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DOMESTIC.

FROM THE VIRGINIA PATRIOT.

Mr. Editor,

In the Virginia Patriot of the 1st inst. you notice, under date of the 7th July last, a Roman Coin found in Tennessee; and hence an erroneous conclusion might be drawn, that the Romans were in this country, and constructed the fortifications throughout its western parts; as various in their forms, principles and calculated effects as might be expected from gradations of civilized and savage science employed on the several defences.

To the best of my recollection, (for my documents are not at this moment accessible,) Ferdinand De Soto extended his expedition into that country in 1543-4, of which there were two journals kept in his army; one by a private dragoon, and the other by an officer of high standing in his own suite military.

The latter, on their return to Spain, was presented to the Duke d'Alva; and I understood, when in Madrid, in 1796-7, (thirty years after I had ranged some of those countries,) was still in preservation there. Of the map of that expedition I have a copy; but, before I had obtained that copy, or a knowledge of that map and its relative journals, I had completed a map of my own compiling, on a larger scale; one which I have no reason yet to doubt, which satisfied my own scrutinies, and which I have found corroborated by my personal investigation of our country in part; and by an evident and honorable coincidence in truths, agreeing with the results of my several enquiries.

The Spanish government permitted, as I understood in Madrid, fifteen copies only of this important and accurate journal to be printed for its own purposes; and, one of these, getting into the hands of the British ministry, was permitted to reach the English language, on similar conditions and views. It was from one of those impressions, in the library of my friend, Dr. Benjamin Smith Barton, of Philadelphia, that I made many conclusive comparisons, and derived much information.

Gen. De Soto landed in East Florida, marched to the present Chickasaw country, then a fortified people, having emigrated from Tennessee, in consequence of cruelties and injustice practised against them by Cortez, after they had helped him in the reduction of Mexico and Montezuma. Notwithstanding the aspect (and I believe the heart) of De Soto was so far above that of Cortez, that the Chickasaws permitted them to enter their fort, and stable their cavalry in their empty barracks. In the course of that night, however, or shortly after, the soldiers found a pretext to quarrel with the natives; they fought bravely on both sides; but through this treachery, the place was burnt, with the loss of many lives and horses.

De Soto remained in possession, did all in his power to conciliate the Indians; and detached farther north such troops as he could spare. The left of them, no doubt, under Indian guides, which that great general could not have neglected to secure in his interest, made for the head of the Muscle-Shoals, crossed the river, and fortified ten acres of ground on the north bank of the Tennessee, below the mouth of Chowahala, or Elk river; into which Salole, or Squirrel river falls on the east.

The centre line was left as a rear guard; and fortified themselves on the south bank of the Tennessee, below Tenchecunda river, till all was safe.

The right division took the Creek war path, which leads from the Creek country to the place where Nashville now stands; passing the head branches of Elk river, the upper forks of Dutch river, at the mouth of Rock-house river, (where De Soto's advance wintered,) dropping their hogs, (sequitiae signifying hogs,) in the fine range of what still retains the appellation of the Sequitiae barracks, comprehending the heads of Duck river, Elk river, Crow and Sequitiae creeks, a district of a hundred miles square, where the Indians have told me, within this fifty years, many of the breed of hogs still existed; and I have seen many killed between there and the Apalachia mountains.

There can certainly be nothing extraordinary, when we advert to the Romans having over-run Spain, or to the intercourse between Rome and the higher Spaniards which still daily exists, that a Spanish officer, on duty there through the whole winter of 1543, should

drop a Roman coin in a work where he remained on duty; but I am more conclusive: I have no hesitation in pronouncing this precious relic to be conveyed thither by De Soto's army.

I have not a doubt that all the other precious relics belonged to his command.

I have many reasons for being tolerably positive that the Rock-house station on Duck river was the farthest northern point of Spanish expedition.

I am desirous to save my country from hasty conclusions and ignorant decisions.

I know somewhat of Europe, personally much of Spain, but more of America.

When the health and strength of a man advanced in years, and in a sick room, will permit, I shall endeavor to throw new lights on our more northern fortifications.

A Soldier of 1775.—
Yes, 763.

FROM THE VIRGINIA PATRIOT.

Mr. Davis,

I observe in the communication you have done me the honor to insert, on Tuesday, concerning the Nashville conjecture, as to the Roman Coin, that your compositions, apart from a few literal errors, has made a typographical error in mis-naming the point fortified by the rear guard of General De Soto's northern advance. It is situated on the south bank of Tennessee River, opposite the mouth of Flat Creek, which enters Tennessee on the north, having an island in the river between them; and is a short distance, (perhaps three or four miles) below the mouth of Tenchecunda creek or river, on the same side where the fort stood.

I perceive, at the same time, an oversight of my own in a very material fact: this is, that De Soto's having calculated before he left Spain, brought with him from one of the most luxuriant countries on earth, the means of trying, or propagating the fruits of Spain in the soil of undiscovered countries. Between the mouth of Rocky River, near the old Chickasaw Town, on the north bank of Tennessee, and the crossing of that river by the right line of De Soto's advance, at Piney Island, in the most southern bent of the Tennessee River, the Creek War Path at the mouth of Bent Creek, they planted a large peach orchard; and, some thirty years back, before the folly of white speculation altered the names and face of things, and the grand truths of historical facts, the Indians gave me "Peach Orchard" as the name of the place, with an assurance of the superiority of the fruit; and that it still continued to propagate.

I shall say little more than to observe, on the subject of western fortifications, and that without prejudice, partiality, or any thing but a wish to establish truth, that I have no hesitation in believing that the great bulk of our more northern ancient fortifications were the defences of man against carnivorous animals; and not the defences of carnivorous man!

Some years ago, for instance, Dr. Fleming, of Botetourt, permitted me to copy a survey he had made, which is now somewhere among my voluminous collection of papers, of the fortification near the mouth of Elk-Horn Creek, Kentucky River; its contents were something above seventeen acres, Winchester measure, and the situation a fine one for all the conveniences of a small town. But as it applies to a system of military defence, I must be permitted to remark that, military defence always implies that the weakest party are inside the works; while, in this instance, give me one third of their numbers outside, I should consider my enemies, prettily cooped and as easily to be conquered.

Tehoptka, in the Creek language, signifies a fortified town; I have an engraven plan of the battle of Tehoptka, under Gen. Jackson, in the Creek country, given to me by three old friends among the Cherokee chiefs, against whom some years was had taught me to guard and respect them; one of these a Colonel and a gentleman, killed in that action thirteen enemies with his own hand; another, a Major, killed nine, and a third a Captain (who was a boy with me in the campaign of 1776) killed three.

Tehoptka was situated in the horse-shoe bend of a river, resembling the fortifications of Elkhorn, Kentucky; but on a much larger scale and more powerfully protected; it had moreover the advantage of regular lines, laid out and constructed by the best British Engineers, across the Isthmus, which Gen. Jackson's line confronted; and the Cherokees were sent round to reconnoitre the place, and the Apex.

Near this last point, they seized a few canoes, put their leading officers and guns into them, and the whole brigade jumped in and swam the river, in a place hitherto deemed inaccessible; driving their enemy before them to meet General Jackson at their Isthmus lines; this action is so well represented in the engraving, and I have had so many authentic accounts of it, that I can not doubt the accuracy.

The Elkhorn fortifications, in point of shape and situation, very much resemble those

of Tehoptka; and, I have no doubt that both of them were fortified towns, as the term implies. But the question, whether against man or beast is not yet settled!

James Barry, Esq. that great and injured Artist, who produced a most wonderful effect in his unequalled paintings, perpetuated in the great room of the Society of Arts, &c. Aephia London, (two whereof are forty two feet long by twelve feet high) has given us a very interesting simile in his picture of Orpheus rousing a savage man from a state of ignorance to a condition of improvement, by means of the arts: He has there represented Lions issuing from the forests and devouring the helpless offspring of the human race! this is not, however; the picture of Elkhorn; near which, and in the salt licks, of most such places, both the bones of the Mammoth, and the Gramineous grinders of an animal resembling the Elephant, have been found in repeated instances. We know enough of the Elephant to be satisfied that he never did nor never could, live two winters in the woods of Kentucky; we know that Lions are in the same predicament; and we know, also, that the common people of Siberia have represented the Mammoth to be a mole, living wholly underground, and either expiring when he worked his way into a body of sand, or dying (to use the expression of Job, chapter XL, as some foreign authors have it) but which English translators of the Bible render "taketh with his eyes" BY THE LIGHT OF HIS OWN EYES.

On comparing the mammoth skeleton found and obtained by Mr. Peale, which has been exhibited in Europe, with the Siberian description of their still existing mammoth and reducing the Russian measurement to English feet and inches, there does not appear to be any material difference in the size of the two. They are both of them, evidently, constructed alike; both carnivorous, with the same powers of mastication, nor is there, in my mind, a probability of either of them deviating otherwise than incidentally from the course assigned by nature to both countries, which in the hemisphere of Kamschatka are not so far apart as to prevent a mammoth's crossing on the ice, or swimming over if the water was open.

When Mr. Rembrandt Peale first conveyed his mammoth to London, and set it up in Pall-mall, he (probably adopting the Siberian ideas) turned the tusks up like those of an elephant; the Siberians having stated that he went through the earth as a mole, fed upon mud, and died when he came into a bed of sand or into day light. Let us examine what we discover of this subject, with more historical and philosophical lights than were in the power of ruder periods:—

The Bible tell us—chapter XL, verse 20—"surely the mountains bring him forth food,"—21st. "He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed and fens."

In page 51, vol. 2. of Laugel's travels to China, we are told that, in the mountains near Beroqowa, many of these beasts are seen in the caves.

The result is that, the mammoth of America and Siberia are the same animals, their habits, their residence, the places of their death (like a poor cow mired in the spring) wholly the same! all the rest as to the movements of their tusks or horns, as to their throwing up the ground like a mole, is mere stuff.

Let any one examine the carnivorous grinder of a mammoth he will be fully satisfied of his powers to break the bones of man or beast and to masticate tree tops when they have no more delicious sustenance.

AN OLD SOLDIER, &c.

MIDDLEBURY, Vt. JULY 15.

A Meteor.—A meteor of uncommon magnitude and brilliancy [was observed, on Friday evening, the 17th inst. by a number of the inhabitants of this and the adjacent towns. It made its appearance, according to the most accurate chronometers, at 20 minutes after nine. A gentleman of this village, standing in his garden, which inclines to the south east, happened to be looking towards his house, which was north-west from him, and was surprised by a dazzling light, of a peculiar hue, proceeding, as he supposed, from the building. Turning his eyes round, he saw the object from which the light emanated. The luminary was then, by estimation, 35 or 40 degrees above the horizon, and in an easterly direction from this borough.

It appeared of different magnitudes to different individuals. Some affirm, that its apparent diameter was equal to that of the full moon, which was then rising, but a few degrees from it. Others are of opinion, that it was not more than half as large. If either of these suppositions be near the truth, it must have been a body of immense size; for its distance was, manifestly, very considerably.

Its descent, many imagined, was in a right line perpendicular to the horizon. But this could not have been. It probably fell in a parabolic curve, or in a figure, approaching such a curve. Its velocity we are unable correctly to compute. The celerity of its movement was so great, that no person, with whom we have conversed, has ventured to estimate the length of time, during which it was visible. It could not have been, at most, more than a very few seconds.

We had heard its appearance compared to that of iron in a furnace, the instant its beginning to fuse. Some say, its light was somewhat different from that afforded by molten iron, but that it was more brilliant.

Three explosions took place, while the meteor was in the heavens. The report was so loud as to be heard by most of the people in this village.—The houses were jarred as they are by a slight earthquake. The sound was thought by some to resemble that of heavy thunder.—By others it was compared to the noise of three cannon discharged in quick succession.

A little before the explosions occurred, or rather before the report was heard, a brisk scintillation, or sparking of the meteor was observed.—Particles proceeded from the body, and continued luminous, till they had arrived at a considerable distance from it, but gradually growing less and less vivid, till they disappeared. Many individuals saw the light, who did not see the meteor.

A gentleman belonging to Whiting, states, that he witnessed the phenomenon, during its passage from near the zenith, till it was totally extinguished; that he saw it, three times, violently agitated, so, to use his own language, "as to cause it to roll over;" that at each agitation, or leap, its bulk diminished, and that, shortly after the third, the luminary wholly disappeared; that at the time of these agitations, an unusual quantity of light was emitted, and, that, in about fifteen minutes, as he believed, after the agitations, he heard three distinct reports. It was probably, the light sent forth at the second explosion, which was observed by the gentleman mentioned, who was standing in his garden. He also heard the report, but imagined, that not more than three minutes intervened between the flash and the time the sound reached his ear. Other gentlemen of this village suppose, that the intervening time could not have been short of five minutes.

Through the motion of this, as well as all other meteors, is rapid, (and they have been seen to move 1000 miles in a minute) it is well known, that the motion of sound is comparatively slow, passing over less than thirteen miles in a minute. Supposing the intervening time to have been five minutes, the meteor, when it exploded, must have been sixty-five miles distant from this place. If the interval was fifteen minutes, its distance must have been about two hundred miles.

We cannot doubt, that, at the moment of the abovementioned agitations, stones denominated meteorick, were projected from the principal mass, and precipitated to the earth. Such we believe, is universally the fact with meteors, which explode in the atmosphere. These stones are usually of a globular form, and always covered with a black or deep brown lustration, composed chiefly of iron. The internal part of the mass is of a greyish colour, and of a coarse, granular texture. Chemical analyses has shown that they are made up principally of iron, sulphur, magnesia, clay, lime and silic. These stones have fallen in almost every part of the globe, and of all sizes, from that of a pea to that of a body of several yards in diameter. But one instance of this kind, has to my knowledge, occurred in New-England. This is the meteor, which burst over the town of Weston, in Connecticut, in 1807; an excellent account of which was given to the public by professors Sillman and Fingale. The body of it was computed to have been not less than twelve or thirteen hundred feet diameter.

If stones fell from the meteor, which we have hastily and superficially described, we are anxious to know where they fell. We hope to hear something on this subject from our friends in the eastern part of this state, or in New-Hampshire.—Should we obtain any additional information, which is interesting, relative to this extraordinary celestial visiter, we shall not fail to communicate it to the public. The above is taken from the mouths of those who witnessed the phenomenon. F. HALL.

FROM THE NORTH WEST.

ST. LOUIS, JUNE 19.

Manuel Lisa, esq. arrived here a few days ago, from his trading posts on the Upper Missouri, with valuable cargoes of furs, peltry, &c. &c. This enterprising gentleman is anxious to gain extend our Indian trade to and beyond the Rocky Mountains. Previous to the late war, his establishments extended to the Pacific side of the mountains, but his parties were obliged to return to the Missouri, leaving behind them an immense quantity of valuable furs, in consequence of the hostility of the Black Feet Indians.

We learn that the Indians who reside on the river Platt and between the rivers Missouri and Arkansas are (as usual) at War with one another. About two months ago, a party of the Pawnees, consisting of four hundred, met a war party of Osages in the plains, within 50 or 60 miles of the Arkansas. The advance guard of the Pawnees made a running fight, drawing after them the Osages into an ambuscade, formed by the main body of the Pawnees. The affair is said to have resulted in the entire defeat and destruction of the Osages; one only escaped out of 48 warriors. Our informant saw 47 guns taken from the Osages. The Pawnees are also at war with the Spaniards of St. A. E. They lately defeated and killed seven Spaniards out of a hunting party they met within the limits of the United States territory. Among the baggage of the Spaniards, they found concealed a Spanish boy, about 10 years old; him they spared, intending to offer him as a sacrifice.