



John Bartram, date unknown, from an original by fellow American Philosophical Society member, and sometimes naturalist himself, Charles Wilson Peale; to the right an elderly William Bartram in 1808, two decades after his southern excursions; also by Peale.

BARTRAM'S TRAVELS (1791).

"From his [John Bartram's] study we went into the [Bartram] garden, which contained a great variety of curious plants and shrubs; some grew in a greenhouse, over the door of which were written these lines: 'Slave to no sect, who takes no private road, But looks through nature, up to nature's God!'"

~ J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), Letter XI.

One can't begin discussing and understanding the son, William Bartram (1739-1823), until we first take due account of the father. John Bartram (1699-1777), a Philadelphia area Quaker, started out as an ordinary farmer, but, who possessing an avid enthusiasm for studying plants and vegetation, instructed and trained himself into becoming a botanist; in fact America's very first to take it up as a profession. In pursuit of this, he tutored himself in Latin; a knowledge necessary for familiarizing oneself with the nomenclature and classifications of flora and fauna; while acquiring and reading books on his chosen field. In this way, he furnished himself with an education while closely studying and observing plants (and animals also) in the field and on his farm. The latter, located at Kingsessing on the Schuylkill, overtime was expanded to include a commercial nursery and a botanical garden, founded in 1728; which can still be visited today. In addition, he corresponded and traded specimens with the leading botanists of Europe such as Carl Linnaeus and Mark Catesby; and those subsequently transplanted from Europe to America, such as Scotch physician and botanist Alexander Garden, Sr., of Charleston, S.C. physician and botanist.¹ Among his other notable American friends and scientific colleagues were Benjamin Franklin; with whom he founded the American Philosophical Society in 1743. So extraordinary was his meteoric rise to prominence that, as well as having by that time become a respected member of the Royal Society, in 1765 he was appointed Botanist to the King; a post he held until his death in 1777.² As part of his scientific endeavors, he traveled extensively through the northern colonies and Canada, and later, in the wake of Catesby, into South Carolina and East Florida, searching for new plants.

Bartram Sr. was also an associate with fellow Quaker Friend Anthony Benezet, and warmly seconded Benezet's efforts in decrying and calling for an end to slavery. Crèvecoeur, in his *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), Letter XI, recounts a conversation with Bartram (whom he refers to as "Bertram") in which Bartrams expounds at length on his abhorrence of the "peculiar" institution.

¹ Whom he as well visited while collecting plants in South Carolina in 1761. Garden was the father of Alexander Garden (Jr.); who authored *Anecdotes of the Revolutionary War in America* (1822) and *Anecdotes of the American Revolution* (1828); which works (you might recall) we quote from at length in the first of the Continental Army Series articles, "Lee's Legion Remembered."

² His grand-daughter later reported that, distress and fear of Howe and the British invasion of Philadelphia in that year hastened his death.

Although a sincere and expressly devout man of faith, Bartram tended, like one-time Quaker Thomas Paine, toward Deism, and this ultimately resulted in his being excommunicated from the Friends.³ In spite of this, Bartram continued to assiduously attend their meetings.

In 1753, Bartram took his son William along with him on an outing into the Catskills; where William began some of the plant and animal observing and sketching which were to preoccupy his later life. Ironically, and despite own academic inclination and other high-minded endeavors, Bartram Sr. had no wish to encourage William as either a botanist or painter; notwithstanding, both of which William was heavily inspired by his father's work to become. An effort was made initially to find William solid, income providing labor, and, among other tries, Benjamin Franklin offered him a position as a printer's apprentice; but that William declined. In 1765, John, as part of his duties as King's Botanist, was commissioned to explore South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida for new plant species. He took William along with him, and the latter in little time after their arrival became fascinated and infatuated with the region. With a new found desire on William's part to become an indigo farmer and rice planter, in 1766 John purchase for him a 500 acres of a rice farm at Smith Point and Little Florence Cove on the St. Johns River in east Florida. Among those who assisted the Bartram's in this project were Henry Laurens, and who acted as "Billy" (as Laurens called him) Bartram's mentor in the father's absence. After a few months on land that required more labor and investment than Bartram could afford, the scheme was at last jettisoned.

Returning to Philadelphia to a chagrined and disappointed father, William continued studying plants and animals, particularly birds, and drawing and painting them as well; at last becoming an eminent a botanist in his own right, and ornithologist. He gradually achieved some notoriety of his own in these researches and endeavors; such that in 1772 London physician, and also Quaker, John Fothergill consented to become William's patron and sponsored him in another expedition in search of new plants in Florida and the Carolinas. William's trip, and which by the time it was finished took him to north Georgia, east and west Florida,⁴ mid-North and south-South Carolina, southeast Tennessee, southern Alabama and Mississippi, and eastern Louisiana, lasted from 1773-1777; arriving back at Philadelphia in Jan. 1778. Although Fothergill was only interested in securing seeds for new plant species, William went beyond his instructions and took up of much of his energy, in addition, with studying, observing, sketching, and writing about birds, animals, and sometimes geology. Further he spent a good deal of time amidst enjoying and learning about the Native American peoples he encountered along the way; and with whom, as well as writing of, he developed a protective affection. Notwithstanding the onset of the Revolutionary War in the last three years of his trip, Bartram all but barely alludes to it, and would seem to have adopted the stance of a neutral pacifist.

Although not without its botanical finds, the chief achievement of William's far flung southern journeys was his *Travels Through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges, or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Chactaws; Containing An Account of the Soil and Natural Productions of Those Regions, Together with Observations on the Manners of the Indians*; published in 1791, and which became a landmark in both literary and naturalist writing. The impact of the book was phenomenal, and the list of Bartram's readers who were signally influenced by him is little short of amazing. On the literary side, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth had their eyes opened by *Travels*; as testimony to which, Bartram's influence is readily recognizable in, respectively, poems "Kubla Kahn" (1797), and "Ruth, or the Influences of Nature" (1799, vol. II of *Lyrical Ballads*.) Chateaubriand was another who succumbed to Bartram's spell; as seen in his novellas *Atala* (1801) and *René* (1802). Others well known authors that can be added are Gilmore Simms, Emerson, and Thoreau. Scientists and naturalists, and flora and fauna painters who owed a not inconsiderable debt to Bartram's work were Alexander Wilson, Marshall

³ The Philadelphia Quakers would probably have view him as something of a Socinian, and construed his rejection of the Trinity as saying he implied by his views he either didn't trust Christ as THE teacher, and or didn't trust what is reported of Christ or some of what Christ is believed to have said.

⁴ At the time of his travels both east and west Florida were in the hands of the British. Following (and to some degree during) the war, they reverted to the victorious Spanish; who in the early 19th century then soon fell the target to U.S. land grabs, and these incidentally, and ironically, were only spurred, and appetites increased by Bartram's florid and august volume. Of course, by the war of 1812 and continuing into ensuing decades, some of the placid areas which Bartram traversed became scenes of raucous and bloody modern war with the natives.

Humphry, and John James Audubon; the latter, in writings less familiar to us than his paintings, adopting a prose style reminiscent of Bartram. Busy as the times were with nation building, and although *Travels* was repeatedly reprinted overseas, it found scarce interest among ordinary Americans and was not republished in this country till 1928. If then, as Edward J. Cashin argues in his *William Bartram and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier* (2000), Bartram hoped to sway the new United States and its Constitution with a love of God, Nature, and Peace, he was presumably all the more discouraged by the relatively poor reception he received at home for his book.

In *Travels*, Bartram combines the precise scientist with poet, theologian, and travel writer. As with his father, he was a Deist, and manifests a very American fervor for God and Nature; not in essence unlike that seen in William Livingston's poem "Philosophical Solitude" (1747). Yet Bartram's Nature is not that of just the breath taking, sweet and lovely, but includes as well the disturbances, the struggle and violence of species feeding off species; predators and prey. Even so, Bartram himself was extremely gentle and sensitive man; who probably only hunted as much to avoid offending the natives and associate travelers as to procure meals on his journey.

And if God is the Father, is not Earth the Mother? Certainly a case long has been and can be made, and if apt an inference, Bartram, and his father, adored that mother; perhaps more than Christ. But what Mother was that in which was often witnessed bestial life taking? Here, in effect, was what William Blake objected to in his own disdain of natural religion. Environmentalism without morals is no environmentalism, and yet where was modern man to find morals? In sometimes savage Nature, and wish like Wordsworth to re-imbibe a pagan creed? True, the generality of the Indians could live morally; yet only because they were capable of living within the bare necessities and dictates of Nature. Morals for urban and empire building man it seems requires further some honest and rational religion beyond that which Nature speaks. Even so, love, paternal and otherwise, is still found in Nature; and this the naturalist and religionist, both of which Bartram was, can celebrate.

Perhaps the greatest advantage and benefit to be derived from Bartram's work is a view of Nature that few have ever known and been able to share before. His empathy for plants and animals is infectious; through and by means of which he is able to impart their feelings, or what seem to be their feelings, to us -- in effect, hearing, and then sharing, the talk of plants and animals; as closely and accurately as any author ever came to doing so. Indeed for some, *Travels* will have a similar effect as eyes-glasses do on the short-sighted or the visually impaired; only in this case the scene and world opened up to view is a vanished paradise -- of sorts at least (given the above caveats) -- being reawakened to and rediscovered by the reader.

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THE most apparent difference between animals and vegetables are, that animals have the powers of sound, and are locomotive, whereas vegetables are not able to shift themselves from the places where nature has planted them: yet vegetables have the power of moving and exercising their members, and have the means of transplanting or colonising their tribes almost over the surface of the whole earth, some seeds, for instance, grapes, nuts, smilax, peas, and others, whose pulp or kernel is food for animals, such seed will remain several days without injuring in stomachs of pigeons and other birds of passage; by this means such sorts are distributed from place to place, even across seas; indeed some seeds require this preparation, by the digestive heat of the stomach of animals, to dissolve and detach the oily, viscid pulp, and to soften the hard shells of others. Small seeds are sometimes furnished with rays of hair or down, and others with thin light membranes attached to them, which serve the purpose of wings, on which they mount upward, leaving the earth, float in the air, and are carried away by the swift winds to very remote regions before they settle on the earth; some are furnished with hooks, which catch hold of the wool and hair of animals passing by them, are by that means spread abroad; other seeds ripen in pericarps, which open with elastic force, and shoot their seed to a very great distance round about; some other seeds, as of the Mosses and Fungi, are so very minute as to be invisible, light as atoms, and these mixing with the air, are wafted all over the world.

THE animal creation also, excites our admiration, and equally manifests the almighty power, wisdom and beneficence of the Supreme Creator and Sovereign Lord of the universe...<sup>5</sup>

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...If then the visible, the mechanical part of the animal creation, the mere material part is so admirably beautiful, harmonious and incomprehensible, what must be the intellectual system? that inexpressibly more essential principle, which secretly operates within? that which animates the inimitable machines, which gives them motion, impowers them to act speak and perform, this must be divine and immortal?

I AM sensible that the general opinion of philosophers, has distinguished the moral system of the brute creature from that of mankind, by an epithet which implies a mere mechanical impulse, which leads and impels them to necessary action without any premeditated design or contrivance, this we term instinct which faculty we suppose to be inferior to reason in man.

THE parental, and filial affections seem to be as ardent, their sensibility and attachment, as active and faithful, as those observed to be in human nature.

WHEN travelling on the East coast of the isthmus of Florida, ascending the South Musquitoe river, in a canoe, we observed numbers of deer and bears, near the banks, and on the islands of the river, the bear were feeding on the fruit of the dwarf creeping Chamerops, (this fruit is of the form and size of dates, and are delicious and nourishing food:) we saw eleven bears in the course of the day, they seemed no way surprized or affrighted at the sight of us; in the evening my hunter, who was an excellent marksman, said that he would shoot one of them, for the sake of the skin and oil, for we had plenty and variety of provisions in our bark. We accordingly, on sight of two of them, planned our approaches, as artfully as possible, by crossing over to the opposite shore, in order to get under cover of a small island, this we cautiously coasted round, to a point, which we apprehended would take us within shot of the bear, but here finding ourselves at too great a distance from them, and discovering that we must openly show ourselves, we had no other alternative to effect our purpose, but making oblique approaches; we gained gradually on our prey by this artifice, without their noticing us, finding ourselves near enough, the hunter fired, and laid the largest dead on the spot, where she stood, when presently the other, not seeming the least moved, at the report of our piece, approached the dead body, smelled, and pawed it, and appearing in agony, fell to weeping and looking upwards, then towards us, and cried out like a child. whilst our boat approached very near, the hunter was loading his rifle in order to shoot the survivor, which was a young cub, and the slain supposed to be the dam; the continual cries of this afflicted child, bereft of its parent, affected me very sensibly, I was moved with compassion, and charging myself as if accessory to what now appeared to be a cruel murder, and endeavoured to prevail on the hunter to save its life, but to no effect! for by habit he had become insensible to compassion towards the brute creation, being now within a few yards of the harmless devoted victim, he fired, and laid it dead, upon the body of the dam.<sup>6</sup>

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BIRDS are in general social and benevolent creatures; intelligent, ingenious, volatile, active beings; and this order of animal creation consists of various nations, bands or tribes, as may be observed from their different structure, manners and languages or voice, as each nation, though subdivided into many different tribes, retain their general form or structure, a similarity of customs, and a sort of dialect or language, particular to that nation or genus from which they seem to have descended or separated: what I mean by a language in birds, is the common notes or speech, that they use when employed in feeding themselves and their young, calling on one another, as well as their menaces against their enemy; for their songs seem to be musical compositions, performed only by the males, about the time of incubation, in part

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<sup>5</sup> *Travels Through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges, or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Chactaws; Containing An Account of the Soil and Natural Productions of Those Regions, Together with Observations on the Manners of the Indians* (1791), Introduction, pp. xxii-xxiii.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Introduction, pp. xxiv-xxvii.

to divert and amuse the female, entertaining her with melody, &c. this harmony, with the tender solicitude of the male, alleviates the toils, cares and distresses of the female, consoles her in solitary retirement whilst setting, and animate her with affection and attachment to himself in preference to any other...<sup>7</sup>

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THE bald eagle is likewise a large, strong, and very active bird, but an execrable tyrant: he supports his assumed dignity and grandeur by rapine and violence, extorting unreasonable tribute and subsidy from all the feathered nations.<sup>8</sup>

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Can it be denied, but that the moral principle, which directs the savages to virtuous and praiseworthy actions, is natural or innate? It is certain they have not the assistance of letters, or those means of education in the schools of philosophy, where the virtuous sentiments and actions of the most illustrious characters are recorded, and carefully laid before the youth of civilized nations: therefore this moral principle must be innate, or they must be under the immediate influence and guidance of a more divine and powerful preceptor, who, on these occasions, instantly inspires them, and as with a ray of divine light, points out to them at once the dignity, propriety, and beauty of virtue.<sup>9</sup>

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THE river St. Mary has its source from a vast lake, or marsh, called Ouaquaphenogaw, which lies between Flint and Oakmulge rivers, and occupies a space of near three hundred miles in circuit. This vast accumulation of waters, in the wet season, appears as a lake, and contains some large islands or knolls, of rich high land; one of which the present generation of the Creeks represent to be a most blissful spot of the earth: they say it is inhabited by a peculiar race of Indians, whose women are incomparably beautiful; they also tell you, that this terrestrial paradise has been by some of their enterprising hunters, when in pursuit of game, who being lost in inextricable swamps and bogs, and on the point of perishing, were unexpectedly relieved by a company of beautiful women, whom they call daughters of the sun, who kindly gave them such provisions as they had with them, which were chiefly fruit, oranges, dates, &c. and some corn cakes, and then enjoined them to fly for safety to their own country; for that their husbands were fierce men, and cruel to strangers: they further say, that these hunters had a view of their settlements, situated on the elevated banks of an island, or promontory, in a beautiful lake; but that in their endeavours to approach it, they were involved in perpetual labyrinths, and, like enchanted land, still as they imagined they had just gained it, it seemed to fly before them, alternately appearing and disappearing. They resolved, at length, to leave the delusive pursuit, and to return; which, after a number of inexpressible difficulties, they effected. When they reported their adventures to their countrymen, their young warriors were enflamed with an irresistible desire to invade, and make a conquest of, so charming a country; but all their attempts have hitherto proved abortive, never having been able again to find that enchanting spot, nor even any road or pathway to it; yet they say that they frequently meet with certain signs of its being inhabited, as the building of canoes, footsteps of men, &c. They tell another story concerning the inhabitants of this sequestered country, which seems probable enough, which is, that they are the posterity of a fugitive remnant of the ancient Yamases, who escaped massacre after a bloody and decisive conflict between them and the Creek nation (who, it is certain, conquered, and nearly exterminated, that once powerful people) and here found an asylum, remote and secure from the fury of their proud conquerors. It is, however, certain that there is a vast lake, or drowned swamp, well known, and often visited both by white and Indian hunters, and on its environs the most valuable hunting grounds in Florida, well worth contending for, by those powers whose territories border upon it...<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Introduction, pp. xxxi-xxxii.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* Part I, Chap. II, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* Part I, Chap. III, pp. 22-23.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* Part I, Chap. III, pp. 24-26.

BEFORE we left the waters of Broad River, having encamped in the evening, on one of its considerable branches, and left my companions, to retire, as usual, on botanical researches, on ascending a steep rocky hill, I accidentally discovered a new species of Caryophyllata (*Geum odoratissimum*) on reaching to a shrub, my foot slipped, and, in recovering myself, I tore up some of the plants, whose roots filled the air with animating scents of cloves and spicy perfumes.<sup>11</sup>

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HAVING completed my Hortus Siccus, and made up my collections of seeds and growing roots, the fruits of my late western tour, and sent them to Charleston, to be forwarded to Europe, I spent the remaining part of this season in botanical excursions to the low countries, between Carolina and East Florida, and collected seeds, roots, and specimens, making drawings of such curious subjects as could not be preserved in their native state of excellence.

DURING this recess from the high road of my travels, having obtained the use of a neat light cypress canoe, at Broughton Island, a plantation, the property of the Hon. Henry Laurens, Esq. where I stored myself with necessaries, for the voyage, and resolved upon a trip up the Alatomaha.

I ASCENDED this beautiful river, on whose fruitful banks the generous and true sons of liberty securely dwell, fifty miles above the white settlements.

HOW gently flow thy peaceful floods, O Alatomaha! How sublimely rise to view, on thy elevated shores, yon Magnolian groves, from whose tops the surrounding expanse is perfumed, by clouds of incense, blended with the exhaling balm of the Liquid-amber, and odours continually arising from circumambient aromatic groves of *Illicium*, *Myrica*, *Laurus*, and *Bignonia*.¹²

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THE glorious sovereign of day, clothed in light refulgent, rolling on his gilded chariot, speeds to revisit the western realms. Grey pensive eve now admonishes us of gloomy night's hasty approach: I am roused by care to seek a place of secure repose, ere darkness comes on.

DRAWING near the high shores, I ascended the steep banks, where stood a venerable oak. An ancient Indian field, verdured o'er with succulent grass, and chequered with coppices of fragrant shrubs, offers to my view the *Myrica cerifera*, *Magnolia glauca*, *Laurus benzoin*, *Laur*, *Borbonia*, *Rhamnus frangula*, *Prunus Chicasaw*, *Prun. Lauro cerasa*, and others. It was nearly encircled with an open forest of stately pines (*Pinus palustris*) through which appears the extensive savanna, the secure range of the swift roebuck. In front of my landing, and due east, I had a fine prospect of the river and low lands on each side, which gradually widened to the sea coast, and gave me an unconfined prospect, whilst the far distant sea coast islands, like a coronet, limited the hoary horizon.

MY barque being securely moored, and having reconnoitered the surrounding groves, and collected fire-wood, I spread my skins and blanket by my chearful fire, under the protecting shade of the hospitable Live-oak, and reclined my head on my hard but healthy couch. I listened, undisturbed, to the divine hymns of the feathered songsters of the groves, whilst the softly whispering breezes faintly died away.

THE sun now below the western horizon, the moon majestically rising in the east; again the tuneful birds become inspired; how melodious is the social mock-bird! the groves resound the unceasing cries of the whip-poor-will; the moon about an hour above the horizon; lo! a dark eclipse of her glorious brightness comes slowly on; at length, a silver thread alone encircles her temples: at this boding change, an universal silence prevails.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Part I, Chap. IV, p. 43.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Part I, Chap. V, p. 48.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Part I Chap. V, pp. 50-51.

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As I continued coasting the Indian shore of this bay, on doubling a promontory, I suddenly saw before me an Indian settlement, or village. It was a fine situation, the bank rising gradually from the water. There were eight or ten habitations, in a row, or street, fronting the water, and about fifty yards distance from it. Some of the youth were naked, up to their hips in the water, fishing with rods and lines, whilst others, younger, were diverting themselves in shooting frogs with bows and arrows.

On my near approach, the little children took to their heels, and ran to some women, who were hoeing corn; but the stouter youth stood their ground, and, smiling, called to me. As I passed along, I observed some elderly people reclined on skins spread on the ground, under the cool shade of spreading Oaks and Palms, that were ranged in front of their houses; they arose, and eyed me as I passed, but perceiving that I kept on, without stopping, they resumed their former position. They were civil, and appeared happy in their situation.

THERE was a large Orange grove at the upper end of their village; the trees were large, carefully pruned, and the ground under them clean, open, and airy. There seemed to be several hundred acres of cleared land, about the village; a considerable portion of which was planted, chiefly with corn (*Zea*) Batatas, Beans, Pompions, Squash, (*Cucurbita verrucosa*) Melons (*Cucurbita citrullus*) Tobacco (*Nicotiana*) &c. abundantly sufficient for the inhabitants of the village.¹⁴

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AT the approach of day, the dreaded voice of the alligators shook the isle, and resounded along the neighbouring coasts, proclaiming the appearance of the glorious sun. I arose, and prepared to accomplish my daily task. A gentle favourable gale led us out of the harbour: we sailed across the lake, and, towards evening, entered the river, on the opposite South coast, where we made a pleasant and safe harbour, at a shelly promontory, the East cape of the river on that side of the lake. It is a most desirable situation, commanding a full view of the lake. The cape opposite to us was a vast cypress swamp, environed by a border of grassy marshes, which were projected farther into the lake, by floating fields of the bright green *Pistia stratoites*, which rose and fell alternately with the waters. Just to leeward of this point, and about half a mile in the lake, is the little round island already mentioned. But let us take notice of our harbour and its environs: it is a beautiful little cove, just within the sandy point, which defends it from the beating surf of the lake. From a shelly bank, ten or twelve feet perpendicular from the water, we entered a grove of Live Oaks, Palm, Magnolia, and Orange trees, which grow amongst shelly hills, and low ridges, occupying about three acres of ground, comprehending the isthmus, and a part of the peninsula, which joins it to the grassy plains. This enchanting little forest is partly encircled by a deep creek, a branch of the river, that has its source in the high forests of the main, South East from us, and winds through the extensive grassy plains which surround this peninsula, to an almost infinite distance, and then unites its waters with those of the river, in this little bay which formed our harbour. This bay, about the mouth of the creek, is almost covered with the leaves of the *Nymphaea nilumbo*: its large sweet-scented yellow flowers are listed up two or three feet above the surface of the water, each upon a green starol, representing the cap of Liberty.

THE evening drawing on, and there being no convenient landing place, for several miles higher up the river, we concluded to remain here all night. Whilst my fellow travellers were employing themselves in collecting fire-wood, and fixing our camp, I improved the opportunity, in reconnoitering our ground; and taking my fusee with me, I penetrated the grove, and afterwards entered some almost unlimited savannas and plains, which were absolutely enchanting; they had been lately burnt by the Indian hunters, and had just now recovered their vernal verdure and gaiety.

HOW happily situated is this retired spot of earth! What an elisium it is! where the wandering Siminole, the naked red warrior, roams at large, and after the vigorous chase retires from the scorching heat of the meridian sun. Here he reclines, and reposes under the odoriferous shades of *Zanthoxilon*, his verdant

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* Part II, Chap. III, pp. 92-93.

couch guarded by the Deity; Liberty, and the Muses, inspiring him with wisdom and valour, whilst the balmy zephyrs fan him to sleep.<sup>15</sup>

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...Having crossed the river, which is here five or six hundred yards wide, we entered a narrow channel, which after a serpentine course, for some miles, rejoins the main river again, above; forming a large fertile island, of rich low land. We landed on this island, and soon saw a fine roebuck*,¹⁶ a some distance from us, who appeared leader of a company of deer, that were feeding near him, on the verge of a green meadow. My companion parting from me, in pursuit of the deer, one way, and I, observing a flock of turkeys at some distance, on the other, directed my steps towards them, and with great caution, got near them; when singling out a large cock, and being just on the point of firing, I observed that several young cocks were affrighted, and in their language, warned the rest to be on their guard, against an enemy, whom I plainly perceived was industriously making his subtle approaches towards them, behind the fallen trunk of a tree, about twenty yards from me. This cunning fellow hunter, was a large fat wild cat (lynx) he saw me, and at times seemed to watch my motions, as if determined to seize the delicious prey before me. Upon which I changed my object, and levelled my piece at him. At that instant, my companion, at a distance, also discharged his piece at the deer, the report of which alarmed the flock of turkeys, and my fellow hunter, the cat, sprang over the log and trotted off. The trader also missed his deer: thus we foiled each other. By this time it being near night, we returned to camp, where having a delicious meal, ready prepared for our hungry stomachs, we sat down in a circle round our wholesome repast.

How supremely blessed were our hours at this time! plenty of delicious and healthful food, our stomachs keen, with contented minds; under no controul, but what reason and ordinate passions dictated, far removed from the seats of strife.

OUR situation was like that of the primitive state of man, peaceable, contented, and sociable. The simple and necessary calls of nature, being satisfied. We were altogether as brethren of one family, strangers to envy, malice and rapine.¹⁷

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BEHOLD, for instance, a vast circular expanse before you, the waters of which are so extremely clear as to be absolutely diaphanous or transparent as the ether; the margin of the bason ornamented with a great variety of fruitful and floriferous trees, shrub and plants, the pendant golden Orange dancing on the surface of the pellucid waters, the balmy air vibrates the melody of the merry birds, tenants of the encircling aromatic grove.

AT the same instant innumerable bands of fish are seen, some cloathed in the most brilliant colours; the voracious crocodile stretched along at full length, as the great trunk of a tree in size, the devouring garfish, inimical trout, and all the varieties of gilded painted bream, the barbed catfish, dreaded sting-ray, skate and flounder, spotted bass, sheeps head and ominous drum; all in their separate bands and communities, with free and unsuspecting intercourse performing their evolutions: there are no signs of enmity, no attempt to devour each other; the different bands seem peaceably and complaisantly to move a little aside, as it were to make room for others to pass by.

BUT behold yet something far more admirable, see whole armies descending into an abyss, into the mouth of the bubbling fountain, they disappear! are they gone forever? is it real? I raise my eyes with terror and astonishment, -- I look down again to the fountain with anxiety, when behold them as it were emerging from the blue ether of another world, apparently at a vast distance, at their first appearance, no bigger than flies or minnows, now gradually enlarging, their brilliant colours begin to paint the fluid.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* Part II, Chap. IV, pp. 106-107.

<sup>16</sup> [*Footnote in original*] \* *Cervus sylvaticus*. The American deer.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Part II, Chap. IV, pp. 109-111.



Now they come forward rapidly, and instantly emerge, with the elastic expanding column of chrysaline waters, into the circular bason or funnel, see now how gently they rise, some upright, others obliquely, or seem to lay as it were on their sides, suffering themselves to be gently lifted or born up, by the expanding fluid towards the surface, sailing or floating like butterflies in the cerulean ether: then again they as gently descend, diverge and move off; when they rally, form again and rejoin their kindred tribes.

THIS amazing and delightful scene, though real, appears at first but as a piece of excellent painting; there seems no medium, you imagine the picture to be within a few inches of your eyes, and that you may without the least difficulty touch any one of the fish, or put your finger upon the crocodile's eye, when it really is twenty or thirty feet under water.

AND although this paradise of fish, may seem to exhibit a just representation of the peaceable and happy state of nature which existed before the fall, yet in reality it is a mere representation; for the nature of the fish is the same as if they were in lake George or the river; but here the water or element in which they live and move, is so perfectly clear and transparent, it places them all on an equality with regard to their ability to injure or escape from one another; (as all river fish of prey, or such as feed upon each other, as well as the unwieldy crocodile, take their prey by surprise; secreting themselves under covert or in ambush, until an opportunity offers, when they rush suddenly upon them:) but here is no covert, no ambush, here the trout freely passes by the very nose of the alligator and laughs in his face, and the bream by the trout.

BUT what is really surprising, that the consciousness of each others safety or some other latent cause, should so absolutely alter their conduct, for here is not the least attempt made to injure or disturb one another.

THE sun passing below the horizon, and night approaching, I arose from my seat, and proceeding on arrived at my camp, kindled my fire, supped and reposed peaceably. And rising early, employed the fore part of the day in collecting specimens of growing roots and seeds. In the afternoon, left these Ellisian springs and the aromatic graves, and briskly descend the pellucid little river, re-entering the great lake; the wind being gentle and fair for Mount Royal, I hoisted sail and successfully crossing the N. West bay, about nine miles, came to at Rocky Point, the West cape or promontory, as we enter the river descending towards Mount Royal: these are horizontal slabs or flat masses of rocks, rising out of the lake two or three feet above its surface, and seem an aggregate composition or concrete of sand, shells and calcareous cement; of a dark grey or dusky colour; this stone is hard and firm enough for buildings, and serve very well for light hand mill-stones; and when calcined affords a coarse lime; they lay in vast horizontal masses upon one another, from one to two or three feet in thickness, and are easily separated and broke to any size or form, for the purpose of building. Rocky Point is an airy cool and delightful situation, commanding a most ample and pleasing prospect of the lake and its environs; but here being no wood, I re-embarked and sailed down a little farther to the island in the bay, where I went on shore at a magnificent grove of Magnolias and Oranges, desirous of augmenting my collections. Arose early next morning, and after ranging the groves and savannas, returned, embarked again, and descending, called at Mount Royal, where I enlarged my collections; and bidding adieu to the gentleman and lady, who resided here, and who treated me with great hospitality on my ascent up the river; arrived in the evening at the lower trading house.<sup>18</sup>

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THE [Seminole] youth, under the supervisal of some of their ancient people, are daily stationed in their fields, who are continually whooping and hallooing, to chase away crows, jackdaws, black-birds and such predatory animals, and the lads are armed with bows and arrows, who, being trained up to it from their early youth, are sure at a mark, and in the course of the day load themselves with squirrels, birds, &c. The men in turn patrol the Corn fields at night, to protect their provisions from the depredations of night rovers, as bears, raccoons and deer; the two former being immoderately fond of young Corn, when the

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* Part II, Chap. V, pp. 167-169.

grain is filled with a rich milk, as sweet and nourishing as cream, and the deer are as fond of the Potatoe vines.<sup>19</sup>

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THERE is a languishing softness and melancholy air in the Indian convivial songs, especially of the amorous class, irresistibly moving, attractive, and exquisitely pleasing, especially in these solitary recesses when all nature is silent.

BEHOLD how gracious and beneficent smiles the roseate morn! now the sun arises and fills the plains with light, his glories appear on the forests, encompassing the meadows, and gild the top of the terebinthine Pine and exalted Palms, now gently rustling by the pressure of the waking breezes: the music of the seraphic crane resounds in the skies, in separate squadrons they sail, encircling their precincts, slowly descend beating the dense air, and alight on the green dewy verge of the expansive lake; its surface yet smoaking with the grey ascending mists, which, condensed aloft in clouds of vapour, are born away by the morning breezes and at last gradually vanish on the distant horizon. All nature awakes to life and activity.²⁰

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AUGUSTA thus seated at the head of navigation, and just below the conflux of several of its most considerable branches, without a competitor, commands the trade and commerce of vast fruitful regions above it, and from every side to a great distance; and I do not hesitate to pronounce as my opinion, will very soon become the metropolis of Georgia.

I CHOSE to take this route up Savanna river, in preference to the strait and shorter road from Charleston to the Cherokee country by fort Ninety Six, because by keeping near this great river, I had frequent opportunities of visiting its steep banks, vast swamps and low grounds, and had the advantage without great delay, or deviating from the main high road, of observing the various soils and situations of the countries through which this famous river pursues its course, and of examining the various productions, mineral, vegetable and animal; whereas had I pursued the great trading path by Ninety-Six, should have been led over a high, dry, sandy and gravelly ridge, and a great part of the distance an old settled or resorted part of the country, and consequently void of the varieties of original or novel productions of nature.

BEFORE I leave Augusta, I shall recite a curious phenomenon, which may furnish ample matter for philosophical discussion to the curious naturalists. On the Georgia side of the river, about fifteen miles below Silver Bluff, the high road crosses a ridge of high swelling hills of uncommon elevation, and perhaps seventy feet higher than the surface of the river; these hills are from three feet below the common vegetative surface, to the depth of twenty or thirty feet, composed entirely of fossil oyster shells, internally of the colour and consistency of clear white marble; they are of an incredible magnitude, generally fifteen or twenty inches in length, from six to eight wide and two to four in thickness, and their hollows sufficient to receive an ordinary man's foot; they appear all to have been opened before the period of petrefaction, a transmutation they seem evidently to have suffered; they are undoubtedly very ancient or perhaps antideluvian. The adjacent inhabitants burn them to lime for building, for which purpose they serve very well; and would undoubtedly afford an excellent manure when their lands require it, these hills being now remarkably fertile. The heaps of shells lie upon a stratum of yellowish sandy mould, of several feet in depth, upon a foundation of soft white rocks that has the outward appearance of free-stone, but on strict examination is really a testaceous concrete or composition of sand and pulverised sea shell; in short, this testaceous rock approaches near in quality and appearance to the Bahama or Bermudian white rock.<sup>21</sup>

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¹⁹ *Ibid.* Part II, Chap. VI, p. 194.

²⁰ *Ibid.* Part II, Chap. VII, p. 245.

²¹ *Ibid.* Part III, Chap. I p. 317-318.

THE evening still and calm, all silent and peaceable, a vivifying gentle breeze continually wafted from the fragrant strawberry fields, and aromatic Calycanthean groves on the surrounding heights, the wary moor fowl thundering in the distant echoing hills, how the groves and hills ring with the shrill perpetual voice of the whip-poor-will!

ABANDONED as my situation now was, yet thank heaven many objects met together at this time, and conspired to conciliate, and in some degree compose my mind, heretofore somewhat dejected and unharmonized: all alone in a wild Indian country, a thousand miles from my native land, and a vast distance from any settlements of white people. It is true, here were some of my own colour, yet they were strangers, and though friendly and hospitable, their manners and customs of living so different from what I had been accustomed to, administered but little to my consolation: some hundred miles yet to travel, the savage vindictive inhabitants lately ill-treated by the frontier Virginians, blood being spilt between them and the injury not yet wiped away by formal treaty; the Cherokees extremely jealous of white people travelling about their mountains, especially if they should be seen peeping in amongst the rocks or digging up their earth.²²

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NEXT morning after breakfasting on excellent coffee, relished with bucanned venison, hot corn cakes, excellent butter and cheese, sat forwards again for Cowe, which was about fifteen miles distance, keeping the trading path which coursed through the low lands between the hills and the river, now spacious and well beaten by travellers, but somewhat intricate to a stranger, from the frequent colateral roads falling into it from villages or towns over the hills: after riding about four miles, mostly through fields and plantations, the soil incredibly fertile, arrived at the town of Echoe, consisting of many good houses, well inhabited; I passed through and continued three miles farther to Nucasse, and three miles more brought me to Whatoga: riding through this large town, the road carried me winding about through their little plantations of Corn, Beans, &c. up to the council-house, which was a very large dome or rotunda, situated on the top of an ancient artificial mount, and here my road terminated; all before me and on every side appeared little plantations of young Corn, Beans, &c. divided from each other by narrow strips or borders of grass, which marked the bounds of each one's property, their habitation standing in the midst: finding no common high road to lead me through the town, I was now at a stand how to proceed farther, when observing an Indian man at the door of his habitation, three or four hundred yards distance from me, beckoning to come to him, I ventured to ride through their lots, being careful to do no injury to the young plants, the rising hopes of their labour and industry, crossed a little grassy vale watered by a silver stream, which gently undulated through, then ascended a green hill to the house, (where I was cheerfully welcomed at the door and led in the chief, giving the care of my horse to two handsome youths, his sons. During my continuance here, about half an hour, I experienced the most perfect and agreeable hospitality conferred on me by these happy people; I mean happy in their dispositions, in their apprehensions of rectitude with regard to our social or moral conduct: O divine simplicity and truth, friendship without fallacy or guile, hospitality disinterested, native, undefiled, unmodified by artificial refinements.

MY venerable host gracefully and with an air of respect, led me into an airy, cool apartment, where being seated on cabins, his women brought in a refreshing repast, consisting of sodden venison, hot corn cakes, &c. with a pleasant cooling liquor made of hommony well boiled, mixed afterwards with milk; this is served up either before or after eating in a large bowl, with a very large spoon or ladle to sup it with.

AFTER partaking of this simple but healthy and liberal collation and the dishes cleared off, Tobacco and pipes were brought, and the chief filling one of them, whose stem, about four feet long, was sheathed in a beautiful speckled snake skin, and adorned with feathers and strings of wampum, lights it and smoaks a few whiffs, puffing the smoak first towards the sun, then to the four cardinal points and lastly over my breast, hands it towards me, which I cheerfully received from him and smoaked, when we fell into conversation; he first enquired if I came from Charleston? if I Knew John Stewart,<sup>23</sup> Esq.? how long since I left Charleston? &c. Having satisfied him in my answers in the best manner I could, he was greatly pleased,

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* Part III, Chap. II, p. 331.

<sup>23</sup> British commissioner to Indians of the American southeast before the Revolution.

which I was convinced of by his attention to me, his cheerful manners and his ordering my horse a plentiful bait of corn, which last instance of respect is conferred on those only to whom they manifest the highest esteem, saying that corn was given by the Great Spirit only for food to man.<sup>24</sup>

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THE Cherokees construct their habitations on a different plan from the Creeks, that is but one oblong four square building, of one story high; the materials consisting of logs or trunks of trees, stripped of their bark, notched at their ends, fixed one upon another, and afterwards plaistered well, both inside and out, with clay well tempered with dry grass, and the whole covered or roofed with the bark of the Chesnut tree or long broad shingles. This building is however partitioned transversely, forming three apartments, which communicate with each other by inside doors; each house or habitation has besides a little conical house, covered with dirt, which is called the winter or hot-house; this stands a few yards distance from the mansion-house, opposite the front door.

THE council or town-house is a large rotunda, capable of accomodating several hundred people; it stands on the top of an ancient artificial mount of earth, of about twenty feet perpendicular, and the rotunda on the top of it being above thirty feet more, gives the whole fabric an elevation of about sixty feet from the common surface of the ground. But it may be proper to observe, that this mount on which the rotunda stands, is of a much ancients date than the building, and perhaps was raised for another purpose. The Cherokees themselves are as ignorant as we are, by what people or for what purpose these artificial hills were raised; they have various stories concerning them, the best of which amounts to no more than mere conjecture, and leave us entirely in the dark; but they have a tradition common with the other nations of Indians, that they found them in much the same condition as they now appear, when their forefathers arrived from the West and possessed themselves of the country, after vanquishing the nations of red men who then inhabited it, who themselves found these mounts when they took possession of the country, the former possessors delivering the same story concerning them: perhaps they were designed and appropriated by the people who constructed them, to some religious purpose, as great altars and temples similar to the high places and sacred groves anciently amongst the Canaanites and other nations of Palestine and Judea.

THE rotunda is constructed after the following manner, they first fix in the ground a circular range of posts or trunks of trees, about six feet high, at equal distances, which are notched at top, to receive into them, from one to another, a range of beams or wall plates; within this is another circular order of very large and strong pillars, above twelve feet high, notched in like manner at top, to receive another range of wall plates, and within this is yet another or third range of stronger and higher pillars, but fewer in number, and standing at a greater distance from each other; and lastly, in the centre stands a very strong pillar, which forms the pinnacle of the building, and to which the rafters centre at top; these rafters are strengthened and bound together by cross beams and laths, which sustain the roof or covering, which is a layer of bark neatly placed, and tight enough to exclude the rain, and sometimes they cast a thin superficies of earth over all. There is but one large door, which serves at the same time to admit light from without and the smoak to escape when a fire is kindled; but as there is but a small fire kept, sufficient to give light at night, and that fed with dry small sound wood divested of its bark, there is but little smoak; all around the inside of the building, betwixt the second range of pillars and the wall, is a range of cabins or sophas, consisting of two or three steps, one above or behind the other, in theatrical order, where the assembly sit or lean down; these sophas are covered with matts or carpets, very curiously made of thin splints of Ash or Oak, woven or platted together; near the great pillar in the centre the fire is kindled for light, near which the musicians seat themselves, and round about this the performers exhibit their dances and other shews at public festivals, which happen almost every night throughout the year.

ABOUT the close of the evening I accompanied Mr. Galahan and other white traders to the rotunda, where was a grand festival, music and dancing. This assembly was held principally to rehearse the ball-play dance, this town being challenged to play against another the next day.

²⁴ *Ibid.* Part III, Chap. III, pp. 349-351.

THE people being assembled and seated in order, and the musicians having taken their station, the ball opens, first with a long harangue or oration, spoken by an aged chief, in commendation of the manly exercise of the ball-play, recounting the many and brilliant victories which the town of Cowe had gained over the other towns in the nation, not forgetting or neglecting to recite his own exploits, together with those of other aged men now present, coadjutors in the performance of these athletic games in their youthful days.

THIS oration was delivered with great spirit and eloquence, and was meant to influence the passions of the young men present, excite them to emulation and inspire them with ambition.

THIS prologue being at an end, the musicians began, both vocal and instrumental, when presently a company of girls, hand in hand, dressed in clean white robes and ornamented with beads, bracelets and a profusion of gay ribbands, entering the door, immediately began to sing their responses in a gentle, low and sweet voice, and formed themselves in a semicircular file or line, in two ranks, back to back, facing the spectators and musicians, moving slowly round and round; this continued about a quarter of an hour, when we were surprised by a sudden very loud and shrill whoop, uttered at once by a company of young fellows, who came in briskly after one another, with rackets or hurls in one hand. These champions likewise were well dressed, painted and ornamented with silver bracelets, gorgets and wampum, neatly ornamented with moccasins and high waving plumes in their diadems, who immediately formed themselves in a semicircular rank also, in front of the girls, when these changed their order, and formed a single rank parallel to the men, raising their voices in responses to the tunes of the young champions, the semicircles continually moving round. There was something singular and diverting in their step and motions, and I imagine not to be learned to exactness but with great attention and perseverance; the step, if it can be so termed, was performed after the following manner, i. e. first, the motion began at one end of the semicircle, gently rising up and down upon their toes and heels alternately, when the first was up on tip-toe, the next began to raise the heel, and by the time the first rested again on the heel, the second was on tip toe, thus from one end of the rank to the other, so that some were always up and some down, alternately and regularly, without the least baulk or confusion; and they at the same time, and in the same motion, moved on obliquely or sideways, so that the circle performed a double or complex motion in its progression, and at stated times exhibited a grand or universal movement, instantly and unexpectedly to the spectators, by each rank turning to right and left, taking each others places; the movements were managed with inconceivable alertness and address, and accompanied with an instantaneous and universal elevation of the voice and shrill short whoop.²⁵

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THE young mustee, who came with me to the Mucclases from Mobile, having Chactaw blood in his veins from his mother, was a sensible young fellow, and by his father had been instructed in reading, writing and arithmetic, and could speak English very well. He took it into his head, to travel into the Chactaw country: his views were magnanimous, and his designs in the highest degree commendable, nothing less than to inform himself of every species of arts and sciences, that might be of use and advantage, when introduced into his own country, but more particularly music and poetry: with these views he privately left the Nation, went to Mobile, and there entered into the service of the trading company to the Chactaws, as a white man; his easy, communicative, active and familiar disposition and manners, being agreeable to that people, procured him access every where, and favored his subtilty and artifice: at length, however, the Chactaws hearing of his lineage and consanguinity with the Creeks, by the father's side, pronounced him a Creek, and consequently an enemy and a spy amongst them, and secretly resolved to dispatch him. The young philosopher got notice of their suspicions, and hostile intentions, in time to make his escape, though closely pursued, he however kept a head of his sanguinary pursuers, arrived at Mobile, and threw himself under the protection of the English, entered the service of the trader of Mucclasse, who was then setting off for the Nation, and notwithstanding the speed with which we travelled, narrowly escaped the ardor and vigilance of his pursuing enemies, who surprised a company of emigrants, in the desarts of Schambe, the very night after we met them, expecting to intercept him thereabout.

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* Part III, Chap. IV, pp. 367-371.

THE young traveller, having learned all their most celebrated new songs and poetry, at a great dance and festival in the Mucclasse, a day or two after our arrival; the youth pressed him, to give out some of his new songs, he complied with their entreaties, and the songs and dance went round with harmony and eclat; their being a young Chactaw slave girl in the circle, who soon after, discovered very affecting sensations of affliction and distress of mind, and before the conclusion of the dance, many of her companions complimented her with sympathetic sighs and tears, from their own sparkling eyes. As soon as I had an opportunity, I enquired of the young Orpheus, the cause of that song being so distressing to the young slave. He replied, that when she was lately taken captive, her father and brothers were slain in the contest, and she understanding the sense of the song, called to remembrance the tragical state of her family, and could not forbear weeping at the recital.

The meaning of the chorus was,

All men must surely die,  
Tho' no one knows how soon,  
Yet when the time shall come,  
The event may be joyful.

THESE doleful moral songs or elegies, have a quick and sensible effect on their passions, and discover a lively affection and sensibility; their countenance now dejected, or again, by an easy transition, becomes gently elevated, as if in solemn address or supplication, accompanied with a tremulous, sweet, lamentable voice; a stranger is for a moment lost to himself as it were, or his mind, associated with the person immediately affected, is in danger of revealing his own distress unawares.

THEY have a variety of games for exercise and pastime; some particular to the men, some to the female sex, and others wherein both sexes are engaged.

THE ball play is esteemed the most noble and manly exercise; this game is exhibited in an extensive level plain, usually contiguous to the town: the inhabitants of one town play against another, in consequence of a challenge, when the youth of both sexes are often engaged, and sometimes stake their whole substance. Here they perform amazing feats of strength and agility; the game principally consists in taking and carrying off the ball from the opposite party, after being hurled into the air, midway between two high pillars, which are the goals, and the party who bears off the ball to their pillar wins the game; each person having a racquet or hurl, which is an implement of a very curious construction, somewhat resembling a ladle or little hoop-net, with a handle near three feet in length, the hoop and handle of wood, and the net[t]ing of thongs of raw hide, or tendons of an animal.

THE foot-ball is likewise a favorite, manly diversion with them. Feasting and dancing in the square, at evening ends all their games...<sup>26</sup>

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*William Thomas Sherman*  
1604 NW 70th St.  
Seattle, Washington 98117  
206-784-1132

[wts@gunjones.com](mailto:wts@gunjones.com)

<http://www.gunjones.com> and [http://www.scribd.com/wsherman\\_1](http://www.scribd.com/wsherman_1)

*For Lee's Legion on Face Book:*

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* Part IV, Chap. III, pp. 506-509.

