



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

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Charleston And Its Suburbs.

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CHARLESTON AND ITS SUBURBS.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY HARRY FENN.



A Garden in Charleston.

IF one go to Charleston from the North, let him go in the spring-time. The almost sudden change from wintry landscape and bleak winds to summer suns and summer foliage is a delightful surprise. If it chance with the traveller, as it chanced with Mr. Fenn and the writer, that the steamer sail away from the New-York wharf amid the rain and wind of a Northern March, that all the way southward cloud and storm surround and beset the vessel, and then at once come with the longed-for sun the wished-

for harbor, the sudden sweetness and beauty of the scene will seem to him a transition to a terrestrial paradise.

Because Charleston lies low, and seems to rise up out of the waters as one sails up to it, it has been called the American Venice. It may be doubted if one would think of this comparison if the guide-books did not suggest it. There are charms enough in the American city to please even an experienced traveller, but one would scarcely find his appreciation of them enhanced by recalling the wonders of the Bride of the Adriatic. If in no true sense a Venice, Charleston yet rises with charming effect from the sea. The long, palm-studded shores of the bay, the islands and forts that dot its surface, the mansions that front the waters, and the spires that lift to the skies, all make up a very pretty picture.

The first impression the streets of Charleston give is that of retiring respectability. There are no splendid avenues, no imposing public structures; but a few fine old churches, and many noble private mansions standing in a sort of dingy stateliness amid their embowering magnolias, command your attention. Our New-York custom, derived from our Dutch ancestors, of painting our brick fronts, is not in vogue here, where the houses have the sombre but rich toning that age alone can give when its slow pencilings are never disturbed by the rude intrusion of the painter's brush. The Charleston mansions are nearly always built with gable-end to the street. At one side rises a tier of open verandas, into the lower of which the main entrance to the building is placed. Usually, after the English fashion, a high brick wall encloses the grounds of the house, and it is only through an open gate-way that one catches a glimpse of flowers, and shrubs, and vines, that bloom and expand within the enclosure. But the rich dark green of the magnolia half screens the unsmoothed brick walls far above, and seems to hold the ancient structure in the hush of venerable repose.

It is quite possible the somewhat rude surface and antique color of the brick houses in Charleston would fail to please the taste of Northerners reared amid the supreme newness of our always reconstructing cities. But every one ought to travel in the company of an artist. It is only when associated with one of this instructed class that a man discovers the use of his eyes, and begins to understand fully the beauties, and harmonies, and rich effects that pertain to many things neglected by ordinary observers. These time-tinted mansions of Charleston, to the eye of an artist, have many charms. In the writer's own case he found it a good training to hear enthusiastic Mr. Fenn dilate upon this bit of color, that glimpse of rich toning, this new and surprising effect. It was even a revelation sometimes to see him extract a picture out of apparently the most unfavorable material. Nothing, indeed, seemed foreign to him but the merely pretty. Sweet, new houses of a respectable primness have no attraction for his artistic longings. Fresh paint is his abomination. The glare of the new enters like iron into his soul. But a fine bit of dilapidation, a ruin with a vine clambering over it, a hut all



Charleston, from the Bay.

awry, with a group of negroes in their flaring turbans set against the gaping walls, old chimneys and old roofs, the dark grays and browns that form into such rich pictures in an old town, these things would be sure to catch his eye and delight his fancy. In these semi-tropical places there are a hundred bits that would be admirable for a sketch in oil or water colors, that would lose their value in black and white. It is a pity that divine color cannot enter into engraving.

The search for the picturesque that would meet the necessities of our purpose was not expeditious. It is only after walking around a place, and surveying it from different situations, that an artist can settle upon his point of view. We were three days in Charleston ere Mr. Fenn discovered the prospect from St. Michael's belfry, and to this the reader's attention is solicited. If he does not think it very good, we shall be tempted to denounce his artistic appreciation. Note the far stretch of sea and the long, low shores; there is Fort Sumter far down the bay, and nearer the famous Castle Pinckney, a fortress that stands guard in the direct approach to the town. The por-



A GLIMPSE OF CHARLESTON AND BAY, FROM ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH.

tion of the city which this view commands is its most ancient quarter. Many of the buildings were erected in colonial times, and up to the period of the Revolution this comprised nearly the entire city. The chimneys are of a quaint fashion, and the roofs are mostly of grooved red tiles. The wide street to the left of the picture is the Charleston Wall Street, where congregate all the banks and banking-houses, brokers' offices, and law-offices. Here assemble the merchants and brokers; here are effected those transactions in commerce and finance so dear to the heart of the money-making world. The building at the foot of the street is the ancient custom-house, which, during the recent war, was rudely hustled by many an irreverent shell, unceremoniously battered by ball and petard, and now stands a broken and shattered reminiscence of by-gone belligerency. This structure, which dates back before the independence of the colony, is dear to the Charlestonians. It has always excited their patriotic sympathies, for here during the Revolution the patriot prisoners were confined, and from its portals the heroic martyr Hayne was led to execution.

The old buildings that the church looks down upon are not more ancient than the church itself. St. Michael's was built in 1752—it is said from designs by a pupil of Sir Christopher Wren. The tower is considered very fine, and the situation of the church makes the spire a conspicuous object far out at sea. During the siege of Charleston in the late war, it was a mark for the Federal artillerymen; but, though persistently shelled, it was struck but a few times, and then only with slight injury.

Another of the ancient churches in Charleston is St. Philip's. This was the first church establishment in Charleston; but the present structure, which is the third erected by the parish, although of venerable age, is yet not quite so old as St. Michael's. The view from the spire is fine; but there is a keener interest in the graveyard than even in the old church itself, for here are met with at every turn those family names that have so long been associated in honor, not only with Charleston, but with the whole country—Gadsden, Rutledge, and Pinckney. In the portion of the graveyard that lies across the roadway is the tomb of Calhoun. It consists of a plain granite slab, supported by walls of brick, and for inscription has simply the name of "CALHOUN." The remains of the statesman were removed during the war, when Charleston was threatened with capture, under a most misjudged apprehension that the Union soldiers would disturb them. They were replaced in the spring of 1871. St. Philip's, with its embowering trees, its ancient gravestones, its scarred and broken walls, its marks of hostile shells, its surroundings of old buildings, the tiled roofs of which show quaintly through the green of the trees, affords a picture that is picturesque and pleasing.

Charleston has been accused of not having a public park; but the promenade known as the Battery is an enclosure which, if small, has some advantages that very few parks can supply. Like the New-York Battery, it is on the water's edge; it commands a view of the extensive bay, and is fanned by winds that come laden with the salt

odors of the ocean. It is surrounded by fine private mansions, and at early morning, at twilight, or on moonlit nights, is thronged with people seeking rest and recreation.

After one, in Charleston, has promenaded on the Battery; has visited the churches; has seen all the ruins effected by war and by fire; has examined the handsome new custom-house, now erecting; has admired all the stately old residences; has visited the fine



A Road-side Scene near Charleston.

military academy; has watched the various aspects of negro character, which in these Southern cities is an endless source of amusement—he must sail down the bay, and he must visit the rich lowland scenery of the suburbs.

Down the bay are many points of historic interest; but Fort Sumter crowns them all. On Sullivan's Island, at the sea-line, is the famous Fort Moultrie of Revolutionary fame. Here, before the war, was the Moultrie House, a watering-place resort for the

Charlestonians. On another island is, or was, the Mount Pleasant Hotel, where there is good bathing, and also forests that afford fine drives and pleasant rambles. Our own



Ashley River.

Rivers, and the banks of these streams have all the characteristics of Southern landscapes. Oaks, magnolias, myrtles, and jasmynes, give splendor and profusion to the picture, while rice-fields and cotton-fields vary and enrich the scene. Here once resided,

On another island is, or was, the Mount Pleasant Hotel, where there is good bathing, and also forests that afford fine drives and pleasant rambles. Our own expedition down the bay terminated at Fort Sumter. To this place there is a daily ferry, consisting of a capacious yacht, the commander of which is an Athenian Greek. There was to our minds something of the Mediterranean in the whole aspect of the vessel, crew, and passengers, which a lateen-sail would have rendered complete. The passengers, that came in little groups to the vessel, were motley and picturesque: the buxom and turbaned negro "aunties," the solemn but ragged negro "uncles," the gay and chattering negro young folk, the varied complexions and costumes of poor whites and rich whites—these elements seemed well fitted for the presiding genius of a mariner from the Archipelago.

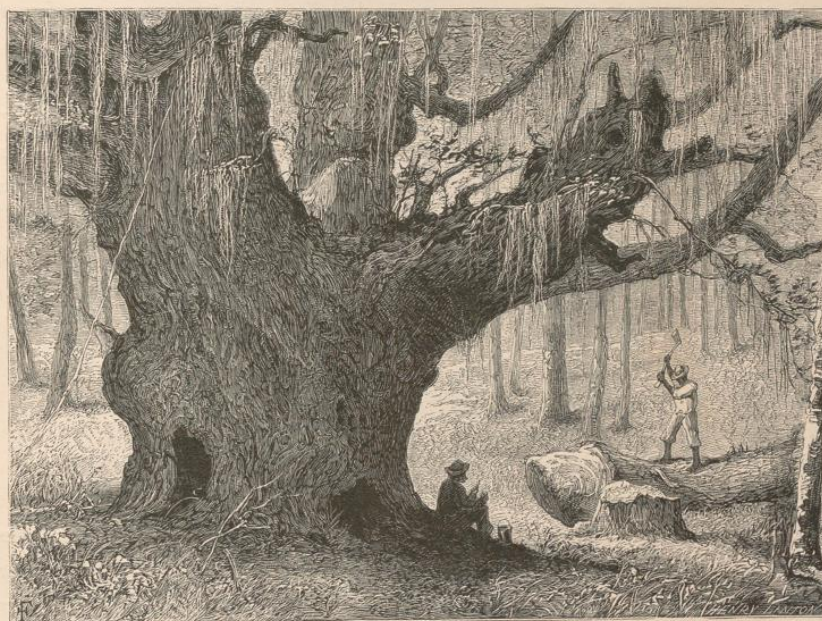
The wind was brisk, and so we ran down to the fort swiftly. Sumter is a ruin, as all the world knows; but possibly all the world does not know that on the highest point of its walls a light-house has been erected, thus utilizing the historic ground. One experiences something of a sensation, as he picks his way over the broken bricks and stones of this fort, and, if alone, would be apt to drift away into far reaches of meditation. On the piled-up rocks without the walls, amid the *débris* of masonry, surrounded by remains of cannon, shell, and round shot, we picnicked—a party, one moiety of which represented those who assailed, and the other moiety those who defended, the walls.

After clambering over the ruins, penetrating the dark underground passages, visiting the casemates that still remain, we returned, a high wind giving animation and expedition to the sail.

Perhaps the greatest charm to the Charleston visitor is the lowland scenery of its suburbs. The city is situated at the confluence of the Ashley and Cooper

during a part of the year, a wealthy aristocracy; but, alas! nearly every mansion is in ruins. The destructive arm of War fell upon this paradise with all its force, nearly every one of the fine old houses having been fired (so it is here reported) by Federal soldiers.

Our expedition to the Ashley we shall long remember. It was by the invitation of Charleston friends, whose hospitality justified the social reputation of the city. The political elements composing the party were as antagonistic as possible; but, regardless of North or South, the Ku-klux, or the fifteenth amendment, we gathered in peace. There were in our small company a Northerner, who had fought under the Union flag, a descendant of one of the proudest names of Revolutionary fame; a Virginian, also of a



A Live-Oak on the Ashley.

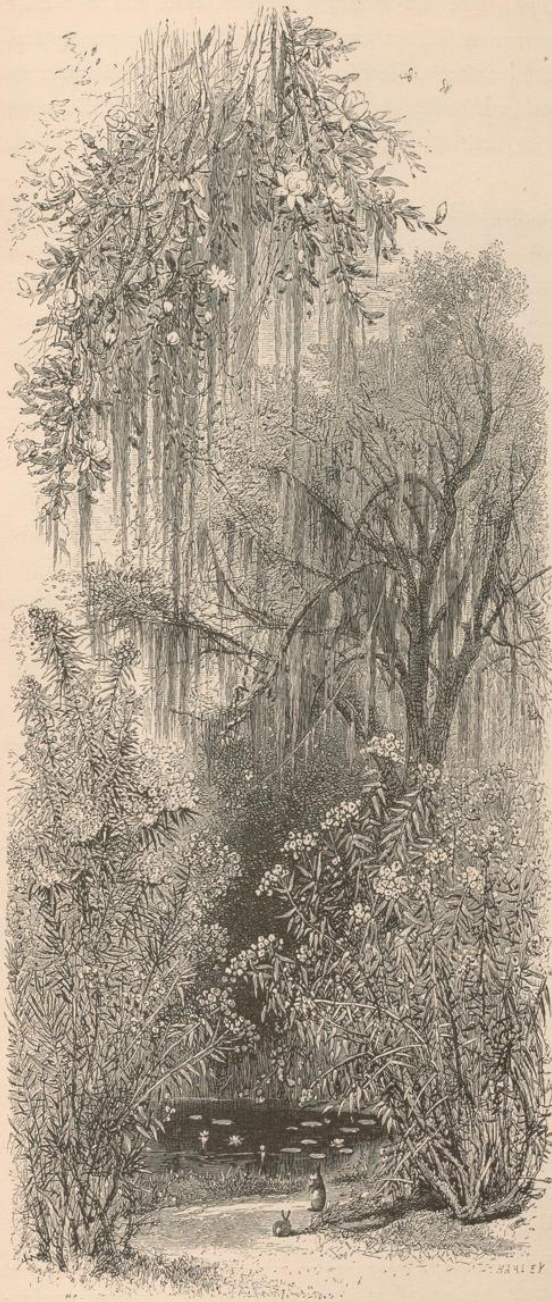
family of renown, whose love of daring and danger had led him into many a strange adventure under Mosby; an Englishman, whose enthusiasm for the Confederate cause had brought him all the way from London to do battle under Lee; another Englishman, whose sympathies for the Federal cause had been marked all during the war; a son of a distinguished journalist of New York, whose name has been notably identified with the Republican party; and, lastly, the writer, of whose political complexion it is not necessary to speak. But, in the face of all these elements of difference, the company was supremely harmonious; and the day, in the estimation of at least some of us, must be marked with a white stone.

The main road from Charleston into the country has been frequently highly praised, and, although some of the fine trees that bordered it have been destroyed, it is still an avenue of singular beauty. The road emerges from Charleston almost immediately into a green wilderness, and for a long distance it is canopied by the boughs of pines, and oaks, and magnolias, with rich effect. There are no signs along the road, as would be the case in our Northern section, of the proximity of a great city. No houses or villas line the way; you seem a hundred miles from a town. You meet occasionally a queer, slight cart, drawn by an ox or a donkey; you pass a group of sportsmen; you encounter now and then on the road-side a group of negroes. An illustration, by Mr. Fenn, catches the spirit of the scene with great fidelity. The extemporized covering of boughs shelters a "sweet-tater" woman, one who dispenses to hungry wayfarers of African hue the edible baked potato of the South.

We reached Ashley River by a sort of by-road. Here a bridge once spanned the stream, but it was destroyed during the war, and now there is a boat propelled by the lusty arms of negro ferrymen. A rope would aid the passage greatly; but our Southern Africans take usually the most troublesome means possible to accomplish their ends. They are proficient in the art of how not to do a thing. When we reached the bank, the boat was on the opposite shore. The current was swift; it took fully half an hour to get the boat over to us, and then the vessel could only accommodate one of our two vehicles. We were nearly two hours getting our forces to the opposite side of the stream.

Once on the opposite side, we were driven through a striking scene—a narrow road winding through a superb Southern forest, where the mammoth live-oak, and the tall pine, and the princely magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) unite to form vistas of rare beauty.

The live-oak of the Southern lowlands is the most picturesque of trees. The famous California trees are of interest solely on account of their magnitude. Their gigantic proportions impose upon the imagination, it is true; but they lack altogether the quaint, fantastic, and picturesque form of the live-oak. An artist could make a series of studies of these trees in which every one would be essentially peculiar in form. In the illustration of the banks of the Ashley, Mr. Fenn has shown two of these trees, comparatively small in size, whose trunks stretch out for a distance almost horizontally; elsewhere the reader will find an illustration of a monstrous trunk standing near the Ashley, which in diameter almost rivals the "big trees" of the Pacific, and which in form has far more novelty and beauty. We saw one of these trees, of magnificent proportions and nearly symmetrical in form. We lifted the low branches, that nearly swept the ground, and entered what seemed a vast forest cathedral. The quaint trunk was covered with knobbed protuberances, and scarred and seamed as if with the marks of many centuries. Its branches, mammoth trees of themselves, shot out at a low elevation



"Magnolia."

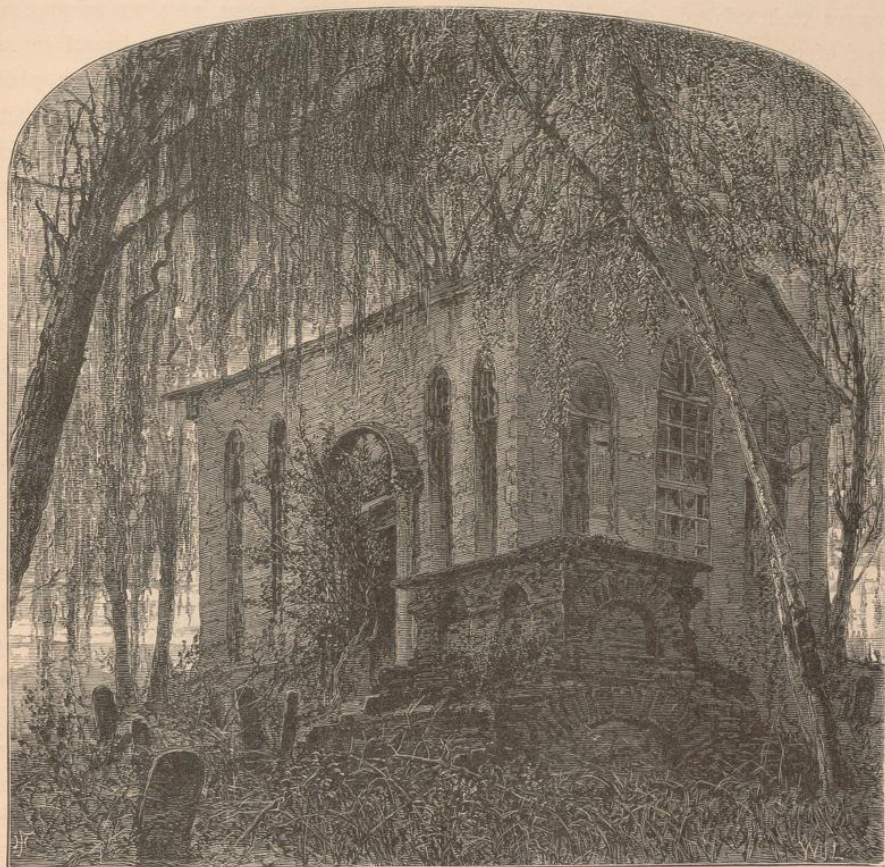
in a nearly horizontal line, extending probably a hundred feet, dipping at their extremities to the ground. The pendent moss from every bough hung in long, sweeping lines, and the sun flickered through the upper branches, touching up moss, bough, and trunk, and relieving the gloom of the interior with bright flashes of light. We were shown an avenue of live-oaks, standing in the very heart of the forest, that would make a superb approach to the finest palace in Europe. But, alas! here it leads only to a ruined waste. A romantic story is connected with this avenue, which some poet should put in verse. The young owner of the estate—this was many years ago—had brought a fair bride from foreign lands. A bridal cavalcade swept out of Charleston to escort groom and bride to the manorial mansion on the Ashley. The proud and eager groom, anxious to show his young wife the charms of her new home, urged her steed ahead of the rest, and, when they reached the avenue of oaks, called upon her to look and admire. Almost as they spoke, a cloud of smoke appeared at the other end of the avenue, and instantly flames

of fire shot up among the tree-tops. The old manor was in a blaze, and the bride arrived only in time to see the destruction of her promised paradise. The young husband was so cast down by this calamity that he carried his wife abroad, and never returned to his American estate. Trees and bushes have grown up around the old oaks, but the avenue retains all its distinct majesty amid the encroaching growths of the forest.

Of all the planters' houses that stood along the Ashley, but one remains, and this is abandoned. "Drayton Hall" is a large brick mansion, standing in the centre of grounds of a park-like character. The rooms are wainscoted from floor to ceiling, the fireplaces are lined with old-fashioned colored tiles, and the mantels are richly carved, but the building was never entirely finished. The story goes that it was erected in exact copy of an English mansion, in order to gratify the taste of the lady to whom the owner was betrothed. The wainscot, the tiles, the carved mantels, and marble columns, were all imported from England; but, ere the chivalrous lover had reproduced on the Ashley a full copy of the house which had charmed his betrothed on the Thames, the lady died; and, since then, the unfinished manor, like a broken monumental column, stands in its incompleteness a memorial of his loss.

Our destination was the estate known by the name of "Magnolia," on the grounds of which we were to lunch. This place is almost a paradise, but a paradise in ruins. The abundance of magnolias gives it its name, but these are interspersed with immense oaks, and, at the time we were there, under the trees a splendid display of oleanders and azaleas filled the spaces with an array of color such as we had never seen approached. These low-country plantations were not usually occupied by their owners in midsummer; then fevers, heat, and insects, made them far from safe or agreeable, and so the white members of the family went into town or northward to upland habitations. This accounts for the special culture of spring blossoms which we noticed at "Magnolia." The planter had given devoted attention to azaleas, grouping the different shades of color from white to deep scarlet in delicate contrasts; and this flower, blooming on bushes from three to a dozen feet in height, lined all the winding avenues, and flashed under the shadows of the magnolias a tropical splendor of bloom that filled us all with admiration. And all this in the midst of desolation and neglect, with overgrown pathways, unweeded beds, and the blackened walls of the homestead looking down upon the scene! A few negroes were in possession, and one tall, melancholy, gray-haired mulatto, with all the dignity and deportment of the old school, lifted his hat, and said: "Welcome, gentlemen, to Magnolia!" On the border of a small lake within the grounds, shadowed by the moss-hung boughs of the oak, we lunched, and then bade adieu to the place. A pathetic story is told of the ruined proprietor, who comes often to his old favorite grounds, and wanders about them with profound melancholy, or sits for hours with his face in his hands, brooding over his desolated home.

The day after our visit to Ashley River we drove to a very old church on Goose Creek, near Cooper River, and about seventeen miles from Charleston. This church was built in 1711. It is situated in the very heart of a forest, is approached by a road scarcely better than a bridle-path, and is entirely isolated from habitations of any sort. A deep ditch surrounds the building, dug as a means of protecting the graves within



St. James's Church, Goose Creek.

it from wild animals. The church was saved from destruction by the Tories during the Revolutionary War on account of the British arms that are emblazoned on the wall just above the pulpit. The interior is very odd. Seventeen square pews fill up the ground-floor, which, like all old English churches, is of stone. A gallery at one end has three or four rows of benches, and under this gallery are a few more benches designed

for the negro servants. The altar, the reading-desk, and the pulpit, are so small, and crowded in a space so narrow, that they seem almost miniatures of those church fixtures. The monumental tablets on the side of the altar are very oddly ornamented in form, and, what is still more singular, are highly emblazoned in color. Although these tablets have been in their places over one hundred and fifty years, the colors retain apparently all their original brilliancy. The lion and the unicorn over the pulpit also preserve their original tints. These specimens of old-time fresco gave us unexpected proof of the duration of this method of color-painting; and the whole chancel in its gay tints and ornamental carving seemed queerly out of place in the otherwise plain and rude structure. This church was once the centre of flourishing settlements, but, with the decadence that has come over the old Commonwealth, the plantations are forsaken, and this historical vestige stands, in the midst of a wilderness, neglected and almost unknown. Trees and bushes have overgrown and hid the gravestones, and the native forest threatens in time to obscure the very foundations of the building.

Magnolia Cemetery is one of the places in Charleston to which strangers are directed. It is a new cemetery, and its name is rather derived from what is expected of it than what it exhibits. So far, very few magnolias adorn it, but there are some live-oaks exceptionally fantastic and queer in form. In this cemetery is a monument to Colonel William Washington, whose exploits in the Revolution are well known; to Hugh Swinton Legaré, one of the ripest scholars South Carolina has produced; and in a vault repose the remains of Commodore Vanderhorst, whose coffin, shrouded with the Union Jack, may be seen through the latticed door of the tomb.

We may here, before closing our article, give a brief glance at the historical record of the city. It was originally settled about 1679—over fifty years before the city of Savannah on the same coast—by an English colony under William Sayle, who became first governor. Its name was obviously given in honor of Charles II., who then was King of England. Its early history was one of conflicts with Indians, devastations by storm and fire, and civil commotions with the lords proprietors, whose authority was eventually deposed in favor of the crown. It was one of the first of the chief places of the South to extend its sympathy to the Northern colonies in their struggle with the mother-country, and led the way in asserting its own independence. Its history during the Revolution was of struggle and misfortune. It was three times assaulted by the enemy: first, in the memorable attack on the palmetto fort at Sullivan's Island, when the British fleet and army were beaten off; next, by the attempted *coup de main* of General Prevost; and, thirdly, by Sir Henry Clinton, when it stood a siege of six weeks, and succumbed at last to famine. Of its strange and often brilliant history since the formation of the Union, of its position as the leader of Southern sentiment and politics, we need not speak; nor is it necessary to recount the severe vicissitudes through which it passed in the late unhappy struggle. We must recall, however, the

days when it was at the height of its glory—when it was the centre of a far-extending circle of brilliant homes, and its old mansions echoed to the tread of famous statesmen and renowned women. We recollect the report of the noted Elkanah Watson, who, just after the Revolution, travelled from Providence to Charleston in a buggy, and whose descriptions of the towns and cities he visited are usually accepted as trustworthy. The wealth and luxury of Charleston surprised the Rhode-Islander, and he speaks of the almost "Asiatic splendor" in which the citizens lived. Charleston was the centre of a somewhat peculiar civilization, and one highly favorable to the cultivation of the few. It was resorted to in summer as a watering-place by the people of the country. The planters brought with them wealth and leisure, and these naturally led to luxurious tastes and habits. We doubt if any community of the same number has produced so many men of distinguished merit. Pinckney, Rutledge, Gadsden, Legaré, are but the leading names of a host of worthies who shed bright lustre on the place. We may hope yet to see the old plantations on the Cooper and the Ashley attain a prosperity under the new dispensation as brilliant as that they enjoyed under the old; we may trust that the old mansions within the city shall renew the social triumphs of their brilliant past; and we may believe that statesmen and men of letters will not fail to perpetuate that renown the famous city once so fairly won and so fully enjoyed.



Magnolia Cemetery