

Meandering Among Words and Ways

Last issue the editor "moseyed" about somewhat. This time he will meander.

Now there is a word the derivation of which is certain. The Meandros was a very crooked river in Greece, or is, for presumably it is still meandering. The Greeks, accordingly, derived from it the word which we have borrowed from them. To "meander", then, is to wind in and out on one's journey, perhaps sometimes almost doubling back on the route. That allows one plenty of liberty.

Possibly the greatest meanderer among American rivers is the now famed Tennessee, which very word means the river of the great bend. As it crosses the state of Tennessee twice, the development of the valley will mean the development of a great part of the Volunteer State.

A study of physical geography shows that most of the great bends of ancient rivers have been cut off in the course of time. But even as near as the Big Coharie, just over here in Sampson, a remarkable one is left. As one approaches old Lisbon, on Big Coharie just above its junction with Six Runs the two forming the Black River, one comes to the east bank of Coharie. The river disappears and shortly thereafter one crosses it at Lisbon. The distance is hardly a half mile. Yet the stream has meandered a mile to the westward and back, making fully three quarters of a circle.

Just out here two miles is the "Black River". That stream is to the main Black what the Missouri is to the Mississippi. The Harnett Black is the upper stretch of the South, which is the longest branch of the main Black. It is the western boundary of Sampson and the eastern of Cumberland and Bladen. Like the Missouri, it is the longest part of the system, but it enters the main stream far below the junction of the two streams which form the main Black. As it is south of Coharie in its lower course, it received that name South. But colonists who followed it on up into the present Harnett seem to have given it the name of the main stream into which it flows fifty miles from Dunn. There is no Coharie north of it in Harnett; so it ceased to be the "South".

When Lisbon Was A Metropolis

That old village of Lisbon was once the metropolis of a large part of both Sampson and Bladen. A hundred and fifty years ago it was laid off into town lots by the writer's great-great-grandfather Richard Herring, the lots being deeded to his several sons and daughters. The records show my great-grandfather Gabriel Herring as owner of some of the lots. Doubtless Richard Herring, who, by the way, as chairman of the first county court of Sampson, the chief of the three men who determined the location of the county seat of Sampson and to whom and his colleagues the deed of the court house square in Clinton is made, expected Lisbon to become quite a town. Flats and small boats could come up Coharie to the village of Lisbon, and from that village, even in my day, the heavy goods brought from Wilmington were carted in every direction. My father has hauled many a load of salt from the little port. It was cheap, cheaper than at present, being brought as ballast from Liverpool in ships which came without cargoes to Wilmington for turpentine and rosin or cotton, and thence up the Black and Coharie to Lisbon. The building of the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad finished Lisbon. The good little town of Garland is its successor as the metropolis of that section of Sampson and Bladen and two of Richard Herring's descendants, Edgar Herring and J. D. Johnson, have been prominent in Garland's building.

That great-grandfather Gabriel Herring possibly laid off the promising river port village, as he was a surveyor. The tradition of his educational advantages has not been handed down. But a deed was once in my possession which indicated that he was a man of considerable culture. His hand was a copy-plate one. The deed was written for my grandfather Peterson, who had to sign with "his mark", and that document indicates somewhat of the leveling process which has taken place within a century and a quarter. It would have surprised Gabriel Her-

ring if a prophet had told him that a son of that illiterate William Peterson would marry his granddaughter, and that a great-grandson of his and grandson of the man who signed with "his mark" would be rather sure that any superiority of intellect which he possesses is derived from the illiterate line. The son of that illiterate did get three months of schooling. He learned to read and, what really counts, did read. The college bred son sometimes marvels at the extent of the knowledge of the father who had three months of schooling in an oldfield school. If he had had a few months in law, as I have heard him wish he had, he would have become a power, and the son would not have been reared as a backwoods farm boy. I have known few men with greater native ability than the son of the man who signed with "his mark".

Heredity Reaches Far

Sometimes one may see a surpassing intellect spring from an apparently unlikely source but by delving into the ancestry find that the family roots go back into a rich heritage. A young Louisianan at the age of 19 or 20 had graduated with honor at Richmond (Va.) College, had taken a law course in a northern university and was back as professor of law at Richmond when he was about twenty-two. His grandfather had, according to tradition, been a freak. His father was a mediocre Baptist preacher. I asked his father what was in the background. He replied that his father, the boy's grandfather and the freak, was a first cousin of Alexander H. Stephens, vice-president of the Confederacy and one of the brainiest men of his age. Half of whatever was back of Stephens was back of the young Louisianan. You cannot always tell what is back of what appears to be a sporadic genius. Yet I have little reason to think that there had ever been any culture back of that native genius who became a well read man after only three months in a school that would appear pathetic today.

And that recalls a suggestion made a few days ago by a scholarly and observant physician as to the Negroes. He remarked that the Negro youths are taking surprising advantage of the opportunities afforded them for getting an education. Moreover, they are aware, he said, that if they steal or commit any other kind of crime they have no big kinsmen to keep them off the roads or out of the penitentiary. The consequence is, the white youths are wearing most of the stripes. It is an apparent fact, continued the doctor, that the most intelligent group in a country has ultimately ruled it. Will it come about in the course of time that the whites of the South will have to find a Hitler to check the power and influence of the Negroes, as Germany's dictator is doing in case of the Jews, who have swamped the universities with their sons and have so largely monopolized the professorships and other scholarly professions that only a few days ago a decree went forth limiting the proportion of Jewish students allowed to enter the universities and banishing hundreds of Jewish professors from the universities?

Wouldn't It Be Tragic?

Wouldn't it be tragic if the Southern youth within a century or two should let the despised race outstrip them, as the boastful Nordics of Germany have let the Jews outstrip them? Football, I opine, will have to cease to be the most popular pursuit at the high schools and colleges if something close akin to that does not happen.

The galaxy of Negro poets, orators, and scientists at present is a most notable one for a race only seventy years out of slavery. Certainly, the white youth of the South cannot afford to dilly-dally and waste the greatest opportunities for culture ever furnished the youth of any land. It is a sad commentary when the average youth at high school or college chooses the courses he deems easiest. Latin and mathematics are too hard to be popular. To "make" a desirable fraternity is deemed more important by hundreds of youths than to gain a place upon the scholarship honor roll. Americans are disposed to reproach the Germans for their harsh treatment of the Jews who have improved oppor-

tunities neglected by themselves. What will Americans do if a similar thing happens in this country? Just look over the honor rolls at the N. C. University of the past few years and see how frequently names of New York and New Jersey Jews appear in comparison with those of the much more numerous Nordics upon the college rolls.

The Jews, of course, have a culture thousands of years older than that of the Nordics of either Germany or America, and regardless of the questionable native superiority of intellect of any people over that of another, they know that the race is not to the swift but to the persevering. In the case of the Negroes, they are still handicapped, despite their ambition. Also the separation of the races in the schools will long prevent any serious competition of the Negroes with the whites in the realm of scholarship. Yet one thing is certain. It is not the opportunity that counts, but the use made of it. The Negro youths may be counted upon to use every opportunity afforded them. The whites have greater advantages, a more favorable tradition and background. The important question is: Will they use them?

Additional Compensations

The editor of the Voice is doing an immense amount of work for little pecuniary reward. Yet there are compensations. The very fact that he has upon his subscription list already a regiment of the leading citizens of the state and that the little paper is apparently appreciated by them, is of itself gratifying. An especial pleasure is it to have among our volunteer readers a number of the fine school fellows of forty-odd years ago who have become prominent among the leading scholars and business and professional men of the State. And I find they are watching and ready to catch a fellow. Dr. Hubert Royster, great as a surgeon and yet mindful of the niceties of language, has just caught me in an offense which irritates his instinct as a purist, and my own too, when my attention is called to it.

"Caption" Goes by the Board

Within a few lines of where I incidentally suggested, in my "moseyings" in the last issue of the Voice, that the perfect-participle stem of a Latin verb may be found by merely cutting off the "ion" of any English noun thus ending, I used the word "caption" for the subject, or heading, of an article. The rule applied indicates clearly that "caption" must be derived from *capio*, the Latin word for catch or capture, and is no kin to *caput*, the Latin word meaning head, which is used for subject of heading in Latin, and from which we derive the word *chapter*. It is just one of the many things that had never caught my attention. I picked up the word in the Lumberton print shop while editing the Lumberton Argus thirty years ago, and had never questioned its paternity in *caput*. The dictionary gives the word caption in the sense in which I used it but states that its use is confined to the United States, and bears out Dr. Royster's statement that it arose from a confusion of the two words *capio* and *caput*. The English are more discriminating. Hubert may be sure that I shall not offend him again by the use of the spurious word, or the spurious use of the word.

"Been" Is "Bean" In England

We Americans, by pronouncing *been* as *bin*, spoil the rhyme in the Mother Goose couplet:

"Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat, where have you been?"
"I've been to London to see the Queen."

Rev. Dr. E. T. Carter, who was a pastor at Clinton for several years, invariably pronounced "been" as we do "bean". The couplet above suggests that it is the rule in England, and the dictionary sustains the suggestion. Dr. Carter, by the way, was one of the best sermonizers I have known. Like other English ministers he emphasized the sermon as the main part of his ministry. The consequence was one who heard him always got something worthwhile. A Sampson-bred minister who was pastor of one of the largest churches in the South but whose time was largely taken up with

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