

VIRGINIA

BY VIRGINIUS DABNEY

Mythology

SINCE that great day three centuries ago when the *Mayflower* landed her cargo of witch-burners on our coasts, the Brahmins of Massachusetts have persisted in proclaiming Plymouth as the nation's birthplace and their State as the fount of American culture and democracy. The First Families of Virginia have just as persistently retorted that Jamestown was settled thirteen years before Plymouth and that it was the Old Dominion and not the Bay State that played the leading part in the upbuilding of early America. Nothing seems to stick quite so firmly in the proud craws of the loyal Virginians of today as these claims of the New Englanders. For while they are themselves by no means guiltless of creating historical myths, they are hardly the equals of the descendants of the sainted Pilgrims. If they are reluctant to admit that Washington's Farewell Address was penned by Alexander Hamilton, or that Jefferson deserves little or no credit for the Louisiana Purchase, or that Monroe's part in the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine was limited, their output of balderdash can scarcely be compared to that of the estimable sons of the Bay State.

The favorite legend nurtured by New Englanders is that the beginnings of American constitutional history are to be found in the Mayflower Compact. It seems to matter little to them that Virginia had representative government long before the *Mayflower* sailed, and few of them, even today, can be brought to admit that the year 1607 antedated the year 1620.

Unfortunately for the peace of mind of highly patriotic Virginians, the Massachusetts historians have persuaded nearly all the people of the North, East, and West that American institutions had their sole origin in the civilization of the Puritans. Right-minded authors and editors in the Old Dominion are thus kept in constant ferment combating this nefarious propaganda and consigning its sponsors to everlasting damnation.

With the perennial wrangle as to whether the blood of a Brahmin or that of an F. F. V. is of deeper indigo I am not especially concerned. The fact is that the greater part of the aristocracies of both the Bay State and Virginia came to flower on this continent. Each sprang in large measure from the English merchant class. Only a handful of the forebears of the haughty Massachusetts gentry of today could boast on their arrival of a coat-of-arms, while a very small proportion of Virginia's puissant First Families can trace their descent from the Cavaliers.

II

Surgery

Virginia's present boundaries date from 1863, when West Virginia was admitted to the Union as a separate State. Following King James' Virginia grant of 1609, describing the Commonwealth as extending into the interior "West and Northwest," it modestly claimed the entire territory from which have since been carved the States of Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wis-

consin. By the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 the region north of the Ohio river and east of the Mississippi was detached from the Old Dominion and organized as the Northwest Territory. Five years later Kentucky was admitted as a separate State. This left Virginia with only its present area and that which subsequently became West Virginia.

The surgical operation performed on it during the Civil War deserves honorable mention. The Constitution forbade the dismemberment of any State without its consent, but this slight obstacle was easily surmounted. Practically all of the Western Virginians who sided with the South were in the Confederate army, so a group of 100% Americans in that part of the State proceeded, during the absence of the Confederates, to get themselves "elected" to the "Legislature." This "Legislature" convened at Wheeling and notified the government at Washington that it was the Virginia Assembly. The claim was acknowledged by the Great Emancipator and the radicals in Congress, and the Wheeling patriots decided to create the State of West Virginia. When that great Commonwealth was admitted to the Union in 1863 a Legislature was duly elected, while the noble body which had engineered the dismemberment proceeded to take up its abode at Alexandria, then held by the Northern army, and again to proclaim itself the Legislature of Virginia. Everyone knew the government of Virginia was located at Richmond, but the farce was carried out for the remainder of the war and for some time thereafter, with a "Governor" of Virginia sitting at Alexandria. After Appomattox the radicals at Washington treated Virginia as a State in so far as getting its consent to the Thirteenth Amendment was concerned, but as a conquered province when it came to accepting its representatives in Congress. Thus in open defiance of the Constitution came into being the sovereign State of West Virginia, "the bastard offspring of a political rape."

III

Beating the Tom-Toms

The Virginia of today is quite different from that of 125 years ago. Once the first State of the Union, it is now merely one of the forty-eight. Until 1820 it was the most populous Commonwealth in the country. Now it is twentieth. Its influence on the affairs of the nation is slight and it has lost its old prestige. We hear sneering allusions on every hand to poor old Virginia's lamentable flop. Its citizens endured these taunts for years with equanimity. They argued that the Commonwealth had been laid waste by the Northern armies and that no one could expect the State to resume her leadership for a long period. Time passed but still Virginia lagged. Its oft-repeated alibis would no longer hold water, but the innate conservatism of its leaders held them inactive. The cultured, old-fashioned Virginia gentleman scorned the idea of shouting the attractions of his native State from the housetops. The rest of the country would have to discover them for itself. No Virginian of the old school had any intention of making a bounding and bawling mountebank of himself in imitation of the uncouth boosters in the more up-to-date sections of the Republic. He asked only to be left in peace in his romantic Zion with his volume of Thackeray, his mint julep, and his glorious and apocryphal memories.

But soon the boosters descended upon the land. "These moss-backed fossils have been running the State long enough," they bellowed. "All they do is talk Virginia's past. We've got to put some pep into this thing! It's up to us to sell Virginia to the world!" So the Virginia State Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1924. And then came the rest of the live-wire organizations. Governor E. Lee Trinkle, their roaring leader, in his closing message to the General Assembly of 1926, spoke of them in the following high terms.

A State Chamber of Commerce, hitherto unknown in the Commonwealth, has been organized with efficient, patriotic men at its head, working together with a real fervor for the advancement of the State as a whole. I feel, too, that I can point with pride to the work that is being done by Shenandoah Valley, Inc., Southwestern Virginia, Inc., Southside, Inc., and Rappahannock, Inc., and our various Chambers of Commerce, Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, and Civitan Clubs, all now surging with an intense interest in the progress of the State.

As a result of this Great Awakening hundreds of thousands of dollars are being spent in advertising Virginia. It was said a few years ago that Hampton Roads, the greatest land-locked harbor on the continent, had been given the State by God and that Virginians were evidently waiting patiently in the confident expectation that God would also develop it. Not so today. The go-getters are seeing to it that Hampton Roads' light is not concealed behind any species of bushel. Similarly the campaign for the Shenandoah National Park was put over the top with little difficulty. Drowsy sons of the Old Dominion were prodded into action and the needed \$1,250,000 was pledged in short order. The cities and towns of the State, with an excess of zeal and a corresponding shortage of modesty, are expressing their civic pride through the medium of automobile tags bearing such slogans as: "Richmond And Proud Of It," "Norfolk Where Prosperity Is A Habit," "Boost Bumpass."

Even Richmond, the ancient capital of the Confederacy, has succumbed. No better illustration of the change that has come over Virginia can be cited than the recent metamorphosis in the Richmond Chamber of Commerce. Early this year a member of the chamber wrote a letter to one of the local papers protesting that the organization was "absolutely dead" and that it was nothing more than a place where "blue-blooded F. F. V.'s often gather to listen to one another's stale talk." Immediately the paper began belaboring the chamber unmercifully, accused it of being almost defunct, and declared that what the city wanted was results. Other dis-

satisfied idealists chimed in, and it was decided that something must be done. An Inter-Club Council, composed of representatives of all the forward-looking organizations in the city was formed at once as an auxiliary to the chamber. And Richmond was put on the map. When it was host not long ago to a Rotary convention every effort was made to demonstrate to the visiting back-slappers that Richmond appreciated this signal honor. The streets were bedecked with flags, automobiles carried placards bearing the generous invitation, "Rotarian Ride With Me," and the keys of the city were handed over to the high priests of pep. Richmond's red-hot boosters are eagerly anticipating the not distant day when the city can boast a population of 200,000, but they quake with apprehension at the thought that Norfolk may at any moment annex Portsmouth and thus wrest from the capital the proud distinction of being the chief metropolis of the State. In their hearts rankles the crushing realization that Atlanta's population is more than 30,000 greater than Richmond's.

Eddie Guest paid the Confederate capital an official visit early this year. The city of James Branch Cabell was thrown into a furor at the prospect of seeing the Poet of the Plain People in person. The local newspapers heralded his coming with daily eulogies for two weeks before his arrival. More than 2,000 people, the largest gathering that had attended a similar function in years, paid a dollar each to hear one of Eddie's inspiring lectures at the city auditorium. He was invited to address the Legislature. Bookstores took advantage of this unprecedented publicity to put on prominent displays of his works and were rewarded by large sales. Eddie so enraptured the local literati that they were moved to express themselves in verse. One of them gave vent to his enthusiasm in a touching lyric printed in a Richmond paper and entitled, "Eddie Guest, You Come Again!"

Thus it is evident that Virginia has

roused itself from its torpor and is following the example of the more "progressive" and forward-looking Commonwealths. Having drifted along for years in a semi-comatose state, it is now engaged in selling itself to the world. If the blasts of Virginia's advertisers have thus far created smaller atmospheric disturbances than the siroccos generated by the boosters of Florida and California, the explanation lies in the newness of the Virginia movement. Boosting in the Old Dominion has already taken every form except that manifested on a large electric sign displayed in front of a New York church and bearing the simple words "Boost Jesus." Virginia may even come to that, in time.

IV

F. F. V.'s

What of those old-fashioned Virginia gentlemen who a few years ago were so loath to seek publicity for their native State? Have they joined the Rotary Clubs? Have they become salesmen of Virginia?

It is safe to say that the vast majority of these scions of the pioneers still feel the greatest repugnance for the buffooneries of the go-getters. They are anxious for the Old Dominion to recover her lost prestige but they are utterly unable to comprehend how that end is to be achieved through perpetual bleating about Service and Vision. To the Virginia aristocrat the methods of the boosters are oafish and barbaric. True, some of them have been dragooned into joining the luncheon clubs. The spectacle of a gray-haired Episcopal rector singing asinine songs, banging his fellow Kiwanians on the back and calling them Bob or Jim when he scarcely knows them by sight, is, indeed, a dolorous one. There are others who feel a genuine interest in the welfare of the State, but have declined to join the clubs under any conditions. And there are still others who much prefer the Virginia of the Old South to the modern article. To this last-named group

of ultra-conservatives the doings of the he-men are detestable. They feel that Virginia has already been robbed of much of her pristine charm, and they cling desperately to what is left. For example they oppose the scheme of a Shenandoah National Park on the ground that it will bring millions of Babbitts into the State and tend to divest it of what little remains of its individuality.

Thus it will be seen that there is a large group of Virginians who refuse to echo the yawps of the go-getters. This group is, indeed, much larger than in the majority of States. It includes, generally speaking, the members of the First Families—those Virginians who for 300 years and more have contributed the largest share to the upbuilding of the Commonwealth. They are offering stout resistance to the wave of Babbittry which has engulfed the country. If their opposition is not always evident to the casual visitor, it is nevertheless real. That opposition, in accordance with traditional Virginian etiquette, is generally expressed *sotto voce*, and thus cannot be heard above the *fortissimo* whooping of the boomers. The Service Clubs get most of the publicity and make all the noise, but it does not follow that Virginia has completely capitulated to them. On the contrary, there are few, if any, States in which the Kiwanian lump is leavened with so stiff an ingredient of sense.

Rotarianism finds its toughest sledding in the Tidewater and Piedmont sections. Within this region are situated the oldest cities and towns—Richmond, Petersburg, Norfolk, Williamsburg, Fredericksburg, Alexandria, and Charlottesville. To the people there the current frenzy for larger and larger cities, with taller and taller skyscrapers and bigger and better smokestacks, is altogether incomprehensible. As I have said, it is this civilized element which serves as a partial check to the up-to-date schemes of Mr. Babbitt. For example, it was recently suggested that the old court house at Charlottesville in which

Jefferson frequently attended court, be torn down and a modern structure be erected in its place. At about the same time the Richmond boomers were moved to bring forward a plan for razing the home of John Marshall in order to extend the playground of a public school. Both suggestions were scotched after a hard struggle by citizens who have been able to retain their reverence for tradition and their appreciation of historical associations. Another uplifting scheme was partially carried out a short time ago before the people of sense became aware of what was up. Several of the old brick walks in historic Capitol Square at Richmond were torn up and replaced with concrete. Asked to explain this vandalism, the superintendent of buildings and grounds replied that "brick walks were all right years ago but they are out of date now." "We want to make the square modern," this talented landscape gardener declared. Immediately upon the publication of this highly illuminating pronunciamiento a tremendous howl went up, and the superintendent suddenly concluded to leave the remaining brick walks unmolested.

V

Relics of the Past

In the Virginia of the Eighteenth Century there was as great a social distance between the opulent planters on the one side and the masses of the people on the other as that which separated the nobles from the yeomanry in Europe. Although the Virginia of today is almost 75% rural, the landed proprietor with his thousands of acres and hundreds of slaves has, of course, vanished long ago. The last vestiges of this feudalistic system were obliterated by the Civil War. Social distinctions in present-day Virginia are based more largely upon wealth than upon birth. While members of the old families often point with satisfaction to their family trees, there are no social barriers separating them from the bourgeoisie. It

has been aptly said that in Twentieth Century Virginia "bank notes are more than coronets and simple flasks than Norman blood." If there is in the State a single club, circle, or other similar organization into which anyone with a few thousand in the bank and a fair knowledge of the amenities will not be readily admitted, I am not aware of its existence. And if to these attributes be added a well-stocked cellar, the combination is irresistible. Indeed, where membership in social clubs is concerned, the possessor of a corpulent bank roll who is of dubious progeniture is frequently regarded as preferable to one rejoicing in the most patrician lineage but lacking the roll, for ducs are sometimes heavy.

If the landed aristocracy of the Old Dominion is a thing of the past, there remain many of the beautiful old Colonial mansions builded long ago by the members of that aristocracy in Tidewater, Piedmont, and Valley Virginia. The most famous are Mount Vernon, Arlington, and Monticello. The last-named has recently become a national shrine, having been purchased from the Hon. Jefferson M. Levy, who had almost succeeded in ruining it by installing canopied beds surmounted by the imperial L, granite lions, heavy gilt furniture, and similar monstrosities. Many of these stately mansions standing amid groves of ancient oaks have been preserved in all their original charm, but hardly a dozen in all Virginia remain in the hands of the families which erected them. In some cases those families have died out or moved away, while in others poverty has made necessary the sale of the ancestral home. The consequence is that a large proportion of the Colonial estates are now in the hands of wealthy outsiders. Unfortunately, some of them have been purchased by loutish Middle-Western captains of industry or Northern *nouveaux riches* whose idea of the proper way to furnish an old Virginia home is to throw away the mahogany and secure overstuffed lounges from Saginaw, Mich.

VI

Moronia

Virginia, like the other States of the Republic, has its uplifters bent on legislating morality into the populace. Except in the case of Prohibition, however, the wowsers have had hard going. It was in 1914 that the wets were routed. In that fatal year of grace was passed the Enabling Act, by which the Legislature authorized a State-wide referendum on Prohibition. With the passage of this act the forces of righteousness launched an intensive campaign against the powers of darkness. Renowned exhorters were imported and the electorate was besought to banish the unholy liquor traffic. Hundreds of church meetings were held. When the day of the referendum arrived, bells were tolled, hymns were caroled, the Scriptures were read, and prayers were offered throughout the State. Such a high pitch of emotional fervor was thus worked up among the Christians by the evangelical sorcerers that they actually were persuaded for the moment that a vote to retain local option was equivalent to a vote for Belial. The result was that the wets went under by a majority of almost two to one. In 1916 the Legislature passed a State Prohibition law and Virginia has since been officially dry. Actually things are, of course, different. Virginia is one of the leading States in the number of stills seized within its borders since Volstead was sainted. While there is little prospect at this time of putting through the pious General Assembly any drastic modifications of the State dry law, several of the legislators have, of late, dared to question whether Prohibition rests on a plane of complete equality with revealed religion. One of the assemblymen, for example, recently denounced the superintendent of the Virginia Anti-Saloon League in fierce terms, while another sharply denounced both the superintendent and Prohibition. The latter also charged that "Richmond newspaper editors write

dry editorials but fail to decline a good drink of liquor." The fanatics are thus far from being in complete control.

The legislative session of 1926 was also remarkable for the squelching of two bills making the teaching of the Federal Constitution and the reading of the Bible compulsory in the public schools. Both of these measures were slain in committee. A Methodist clergyman in the Assembly announced his intention of sponsoring a bill outlawing the hideous and nefarious doctrine of evolution. He never introduced it, for he soon found on investigation that it was certain to be defeated. The Baptists of the State, who, with the exception of the Methodists, have the largest membership of any Virginia denomination, were the leaders in the fight against the Bible Bill. They unanimously passed resolutions at their annual convention condemning the bill as "an invasion of the rights of conscience and a violation of religious liberty," and later presented an able memorial to the Legislature which might be perused with profit by Kluxers and other such apostles of tolerance. The principal advocates of the Bible Bill were the Methodists and the self-styled Patriotic Welfare Committee, which last was also behind the Constitution and Anti-Evolution Bills. This body of 100% Americans is composed of representatives of the Ku Klux Klan, Daughters of America, Patriotic Order of Sons of America, Junior Order of United American Mechanics, Order of Fraternal Americans, and Sons and Daughters of Liberty. It has failed in everything it has undertaken. It first came into prominence during the Summer of 1925, when it made a ludicrous attempt to prevent the erection at Richmond of a statue of Columbus, on the ground that he was a Catholic and a "furriner." The opening paragraph of the committee's statement of its alleged reasons for opposing the statue contained these chaste and grammatical lines:

Believing the citizens are anxious to know why citizens objected to the raising of a monument

to one Christopher Columbus, we submit this article, in the beginning we desire to say not through any religious prejudice has there been objection raised but purely along historical lines, inasmuch as our histories deny the fact that the said Christopher Columbus was the discoverer of America therefore patriotic men and women who believe in dealing justice where same is due, believe that the real discoverer should be recognized if such monuments are to be erected. . . . As we surely favor the erection of a monument any where, any time, to any of our noble patriotic American heroes, New York may boast of a Columbus Square and Washington of its monument, yet Virginia, the Mother State of the South, should ever erect monuments to the patriots that are dear to all Americans.

In addition to refusing to pass the measures advocated by the dolichocephalics, the Assembly of 1926 gave its approval to several highly beneficial bills sponsored by Governor Harry F. Byrd who, fortunately for the State, is not a member of the "boost, don't knock" school. When he took office he saw the woeful inefficiency of the State government, and courageously set out to remedy this condition. His programme is generally regarded as the most salutary inaugurated by any chief executive of Virginia in at least a generation.

VII

Teaching the Young Idea

The institutions of higher education in Virginia are laboring under the serious disadvantage of receiving practically no support from the State. Out of every dollar raised by taxation only 6.2 cents go to higher education, this being the lowest allotment in the Union save in backward Georgia. The consequence is that the State-supported institutions of collegiate rank are unable to do much in the way of research. A more cheering aspect of the educational situation is the entire absence of that relic of barbarism, the heresy hunt. With teachers in North Carolina continually belabored by earnest pastors who adhere to the doctrines of Bryanism, and with Tennessee and Mississippi already committed to the literal interpretation of Genesis, educators in Virginia are free to

embrace Darwinism, and they do not hesitate to do so, even in the sectarian institutions. Anyone who attempts to hamper scientific research by an appeal to Scripture receives only loud guffaws and is speedily laughed out of court.

The University of Virginia is commonly regarded by the more righteous citizens of the Commonwealth as a sink-hole of iniquity, but not because the members of its faculty acknowledge their arboreal ancestry. The youth who matriculates there is not eternally coddled and pestered by professors, nor is he spied on by hired snoopers, as is the case in many other universities. This, of course, is not at all to the taste of the Pecksniffs of the State, who hold to the conviction that the student body is made up of pampered Sybarites spending their time in bacchanalian orgies. This naïve estimate of the university cannot be justified. The per capita consumption of booze by the undergraduates is no greater than in Wake Forest College.

Aside from this, the university is one of the most beautiful in America or Europe. Its grounds and buildings were designed by Thomas Jefferson and were laid out under his personal supervision. Visitors from all parts of the world are struck by the Hellenic loveliness of its architecture, the stately beauty of its arcades and serpentine walls, mellowed by the passage of the years. On the grounds and in the adjoining town of Charlottesville is probably as much first-rate statuary as can be found in any place of equal size on the planet. William and Mary College, located in the historic town of Williamsburg, was founded in 1693, and is the oldest college or university in the country with the exception of Harvard. It numbers among its alumni Thomas Jefferson, John Marshall, James Monroe, John Tyler, Spencer Roane, Benjamin Harrison, Littleton Waller Tazewell, and many other august celebrities. Then there is Randolph-Macon College, at Ashland, named for John Randolph of Roanoke and Nathaniel Macon of North

Carolina. When Randolph was asked by the college authorities if he would permit this institution for the education of young Methodists to be named after him, that ingratiating statesman replied: "Yes, you may use my name, for when educated they will cease to be Methodists."

VIII

Today and Tomorrow

While it is obvious that Virginia occupies no such place today as it held at the opening of the last century, its current contributions to civilization are perhaps not quite as infinitesimal as might be supposed. It is moderately well represented in the fine arts, and an examination of "Who's Who" reveals that the number of Virginians in it is almost twice as great as that for any other Southern State and ninth for the entire country.

True, practically all its politicians have capitulated long since to the Anti-Saloon League and may be found doing the goose-step behind the Hon. Wayne B. Wheeler.

The Commonwealth must therefore look to her neighbor, Maryland, for stalwart leadership in combating the tyranny of the dry laws. Finding small comfort in their native habitat, the embattled wets in the Old Dominion rally beneath the standards of those unterrified apostles of individual liberty in the Free State, Governor Albert C. Ritchie and Senator William Cabell Bruce, both of whom are native Virginians.

The question which gives most concern to the illuminati in the Virginia of today, however, is not quite so much its present as its future status. Only the most frantic Rotarian will deny that the Commonwealth's present position is immeasurably below that of 100 years ago, although it has thus far been able to retain a small share of its former charm and to bring forth a limited number of civilized sons and daughters. But the boom now on threatens to despoil the ancient State of what remains of the glamor that was peculiarly its own. What will Virginia be like in fifty or even ten years? The answer rests with the boosters.

QUAY OF PENNSYLVANIA

BY ISAAC R. PENNYPACKER

IN THE fourth decade of the last century, in a small inland town of Pennsylvania, there lived a minister of the Presbyterian Church who had given up pastoral work because he was threatened with tuberculosis. From this disease he, his wife and all of his children but two subsequently died. The church authorities assigned him to a line of activities which took him out of his study, called for journeying to and fro, and kept him outdoors much of the time. The journeys were not long, and he usually reached home on a Saturday to spend Sunday. One Saturday he had driven to within ten miles of his home, but too late to connect with the family midday meal. Entering a wayside hotel, he found seated at the dinner-table his son, aged ten years, and his daughter, several years younger. At the boy's instigation the two children had tramped the ten miles in order to meet their father, and the boy had ordered for the two a dinner which they were eating with entire self-possession and the hunger of childhood reinforced by their long walk. The boy was Matthew Stanley Quay, described in the memoirs of Thomas E. Platt, of New York, as the ablest politician who ever lived in America.

This exhibition of youthful audacity in one whom James Donald Cameron, railroad president, Grant's Secretary of War and United States Senator, once declared to me to be the most audacious man he had ever known, was repeated more than once in childhood. Seated on her porch on a Summer day Matt's mother was surprised to see entering the gate a large number of girls and boys, the girls in white

dresses with ribbons and the boys with clean faces and collars, wearing their Sunday clothes. Matt had simply decided that it was time for him to have a party. Without consulting his elders he had written invitations to every girl and boy of his acquaintance. Whether he overlooked the matter of refreshments or whether, with his habitual foresight, he counted upon their appearance if he provided the guests for their consumption is not certain. If the latter surmise is correct, no doubt his mother fulfilled his anticipation by sending out hurriedly for ice-cream and cake. On one of his week-end visits the father brought home a Bible and one of those weapons of war from whose lifted hilt the shadow of the cross was said to have been thrown. Being older than his sister, Matt was given the first choice. He chose the Bible—and soon had the sword also.

Quay's public career; the long list of public offices he held, many of which he resigned, including one with a salary of \$50,000; and his numerous political positions of responsibility outside constitutional office, including the management of the campaign which placed Benjamin Harrison in the White House, are known to all persons familiar with our political history. The Blaine campaign of 1884 had been run in a most incompetent way, measured by Pennsylvania standards. There was much talk but not much systematic, thorough-going work. A few hundred votes for Cleveland in New York city gave him his majority over Blaine in the Electoral College. In the successful Harrison campaign which followed, Quay adopted