



Picturesque America; or, the land we live in

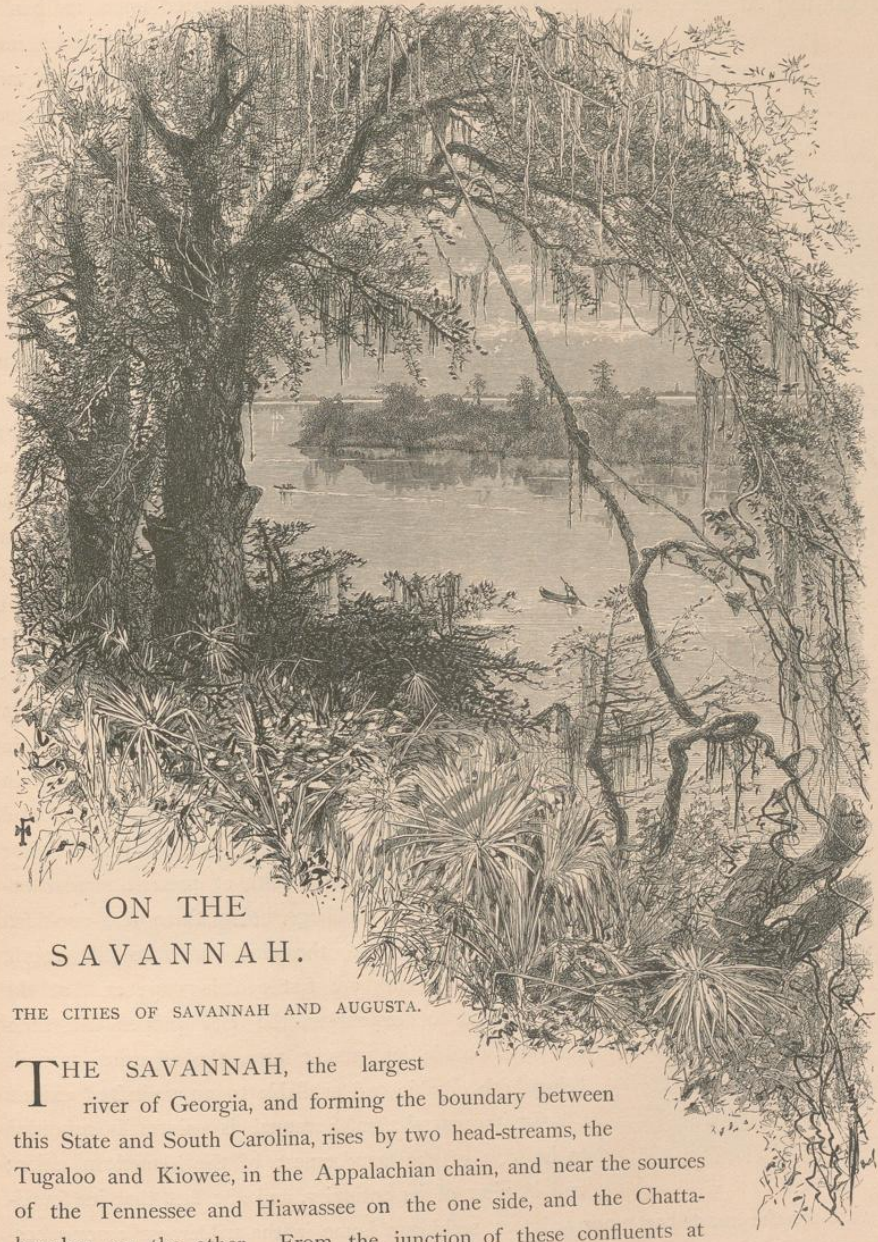
a delineation by pen and pencil of the mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, water-falls, shores, cañons, valleys, cities, and other picturesque features of our country ; with illustrations on steel and wood, by eminent American artists

Bryant, William Cullen

New York, 1872

On The Savannah.

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ON THE
SAVANNAH.

THE CITIES OF SAVANNAH AND AUGUSTA.

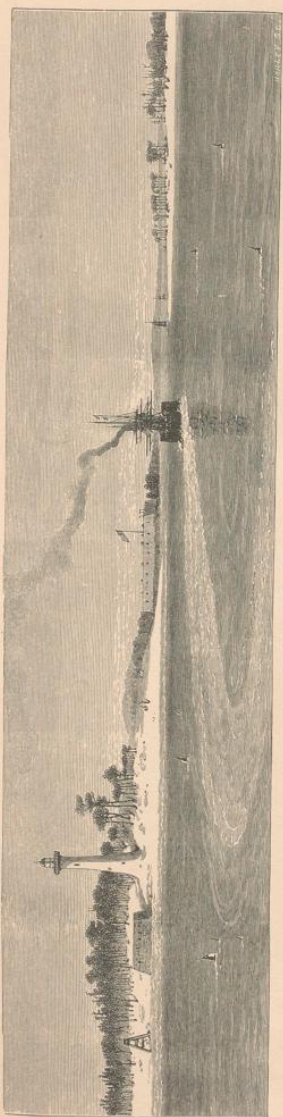
THE SAVANNAH, the largest river of Georgia, and forming the boundary between this State and South Carolina, rises by two head-streams, the Tugaloo and Kiowee, in the Appalachian chain, and near the sources of the Tennessee and Hiawasee on the one side, and the Chatahoochee on the other. From the junction of these confluent at

Andersonville the river has a course of four hundred and fifty miles to the sea. Savannah and Augusta, two of the largest cities in the State, are situated upon its banks,

the former seventeen miles from where it empties into the Atlantic, the latter at the head of navigation, two hundred and thirty miles from its mouth. The river between these points glides between richly-wooded banks, with occasional glimpses of cotton-plantations in the upper portion and of rice-plantations below. The wild swamp-wastes that mark its lower shores are full of a strange, weird beauty, and the groves of massive live-oaks, hung with their mossy banners, that shadow and conceal the mansions of the planters, have a noble grace that is very captivating.

The site for the city of Savannah was selected by General Oglethorpe, the founder of the colony of Georgia, who made his first settlement at this point in February, 1733. The city occupies a promontory of land, rising in a bold bluff, about forty feet in height, close to the river, extending along its south bank for about a mile, and backward, widening as it recedes, about six miles. The river making a gentle curve around Hutchinson's Island, the water-front of the city is in the form of an elongated crescent, about two and a half miles in length. The present corporate limits extend back on the elevated plateau, with lowlands on its eastern and western flanks, a distance of about one and a half miles; the area of the municipal limits, at present almost entirely occupied with buildings, being three and one-third miles square. Beyond the city limits, to the south, suburban settlements are fast growing up; and, at the present ratio of expansion, the city proper will soon comprise double its present area, the adjacent grounds being both eligible and available to an unlimited extent.

In its general plan, Savannah is universally conceded to be one of the handsomest of the American cities; and in view of its antiquity, and the fact that its founders were for the most part poor refugees, seeking a home in the wilderness among hostile savages, it is a matter of surprise that they should have adopted a system at once so unique, practical, and tasteful. The streets—running nearly east and west, and north



Mouth of the Savannah River.

and south, and crossing at right angles—are of various widths; the very wide streets, which run east and west, being alternated with parallel narrower streets, and each block intersected with lanes twenty-two and a half feet in width. The streets running north and south are of nearly uniform width, every alternate street passing on either side of small public squares, or plazas, varying from one and a half to three acres in extent, which are bounded on the north and south by the narrower streets, and intersected in the centre also by a wide street.

These plazas—twenty-four in number, located at equal distances through the city, handsomely enclosed, laid out in walks, and planted with the evergreen and ornamental trees of the South—are among the distinguishing features of Savannah, and in the spring and summer months, when they are carpeted with grass, and the trees and shrubbery are in full flower and foliage, afford delightful, shady walks and play-grounds for the juveniles, while they are not only ornamental, but conducive to the general health by the free ventilation which they afford. They have well been called the lungs of the city.

Upon the large "trust-lots," four of which front on each of these squares—two on the east and two on the west—many of the public edifices and palatial private residences of Savannah are built. It is a little singular that the Savannaheans are indebted for this beautiful and unique feature of their city to the sagacious precaution of the first settlers against the dreaded attacks of the Indians. We are told by Mr. Francis Moore, who wrote in 1736, that "the use of this is, in case a war should happen, the villages without may have places in town to bring their cattles and families into for refuge, and for that purpose there is a square left in every ward, big enough for the outwards to encamp in."

In addition to these old camping-grounds—many of which were occupied for the same purpose by General Sherman's troops during his occupation of the city—a public park, comprising some ten acres (since increased to thirty acres), called Forsyth Place, was, a few years since, laid out, a considerable distance south of the city limits. It is, however, now being rapidly enclosed by buildings, and will in a short term be the centre of one of the finest and most populous portions of the city. Many of the original pine-trees were left standing on the grounds, which are laid out in serpentine walks, and ornamented with evergreen and flowering trees and shrubbery. In the centre is a handsome fountain, after the model of that in the Place de Concorde in Paris, and which is supplied with water from the city water-works. The lofty pines still standing, with the ornamental trees, afford a grateful shade; while the beautiful shelled walks, the luxuriant grass, the fragrant flowers, and the plashing fountain, make Forsyth Place a delightful retreat from the noise, bustle, dust, and heat of the city.

Among the peculiar features of Savannah which command the admiration of strangers are the wideness of its principal streets, abounding with shade-trees, and the flower-gardens which, in the portions of the city allotted to private residences, are attached to



View of Savannah from the River.

almost every house. Ornamental trees of various species, mostly evergreens, occupy the public squares, and stud the sidewalks in all the principal thoroughfares; while the gardens abound with ornamental shrubbery and flowers of every variety. Conspicuous among the former are the orange-tree, with its fragrant blossoms and golden fruit in their season, the banana, which also bears its fruit, the magnolia, the bay, the cape-myrtle, the stately palmetto, the olive, the *arbor-vita*, the flowering oleander, and the pomegranate. Flowers are cultivated in the open air, many choice varieties—queen among them all, the beautiful *camellia Japonica*, which flourishes here in greatest perfection, the shrub growing to a height of twelve to fifteen feet—blooming in mid-winter. At all seasons, Savannah is literally embowered in shrubbery, and in the early spring months, when the annuals resume their foliage, and the evergreens shed their darker winter dress for the delicate green of the new growth, the aspect of the city is truly novel and beautiful, justly entitling it to the appropriate *sobriquet* by which it has long been known, far and wide, of the “Forest City.”

The old city of Oglethorpe's time was located on the brow of the bluff, about midway between



Fountain in Forsyth Park.

the present eastern and western suburbs, and its boundaries are still defined by the Bay and East, West, and South Broad Streets. Upon the river-front, a wide esplanade, about two hundred feet in width, extending back from the brink of the bluff, was preserved for public purposes. This is called the Bay, and is now the great commercial mart of Savannah. As commerce grew up, warehouses and shipping-offices were built by the first settlers, under the bluff between it and the river. In time these were replaced by substantial brick and stone structures, rising four and five stories high on the river-front, with one or two stories on the front facing the Bay, connecting with the top of the bluff by wooden platforms, which spanned the narrow road-way beneath, passing between the buildings and the hill-side. Some of these buildings, spared by the great fire of 1820, which consumed the larger portion of the old town, are interesting for their antique and quaint architecture. A range of them, opposite the foot of Bull Street—the

fashionable thoroughfare of the city—is made the subject of a sketch by our artist. These relics of old Savannah, and a few others, hold their place in the line of stately modern buildings, which now extend along the larger portion of the city-front under the bluff. Platforms still connect the upper stories of the stores under the bluff with the Bay; and at the foot of the principal cross-streets walled road-ways lead to the quay, which is wide, and occupied at intervals with large sheds for the protection of goods in the process of shipping and discharging. Along the quay, in close proximity to the wharves, are also located the cotton-presses and rice-mills.

While Savannah makes no special pretensions to architectural beauty, nevertheless the city contains many fine public and private buildings, and the good taste which characterizes her modern improvements evinces a progressive spirit and liberality worthy of



Monument to General Greene.



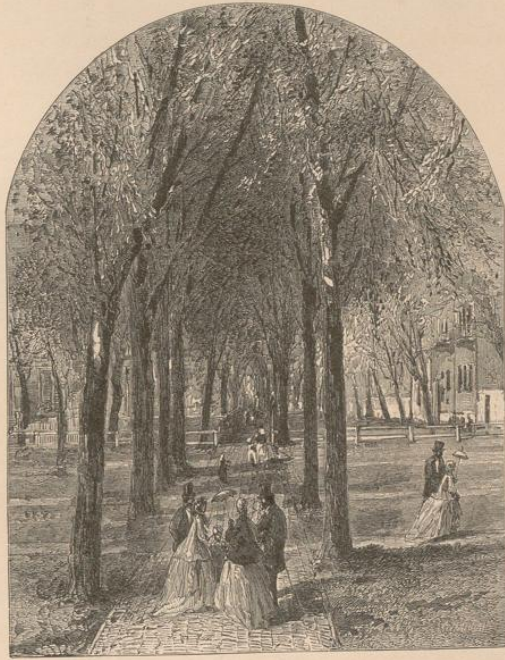
Church, Bull Street.

her rapidly-increasing wealth and commercial importance. Some of her church edifices are models of architectural beauty; and among the new buildings, many of which have been erected within the past two years, are some substantial and imposing structures. In Monument Square there is a fine marble obelisk, erected to the memory of General Greene, of Revolutionary fame, the corner-stone of which was laid by Lafayette, during his visit to America in 1825. The shaft is fifty-three feet in height. Another and very elegant structure was erected in 1853, to the memory of General Pulaski, who fell, it will be remembered, during an attack upon the city by the British, in the year 1779.

Owing to the crescent form of the city-front, its elevation, and the absence of any eligible point of observation on the opposite side of the river, it is difficult to obtain a view that will convey a correct impression of its size and appearance. This difficulty our artist experienced, as the best position which he could obtain, on Fig Island, pre-

sented but a meagre profile of the city-front and its eastern environs. He has, however, given us a sketch of the city as seen from that point, that will be readily recognized by the citizens of Savannah. The view takes in the line of Hutchinson's Island, on the opposite side of the river, which extends the entire length of the city.

The view of the mouth of the Savannah River conveys a very correct idea of the appearance of the entrance to the harbor, which is capacious and well protected, Tybee Island being the head-land on the left, and the extreme southern point of Dawfuskie Island defining the entrance to the river on the right. The steamer seen nearly opposite Fort Pulaski, which is situated on Cockspur Island, has passed the bar,



Bull Street.

upon which there is a depth of twenty-six feet of water, and, following the wide channel marked by the buoys, is proceeding on her way to the city, which may be reached at full tide, with a depth of eighteen and a half feet of water. When the dredging is completed in what is called "The Wrecks," an obstruction which has existed in the river opposite the eastern end of Fig Island since the old Revolutionary War, a much greater depth of water can be carried up to the city. Passing up the river, the stranger is struck with the peculiar aspect of the wide expanse of grass-clad salt-marsh through which it meanders, forming many islands, but preserving at all times ample width for the navigation of vessels of the largest class.

The population of Savannah, in 1870, was twenty-eight thousand, showing a large increase over the census of 1860; while her exports, during that decade, rose from seven million to fifty-eight million—facts affording a striking illustration of her growing importance as a commercial centre. Until the construction of the Central Railroad, thirty



Bonaventure Cemetery.

years since, Savannah was comparatively isolated from the internal commercial world, her only communication with the interior of the State being by the Savannah River to Augusta, the head of steamboat-navigation—the wilderness and the great swamps of the Altamaha interposing an impassable barrier to the vast and fertile regions of the Southwest. By her great trunk-roads—the Central, and the Atlantic and Gulf, and their connec-

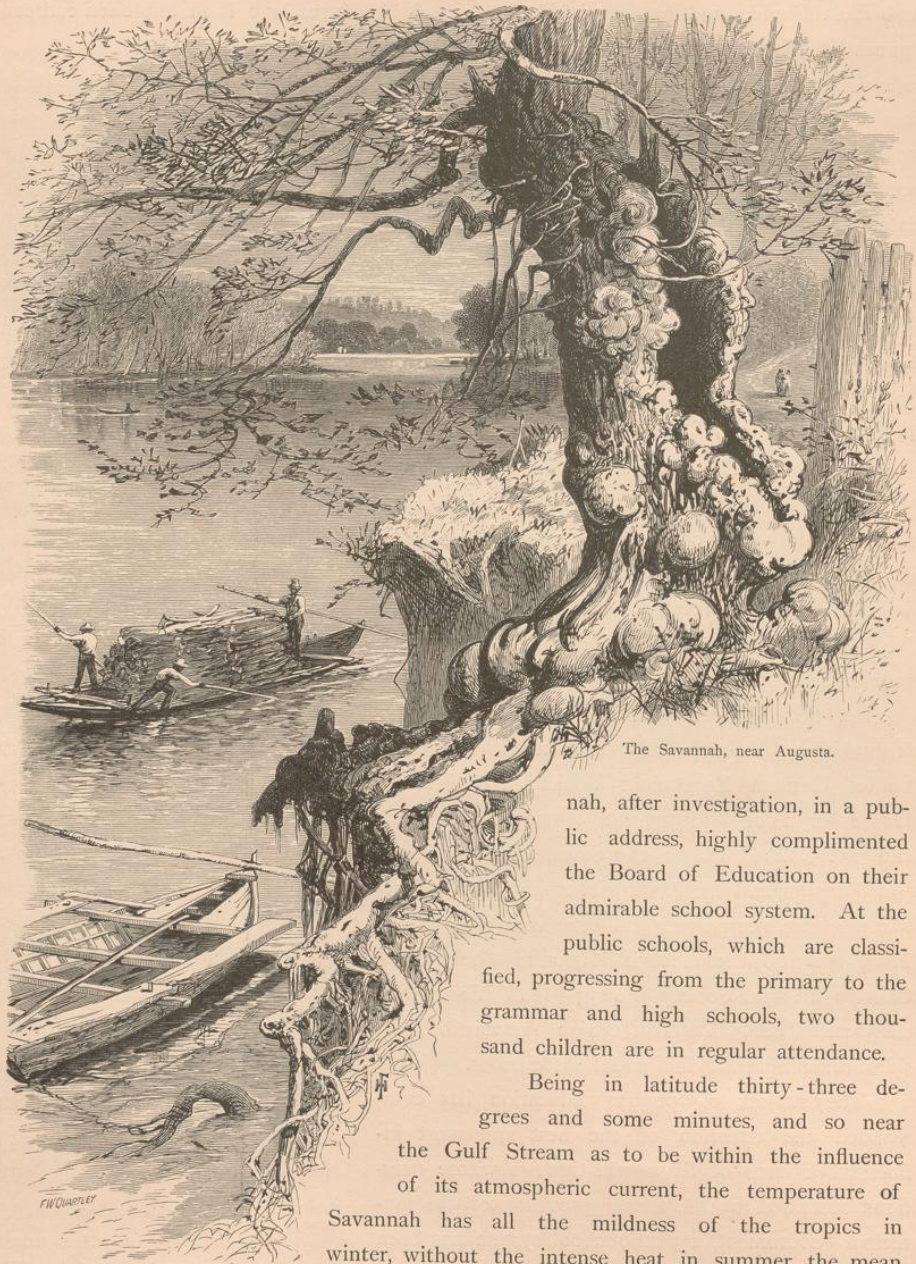
tions—she now offers an outlet for the products of the entire State of Georgia, Middle and West Florida, and portions of Alabama and Tennessee, and is in unbroken railroad connection with Memphis, Mobile, Vicksburg, Louisville, Cincinnati, and the principal commercial centres of the West. When it is considered that this system of railroad communication, which has already accomplished so much, is constantly radiating and extending; that the harbor is one of the best, safest, and most accessible on the South-Atlantic coast, and that it is almost on an air-line by the shortest route with San Diego on the Pacific, the impulse which must be given to the commerce of Savannah by the completion of the South-Pacific Railroad cannot be over-estimated.

The benevolent, literary, and educational institutions of Savannah are numerous and liberally sustained, some of them being among the oldest in the country; the Union Society, for the support and education of orphan boys, and the Female Asylum, for the care and education of orphan girls, having been founded in 1750. The St. Andrew's Society, St. George's Society, Hibernian Society, Irish Union Society, Hebrew Benevolent Society, Ladies' German Benevolent Society, the Abram's Home for Poor Widows, the Home for Old and Indigent Colored People, the Savannah Poor-House and Hospital, and the Marine Hospital, are all highly-respectable, prosperous, and beneficent institutions. There are also the Georgia Historical Society, the Georgia Medical Society, Young Men's Library Society, and Young Men's Christian Association, besides other fraternal and social associations.

The subject of popular education has commanded the attention of the best and most influential citizens of Savannah, through whose exertions, sustained by the liberal provision of the municipal government, a public-school system has been inaugurated, which is justly pronounced equal to that of any city in the Union. The Rev. Barnas Sears, D. D., agent of the Peabody Fund, while on a recent visit to Savan-



Old Houses in Savannah.



The Savannah, near Augusta.

nah, after investigation, in a public address, highly complimented the Board of Education on their admirable school system. At the public schools, which are classified, progressing from the primary to the grammar and high schools, two thousand children are in regular attendance.

Being in latitude thirty-three degrees and some minutes, and so near the Gulf Stream as to be within the influence of its atmospheric current, the temperature of Savannah has all the mildness of the tropics in winter, without the intense heat in summer, the mean

temperature being sixty-six degrees, very nearly the same as that of Bermuda. The sultriness of the "heated term" in Savannah is less oppressive than in New York or Boston, mitigated as it is by a soft, humid atmosphere, and the never-failing breath of the trade-winds, so grateful at that season. In point of health, the mortuary statistics of Savannah will compare favorably with those of any other city of the same population in the United States, the locality being comparatively free from the fevers of the lower latitudes, and almost entirely exempt from the pulmonary affections so prevalent farther North. For Northern invalids the climate of Savannah, with the conveniences and comforts of the metropolis, is considered preferable to that of the sanitary retreats on the coast farther South.

Savannah is not without suburban attractions, there being several places in its vicinity of historical interest, whose sylvan character and picturesque beauty are in keeping with the "Forest City" itself. Thunderbolt, White Bluff, Isle of Hope, and Vernon, are all rural retreats on "the salts," within short drives of the city, where, in the summer months, the bracing sea-breeze and salt-water bathing are enjoyed. At each of these places, which are reached in a few minutes by an extension of the city railroad, are small settlements and good accommodations for visitors. Bethesda, about ten miles from the city, where the Union Farm School is located, was the site of the Orphan House established by Whitefield in 1740.

Our artist presents a sketch of Bonaventure, which is located on Warsaw River, a branch of the Savannah, about four miles from the city. The scenery of Bonaventure has long been renowned for its Arcadian beauty. A hundred years ago, the seat of a wealthy English gentleman, the grounds around the mansion, of which only a dim outline of its foundations remain, were laid out in wide avenues, and flanked with native live-oaks. These trees, long since fully grown, stand like massive columns on either side, while their far-reaching branches, interlacing overhead like the fretted roof of some vast cathedral, the deep shade of their evergreen foliage shutting out the sky above, and the long, gray moss-drapery depending from the leafy canopy, silent and still, or gently moving in the breeze, give to the scene a weird and strangely-sombre aspect at once picturesque and grandly solemn. Many years ago Bonaventure was devoted to the purpose for which it is so peculiarly fitted by Nature, and became the burial-place of many of the prominent families of Savannah, whose memorial monuments add to its solemn beauty. Recently the place has been purchased by a company, by whom it has been enclosed, the trees trimmed, the grounds cleared of their rank growth, laid out in lots, and opened to the public as a cemetery. In this operation much of the wild beauty of Bonaventure has been literally trimmed away, thus demonstrating the fact that, in the picturesque at least, it is not always in the power of art to improve upon Nature.

Though constantly threatened from the commencement of the war till its evacua-

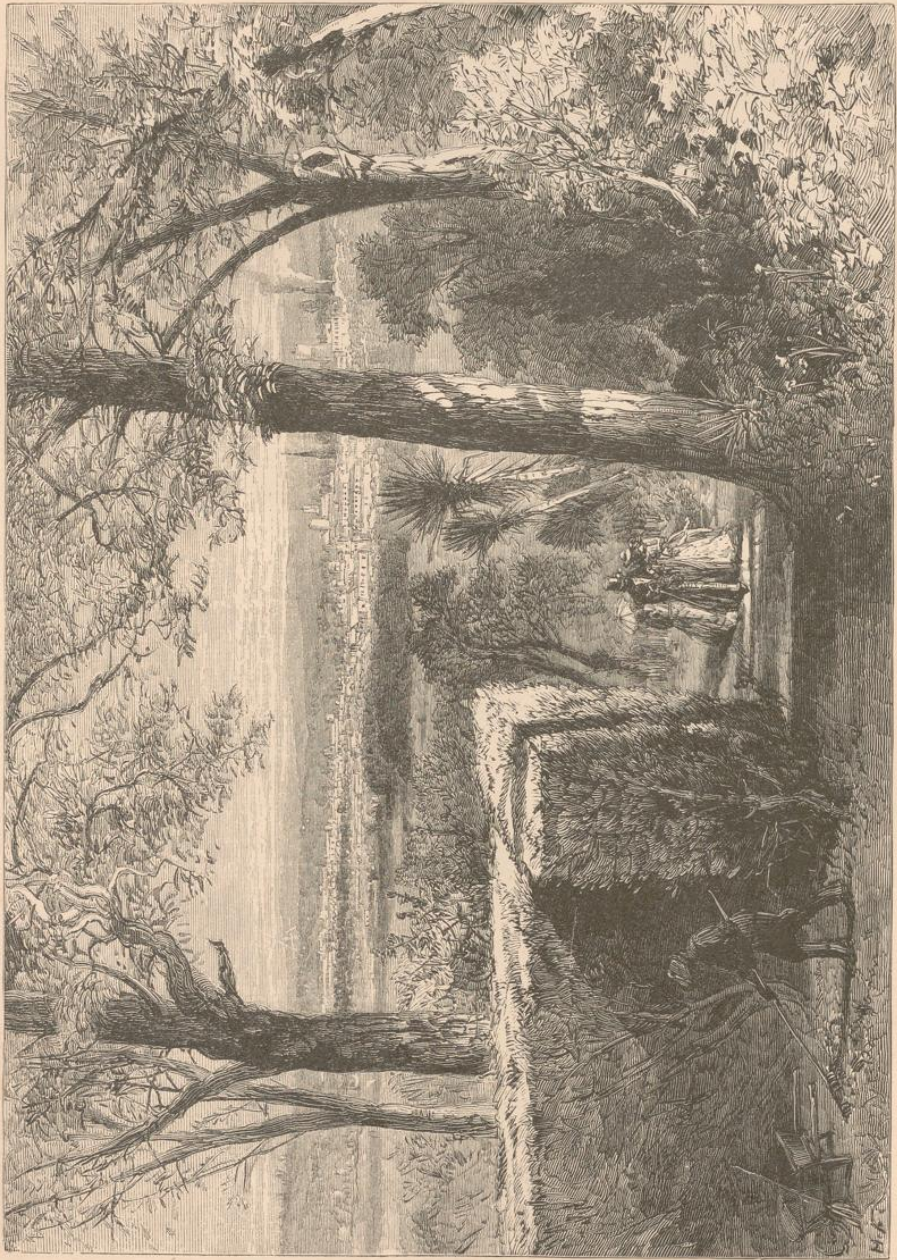


THE SAVANNAH, AT AUGUSTA.

tion at its close, Savannah was so fortunate as to escape attack. Since the war her citizens have been equally fortunate in being able to preserve her municipal government in the hands of her own people. A wise and prudent administration of her affairs, together with the business enterprise and energy of her citizens in reopening and extending the old channels of commerce, and in inviting and providing employment to capital and enterprise from abroad, has given an extraordinary impetus to the growth and commercial prosperity of the city, which, with the great natural advantages of her position and the accomplishment of the great enterprises of internal improvement with which her interests are identified, afford the most encouraging assurance of a prosperous future.

Augusta, which lies at the other extreme of the navigable waters of the Savannah, was settled only two years later than its seaward rival. Like Savannah, it was laid out under the personal supervision of General Oglethorpe, to whom it is indebted for its name, given in honor of one of the English princesses. It is situated on a broad plain. The wooded and winding Savannah waters one of its sides; handsome villa-crowned hills environ it on others. The taste which has made Savannah one of the handsomest of cities is apparent here also in its broad avenues richly shaded with antique trees. The recent war laid no devastating hand on its handsome streets or its embowered villas; unlike so many of the Southern cities, it stands with the beauty and grace that the years have given it, unimpaired by misfortune and uninjured by firebrand or assault. But it has not always been so fortunate in escaping the horrors of war; for, during the Revolution, it was of so much importance as a military post as to lead to several desperate battles for its possession. The vindictiveness that characterized the war of the Revolution all through the South was exhibited here. In 1780, the city was in the hands of the invader, and the patriots made a gallant effort to retake it. But they failed, and the British commander was so exasperated at the attempt that he ordered the immediate execution of a number of prisoners in his possession.

The most beautiful of its avenues is Greene Street, which is lined with fine mansions. Tall, spreading trees not only grace the sidewalks, but a double row, with grassy spaces between, run down the centre of the ample roadway. This sets beautiful park-grounds before every man's door; and the children playing under the trees, and the roaming cattle that are allowed to gather in the grateful shade, give the scene a domestic peace that is very charming. Here stands the City Hall, a really fine building of venerable age, set in an ample green amid tall trees, and having about it an air of dignity and repose. The building and grounds are kept with scrupulous care, and the scene has more of the rich, quiet charm that pertains to an English university-town than is usually found in our rude, new-made American cities. A tall granite column standing before the hall in the green of the roadway, commemorating the signers of the Declaration of Independence from Georgia, adds dignity and finish to the picture. The main business-



VIEW OF AUGUSTA, FROM SUMMERVILLE.

street is also wide; it is lined with handsome shops, in which may be noted abundant signs of activity; and it is thronged with great crowds of vehicles from the country.

Augusta is an important cotton-market, its situation at the head of navigation on the Savannah giving it good facilities for shipping. Hence cotton centres here from all the surrounding country; it comes in the shipping-season in vast abundance, both by rail and by wagons. At this period every road is crowded with huge vehicles drawn by four and six mules, and piled high with the precious merchandise, wending their way toward the river, while the streets of Augusta are thronged with these vehicles in picturesque confusion. Active scenes are witnessed on the banks of the river, where small stern-wheel steamers come up and bury themselves to their smoke-pipes in cotton-bales. The groups of boats shown in the engraving illustrating this scene are just below the long and handsome bridge which connects Augusta with the town of Hamburg, on the South-Carolina side of the river. The Savannah, although at the head of navigation, is wide at this point, and its shores are picturesque. Along the high banks upon which Augusta is situated are rows of old mulberry-trees, the trunks of which are covered with warts and knobs, and their gnarled, fantastic roots exposed by the washings of many freshets. Facing these trees are many pleasantly-situated cottages and villas, with very charming prospects of the river and the green slopes of the opposite shore.

We give a view of Augusta from Summerville, a suburban town of handsome villas, situated on high hills two or three miles from the city. A line of horse-cars runs from the town to the summit of the range. Here are situated many villas and cottages, embowered in trees, with broad verandas, handsome gardens, and many signs of wealth and culture. The scene is more Northern in its general features than Southern; the houses are like the Northern suburban villas, and the gardens not essentially different, although the Spanish bayonet—that queer horticultural caprice, with its bristling head of pikes—shows a proximity to tropical vegetation. These heights form a part of the famous red sand-hills of Georgia, and a characteristic feature are the rich red tints of the roadways.

Augusta has been quietly solving the problem whether cotton fabrics can be manufactured profitably in cotton-growing sections, by establishing and successfully working a large factory, which now employs over five hundred operatives. A canal, which brings the upper floods of the Savannah to the city at an elevation of forty feet, supplies ample water-power for factories, and is encouraging an extensive embarkation into manufactures. It is nine miles long. The United States have an arsenal at Augusta, on the Summerville hills. Here, during the war, the Confederates built extensive workshops and powder-mills, which now have a curious interest to the visitor. The population of this city, according to the census of 1870, was over fifteen thousand.