

Chapter 1

A Long Way From Home

It was the day after Christmas in the year 1846. Near sundown, two young officers of the army of the United States sat upon one of the benches on the promenade of the great reservoir which supplies the city of Rio de Janeiro with water.

Both were lieutenants,—one of engineers, the other of artillery. Anyone half-acquainted with the United States would have recognized them as West Pointers; and their presence in this far-away spot was easily accounted for by a glance downward from the coign of vantage where they sat, at a fleet of United States men-of-war and troop ships riding at anchor in the bay.

Nowhere in all the world is there a scene more beautiful than that spread out before them. Below, falling away down the mountain side to the silver sands of the bay, were the palms and gardens, and orange and olive groves, surrounding the residence of the Cateti suburb. To seaward, the southern boundary of the mile-wide entrance to the bay, loomed the bald, brown peak of the Sugar Loaf Mountain, with the beautiful suburb of Botafogo nestling near its base. Huge mountains, their dense foliage lit by the sinking sun, ran down to the water's edge upon the opposite or northern shore. Far beneath them was the Gloria landing for naval vessels. To westward, sweeping out into the bay with bold and graceful curves, and spread beneath them like a map, was the peninsula upon which the city of Rio is built, and beyond this, gleaming in the evening sunlight, and studded with islands of intense verdure, extended the upper bay until it was lost in the distance, where, on the horizon, the blue peaks of the Organ range closed in the lovely picture.

The ships bearing the commands to which the young gentlemen were attached were bound to California around Cape Horn. The troops were to take part in the war then flagrant between the United States and Mexico. A short stop had been made at Rio for water and other provisions and these two youngsters were among the first to apply for and obtain shore leave.

The dusty appearance of their dress, and other evidence of fatigue, showed that they had not failed to sustain the reputation of their countrymen as investigators of everything new and strange. In fact, they had, in the morning exhausted the sights to be seen in the city. After amusing themselves in the shops of the Rua Direita, and replenishing their stock of Spanish books in the Rua do Ovidor and wandering through several churches and residence streets, they had become very much interested in the remarkable aqueduct which supplies the city of Rio with water.

Our young soldiers, in their engineering zeal, had followed the aqueduct back to its source of supply; and now, bound for the Gloria landing, were resting, deeply impressed by the great work, and by the genius and skill of its builders. But both the youths, recalling the fact that it was the Christmas season, felt, in spite of all the tropical novelty and strange beauty surrounding them as evening closed in, a yearning for an American home and voice and face; and their conversation naturally enough fell into conjecturing how the Christmas was being spent by their own loved ones in the United States, or in bemoaning the good things they were missing.

While thus engaged, they saw two men approaching. One was in civilian dress; the other wore the uniform of assistant surgeon in the United States navy. The newcomers were engaged in animated conversation; and, although the civilian was a man of forty, while his companion was a youngster of twenty-five, there was little if any difference in the alertness of their steps.

The faces of the young officers lit up with pleasure as, upon the near approach of the two pedestrians, they caught the sound of genuine United States English. They had observed the American flag floating from a residence in the Cateti, and had no doubt that the persons who were now passing were in some way connected with the legation. Accordingly, with that freedom which fellow countrymen feel in addressing each other in foreign lands, the West Pointers arose at the approach of the two gentlemen, and, catching the eye of the elder of the two, advanced, announced their rank and service, and made some inquiry as a groundwork of further conversation. They were not mistaken in their surmises. The gentleman addressed was the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Empire of Brazil from the Republic of the United States. A title like that was well calculated to paralyze the familiarity of two young military men; and when they realized that, unannounced and covered with dust, they had of their own motion

ventured into conversation with the bearer of such an august title, their first impulse was to apologize for their temerity and to withdraw. Even from an officer of no higher grade than captain in their own service, they were accustomed to a greeting strictly formal, usually accompanied by the inquiry, "Well, sir? state your business;" and, having done so, they were generally glad enough to salute and withdraw. Here they were, without any business, standing in the presence of a high official, with nothing more to say, and with no excuse to give for what they had said. But before their embarrassment could grow more annoying, the minister put them completely at their ease. "Well met!" he exclaimed; "we are just returning homeward from the city. Come! The more the merrier: you shall dine with me. I still have some Christmas turkey and plum pudding, and we will drink the health of the good angel who sent my countrymen to me at this blessed season."

During the course of their walk to the American legation, the young fellows had opportunity to observe their newly found host more carefully. To them he was a revelation. His name and position in politics were not unknown to them; for although still young, he had for many years been a conspicuous figure in national politics in the United States. The echoes of his eloquence, as well as accounts of his game-cook courage, had penetrated even into the isolated world of the Academy at West Point. In fact, he had been absent from the United States but two or three years upon this mission, which had been accepted partly on account of failing health, and partly from a desire to strike a blow at the infamous African slave-trade. He had accomplished much towards breaking up the slave-trade, and derived great benefit to his health.

Brilliant at all times in conversation, he was, on this occasion, unusually interesting. The sight of his country's ships in the harbor, and the news of the struggle with Mexico, so excited and elated him that he was seen at his best by his visitors. The two boys studied him as if he had been some great actor. Tall and thin, he was nevertheless exceedingly active and muscular. His dress consisted of simple black, with spotless linen. He wore the open standing collar and white scarf affected by the gentlemen of that period. The only ornament upon his person was a large opal pin confining the neckerchief. His head gear, suited to the climate, was one of those exquisitely wrought white Panama hats which is the envy of men living beyond the tropics. Beneath this was a head exquisitely moulded, with a noble brow, and large hazel eyes, the ever-changing expression of which, coupled with a full, rich voice, charmed

and fascinated his guests. His silken blond hair was thrown back and worn long, as was the custom of the day. A nose too handsome to be called Roman, yet too strong to be designated as Grecian; a mouth wide and mobile, filled with even, white teeth; and a strong chin with a decided dimple, — completed the remarkable face which turned in ever-changing expression, from time to time, towards its companions, as they strode homeward in the twilight.

Such was the American minister; and, according to the mood in which one found him, he impressed the stranger as the gentlest, the tenderest, the most loving, the most eloquent, the most earnest, the most fearless, the most impassioned, or the fiercest man he had ever met. Nobody who saw him ever forgot him.

They reached the legation just as it was growing dark, and as the full-orbed moon was rising from the distant sea. Seeking the veranda, and seating his guests in the wicker easy-chairs with which it was well supplied, the minister excused himself, and left them for a few minutes to their own observations and reflections.

As the soft sea-breeze came up to them, laden with garden perfumes; as they watched the golden highway the moon's reflection on the sea; as they saw the twinkling lights of the ships in the deep shadows of the bay below them, — they felt as if they had indeed discovered an earthly paradise; and when a fair blond girl in filmy apparel glided through the drawing-room and joined them speaking pure English, it seemed as if their paradise was being peopled by angels. Everybody here spoke in English. Everything spoke of home. The pictures on the walls, the books on the tables, yes, the dishes at table were all American.

The visitors were conducted to their apartments to make necessary preparations for dinner. Soon after their return to the drawing-room, the minister reappeared with a look somewhat troubled, as he apologized for his long absence and the non-appearance of the lady of the house.

A moment later the folding-doors rolled back, and the English butler announced that dinner was served. Oh, what a contrast with the ward-room of the man-of-war in which our two lieutenants had been dining for a month or more!

Dinner over, the company once more sought the cool veranda, where coffee and cigars were served. There they were joined by Baron Lomonizoff, the Russian minister who had called to be informed of all the recent developments in the controversy with Mexico, and who

spoke English perfectly. Later, just as the baron was bidding adieu, in fact, at what seemed to our young friends to be a very late hour for visiting, the oddest imaginable specimen of Brazilian humanity was introduced as Dr. Ildefonso.

His efforts at English were startling. They nearly convulsed our two young friends, and reconciled them to their own failures at Portuguese.

As the little doctor showed no signs of leaving, and as, by one or two indications, the young visitors began to suspect it was time for them to go, they reluctantly took their departure, thanking their host a thousand times for the pleasure he had given them, and chatting joyously, on the route to the ship, about the good fortune which had given them such a Merry Christmas.

The little Brazilian doctor and the surgeon in the navy had remained because there was work on hand for them. I entered my name on the docket of humanity that night; and as the lawyers say, my cause was continued until the further order of the court.

How do I know it? I will tell you.

Forty-five years later, at a great banquet in New York, I was sitting beside an aged, grizzled general of the armies of the Union.

Said the old general cheerily, "Did I ever tell you of my visit to your father in Rio?" Receiving a negative response, he proceeded in his inimitable way to recount every incident above set forth, omitting the hour of his own departure from the legation. The memory of the struggles of the little Brazilian doctor with the English language still amused him immensely. He was recalling some absurd mistake of Dr. Ildefonso, when I looked up, and, with a merry twinkle in my eye, said, "General, at what hour did you leave the Cateti that night?" "Oh, I should say about eleven or twelve o'clock," said the general. "Well, now, do you know, my dear general, I deeply regret you left so early. I arrived myself that night about two hours after your departure, and would have been so delighted to meet you under my father's roof." This sally was met by a hearty laugh from the listening company, and was followed by a glass of wine to the memory of those olden days, since when so many things have happened.

The young lieutenant of artillery, and the old general above described, was no other than William Tecumseh Sherman, commander of the armies of the Union. His companion was the officer who afterwards became famous as General Halleck. Neither of them ever met again their host of that evening.

In later years, he also became a distinguished general but on the Confederate side. He never knew that Sherman and Halleck, the great Union generals, were the young officers he entertained at Rio the night I was born; for he died many years before the general revealed his identity as above related.

Forty years after this meeting, when I was in Congress, I received a letter from a dear old retired chaplain of the navy living in Boston, Rev. Mr. Lambert, asking assistance in some public matter, and concluding with the remark that this demand of a stranger sprung from the fact that the writer had held me in his arms and baptized me at the American legation in Rio, April 14, 1847.

In the spring of 1847, my father asked the President for a recall; and, his petition being granted, the United States frigate Columbia was placed at his disposal for the return to America.

I was a tried seaman when, for the first time, I set foot upon the soil of my country, and took up my residence where my people had lived for over two hundred years. I was not born on the soil of the United States, but nevertheless in the United States; for the place where I was born was the home of a United States minister, and under the protection of the United States flag, and was in law as much the soil of the United States as any within its boundaries. Descended from a number of people who helped to form the Union, born under the glorious stars and stripes, rocked in the cradle of an American man-of-war, and taught to love the Union next to my Maker, little did I dream of the things, utterly inconsistent with such ideas, which were to happen to me and mine within the first eighteen years of my existence.

Chapter 2

The Kingdom of Accawmacke

Our voyage terminated in the kingdom of Accawmacke, the abiding-place of my ancestors for two and half centuries. Although within eight hours of New York and six hours from Philadelphia by rail, the region and its people are as unlike those of these crowded centres of humanity as if they were a thousand miles away.

John Smith tells us, in his memorable narrative of earliest American explorations, that when Captain Nelson sailed in June, 1607, for England, in the good ship Phoenix, he, John, in his own barge, accompanied him to the Virginia capes; and there, after delivering his writings for the company, he parted with him near the southernmost cape, which he named Cape Henry. Sailing northward, Captain Smith first visited the seaward island, which he named Smith's Island, after himself. It is still called Smith's Island, and is owned by the Lee family. Then he returned to the northernmost cape, at the entrance to the Chesapeake Bay, and named it Cape Charles, in honor of the unfortunate prince afterwards known as Charles I. Upon the point of this cape Smith encountered an Indian chief, whom he describes as "the most comely, proper, civil salvage" he had yet met. The name of this chief was Kictopeke. He was called "The Laughing King of Accomack," and Accomack means, in the Indian tongue, "The Land Beyond the Water." He bore in his hand a long spear or harpoon, with a sharpened fish-bone or shell upon its point; and he it was who taught John Smith and his companions to spear the sheepshead and other fish in the shallow waters hard by. John Smith and The Laughing King have been buried for well-nigh three centuries, but the people about Cape Charles still spear sheepshead on the shoals in the same old way.

Smith and his companions cruised along the western shore of this Peninsula of Accawmacke, which is the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay, until they reached what is now called Pocomoke River, the present boundary between Virginia and Maryland. The distance is probably eighty miles. The reason assigned for the long cruise was that they were

searching for fresh water. To those who know the abundant springs of the Peninsula, this statement is surprising. Overtaken in the neighborhood of Pocomoke by one of those summer thunderstorms which are so prevalent in that region, they were driven across the bay to the western shore, and thence they cruised down the Chesapeake until they turned into what is now called Hampton Roads. Passing the low sandspit where the ramparts of Fortress Monroe now frown and the gay summer resorts are built, they stopped at the Indian village Kickotan, located upon the present site of Hampton. Obtaining there a good supply of food from the Indians, they returned to the Jamestown settlement, about forty miles up the river, then called Powhatan, now known as the James. In this as in all things, the Englishman appropriated what belonged to the Indian, and King James supplanted King Powhatan.

It was on this return voyage that Smith, while practicing the art acquired from the King of Accawmacke, impaled a fish upon his sword, in the shallow waters about the mouth of the Rappahannock River. Unaware of the dangerous character of his captive, he received in his wrist a very painful wound from the spike-like fin upon the tail of the fish. This wound caused such soreness and such swelling that he thought he was like to die, and his whole party went ashore and laid Smith under a tree, where he made his will. "But," says he, "by night time the swelling and soreness had so abated that I had the pleasure of eating that fish for supper." The next morning the journey was resumed, and the place, in remembrance of the incident, was named Stingaree Point. To this day, that point at the mouth of the Rappahannock is called Stingaree Point; and that fish is still called Stingaree by the people along the Chesapeake Bay.

After this famous cruise, John Smith, who was as active and restless as a box of monkeys, made his map of Virginia, which is still extant, — and a pretty good map it is, showing his capes and his islands, and his points and his rivers, and what not, — in which map the Kingdom of Accawmacke bears a most conspicuous part.

On that historic document, old John at certain point printed little pictures of deer, to show where they most abounded; and at other points he designated where the wild turkeys were most plentiful. The author of this humble narrative has, in his day, hunted every variety of game which abounds at the present time in Old Virginia; and just where the deer and turkeys were most abundant in 1608, according to John Smith's map, there are the most abundant now. In the counties of Surry

and Sussex, upon the south side of the James, run, doubtless, the descendants of those very deer whose pictures adorn the map of John Smith, published three centuries ago; and within the past twelve months the writer has followed the great-great-great-grandchildren of the identical turkeys, no doubt, from whose flocks were captured, in 1616, the twenty birds sent by King Powhatan to his brother the King of England.

But to return to our Kingdom of Accawmacke.

After the Jamestown colonists had tired of poor old John Smith, after he had blown himself up with his own powder while smoking in his boat, upon one of his return trips to Jamestown from the present site of Richmond; after he had returned to England, broken in health and spirits,—the colonists who remained found, among their other miseries and tribulations, that they were sadly in need of salt.

Bearing in mind stories brought back from the coast by Smith, Sir Thomas Dale, governor, in the year 1612 detailed a party from the Jamestown settlement to go to the Kingdom of Accawmacke and boil salt for the settlers at Jamestown.

We may well imagine that such a task was far from grateful to those to whom it was allotted. It was looked forward to by them, no doubt, as the equivalent of solitary confinement in a dangerous locality. At Jamestown the settlers were located upon an island. This fact and their numbers gave them comparative security from the savages. In Accawmacke the party assigned to salt-boiling was placed upon the same land as the Indians; and its numbers were so small, and the position so isolated from the chief settlement by the Chesapeake Bay between them, that their situation would have been most perilous in case of attack. It was therefore, doubtless, in the spirit of satire that the party named the place at which they first located upon the eastern shore, Dale's Gift.

Thus came about the first settlement of the white man upon the eastern shore peninsula of Virginia; and, recognizing its separation from the other settlements, the kings of England for many years addressed all their decrees to the Virginia colonists to their "faithful subjects in ye Colonie of Virginia and ye Kingdom of Accawmacke"

Like many another venture undertaken reluctantly in ignorance, this settlement upon the eastern shore proved to be anything but an irksome and dangers transfer. The party at Dale's Gift found the Accawmacke Indians totally unlike the warlike and treacherous tribes across the bay; and from that time forth there never was, not even at the

time of the general outbreak of the savages in 1629, any serious trouble between the whites and the Indians of the eastern shore. The climate also was much more salubrious than that of the swamp region where the brackish waters at Jamestown bred malaria. As for sustenance, they found the place an earthly paradise. In the light and sandy soil corn, vegetables, and many varieties of fruit grew with little care of cultivation and in great abundance. Fish and shell-fish of every kind abounded in the ocean, bay, and inlets. Wild fowls of many sorts, from the lordly wild goose to the tiny teal, swarmed in the marshes and along the coast. Game in great abundance, furred and feathered, could be had for the shooting of it upon the land; the fig and the pomegranate grew in the open air. And the influence the Gulf Stream, which in passing these capes approaches to within thirty miles of the coast and then turns abruptly eastward, made, as it still makes, residence upon the eastern shore of Virginia most charming and delightful. The eastern shore men were the epicures of the colony. A hundred years before New York knew the terrapin, it was the daily food in Accawmacke.

We may be sure that the less fortunate settlers at Jamestown, Smithfield, Henricopolis, Flower de Hundred and the Falls of the James were not long in finding out the delights of this, at first, despised settlement in Accawmacke. History tells us that when, twenty years later, the colony of Virginia was divided into eight colonies, "to be governed as are the shires in England," the Accawmacke settlement was of sufficient importance to constitute of itself one of these eight counties; and in 1643, when the whole colony had a population of but fifteen thousand, one thousand of these were upon the eastern shore. When Captain Edmund Scarburgh, presiding justice, opened the first County Court of Accawmacke at Eastville, the county seat, in the autumn of 1634, The Laughing King of Accawmacke had no doubt ceased to laugh; for he, like many another savage chief before and after him, had by this time felt the fangs of the British bull-dog sink deep into the vitals of his kingdom, and became sensible of the fact that it was a grip which, once fastened upon its prey, never relaxed its hold.

Rare old records are those of Captain Edmund Scarburgh and his successors, and very curious reading do they furnish. You may see them, reader, if, instead of flashing and dashing over every other country in search of novelty, you will seek the things which are interesting in your native land, within a stone's throw of your door. There they are, preserved to this day, in the little brick court house, and are continuous

from then until now, without a break, preserving the history of their section intact through a period of nearly three centuries.

The Peninsula is no longer a single county. About 1643, ambitious Colonel Obedience Robins, from Northamptonshire, England, succeeded in changing the name of the Peninsula to Northampton. It was not until 1662, when the eastern shore of Virginia was divided into two counties, that the upper portion resumed the old title of Accawmacke, which it retains to this day. The lower part of the original Accawmacke is still called Northampton.

Nowhere is the type of the original settler in Virginia so well preserved, or are to be found the antique customs, manners, and ways of the Englishman of the seventeen century in America so little altered, as in the Kingdom of Accawmacke. No considerable influx of population from anywhere else has ever gone to the eastern shore of Virginia since the year 1700. The names of the very earliest settlers are still there. Everybody on the Peninsula knows everybody else. Everybody there is kin to everybody else. Nobody is so poor that he is wretched; nobody is so rich that he is proud. The majority of the upper class are staunch Episcopalians, just as their fathers were Church of England men; and the remainder of the population are for the most part Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians.

The vices of the community, as well as the virtues, are equally well-recognized inheritances from their progenitors. Fighting and drunkenness are by no means absent but theft is rare among the whites. The kinship and sociability of the population are such that the fondness of the Englishman for sports of all kinds is freely indulged. No neighborhood is without its race-boat; no court day without its sporting event of some kind; and no tavern without its backgammon board, quoits, and, in old times its fives-court. The poorhouse has fallen into decay. When a man dies, his kin are sufficiently numerous to care for his family; and while he lives, there is no excuse for pauperism in a land where earning a living is so easy a matter.

The citizen of Accawmacke may begin life with no other capital than a cotton string, a rusty nail, and broken clam, and end it leaving a considerable landed estate. With his string for a line, his nail for a sinker and his clam for bait, he can catch enough crabs to eat and sell enough besides to enable him to buy himself hooks and lines. With his hooks and lines he can catch and sell enough fish to buy himself a boat and oyster tongs. With his boat, fishing-lines, and oyster tongs he can, in a

short while, catch and sell enough fish and oysters to enable him to build a sloop. With his sloop he can trade to Norfolk, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, sell fish, oysters, and terrapin, and carry fruit and vegetables, until he has accumulated enough to buy his own little patch of ground, and build his house upon it. Then, from the proceeds of his fruit, berries, and every variety of early vegetable, for which he will find excellent markets, he is sure of a comfortable living with easy labor; and he will be happier in his simple home than many who are far more pretentious, and whose incomes are far greater.

Such has been for three centuries, and still is, the place and people among whom my lot was cast when I arrived from Brazil,—descendants of the families of Scarburgh, Littleton, Yeardley, Bowman, Wise, West, Custis, Smith, Ward, Blackstone, Joynes, Kennard, Evans, Robins, Upshur, Fitchett, Simpkins, Nottingham, Goffigan, Pitts, Poulson, Bowdoin, Bagwell, Gillett, Parker, Parramore, Leatherbury, Cropper, Browne; and the rest of them, who were there when Charles I. was king, and who gave the name of Old Dominion to Virginia because they refused to swear allegiance to the Pretender Cromwell, and made the colony the asylum of the fugitive officers of their lamented sovereign.

Poor enough pay they got for their loyalty; for, when Prince Charlie came to his own, although Sir Charles Scarburgh, son of old Captain Edmund of blessed memory, was Court Surgeon, and although Colonel Edmund Scarburgh, his brother, was made Surveyor-General in Virginia, in recognition of his fidelity, the reckless sovereign gave away the devoted Kingdom of Accawmacke to his favorites, Arlington and Culpeper. To this day, one of the loveliest places upon the Peninsula, on Old Plantation Creek, bears the name of Arlington, bestowed upon it by John Custis, in honor of one of the proprietary lords of the eastern shore.

A famous local celebrity in his day was this old John Custis,—feasting and junketing at lordly Arlington. When, in 1649, Colonel Norwood, seeking asylum in Virginia after King Charles's defeat, was shipwrecked upon the coast of the eastern shore, he first secured abundant clothing from Stephen Charlton, a minister of the Church of England, and his sufferings were atoned for he says, by finding John Custis at Arlington. He tells us how he had known him as a tavern-keeper in Rotterdam, and of the high living he had with Custis in his new home until he put him across the bay to Colonel Wormley's, more dead than alive from hospitality.