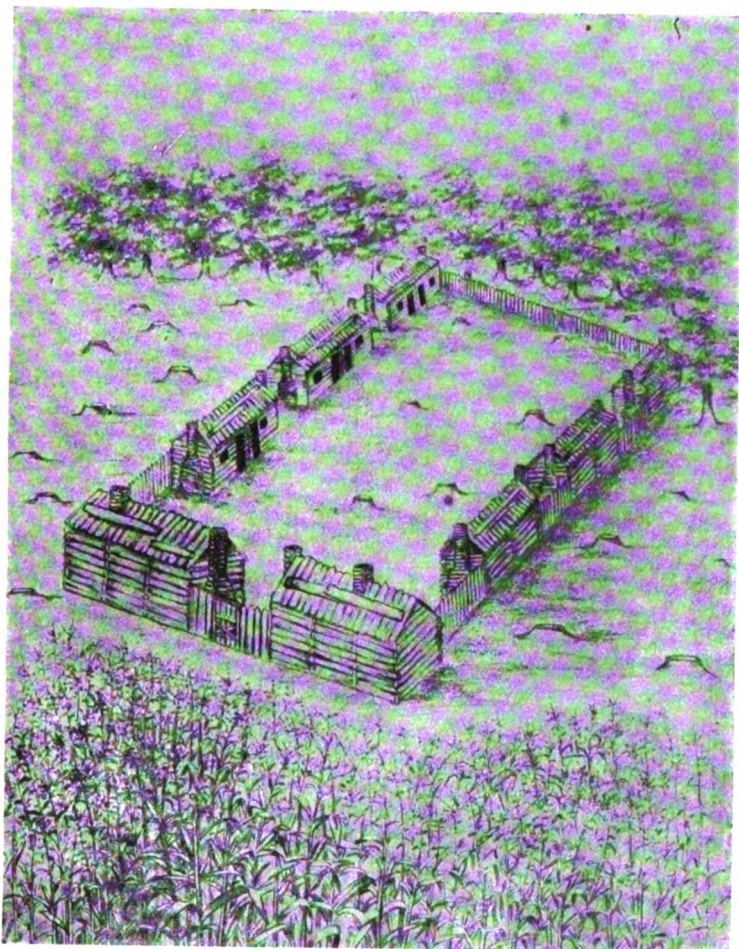
accordingly went to Williamsburg, Va., in November, 1777. The news of Burgoyne's surrender had inspired the Virginia authorities with patriotic enthusiasm, and Governor Henry sanctioned Clark's proposal to raise a sufficient force to proceed against the British in the Northwest. Orders were issued and Clark was put in command of the expedition. Six thousand dollars in colonial currency were voted him, and with the rank of Colonel he set out for Pittsburg. After much discouragement he secured three companies of volunteers and a number of adventurers and continued his journey down the river to the Falls. The fort that he built on his arrival furnished a nucleus around which the village subsequently sprang up.

Thirteen families remained at the Falls while Clark and his men went on against Kaskaskia. The campaign was a brilliant success. One post after another fell into the hands of the fearless Kentuckians, and the whole of the Northwest Territory was opened to emigration. It is said that when Clark and his followers appeared before the astonished garrisons during these operations, the redcoats almost imagined a force had dropped from the skies, so

inaccessible had they deemed their strongholds to be, and so suddenly had their conquerors come upon them. It was not strange, therefore, that the eloquent John Randolph of Roanoke spoke of Clark in after years as the "American Hannibal, who, by the reduction of those military posts in the wilderness, obtained the Lakes for the northern boundary of our Union at the peace in 1783."

If the visitor desires to see the location of the first settlement at the Falls let him stand upon the Fourteenth Street Bridge and look down the river. To the right is the main current of the Ohio as it plunges roaring over the Falls, and to the left is the island on which Colonel Clark and his men built a fort when they arrived in the spring of 1778. This was called "Corn Island," from the fact that a crop of corn was planted by the risky pioneers around the fortress, and carefully cultivated, notwithstanding they were hourly exposed to Indian attacks.

Either in the autumn of 1778 or the spring of 1779 (history is not certain which), the garrison on Corn Island went ashore and laid the foundation of the future city of Louisville. Huts, blockhouses and stockades were erected, and



BLOCKHOUSE AND LOG CABINS ON CORN ISLAND, 1778.

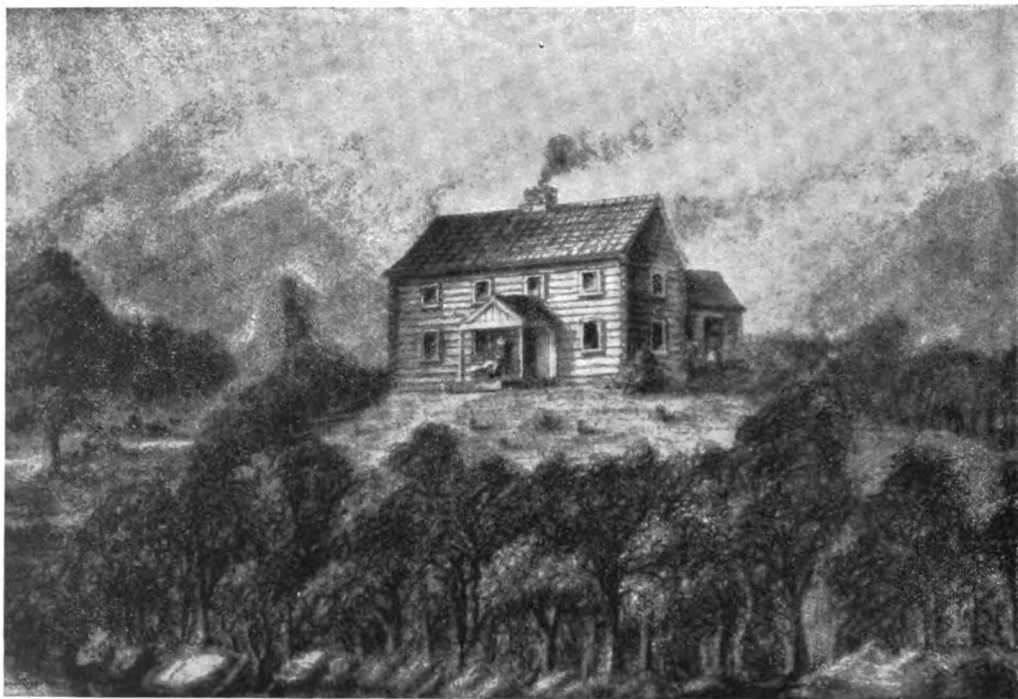
FIRST SETTLEMENT OF LOUISVILLE, KY.

From an old print in the possession of Col. R. T. Durrett, Louisville, Ky.

the Indians saw that the intruders had come to stay. During the year 1779, Colonel Clark directed his energies against the British post Vincennes, and easily captured it.

In May, 1780, the Virginia Legislature passed an "Act for Establishing the Town of Louisville at the Falls of Ohio." The population of the place had increased to six hundred; but the increase of strength rendered the pioneers careless, and as a consequence the Indians on several occasions surprised and captured parties beyond the protection of the fort and escaped with them across the river, or into the wilderness to the south, almost before an alarm could be given. Colonel Clark, in order to ward off the attacks of the red men, constructed a unique sort of gunboat supplied with four-pound cannon. It was the first actual vessel of war ever seen on the Ohio, and though some chroniclers are disposed to make light of its actual utility as a means of defence, it kept the insidious savages from crossing the river in its vicinity.

This period in the history of Kentucky (1780-1800) was admirably portrayed by the facile pen of Washington Irving after his literary tour of the West in 1834, when he



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RESIDENCE OF GEORGE ROGERS CLARK ON THE INDIANA SHORE, OPPOSITE LOUISVILLE.

FROM AN OLD PRINT IN THE POSSESSION OF COL. R. T. DURRETT, LOUISVILLE, KY.

visited Louisville and took notes for future sketches. An eccentric though shrewd character of the day, William P. Duval, whose career as a pioneer lawyer, and whose adventures as an Indian commissioner under Monroe gave him fame scarcely second to that of George Rogers Clark, inspired those two narratives in *Crayon Papers*, called "The Early Experiences of Ralph Ringwood," and "The Conspiracy of Neamathla." Mr. Irving's humor is at its best in the first of these and his picture of primitive people is unsurpassed. James K. Paulding likewise wrote of Governor Duval in a novel called *Nimrod Wildfire*.

With the old-style method of travel by keel-boat and barges (1780-1810), going down the river was easy enough, but ascending stream was indeed difficult. A mile an hour was the maximum rate of progress, and if the wind and tide chanced to be unfavorable, many days were lost in waiting. Then, again, the craft was likely to strike a snag or run aground, and the strength and patience of the crew would be completely exhausted ere another start could be effected. Sometimes the men became so exasperated that they would leave the boat or barge *en masse* and return afoot

whence they had started. It required three and often four months to come up to Louisville from New Orleans. Nor was this all. Bands of desperadoes infested the forest on either shore, and would hold up a boat or barge, —prototypes of the notorious train robbers of later days. The records of river navigation are filled with thrilling incidents and studies of unique character.

But notwithstanding these difficulties European tourists ventured into the wilds in search of novelty or on business speculations. One of these came to the Falls city as early as 1806, and afterwards, in writing his impressions of the place, said: "I had thought Cincinnati one of the most beautiful towns I had seen in America, but Louisville, which is almost as large, equals it in beauty and in the opinion of many exceeds it."

Robert Fulton and Daniel French went into the steamboat-building business at Pittsburg, after the trip of the *Orleans* in 1811; and a few years later better facilities were afforded for travel on the Ohio. The Eastern visitor to Louisville should by all means come from Cincinnati, or even Pittsburg, by boat in order to study the historic scenes and associations

of the "Rhine of America." Distinct epochs in American literature have arisen from the inspiration and suggestion given by this celebrated stream and life along its course to the various writers who travelled its waters.

First and foremost among these was John J. Audubon who came in 1809, previous to the opening of navigation by steamboat. Reports of the happy wilds of Kentucky had reached him in his Pennsylvania home subsequent to his return from Paris, where he had been sojourning as an art student. His passion for ornithology drove him to the West, and the hour he left Pittsburg marked the beginning of a new era in his wonderful career as a naturalist. The Ohio charmed him, and, locating at Louisville, he collected specimens of every bird that could be found in forest or field. In 1810, Alexander Wilson, the distinguished Scotch-American ornithologist, traversed the Ohio and Mississippi valleys on a mission similar to Audubon's. Stopping for a season at the Falls city he chanced to become acquainted with Audubon, and in the course of conversation the two exchanged ideas and were astonished to discover that they were pursuing the same line of work. This meeting



THE CITY HALL.

was memorable, for it awakened Audubon to a full realization of his genius and helped Wilson unspeakably. Indeed, so far-reaching were its results that in order to appreciate them one has first to familiarize himself with some of the subtlest tendencies and movements of the nineteenth century.

When steamboat navigation began on the Ohio (1812-16) the rush of emigration commenced anew. Thirty-nine English families sent Henry Bradshaw Fearon over in 1816 to make a careful study of places and people in the Ohio Valley. He was an intelligent, practical observer, and his descriptions of the inhabitants and social conditions of Louisville are strikingly suggestive of Dickens. There is a vein of sarcasm in his observations, due to the fact that he has little sympathy with the commercial ambition that seemed to possess the people to the exclusion of higher pursuits. Every one seemed self-absorbed and bent on money-making; even the best hotels were conducted on the crowding policy. The people had unparalleled appetites, according to Mr. Fearon, for his description of a tavern meal in Louisville is similar to Dickens's report of the fast-eating Americans he met while among us.

The tide of emigration from England swelled enormously in the decades succeeding 1820-40, and swindlers reaped so rich a harvest by selling imaginary land bargains in imaginary towns of the Ohio Valley that an investigation became necessary. A leading purpose with Charles Dickens in coming to America on his first tour in 1842 was to examine into and expose these frauds, which he did with fearless sarcasm and irresistible irony. The whole plot of *Martin Chuzzlewit* hinges on real-estate speculations at Cairo, Ill., at the mouth of the Ohio, the original of the city of "Eden," which Scadder, the real-estate agent, so eulogistically described to Martin that the credulous young Englishman forthwith invested all his funds in the hope of reaping an ample fortune by the day he set foot in the place. Pittsburg, Cincinnati and Louisville are realistically, and in some respects ridiculously, portrayed in chapters xxi.-xxiii., and if the reader will compare these with Dickens's *American Notes*, the actual scenes and experiences that suggested the story may be found.

As an offset to the severity of this inimitable satire, the reader should peruse the article

“English Writers on America” in Washington Irving’s *Sketch Book*, which was called forth by exaggerated stories propagated by the pens of early British travellers in this country after their return home. Dickens came to Louisville in 1842, and when he had gone up to his room at the Galt House, Major Throckmorton, the proprietor, who was as high spirited as he was polite, appeared at the novelist’s door and said, “Sir, I am proud to extend you the hospitality of the house; and shall be delighted to serve you to the best of my ability.” “Boz,” in spite of his alertness, was not aware of the vast difference there is between the social standing of an American hotel proprietor and that of an English innkeeper. Glancing at the Major he replied, “All right, sir; all right; if I want anything I’ll ring for you.” Throckmorton’s eyes flashed with anger as he exclaimed, “What do you mean by such impudence to me? You don’t know whom you are talking to; I’ll throw you out of the window.” The Major was a powerful man and would doubtless have made good his threat had not Dickens speedily apologized for his mistake.

Among the Englishmen induced to emigrate



ON THE TOBACCO BREAKS.

to Kentucky by Mr. Fearon's book in 1818, was George Keats, brother of the poet, John Keats. The circumstances of his coming and his career after arriving form one of the interesting chapters in the early history of the State.

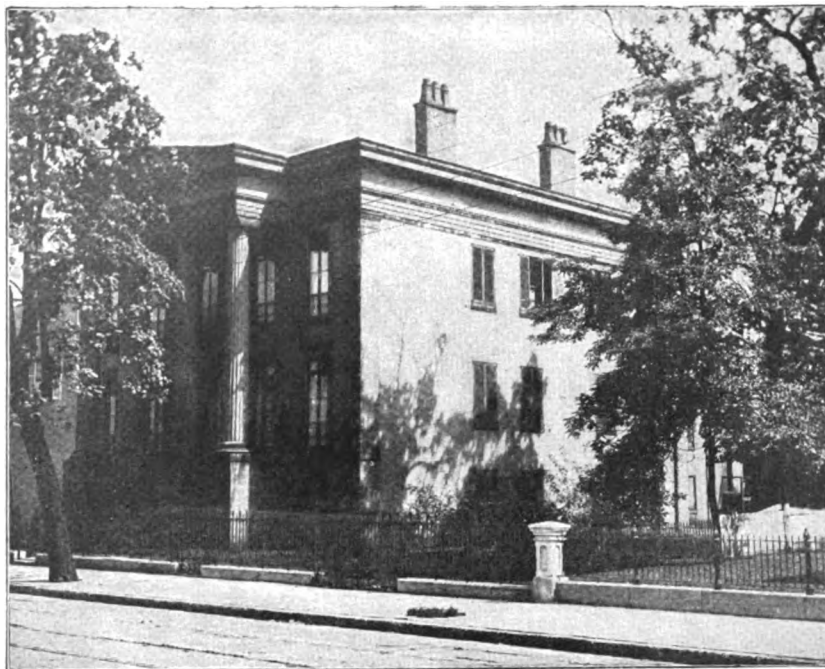
George returned to England in the autumn of 1819, leaving his wife in Louisville. Securing the remainder of the family estate which fell to him, he invested in the lumber trade at the Falls city and made a fortune. His mills were located on First Street, between Washington Street and the river, and in 1835 he built an elegant residence on what is now Walnut Street, between Third and Fourth. The square on which this mansion still stands was then the aristocratic section of the city, and while the house was in course of construction people would stroll along and speak admiringly of it as "The Englishman's Palace." With the exception of the roof, which was altered, and the present portico, which was added by a subsequent purchaser, the residence is in no wise changed since George Keats occupied it. Lavish was the hospitality dispensed by the poet's brother, and he will always rank among the noblest citizens Louisville has ever had.

Though the happiness of helping John was not, as he had hoped, permitted him, his house became the center of a circle of warm admirers of the author of *Endymion*, and for a long time the culture of the city and State found in him a leader both liberal and inspiring. James Freeman Clarke was for seven or eight years pastor of the Unitarian Church in Louisville, and George Keats was a member of his congregation. The two became intimate friends, and Mr. Clarke afterward wrote entertainingly of him. He served in the city council and aided in the establishment of the Louisville school system.

The correspondence between George and John includes some of the poet's finest letters. These descended to one of George's daughters. About the year 1873 her son, John Gilmer Speed, the well-known writer, now of New York, chanced to be looking over these priceless papers and noticed that they had not been published in Lord Houghton's life of Keats. He accordingly collected them, and from one of the volumes we select a few brief sentences pertinent to the purpose of the present sketch.

One letter from John tells George to take

financial reverses as coolly as possible, considering he had done his best. Another, declining an invitation to come to Kentucky, says, "You will perceive that it is quite out of my interest to come to America. What could I do there? How could I employ myself, out of the reach of libraries?" And thus he counsels George: "Be careful of those Americans. I could almost advise you to come, whenever you have the sum of five hundred pounds, to England. Those Americans will, I am afraid, still fleece you." In a letter to George's wife in January, 1820, he speaks of his wish to cross the sea with his brother: "I could almost promise you that if I had the means I would accompany George back to America, and pay you a visit of a few months." Had he made the trip and beheld with his own eyes the loveliness of the Ohio Valley, and met the kindly people of Kentucky, he would not have been so inclined to disparage Louisville society: "I was surprised to hear of the state of society at Louisville: it seems you are just as ridiculous there as we are here—threepenny parties, halfpenny dances. The best thing I have heard of is your shooting, for it seems you follow the gun."



A terrible tragedy occurred at the Keats mansion, back in the forties, about which there is a pathetic tradition. Isabella, the beautiful young daughter of George Keats, according to tradition, killed herself in a fit of despondency at the unhappy termination of a love-affair. A circumstance said to have taken place in 1890 seemed to substantiate the tradition. An elderly, refined-looking and quiet stranger appeared repeatedly at the Keats house and requested to be left alone in the library, where the girl was shot. At first he offered no explanation of his unusual request, but when finally leaving he said to the lady who had admitted him, "I parted from her in there, and have returned from California to visit the scene once more." The rumor was soon circulated that the mysterious stranger was the lover whose unfaithfulness had robbed the unhappy girl of the desire to live.

The descendants of George Keats still living in Louisville deny the pathetic story throughout. They affirm that the girl was heartwhole and free from any morbid tendencies. Their version of the tragedy is substantially as follows: Isabella's brother Clarence had been out hunting in the vicinity of the



city, and, returning home, carelessly left his gun on a sofa in the darkened library. Isabella shortly afterward went into the room to lie down, and, not seeing the loaded weapon, struck the trigger in such a way with her foot that the contents was discharged, mortally wounding her.

Edward Eggleston's inimitable Hoosier Tales portray the next period in the history of the Ohio Valley (1840-60), immortalizing those pedagogues of the Ichabod Crane type who came swarming from New England when the tide of emigration first set westward. Mr. Eggleston spent his childhood on the river between Cincinnati and Louisville, and his pictures of primitive social life in Kentucky and southern Indiana are in the style of Irving's sketch already mentioned. Zachary Taylor went to school, not far from the Falls fort, to one of these Yankee teachers, a native of Connecticut by the name of Ayers, who was a sagacious fellow, able to watch the Indians and urchins simultaneously. The South and West owe these wandering educators a debt of gratitude that can hardly be overestimated.

It was from the Falls city that Aaron Burr planned to make his treasonable descent upon

the South in November, 1805, and there is still current in the State much interesting tradition concerning him. The court-house in Louisville contains the noble statue of Henry Clay by Joel T. Hart. At the Polytechnic Society on Fourth Avenue are Hart's other pieces of statuary; and on Third Avenue, at the residence of Mrs. Elizabeth Menefee, are many of those superb portraits painted by Matthew H. Jouett, Gilbert Stuart's favorite pupil, and a master American artist. His genius and that of Hart developed beyond the confines of classic civilization, and though subsequently aided and directed by the best instruction of conventional schools retained an individuality and conformity to nature all their own.

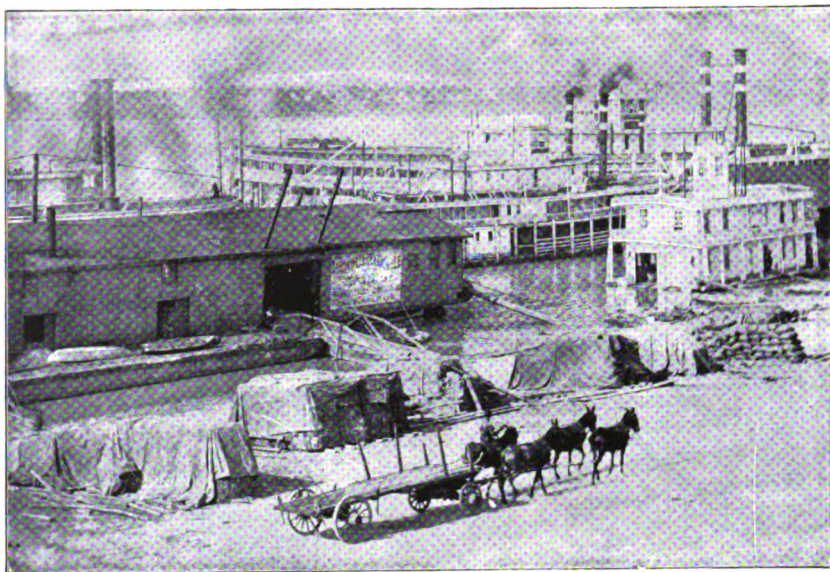
Just across the court-house square, and within a stone's throw of the imposing figure of the sage of Ashland is the site of the old Pope residence where Worden Pope and his sons entertained James Monroe and Andrew Jackson during their tour through the South in 1819. The Popes held a high position of political influence in the State, and at a conference called on this occasion the name of Andrew Jackson was first proposed to the Southern people as Monroe's successor.

The home of Zachary Taylor, five miles from the city, is well worth visiting. Near it is the house in which Jefferson Davis was married to his first wife, the daughter of General Taylor.

On August 6, 1855, occurred the terrible political riot precipitated by the Know-nothings. A mob with a cannon at their head went murdering and burning through the streets of Louisville. The day is known in history as "Bloody Monday."

Louisville was decidedly Union in its sympathies during the Civil War, though many of its inhabitants inclined to support the Southern cause. George D. Prentice, though just and kindly to the South, was always loyal to the national government, and his paper, the *Journal*, was notably influential on that side. The Falls city as a recruiting station at the beginning of the struggle between the States was fully as important in the West as was Washington in the East. It was the basis of numerous military movements that turned the tide of fortune against the Confederates, and in this city some of the most eminent Federal commanders were at different times located.

At the home of Col. Reuben T. Durrett on



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A SCENE AT THE WHARF.

East Chestnut Street are relics innumerable, and the scholarly host, who knows every fact of the city's history, is ever ready to show them to the visitor. Louisville is not only a lively commercial center, but is also the home of culture and art. The brain and beauty of which she boasts can be found throughout the Blue Grass region, and the hospitality she dispenses is characteristic of the whole commonwealth. Mary Anderson de Navarro first won fame in this city, her girlhood home, and has never ceased to love it. Henry Watterson and his able young lieutenant, Harrison Robertson, still keep the *Courier-Journal* to the front; and James Lane Allen, though not a native nor a resident of the Falls city, portrays the traits of her people upon his inimitable pages when he writes of all Kentuckians. Madison Cawein, the Keats of America, is here; and Charles J. O'Malley, who voices the sentiment of every Kentuckian when he sings:

“ My own Kentucky, sweet is fame,
And other suns sink down in flame ;
And other skies bend over blue ;
And other lands have hearts as true ;
And other mornings break as clear ;

And God keeps love-watch everywhere—
But O, my mother, on thy breast
Alone my head may find full rest,—
My heart to thy heart as of yore,—
Asleep within thy arms once more,
O my Kentucky !”

