CHAPTER VI.

Conjectures in relation to vast mineral wealth in Upper-Carolina—Old French and Spanish miners—The gold mania of that treasure-seeking age—The restless energy born of the love of money more efficient for good than money—Treasures not essential either to the support or the progress of truth, &c.

The wild animals of the upper-country, particularly those that supplied the Indians and hunters with food, and the valuable peltries, which, it will be presently seen, became the much-desired commodities of a lucrative traffic, chiefly attracted the attention of the first white men who penetrated these north-western wilds. They were not, however, the only objects of pursuit; the supposed vast mineral wealth of the same region had, from a very early period, excited the romantic speculations of adventurers from all the leading colonizing nations of Europe. The beetling crags, towering mountain knobs, and quartz-bearing hills of the upper-country, were peculiarly alluring to the gold-loving rapacity of the French and Spaniards.

The treasure-seeking mania of this active age was remarkable; but only because turned for a time into an extraordinary channel. The previous and

succeeding periods, with the one in which the present generations are pushing their fortunes, are to be regarded as not a whit less, but perhaps more calmly sordid. It has often been a subject of serious regret that so small a portion of the acquired treasures of the world are devoted to the cause of truth; yet many striking facts attending the gold mania of this era, as well as that we have witnessed in our own, clearly indicate that there is much less of efficacy for good in gold itself, than in the unceasing, restless activity and energy engendered by the depraved love of it.

Those who express such regret either forget, or do not perceive, that money is not only the representative of the values created by the sweat and self-sacrifice of the enslaved toiling million, but equally, in a moral sense, of the depravity of the race. Wherever wealth inordinately accumulates, there very soon are developed the most hideous forms of human iniquity and misery. "Where the carcass is, there the eagles gather together," and that carcass is the laboring poor of Free-soil society.

Even in the South, where the institution of African slavery fosters the purest and healthiest social organization the world has ever seen, men of wealth may be almost daily met, stiff and stark with the self-complacency that proclaims to others, "stand aside, I am holier than thou." Yet so little is there of essential potency in money to promote and sustain the true dignity of man, that it cannot be regarded as an element even in the moral progress of

humanity. The glory and stay of the country is its real Christianity, whose maintenance actually costs it thousands less than its dogs and annual supply of tobacco and strong drink. Indeed, the Church would continue to live with vigorous efficiency, though every cent were emptied from its coffers.

The Great Teacher, who needed not that any should tell him what was in man, when organizing his visible church on earth, evidently avoided the self-sufficient power of money. Two only of its representatives were intimately associated with his humiliation: one of them sold him for thirty pieces of silver, and the other, frightened in the last moment to his duty by the awful manifestations of nature at the crucifixion of his master, assumed his true character, and begging the body, put upon it the equivocal honor of laying it in his own sumptuous tomb. The worst deformity of modern society is not poverty and its evils, but the inordinate love and accumulation of barren money, the superciliousness of the purse-proud, and the heartless selfishness of a large and growing class, which mistake worldly prosperity for the distinguishing favors of Heaven.

Like the numerous useful discoveries however that resulted incidentally from the lonely studies of the crazy alchymists of the middle ages, the gold fever of this period achieved the exploration of large and valuable tracts of country, that must have otherwise lain a much longer time utterly unknown to civilized men. It is quite probable that even before the commencement of the eighteenth century many adven-

turers landed in Charleston and St. Augustine, who, after a brief rest, and the necessary inquiries, set off with gun and knapsack in search of the hidden treasures, which rumor had declared only awaited the enterprise of the skillful explorer among the granite hills and wild mountain ridges of the upper-country.

Indeed, the famous territory of Cofachiqui, so often mentioned, and so minutely described by the chroniclers of the celebrated gold-hunting expedition undertaken by Ferdinand De Soto, in 1538, through the dreary wilderness, afterwards embraced in the States of Florida, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi, had its centre on the western limits of the present territory of Upper Carolina. Its capital and chief town stood upon the tongue of land between the Broad River of Georgia, and the Savannah, just opposite the modern District of Abbeville.

"Early in March, 1540, De Soto broke up his winter quarters, and set out for the north-east, in search of the Province of Cofachiqui, which was supposed, from Indian accounts, to be the rich country for which he was in search. He had been informed by the guides and other Indians, that it lay a long distance off, towards the north-east, and that it abounded in gold, silver and pearls. From Anhayca they passed northward, probably crossing the Flint River, and pursuing their marsh in the valley on the west side, for nearly twenty days, until they reached the southern part of the Cherokee country, called Achalaque; then they directed their route to the north-east, crossing, in the course of the next twenty days'

march, two large rivers, in all probability, the Ocmulgee and Oconee Rivers, in the vicinity of Macon and Milledgeville, in Georgia.

At length, after an entire march and sojourn of more than two months, the Spanish army arrived in the Province of Cofachiqui, about the middle of May. This province was situated on, or near, the head waters of the Savannah River, and the chief town, probably, in the peninsula, at the juncture of the Broad and Savannah Rivers. They found the country ruled by a beautiful Indian queen, or female Cacique, who entertained the Spanish governor and his army with great ceremony." *

The generous hospitality of Xualla—for that was the name of the Indian queen—was, however, ill requited by the avaricious strangers. They soon discovered that there were numerous mounds or tombs in the vicinity of the town, filled with rich treasures, that had been deposited with the bodies of distinguished chiefs. These sacred relics were plundered for the jewels which they contained; they were the only riches found, and, although many and valuable, were to be obtained in large quantities only by plundering the vaults of the dead.

The old chroniclers severely test the faith of the reader, in respect to these treasures. The Portuguese narrator, the most reliable historian of DeSoto's expedition, informs us that the amiable queen, tired of the presence of the ungrateful Spaniards, offered

* Monette's History of Valley of the Mississippi.

them, if they would be gone, two hundred horse-loads of pearls. They took, however, from the mounds, or temples, only fourteen bushels, which were sent to Havana, as a specimen of the natural wealth of the country. Garcellasso, another historian and eye-witness, affirms that in the country surrounding the capital of Xualla, the Spaniards calculated that a thousand bushels of pearls could have been gathered.

These gems, though very pretty, were, doubtless, not of the most valuable kind; but the fact that they were found in such incredible quantities, and the product of the muscle, once so common on all the streams of the upper-country, is sufficiently astonishing. None, we believe, have ever been discovered in the same region since the time of De Soto's expedition; and even the muscles themselves are now seldom met with.

Were the Indians in possession of a secret process, by which these gems were engendered in the shells of the muscle, that was never revealed either to Spaniards or English? But where are the muscles, which, in 1540, were found in such vast numbers around the Indian settlements on the Savannah and in the country north-west of it? A living muscle is now seldom seen on the Coronaka, yet, in our boyhood, we remember to have seen them there in considerable quantities; and the minute fragments of their shells mingled everywhere with the sand and pebbles, indicate a great abundance of them in primitive times.

The Spaniards found, also, in the capital of the Indian queen, hatchets formed from an alloy of gold and copper. These objects greatly excited their cupidity, and encouraged them in the belief that they had at last discovered in Cofachiqui, a country abounding in the precious deposits they had so long sought. And so they indeed had, but it was neither their good fortune nor their desert, to find out the precise spot where they could be obtained. In less than fifteen miles south-east of the town, on the opposite side of the Savannah, lay one of the most extraordinary gold deposits in the world.

It is true that the Cherokees knew nothing of excavations on the present site of the Dorn Mine, or on any of its rich branching veins; but they were well acquainted with the locality, which is shown by the numerous relics of their handy-work scattered around it; and there can be little doubt that the massy nuggets of its out-cropping gold supplied them abundantly with the finer metal of the alloy that so attracted the eyes of the Spaniards. It is well known to mineralogists that the out-croppings of most gold and copper regions, are far richer than their deep, but more permanently productive veins. And, it is no less known to a few who have inquired into the traditions of the aborigines, that the gold and copper found in their possession, in the form of solid masses and curious trinkets, by the first white men who visited the country, were obtained from those sources.

But by what method did they succeed in smelting

these metals? It was one of the most remarkable devices of savage ingenuity; in practical efficiency, the famous blow-pipe of Dr. Hare was scarcely superior.

Having first hollowed out a flat stone in the form of a basin, they filled it with charcoal, and upon this laid the nuggets of metal. A number of Indians now seated themselves in a circle around the basin, (and this circle was larger or smaller in proportion to the size and number of the nuggets to be melted,) each one having in his hand a long reed pierced through its entire length, and armed at one end with a clay tube or pipe. Everything being ready, fire was applied to the charcoal, and the whole mass instantly blown into a powerful heat through the reeds, the clay-extremities of which were inserted in the basin, while the Indians blew through them upon the charcoal with all their might, and with protracted expiration.

No ordinary lump of either gold or copper could long maintain its solidity in such a crucible. With this process the Indians could easily produce any variety of ornament from those metals, using them either alone or in alloy. This method was known to have been in use among the Indians who lived upon the gold-producing lands of North Carolina, and the same process must have been known to the Cherokees.

It is quite probable that had the Spaniards conducted themselves properly while in the capital of Cofachiqui, Xualla would have revealed to them the

precise spot whence the gold of the wonderful hatchets was obtained—the renowned mineral treasury of Cofachiqui. But such was the deep disgust and resentment with which the whole native population were inspired by their rudeness and inhumanity, that they would have preferred to die rather than impart information so agreeable to their hated visitors.

Every effort was used therefore to induce them to leave the province; and none succeeded so well, as the declarations of the queen, whom De Soto had made his captive, and of her attendants, that the gold deposits for which the Spaniards were searching lay some distance off towards the north-west, among the mountains. He had learned this too on the banks of the Flint River, and now set off across the territory of Georgia in search of the yellow stone quarries of Dahlonega."*

Some time after leaving Cofachiqui, two of his followers volunteering their services, were sent by De Soto to explore the country in search of the mines whence the gold was obtained he saw in the hatchets on the Savannah. After several weeks of toilsome wanderings among rolling hills and mountains of stupendous rocks, they returned to him at one of his camps in the territory of Alabama, having made no discovery of any mineral, and bringing back with them nothing more valuable than a buffalo's skin, which they conjectured to have been taken from an

* Dahlonega in Cherokee means the place of the *yellow stone.*

animal of huge size, and that partook of the nature of the ox and the sheep.*

There is much confusion even in Monette, in regard to the Province of Cofachiqui and the country of the Cherokees. He speaks of the Spaniards, when marching up Flint River, as having reached, just as they turned towards the north-east in search of Cofachiqui, the southern boundary of the Cherokees, whose country was called Achalaque. Yet after De Soto has left the Savannah, and is marching north-westwardly towards the present site of Rome, in Georgia, the same historian adds: "Through this means—the captivity of Xualla—the Spaniards procured a safe march through the territory of Cofachiqui to the country of the Cherokees, called the Province of Chalaque.

The truth is, from the moment he reached the southern boundary of the Cherokees on the Flint, till he met the beautiful Queen of Cofachiqui on the banks of the Savannah, he had been marching over Cherokee territory.

Xualla's capital, at the mouth of Broad River, was no more the centre of Cofachiqui than it was of the country of the Lower Cherokees.

The old map published by Adair with his History of the North American Indians, represents the southern boundary of the Cherokees as running directly eastward from the Flint to the Savannah, considerably south of the mouth of Broad River. At a later

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* Pickett.

period, however, this line appears to have been obliterated, and Broad River came to be the dividing line between the lands of the Cherokees and Creeks. It is so laid down by Mouzon and Cook. This brought those warlike savages in close proximity with the early settlers of Ninety-Six District, on the Savannah; and it was for their protection that Fort Charlotte was built, and garrisoned a few years before the breaking out of the Revolution. The father of Robert Long, who settled on Duncan's Creek, in 1769, often assured his family, if we mistake not, that not long after his arrival in Ninety-Six District, he had taken from the government, and executed the contract of building Fort Charlotte.*

We have in another place traced in this and other portions of the upper-country, the scattered remains of the towns and villages of a numerous people that once lived upon its fertile valleys and streams. It is highly probable that those settlements were the provincial towns of Cofachiqui—the richest and most flourishing district of the Lower Cherokees—that they were yet standing and prosperous, at the period of De Soto's visit, the events, whatever they were, having subsequently transpired, which reduced them to ruin and decay.

The ancient mounds and terraces that distinguished the site of Xualla's capital, are seen at this day, though much wasted, at the mouth of Broad River. Many have been the speculations in regard

* Conversation of Miss Susan Long.

to them, by the farmers of their vicinity, both in Elbert County and Abbeville District.

The spot was visited by Bartram in 1776, and the following description given of it in his rare book of travels in Carolina: "After conferring with gentlemen in Augusta, conversant in Indian affairs, concerning my future travels in those distant, unexplored regions, and obtaining letters to their agents in the Indian territories, I set off, proceeding for Fort James, Dartmouth, at the confluence of Broad River with Savannah—the road leading me near the banks of the river for the distance of near thirty miles. Towards evening I crossed Broad River at a good ford, just above its confluence with the Savannah, and arrived at Fort James, which is a four-square stockade, with salient bastions at each angle, mounted with a block-house, where are some swivel guns, one story higher than the curtains, which are pierced with loop-holes, breast-high, and defended by small-arms.

"The fortification encloses about an acre of ground, where is the governor's or commandant's house—a good building, which is flanked on each side by buildings for the officers and barracks of the garrison, consisting of fifty rangers, including officers; each having a good horse, well-equipped, a rifle, two dragoon-pistols and a hanger, besides a powder-horn, shot-pouch, and tomahawk.

"The fort stands on an eminence in the fork between the Savannah and Broad Rivers, about one mile above Fort Charlotte, which is situated near the

banks of the Savannah, on the Carolina side. Fort James is situated nearly at an equal distance from the banks of the two rivers, and from the extreme point of land that separates them. The point or peninsula between the two rivers, for the distance of two miles back from the fort, is laid out for a town, by the name of Dartmouth, in honor of the Earl of Dartmouth, who, by his interest and influence in the British councils, obtained from the king a grant and powers in favor of the Indian Trading Company of Georgia, to treat with the Creeks for the cession of a quantity of land sufficient to discharge their debts to the traders; for the security and defence of which territory this fortress was established.

"I made a little excursion up the Savannah River, four or five miles above the fort, with the surgeon of the garrison, who was so polite as to attend me and to show me some remarkable Indian monuments, which are worthy of every traveler's notice. These wonderful labors of the ancients stand in a level plain, very near the banks of the river, now twenty or thirty yards from it.

"They consist of conical mounds of earth and four square terraces. The great mound is in the form of a cone, about forty or fifty feet high, and the circumference of its base two or three hundred yards, entirely composed of the loamy rich earth of the low grounds. The top or apex is flat; a spiral path or track leading from the ground up to the top is still visible, where now grows a large, beautiful red cedar. There appear four niches excavated out of the side

of this hill, at different heights from the base, fronting the four cardinal points; these niches are entered from the winding path, and seem to have been meant for resting places or look-outs. The surrounding level grounds are cleared, and planted with Indian corn at present; and I think the proprietor of these lands, who accompanied us to this place, said that the mound itself yielded above one hundred bushels in one season; the lands hereabouts are exceedingly fertile and productive.

"It is altogether unknown to us, what could have induced the Indians to raise such a heap of earth in this place, the ground for a great space around being subject to inundations, at least once a year, from which circumstance we may conclude they had no town or settled habitations here. Some imagine these tumuli were constructed for look-out towers. It is reasonable to suppose, however, that they were intended to serve some important purpose in those days, as they were public works, and would have required the united labors and attention of a whole nation, circumstanced as they were, to have constructed one of them almost in an age.

"There are several less ones round about the great one, with some very large tetragon terraces on each side, near one hundred yards in length, and their surfaces, four, six, eight and ten feet above the ground on which they stand.

"We may, however, hazard a conjecture, that as there is a narrow space or ridge in these low lands, immediately bordering on the river's bank, which is

eight or ten feet higher than the adjoining low grounds that lie betwixt the stream, and the heights of the adjacent mainland, which, when the river overflows its banks, are many feet under water, when at the same time this ridge on the river bank is above water and dry, and, at such inundations, appears as an island in the river these people might have had a town on this ridge, and this mount raised for a retreat and refuge in case of inundations, which are unforeseen, and surprise them very suddenly every spring and autumn."

Such, more than eighty years ago, were the ruins of the great capital of Cofachiqui. From the period of De Soto's expedition to the time of Bartram's visit, nearly two hundred and fifty years had passed away; and when two centuries more shall have imprinted their wasting footprints upon the same spot, its unsculptured, unlettered tumuli will still tell the passing stranger their simple story of the departed red men.

De Soto, not long after leaving Cofachiqui, found a magnificent though melancholy grave in the bosom of the Mississippi; but no treasure of the beautiful yellow stone either from the mines of Dahlonega or the more lightly covered deposits of Abbeville.

We are informed by Adair that shortly after the settlement of Augusta a company of desperate adventurers, of what nation we are not told, were found working with success a silver mine, which they had opened in one of the solitudes of the Blue Ridge, probably not far from, if not on the very spot, where

a similar vein is now being wrought by a Charleston company in Cheohee Old Fields, at the head of Little River, in Pickens District. This place is rich in Indian remains. A few years ago an adventurous miner threw out, from the depth of some fifteen feet below the surface, a curious cup of exquisite form and color, which is still preserved by a lady residing in Clarksville, Georgia.

They found the ore at the depth of some thirty feet, and so rich did it prove, that they were soon enabled to combine with their mining operations the then lucrative business of coining large quantities of counterfeit money which was conveyed to Augusta in wagons. A heavy load of it was, on one occasion, detected by the public officers passing over the usual route that had been destined for the purchase of negroes in that town.

This mine, like many others in the same region, has been utterly lost to the cupidity of succeeding generations, unless it be really true that Kughtmann has struck upon the identical vein in Cheohee Old Fields. It is well to remember, however, that even at this early period, a villainous class of arrant counterfeiters found, in the shady recesses of the mountains, and in the lawless society of the border, a retreat sufficiently favorable to their nefarious occupation; and they were not men whose wits were so dull as not to perceive that the popular belief in the existence of gold and silver in this region gave them license to prosecute it with the utmost boldness and energy. They spared no

pains, therefore, to extend and deepen this belief; and hence the great number of legendary stories still to be met with in the upper-country, of ancient gold and silver mines, that were once well known and worked with wonderous profit, but now lost.

There can be no doubt, however, that at this period, the old English traders among the Cherokees were confident in the opinion that their hills and mountains were as rich in the precious metals as any portion of Mexico or South America. One affirms, that so thoroughly were the rocks and soil impregnated with them and other valuable metallic substances, that the mountains glistened in view of the passing traveler; and even the blades of grass were bright with their subtle exhalations. "On the tops of those mountains I have seen tufts of grass deeply tinctured with mineral exhalations. If skillful alchymists made experiments on these mountains, they could soon satisfy themselves as to the value of their contents, and probably would find their account in it."*

Lawson declares that the Indians, time immemorial, were acquainted with valuable mines of gold and silver in Upper Carolina; but that nothing could ever induce them to discover their locality to Europeans. Their reason for concealing them was, that they knew the English and Spaniards greatly coveted the precious metals, and if their mines were once known to them, they would come up and settle near their

* Adair, p. 236.

mountains, and bereave them of their hunting-grounds.*

Another chronicler, no less ancient and quaint, tells us of a quicksilver mine, situated somewhere in the same region of Carolina. He is exceedingly vague as to its locality, but describes minutely the method used by the Indians for extracting the metal from the ore. They used it in preparing the colors with which they painted their bodies in time of war and great festivals.

The ore was broken into small pieces, and placed in earthen pots, from which a strong heat sublimed the quicksilver—that is, drove it off in the form of vapor. The pots had long necks, and these being inserted in others full of water, and half-buried in the ground; the vapor was received by the water, and condensed into the fluid metal.

Arranged in rows close to one another, three or four men could attend to a thousand retorts, all heating at once†.

The traditions of the olden time, and some curious facts that have come to light in more recent periods do not appear to confine the deposits of silver, at least, to the mountainous portions of the upper-country. Many years ago, there were picked up on the bank of Bush River, in Newberry District, several ancient Indian ornaments, consisting of pieces of black marble, rudely set in silver. Dr. Flannagan, who then lived on the Ennoree, and into whose pos-

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* Page 205. † Cox's Carolina.

session these interesting relics came, conjectured that both the silver and the marble were originally procured in that portion of the Cherokee Nation that lay beyond the mountains. As late as 1815, he had ascertained that the Indians, who still resided there, were secretly working a very rich silver mine near a town named Shainrack, which they carefully concealed from the whites. By artful persuasions, he was on the eve of making its discovery, through an Indian, who had already consented to lead him to the spot, when his hopes were disappointed by the interference of a mixed-blood, a prominent character among them, by the name of Johnson.*

Would it not be just as plausible, however, to conjecture that the silver contained in those old mementoes of Indian vanity, was originally found near the spot where they were picked up—at least, nearer to Bush River—than the country over the hills?

A tradition of an ancient silver mine that was once known and worked on Coronaka Creek in the present District of Abbeville, still lingers among the people, who live around the old Rock Church. This tradition is scarcely known to the rising generation, but is cherished with deep interest by a few venerable men whose years link them with the age that conversed with the emigrant fathers.

We shall relate it just as we received it from the lips of one of them when a boy. Many years ago, when the whole up-country was yet covered with its

* Mills's Statistics.

primitive forest, and scarcely known even to English adventurers, a party of enterprising Spaniards penetrated, in their search for gold and silver, into the territory now embraced in this district; and on a spot somewhere near the present site of the Old Rock Church, observing signs of one of the precious metals, applied their pick-axes, and brought to light a promising vein of silver ore. Fixing themselves permanently, they, in a short time, laid open a mine, whose wealth surpassed belief.

Such was their avidity, however, says the tradition, to acquire treasures, that they wholly neglected to procure for themselves the necessary means of subsistence—finding it more convenient to obtain them by force from the neighboring Indians, whose corn patches lay on the fertile valleys of the Coronaka. This, the generous Cherokees endured for a time; but on its being frequently repeated, they became exasperated, and attacking the Spaniards in their excavation, massacred the whole party, except two, who escaped and fled towards North Carolina. The Indians then threw the entire mass of the accursed metal they had raised and melted, back into the mine, and so completely restored the spot to its primitive aspect, that no vigilance or skill of civilized men has since availed to recover the lost treasure. The precious secret, doubtless, passed away forever with the red men.

These Spaniards may possibly have been a party of straggling deserters from De Soto's camp on the Savannah. In process of time, however, the Cherokee

war of 1760 broke out, and brought up from Charleston into the back-woods an army, composed of soldiers and volunteers drawn from many different sources. On their return from the campaign in the Nation, they formed an encampment, and rested several days at a ford of Little Wilson's Creek, on a piece of ground afterwards embraced in a plantation owned by Rev. Joel Townsend, a short distance south of the Pointing Rock and the Old Rock Church. The ancient Keowee trail, it will be more fully shown, passed between and near both of these conspicuous spots.

The surrounding settlers were soon familiar in the camp; indeed, some of them had served as volunteers in the recent foray against the Cherokees, where, among other things, they learned, from certain old soldiers, this curious story of a silver mine of untold value having been discovered and lost, in the manner described, not far from the very place on which they were encamped.

They were moreover informed, that the Pointing Rock, which stood close on the side of the old Keowee trail, had been noted by the escaped Spaniards as a land-mark by which their treasure might be once more found. *It lay just two miles east of that rock.**

Such is the tradition of the lost mine of the Spaniards. It is now well nigh forgotten; but in a former age the influence which it exerted upon the sons

* Conversations with my father and with Joseph Fox Foster, who recently died near the Rock Church, at an advanced age.

of the old men of the Coronaka settlement, who had served in Grant's army, and who can scarcely be charged with being inordinately sentimental or romantic, was near akin to that exercised by their belief in the final perseverance of the saints.

Early in the present century, a company was formed of several of the most practical men of the neighborhood for the purpose of making a thorough search for the old Spanish mine. Among them, were old Dr. Zachary Meriwether, Colonel John Logan, Captain John Irwin, and Wm. Buchanan—all of them Revolutionary soldiers, except Dr. Meriwether. They began by carefully taking from the Pointing Rock the traditionary bearing which led them to quite a promising-looking spot on a hill-side, a short distance above the east bank of Coronaka, and a little way south of the site of old Captain *Slunge*, John Calhoun's Revolutionary tub-mill, afterwards Logan's. Here, with brilliant expectations, the company broke ground, and sunk a shaft some sixty or seventy feet in depth.

Often, in the hunting rambles of our boyhood, while yet ignorant of the traditions of the old settlement, we wandered to the brink of this strange excavation deep in the shadows of primitive woods, and there mused, with far more imagination than philosophy, on its probable cause. The land belonged at the time the shaft was sunk, to Buchanan; and such was his faith in the ancient tradition, that even at this day it may be seen in the conveyance by which it passed from his to other

hands, that one or more acres were reserved, in the midst of which the excavation had been made.*

The work went bravely on, with a few interruptions, for several weeks; the adventurous miners examining closely every bucket-load of earth and stones as it came up, expecting each successive one to disclose, at last, the identical silver that had been smelted perhaps more than a century before by the less fortunate Spaniards.

The precise spot on which this delving was going forward had been ascertained by Captain Irwin, who professed, as well as most of his neighbors, unwavering faith in his ability to discover veins or deposits of the precious metals beneath the earth's surface. He had in his possession a forked divining-rod, still preserved by his descendants, which was never known, in his hands, to fail to detect the hiding-place of any noble metal, if it lay near enough the surface to be within its influence.

On one occasion, soon after the Revolution, having been called down on the Saluda, to search with his rod for the spot in which a well-known Tory had concealed, it was reported, a considerable sum of gold; he discovered with little difficulty that it lay near the root of a tree, which leaned several feet over the water of the river; for, on looking more closely, after repeated trials of the rod, had fixed indubitably upon that spot, there, sure enough, an old powder-horn was found hanging from one of the

* It is at present the property of Thomas Stuart.

upper limbs, just over the very point where, in the opinion of all concerned, the stupid fellow had consigned his money to the faithless waters. After this feat, the old soldier's brass rod was as potent over men's minds as it was over hidden treasures.

Our grandfather was the first, at length, to suspect the virtues of the magic rod; though his faith continued as firm as ever in the teachings of the old tradition; but keeping his doubts to himself, he resolved to give it a private test that would infallibly settle the question in his own mind.

Happening one day at the excavation, when a rock was thrown out, whose almost spherical shape and metalic appearance drew the attention of all present, he placed it on the pummel of his saddle and carried it home with him, and throwing it down in the yard, concealed under it four silver dollars, so as to put the fairness of the test beyond doubt, and then sent for Capt. Irwin to come with his rod, as he suspected the existence of silver near his house. The enthusiastic old man was soon at the spot; but after a thorough search, he pronounced confidently the opinion, that the place was utterly destitute of any deposit of the precious metals.

Nothing, of course, was said about the ruse of the hidden coins; but the operations at the shaft ceased soon after, never more to be resumed. It was not long, however, before another considerable excavation was made in the same bootless search, near the head of the branch that runs into Coronaka through the lands and close to the house owned at present by

Franklin Crawford. It was on the plantation, if we mistake not, of the venerable Benjamin Puliam, so well remembered, though long dead, for his unbounded hospitality and native goodness of heart. He lived and died on this place, afterwards embraced in the lands of the late Capt. T. B. Byrd.

The chief laborer employed in sinking the shaft on the Coronaka was old Nick, the faithful and well known negro, who died in the possession of our father at an advanced age in 1850. He had belonged, when a boy, to Capt. John Calhoun, and passed with that intrepid partizan soldier through many of the troublous scenes enacted on the Saluda and Coronaka during the Revolution. To the last day of his life nothing gave him so much pleasure as to recount the incidents to which he had been an eye witness at that trying period; especially the rough handlings the Tories received at the hands of his old master.

With uncommon intelligence for a slave, he combined the admirable humility so characteristic of the negroes of his times; and even, in his old age, would have gloried in shouldering his musket against Tory or *Abolitionist*, in defence of his master and his master's family. We are not ashamed to confess that many happy moments of our boyhood were spent in listening to his graphic stories of the olden time. On one occasion, he was captured at his master's house, during his absence, by a band of plundering Tories, who carried him into North Carolina, and concealed him, with several other negroes taken in

the same manner, in the hollow of a huge sycamore that stood under a hill in a thick swamp. "We like to have starved to death in this place," he related; "a man came only once or twice a day to the top of the hill, and rolled down a few ash cakes, which broke into a hundred fragments before reaching its foot, and the strongest among us fared best in the fierce struggle that followed for the scattered crumbs." His master succeeded, after some time, in tracing him to the neighborhood in which he was concealed, and making a foray into it with several of his Whig comrades, overtook and recovered him from the Tory when in the act of conveying him farther away. His joy, on seeing his master once more, he used to relate, was too full for utterance; seizing his hand as he rode up, he leaped behind him on his horse, and together they dashed on in pursuit of the retreating marauders. We shall have more to say of Captain Calhoun in another place.

The old Spanish mine is yet undiscovered. It may be, however, that when all is forgotten—when the tradition itself has faded from the memory of men, and the last witness of its influence upon the minds and imaginations of our grandfathers is no more—some fortunate farmer, while enlarging with enlightened judgment the operations of his agricultural improvements, deepening his furrows, and lengthening his ditches, will one day, unexpectedly lay open the lost mine and treasures of the Spaniards.

An old chronicler adds: "Metals or minerals, I know not of any, yet it is supposed and generally

believed, that the Apalatean Mountains, which lie far within the land, yield ore both of gold and silver; that the Spaniards, in their running searches of this country, saw it, but had not time to open them, or at least for the present were unwilling to make any farther discovery, till their mines of Peru and Mexico were exhausted, or as others assert, that they were politically fearful that, if the riches of the country should be exposed, it would be an allure to encourage a foreign invader. Poverty preserving riches often times the cause that property is lost, usurped, and invaded; but whether it be this or that reason, time will discover." *

There are reasons for believing that the knowledge of valuable mineral deposits in the upper-country was not confined to the Indians or Spanish adventurers. An old Mrs. Moss, who died a few years ago, in the north-west corner of York District, at an advanced age, frequently affirmed that her husband, during the Revolution, had obtained from a mine on Dolittle Creek, all the lead from which he cast the balls used in his rifle at that troublous period.

The whole family of that name—and there were not a few of them—were famous hunters. Since that time we are not aware that a particle of lead in any form has been found on the same stream, though it runs through a country rich in mineral productions.

* Gent's Carolina, Carroll's Hist. Col.