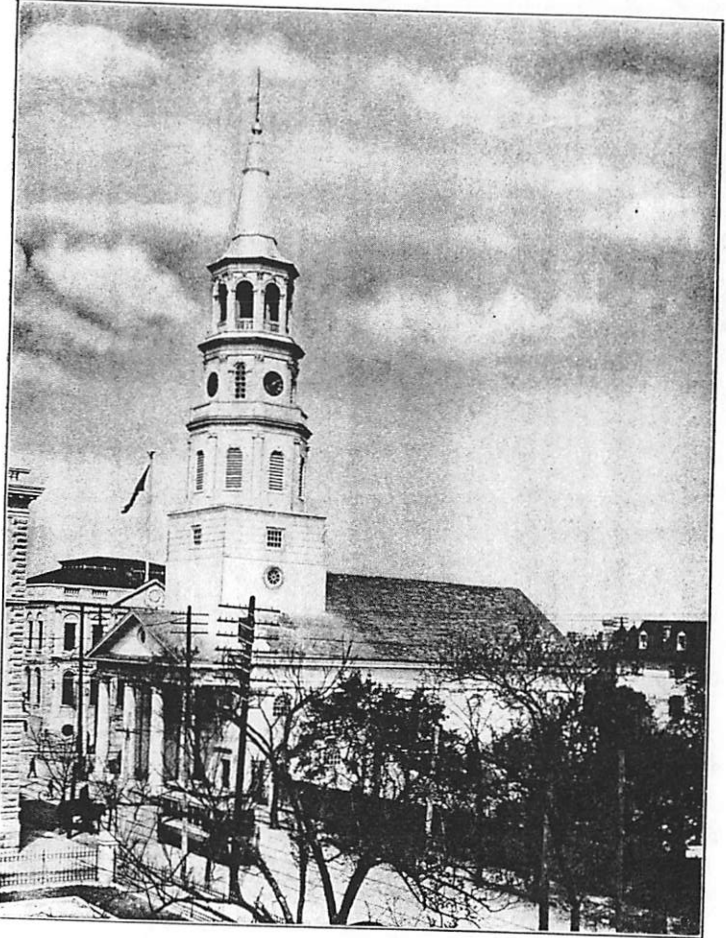

St. Michael's Church

CHARLESTON

THE PLACE AND THE PEOPLE

BY

MRS. ST. JULIEN RAVENEL

AUTHOR OF "LIFE AND LETTERS OF ELIZA PINCKNEY," "LIFE AND TIMES OF WILLIAM LOWNDES"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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that the negroes were more hopeful converts. He set up a school, taught twenty-three to read, and baptized and confirmed several. He lived but a short time, but his successor, Mr. Le Jau, was very zealous. In a few years there were many negro communicants: As early as 1711 the Society's reports mention Mrs. Edwards and Mrs. Haig, Mr. Morris, Lady Moore, Captain Davis, Landgrave and Mrs. Morton, Mrs. Skene, and others as "taking particular pains to instruct their people in religion, reclaim and reform them."

The very first difficulty with the savage native African, the Carolinians were in a measure spared, for those from Barbadoes, the first in the colony, had already received some rudiments of civilization and acted as trainers to the newcomers. To make them wear clothes, speak English, and not murder one another were the first elements of education: all hard to inculcate, especially the first. Any rag of ornament they would gladly put on, but reasonable garments were a burthen, and some men had to be indulged with petticoats, refusing trousers as indignantly as any Highlander. English, of a sort, came more easily, their quickness of ear helping to the sounds; but to prevent their brutal fights was always one of the most troublesome parts of plantation discipline.

In religious teaching the great difficulty was the inherent separateness of religion and morality in the Ethiopian mind. Dr. Garden's plan for his school was to buy two intelligent lads, instruct them carefully in the reading of the Bible and Prayer-book, and set them to teach the others. The scheme worked well for a time, and commended itself to the public. Miss Lucas mentions that she is herself teaching "two little negro girls, who I intend for school-mistresses for the rest of the negro children."

How Dr. Garden's teachers enjoyed it can be under-

EARLY BRICK HOUSES ON TRADD STREET. BUILT BY ROBERT PRINGLE SOON AFTER THE GREAT FIRE OF 1740

stood by any one who has seen a deacon or a class leader at an African camp-meeting! The school was supported by the S. P. G. and by subscribers. The commissary him-

self gave the site for the building, a part of the glebe land left by Mrs. Affra Coming. It went on prosperously for twenty years. Then one "boy" died and the other took to evil ways. Why none of their scholars were put in their places is not known, but the plan was discontinued.

In 1742 there were twelve S. P. G. clergymen in the colony engaged in missionary work.

A blessing in disguise befell Charles Town in the year 1740: a fire, which beginning at the west end of Broad Street swept eastward and consumed every house below the northern side of that street. The houses were of wood and of no great value, but that being the oldest and most populous part of the town, there was much distress. It was hard to provide shelter for the people. Great quantities of goods both for export and import were stored there, and Governor Bull reported to the Lords of Trade that the loss amounted to two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Even the gun carriages in the fortifications, and some of the bastions which defended the town, were destroyed.

Parliament came to the aid of the colony and sent it twenty thousand pounds. The place was rebuilt of brick. Many of the houses still remaining between Broad and the line of Water streets, all of small, dark brick, date from this time on. That on Tradd Street, between King and Meeting, built by Robert Pringle (first of the name to come to Carolina; a Scotch merchant, and afterward assistant justice), but recently taken down, bore the inscription "R. P. 1742," cut in stone above the door.

CHAPTER IX

GOVERNOR GLENN'S PICTURE OF CAROLINA

FOR eight years there had been no Royal Governor in Charles Town; and although Lt. Governor Bull was a wise and well-loved ruler, there was natural excitement when James Glenn arrived in 1743. Governors then were received in this wise. The *Gazette* informs us: "Last Saturday arrived here in the Tartar man-of-war his Excellency James Glenn, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Province, and Vice-Admiral of the same. Upon a signal of five guns being discharged from Fort Johnson the Charles Town regiment was drawn up under arms upon the Bay;" — describes the salutes of the forts and "As soon as she" (the *Tartar*) "came to anchor the Clerk of the Council and Master in Chancery, having been first sent on board to wait on his Excellency and show him a proper place of landing, he was received by the Honourable Edward Aitkin and Charles Pinckney, Esq., as members of his Majesty's Council, who conducted his Excellency through the two lines of foot to the Council Chamber, to his Honour the Lieutenant Governor, attended by the rest of the members of the Council.

"His Excellency having then produced His Majesty's commission, he was conducted by them, — the sword of State borne before, — and attended by the Commons House and many officers and other gentlemen of distinction to Granville's Bastion, where the same was published in due form, which was followed by three whirras" (hurrahs?) a "discharge of cannon at the Bastion and a

that day were generally warmed by iron heaters for which a cell was provided. Also to her stepdaughter her "best diamond ring and large silver monteth (?)," besides devising "all her books, silver plate, rings and other jewels not otherwise given" to her cousins Wilkinson.

Governor Johnson leaves "To my daughter Margaret all the cloaths, watches, Rings, Necklaces, Jewells, Linnens, Laces, etc., of my late dear Wife," and all his plate, etc., to his eldest son.

These fine things made the ladies very brilliant when they attended the newly opened theatres in Dock (now Queen) and Church streets. The theatres ("play houses" they were generally called) are described as "temporary" and were probably not much more than barns, but very good acting has been seen in barns, from Shakespeare's time down. There were represented a tragedy called "The Orphan or the Unhappy Marriage," "The London Apprentice or George Barnwell," "Cato, by Mr. Addison with a Prologue by Mr. Pope" and the amusing comedy of "The Recruiting Officer" given "by special desire of the Troop and Foot Companies," all of which were enjoyed with clear consciences by the jolly planters and merchants of the gay little Southern town.

Mrs. Alice Morse Earle, in her very ingenious and entertaining book "Stage Coach and Tavern Days," has given an amusing account of how "Othello" was smuggled into New England in 1762 at the "King's Arms Tavern" at New Port, Rhode Island, as a "Series of Moral Dialogues in Five Parts, Depicting the evil effects of jealousy and other bad Passions, and Proving that happiness can only spring from the pursuit of Virtue," etc.

No such subterfuge was needed in a "Church Colony." Mrs. Pinckney tells us at about the same date, how she dearly loved a play, and tried never to miss seeing Mr. Garrick when in London, and Mrs. Manigault in her diary

THE PRINGLE HOUSE, KING ST.

the "poorer sort" in carts and wagons of every kind, the negroes in numbers, all thronged from every direction to the course. It was a gay, open-air jollification, good-humoured and merry, thoroughly enjoyed by all. For the members of the Jockey Club and their families was always given a ball, considered the culmination of the gay season. These races, interrupted by the Revolution, were resumed after it and continued in the same fashion down to 1860.

The Governor endeavoured, he said, by advice and example to inculcate frugality, but he established himself as became his office, in one of the handsomest houses of the town, the Hon. Charles Pinckney's, "beyond the Bridge," that is, the "Governor's Bridge" which crossed the present Market Street nearly north of St. Philip's Church. It was in the new part of the town, just beyond where the old wall had been a few years before, and had the advantage of a delightful situation, standing in the middle of a whole square, on the bay, fronting the water and commanding a view of the harbour. The house was a fine specimen of colonial architecture, much resembling that built some years later by Miles Brewton on King Street, and now known as the "Pringle House"; surrounded by a lawn and garden, and with offices, stables, etc., sufficient for official dignity.

It was occupied by successive Governors, Glenn, Lyttleton, Boone, and Lord Charles Montagu, during the absence of the owner in Europe, and the long minority and absence of his son. There was much feasting and good company in the "commodious mansion house" during those years, especially in Lord Charles's time — dinners, balls, and easier and more social intercourse. Dinners were stately and slow. The tables handsomely set out with the satin-fine damask cloths and huge napkins, some of which still remain, — old Nankin or East India china and heavy silver

and cut glass. "The manner of living nearly the same as in England, plentiful tables," says Hewat. But modified of course by the climate and by the taste for West Indian dishes brought from the islands. "Turtle with saffron and negro (Cayenne?) pepper, very delicate for dressing it," terrapins stewed, boiled and baked, and all varieties of fish, flesh, and fowl. On one very important point Hewat and Dr. Milligan, who wrote within five years of each other, bear honourable testimony. The former says, "Where rum is cheap" (brought from West Indies) "the use of it will not be uncommon, especially among the lower classes of people but the gentlemen in general are sober, industrious and temperate." The latter adds "Madeira wine and punch are the common drinks of the inhabitants; yet few gentlemen have not also claret, port, and other wines."

"The ladies are extremely temperate and generally drink water, which in Charles Town is very unwholesome, the soil not solid enough to strain it sufficiently." This peculiarity of the soil led to the universal building of cisterns. Brick cemented storehouses of rain-water, which, when properly constructed and carefully kept, furnish a singularly pure and healthy water, free from poisonous germs. This "cistern water" is still generally drunk in Charles Town.

That the gentlemen should be "sober, industrious and temperate" was in view of the work they had to do an absolute necessity. It needed every energy and power of head and hand to win from the soil of Carolina the wealth won by these men.

There can be no greater mistake than to suppose that the Carolina planter ever had the easy, luxurious life of his West Indian brother. In the Islands nature is so bountiful, so prolific, that the earth yields her fruits to but little labour and care. In Carolina every step was

they were to stay "until his Majesty's pleasure could be known." The gentlemen, Mr. Saxby and Mr. Lloyd, who had been appointed "distributers," showed no desire for martyrdom, and frankly renounced their office, and things gradually quieted down until the inconvenience of doing no business became so great that the Bar remonstrated. The inconvenience was very great. No newspaper, for instance, could be issued, for the editor did not dare to send it out unstamped, and the subscribers would not take it stamped. The various officers of the law courts all declined to risk their positions by defying the Act, and Skinner adjourned the courts from month to month, awaiting further instructions. At last Governor Bull was (as told in General Pinckney's letter) prevailed upon to appoint Rawlins Lowndes, Benjamin Smith, and Daniel D'Oyley associate judges, and they, overruling the chief justice and the Attorney-general, Sir Egerton Leigh, after much delay and many technical difficulties opened the Court on the 4th of March, 1776. The preliminaries of a case were then heard, in which Mr. Bee, Mr. Rutledge, Mr. Manigault, Mr. Parsons, and Mr. Charles Pinckney were all concerned. This day may really be considered the beginning of the Revolution in Charles Town, for it was the first on which orderly and serious opposition was made to an undoubted Act of the British Parliament. The three new judges were laymen, as was also Mr. Robert Pringle, who was on the bench already but had not appeared. Smith, Pringle, and D'Oyley were merchants. Rawlins Lowndes was a planter, but had been for many years provost marshal of the Province, and had much knowledge of the law. The others were, of course, all barristers. Mr. Bee and Mr. Parsons had long been members of the Assembly; Mr. Rutledge has been mentioned already; Mr. Charles Pinckney was the nephew of Chief Justice Pinckney, and like his sons had been educated in England;

Mr. Manigault was the son of the wealthiest man in the colony, the merchant Gabriel Manigault, son of the Judith already spoken of. He (Peter Manigault) had been for a long time in England, and admitted to the Bar there, and was considered a youth of great promise. Mrs. Pinckney writes of him that "he is to make glad his Mamma's heart by returning to her. . . . I dare assert not only from mine but from better judgments he will make her amends for all her cares, and answer all her hopes." This prediction was truer than such predictions often are. The young man rose rapidly in the esteem of his countrymen, and was at this time Speaker of the Assembly, a position always considered a most honourable one in the colony. Egerton Leigh, attorney-general, and Dougal Campbell, clerk of the Court, were with Skinner the officers opposed to the new judges and the lawyers. Campbell did honestly what he conceived that his official duty required of him, and Leigh also offered opposition. But Leigh, the son of the man who had for a bribe falsified the returns of the election for Westminster, although a "man of parts," was so venal that he commanded no respect. It was told of him that on one occasion a suitor had said despondently to his lawyer, that he knew he had no chance of success because his opponent had given Mr. Leigh twenty pounds. "Run," cried his attorney, "run and give him thirty, he will at once decide for you." Such were the men sent by Great Britain to maintain the law in her colonies.

Governor Bull had still to be reckoned with, and he supported the officers with all his authority. The lawyers appealed to the Assembly and the Assembly supported them; there was every sign of an endless conflict—the only hope of solution being "at home." In the meanwhile the delegates, Thomas Lynch, Christopher Gadsden, and John Rutledge, sent by the Assembly to the Congress which Massachusetts had called to meet in New York, had come

rangement, and Washington, who had a high opinion of what was due his position, was not the man to neglect any detail of equipage.

The President came in his travelling chariot with four horses and outriders. His favourite horse was led behind that he might change the exercise occasionally. His luggage followed in another vehicle, and all the servants were handsomely liveried. As he advanced the people thronged to see him pass, and the gentry of each neighbourhood mounted and escorted him to the next stopping place.

When the cortège reached the Waccamaw River, it stopped for the night at Colonel William Alston's plantation, Clifton. Colonel Alston was one of the largest rice planters in the State and considered a model one. He was an old soldier, having been an officer of Marion's and had lately married as his second wife the beautiful Mary Motte, youngest daughter of Rebecca Motte of Revolutionary fame. She had been a little girl when she was locked up in the garret during Rawdon's tenancy of her mother's house, and was now a lovely young woman with her character written on her face, and made a charming hostess.

Clifton house (since destroyed by fire) stood among fine trees, a little back from the river, with fields spreading wide before it. These fields in early spring were covered with the young rice, springing green from the dark earth and intersected by innumerable ditches, the water gleaming bright in the sunshine. The President was quite unprepared for such perfection of cultivation, and, the passion of his life being agriculture, was delighted. It won from him one of the few enthusiastic remarks reported of him, for he told his hostess that it "looked like fairyland." And afterward in Charleston he said to the Governor, Mr. Charles Pinckney (son of Colonel C. Pinckney, President of the first Provincial Congress), that he had had no idea

that anywhere in America was there such perfection of cultivation as he had seen on the large rice rivers which he had crossed.

The next stage was to Georgetown, where he was, of course, received with all honour, and then to Charleston, stopping by the way for a late breakfast at Mrs. Horry's place, Hampton on the South Santee. Here he saved the life of a live-oak tree, which had been condemned to the axe as obscuring the view from the avenue of a fine portico just erected.

The General's good word saved it, and it still lives to keep the memory of the visit.

Arrived at Haddrell's, he was met by two handsome barges prepared for him and the gentlemen who escorted him. A committee greeted and accompanied him. His own barge was manned by twelve masters of ships then in port, "volunteers all handsomely dressed at their own expense." "Also a flotilla of boats of all sizes filled with ladies and gentlemen attended him across the river."

At Prioleau's wharf he was received by the Governor, Mr. Pinckney, the Lieutenant-governor, Mr. Isaac Holmes, the Intendant, Mr. Vander Horst, the gentlemen of the City Council, and the Society of the Cincinnati. These, all headed by "the mace," walked in procession to the Exchange, where he stood bareheaded on the steps and received the cheers and homage of the public. Those who saw him declared that it always remained one of the strongest impressions of their lives. Washington had the singular good fortune of enjoying his "legend" in his own time.

He embodied to the people at large, not more than to those who knew him best, all the virtues which they hoped for the Republic. Strength, honour, virtue, courage, justice, truth — all seemed personified in his majestic form.

The house prepared for the honoured guest was that

Travellers have left us their impressions of place and people in these years, and it is curious to observe that the peculiarities which they describe are those remarked sixty years later. Character and habits had already crystallized into the forms which they were long to maintain.

Of the town itself one gentleman says, "a pretty place though dead level, lying between two noble rivers."

Its appearance, rising from the waves, unlike anything else. The harbour crowded with vessels, generally foreign, and many foreigners in the streets.

The aspect of things is tropical on the shore; alongside are vessels from every part of the world loading and unloading, — from the West Indies in particular. The wharves are covered with bananas, cocoanuts, coffee bags, etc., and rice and cotton to be shipped. The days are bright and sunny, he could fancy himself in equatorial regions again. "The Negroes (notwithstanding their degraded condition) looked bright and happy."

M. de Liancourt describes particularly the gentlemen whom he met. His journey to Charleston was made agreeable by his good fortune in falling in with Mr. John Julius Pringle, a distinguished lawyer, whose conversation he enjoys. He finds the manners of the gentry more European than in the Northern States, and that the ladies are more lively and take a greater share in conversation, but with perfect propriety and modesty.

He does not — sad to say — consider them as handsome as the Philadelphia belles, being too pale and fading early, but they are interesting and agreeable. He is entertained at the Elms by Mr. and Mrs. Izard, whose conversation is delightful. He visits Ashley River, and thinks Drayton Hall the handsomest place he sees. His friend Mr. Pringle is busy building and planting trees at his place near by — then called "Greenfield." Mr. Pringle thinks of calling it "Susan's Villa," in compliment to his wife.

Luckily the attorney-general (whom Mr. Thomas says is "good as great") determined upon "Runnymede," by which name the beautiful place is still known.

The duke described the abounding hospitality and the too liberal style of housekeeping, the crowd of servants. "In no part of the globe is so much hospitality practised as in America, nor can it anywhere be better exercised than in South Carolina. . . . A Carolinian, though not very opulent, rarely has less than twenty servants in attendance on his table, his stables, and his kitchen . . . and yet things are not neatly kept, and are often shabby. There are few families who do not keep a chaise or a coach, and ladies rarely set foot on the streets."

Mr. Thomas declares that it is "the most aristocratic city in the Union notwithstanding her Jacobinism" and that "Political professions were of Jefferson's school, but practice aristocracy complete."

All of which, with but slight alteration, might have been written in 1860.

One most honourable trait of the period was the attention and deference paid to age, character, and public service. Every man's record was known, and won from his compatriots a respect that wealth was powerless to buy.

A gentleman some years ago told his son that his father, Mr. John Huger, a distinguished patriot, had always been accustomed, as his house had no piazzas, to take his tea, in fine summer weather, on the broad sidewalk in front of his door. The table was brought out and arranged, and passing friends would stop for a cup and a chat.

"How did he manage with the people going by?" asked the son.

"You surely do not suppose," said the astonished father, "that any one would intrude upon the old gentleman! Of course when people saw him, if they were not

Mr. Drayton was the son of Judge William Drayton, who at the outbreak of the Revolution was chief justice of Florida. He had studied law with and been greatly under the influence of Mr. Edward Rutledge, from whom he had received the strongest Federal principles, and having begun life with nothing, he had now an income of $18,000 a year from his profession. This he renounced for a commission in the regular army, and served until all danger of hostilities was past. He then, refusing all offers of promotion, resigned his commission, returned to the bar, and was afterward member of Congress, and prominent in various ways.

Mr. Huger also had belonged to the old party, but could not agree with its over-prolonged toleration of injustice. He too resigned and entered the army, for the time, then returning to Charleston, where he was to play an important part.

These two gentlemen have been singled out from their fellows, because this was their first appearance in the public affairs of the place, in which they later took great part.

While the war was still in progress a tragedy, unexplained at the time, startled the town. Theodosia, the beautiful daughter of Aaron Burr, was the wife of Governor Joseph Alston, the eldest son of Colonel William Alston, already mentioned as having entertained General Washington, at his plantation "Clifton" on the Waccamaw. The devoted affection between the father and daughter, and her exquisite loveliness and charm, had touched many hearts at Burr's trial for high treason in 1804. The feeling against him after his so-called acquittal, his expatriation and misery, were great sorrow to her; she returned to Carolina a mourning woman. There she was almost idolized by her husband's family; and admired, not only for grace and accomplishment, but for the

impression of purity and elevation of character made upon all who knew her. The death of her only child, a handsome and promising boy of fourteen, so preyed upon her health as to cause great anxiety.

Her father had by that time returned to New York, and she was persuaded to go on to join him there. She set sail from Charleston accordingly, and never was heard of more!

For a time her friends hoped against hope — there had been no storm, and the vessel was a stanch one. Had it been taken by an English cruiser news would come sooner or later — after a while that hope failed. The distracted husband made all possible search. The coasts from Carolina to New York were carefully examined, but not the slightest trace of the vessel could be found.

It remained for long a mystery of the sea.

More than thirty years later an old sailor, dying in a village of the North Carolina coast, confessed that he had been one of a pirate crew who had captured the ship and compelled the passengers to walk the plank! He produced a small picture, which was, he said, the portrait of the lady thus murdered. He had himself taken it from her cabin. The husband and father were spared the ghastly tale, for both were dead before it was told, but persons who had known Mrs. Alston thought that they recognized the likeness.

No dying man would willingly accuse himself falsely of such a crime.

In the first quarter of the century many buildings, both public and private, were erected; many "greens" built over, and low land reclaimed.

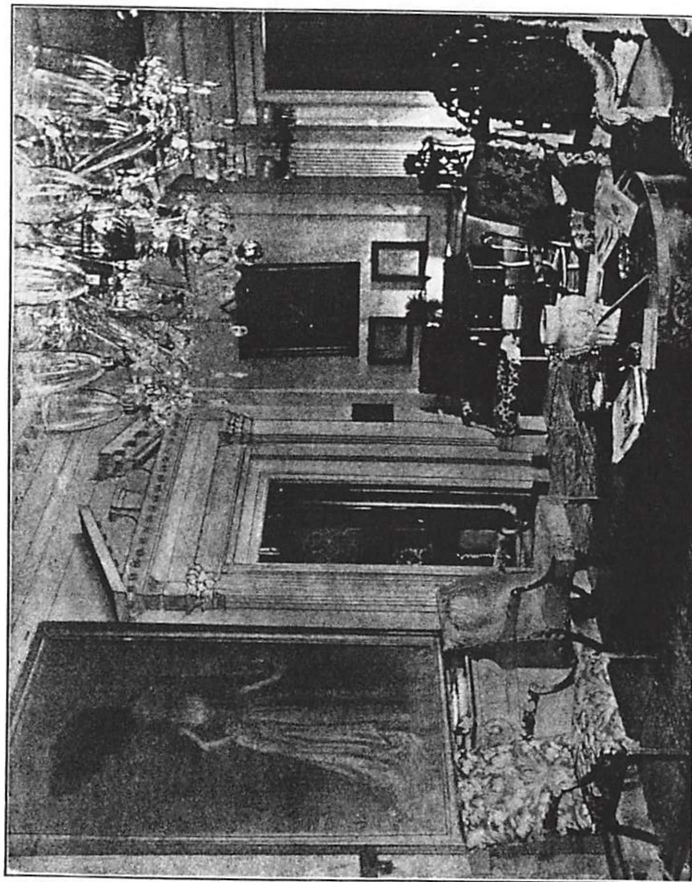
The City Hall, built in 1801 for the State Bank, was eighteen years later converted to its present use, and the inside adorned with handsome marble columns brought from Italy. The present Charleston Library was the old

could always induce each guest to speak of that of which he spoke best, never allowed any one to prose, and when he took the *parole* himself, avoided with wonderful tact the part of hero of his own stories. These breakfasts went on for years and were, in all pleasantness, lessons in the art of conversation.

Mr. Poinsett married late in life a handsome and wealthy widow, Mrs. John Julius Pringle (Miss Izard), a daughter-in-law of the attorney-general, — two of whose descendants have received his name in baptism. He had hitherto taken no active part in the public affairs of the city, but was now to become prominent in them.

Even conservative Charleston was feeling the impulse of the mechanical century. Steam was soon to be introduced into her mills, and steamboats to her waters. Morse, who was then known only as an artist, was for some time in Charleston, painting many portraits there, and it is said that he perfected his great invention, the telegraph, in a house in Chalmers Street. Greatest of all, a scheme for a railroad to carry freight and passengers began to be discussed as early as 1813. The only road then running being a small one for carrying coal from the pits to Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The scheme remained in the air, however, until 1827, when a charter was granted for this new wonder. It was proposed to build it to connect the cities of Charleston and Augusta, Georgia, over a hundred miles apart — an extraordinary enterprise for that time.

In the meanwhile the turnpikes were so much improved that by 1820 travelling was no longer the thing of horror that it had been ; stages ran regularly, and with comparative celerity. Young Dr. Gilman, for instance, when he came to preach his test sermons in the Unitarian Church, was no more than eleven days and nights from Boston to Charleston, whereas it had taken seventeen days to get the



An End of the Drawing-room of the Pringle House

country. I became seriously affected afterwards by the continuance of the use of the waters, they produced imposthume, eruption with fever, colliquative sweats and extreme debility, these sufferings aggravated by the torment of long and rough roads reduced me to the lowest stage of exhaustion by the time I got home. I have been on the recovery some time, and still am so, but not yet able to sit erect for writing — among my first efforts is that of recalling myself to your recollection, and of expressing the gratification I derived at the springs from your acquaintance and society. However little of life may remain for cherishing a cordiality which it must so soon part with, it will not be the less felt while feeling remains, and in the hope that the tour I recommended of the upper and lower valley of the Blue Ridge may give me, the ensuing autumn the gratification of receiving you at Monticello, I pray you to accept the assurance of my friendly attachment and high respect, and that I may be permitted to place here my respectful compliments for Miss and Mr. Alston, who were the companions of your journey.

"TH. JEFFERSON."[1]

Colonel Alston was at that time considered the type of the home-staying Carolina planter. A very young man at the beginning of the Revolution, he had not had the English education which so many of his class enjoyed, but was thoroughly Carolinian.

He had served under Marion and was one of his most trusted friends. On the conclusion of the war he devoted himself to planting, differing from most of his compatriots in that he eschewed politics. Only once did he consent to allow himself to be sent as senator to the State Legislature, a sacrifice to his friendship for Mr. Jefferson, whose nomination for President was then in jeopardy.

[1] Unpublished letter in the possession of Charles Alston, Esq., Charleston.

He was twice married; first to Miss Ashe, secondly to Miss Motte, by each of whom he had several children. His eldest daughter by the second marriage was the wife of the distinguished Robert Y. Hayne, who wrote of him: —

"It is as a Carolina Planter, — a character associated with the interests and honour and best hopes of the State, — that Col. Alston was chiefly distinguished. Whether we estimate his claims to public consideration by his extraordinary success — the admirable treatment of his slaves, or the progressive improvement of his estates, the result of a wise system of economy and good management. . . .

"It is believed that at the time of his death he was, with perhaps one exception, the largest slaveholder in South Carolina. . . . It was the opinion of Col. Alston that in the management of slaves the true interests of the planter were in exact accordance with the dictates of an enlightened humanity. It was with him a rule through life to treat his slaves with the utmost liberality and kindness, while he never relaxed the reins of a wholesome discipline. His rule was to provide them with dwellings of the best description, and to allow them supplies of every kind on the most liberal scale. The consequence was that his numerous plantations were models of neatness and order, and his slaves always presented an appearance of health and comfort which spoke well for their treatment. They were devotedly attached to their master whose service they would not have exchanged for any other upon earth. . . . His system was based upon a calculation of practical results. It was not the slaves *only* who were to be made prosperous and happy. If they were among the best treated in the State, his crops were always abundant, and his rice of the finest quality.

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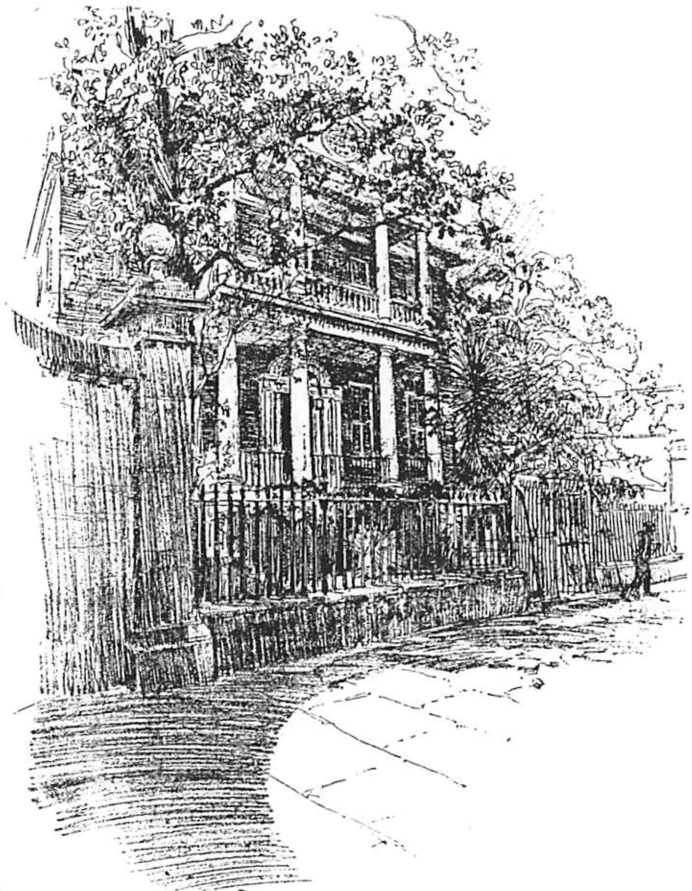

THE PRINGLE HOUSE

"Until compelled by increasing infirmities to retire from the world, his house was the abode of a refined and elegant hospitality. . . . Courteous in his manners, social in his disposition, surrounded with a large circle of friends

and blessed with an ample fortune his tastes and habits were for many years those of 'a Carolina gentleman of the old school.'"

Colonel Alston survived to 1839, dying in his eighty-third year, a consistent member of the Episcopal Church.

His house in King Street, through the marriage of his youngest daughter to Mr. William Bull Pringle, is now known as the Pringle house.

In 1822 occurred the only really serious threat of servile insurrection which had threatened Charleston since that incited by the Spaniards at St. Augustine in 1739.

By this time the disputes consequent upon the admission to the Union of the new States of the Louisiana Purchase were raging.

The abolition party was violent. It was proved that certain negroes who had gone to the North had there become so perverted that upon their return to Charleston, they proposed a plot of insurrection to their friends.

They asserted that in this scheme they had the support of a large and influential body of sympathizers at Boston and elsewhere.

The negroes — or some of them — lent ear. The plot thickened, and the consequences might have been too terrible for words, had not two faithful servants told their masters of the startling tale. These gentlemen at once informed the Intendant, Colonel James Hamilton, and the Governor, Mr. Bennett.

Upon examination it was found that the originator of the scheme was a free mulatto named Denmark Vesey, who had been much in the North in communication with the abolition party, and had brought in and disseminated their publications. His chief colleague was an African called "Gullah Jack, an hereditary conjurer," supposed by the negroes to be immortal and able to work miracles by magic. These and others were the ringleaders. Their