

# "GENTLEMAN" JOHN PERKINS

## Some Account of the Life and Times of "Gentleman" John Perkins, of Lincoln; and of His Contemporaries, Successors and Descendants; Together With a Glance at the History of the Manners, Customs and Development of What is Now Caldwell County and of the Adjacent Country, During the Latter Part of the Eighteenth and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Centuries.

By W. W. SCOTT

(Continued from Last Week)

This idyllic experience of Mr. Miller, which, together with the other experiences of life at Valle Crucis, Miss Cooper describes so graphically and realistically as to raise her book almost to the dignity of a prose epic, occurred soon after his bereavement in the death of his wife and son, and no doubt the life he led here was more of a solace than any other occupation he could have engaged in. Subsequent to this came his business ventures, although he retained the Valle Crucis property for several years afterwards.

[It is interesting to note that Miss Susan Fenimore Cooper, the writer of the fascinating little book from which the above extracts were taken, was the daughter of James Fenimore Cooper, the great American novelist, who was born at Scarsboro, N. J., in 1813, and during the last years of her father's life was his secretary and amanuensis. She died in Cooperstown, N. Y., Dec. 31, 1894, in her 81st year, just four years after the publication of her book about Valle Crucis.—From the People's Cyclopaedia.]

### The Valle Crucis Estate

The following extract is made from Mr. Marshall DeLancey Haywood's "Bishops of North Carolina":

"It was in 1844-45 that Bishop Ives began to take steps toward the establishment of a mountain mission in Watauga (Ashe) county at a place called Valle Crucis. This was a noble conception for the spread of religion and education throughout the mountainous section of the diocese, theretofore a much-neglected field; and, had he confined his religious views strictly to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and Book of Common Prayer, the undertaking might have met with more success. Even with its early record, whereby it lost the confidence of the Church for a time, much good has been accomplished there. . . . In August, 1844, while on a visit to the Watauga Valley, the Bishop purchased a farm and awarded contracts for the erection of buildings for a missionary station. Of this farm, one hundred acres were under cultivation when the land was purchased. A small grist mill and tannery were already on the place. The first buildings erected under the auspices of Bishop Ives were a saw mill, a log kitchen and dining room, a log dwelling containing four rooms, and a frame building (sixty by twenty feet) with a room at each end for teachers, together with a large hall for school purposes in the center, all on the ground floor. Over the whole was a dormitory for boys. All these buildings, said the Bishop, would be ready by June, 1845. The objects of the Valle Crucis mission, as set forth by Bishop Ives to the convention of 1845, were as follows: To extend the gospel throughout a territory, thirty or forty miles in every direction, to a religiously destitute people; to give rudimentary instruction to poor children of the immediate neighborhood on terms which their parents could afford; to receive into the institution young men of talent from the surrounding country, on condition that they should serve as teachers and catechists for a certain time after graduation, under the direction of the authorities of the mission; to train boys of talent and merit for either the ministry or subordinate services to the Church; to give theological training to candidates for holy orders; to conduct a general school, both classical and agricultural; and to maintain a model farm, both as an aid in maintaining the mission and as a means of instructing the surrounding population in improved agriculture. This was the first school in North Carolina where practical agriculture was taught. The farm work was under the direction of a young agriculturist from the State of New York. In 1846 much progress was reported at Valle Crucis. Several of the old mills had been replaced with new and improved buildings for the same uses, and a large barn and blacksmith shop had been added, besides other houses. In the classical and agricultural school twenty-eight pupils had received instruction during the year, nine of these being given instruction and board free of charge. There were also seven candidates for holy orders residing there. Upon receipt of this report for 1847 the Committee on the State of the Church, through its chairman, the Reverend Robert Brent Drane of Wilmington, reported that it deeply sympathized with the Bishop in his wishes and agreed with him in the expectation of its ultimately becoming a noble and permanent nursery of the Church. In 1846 the Valle Crucis mission sustained a severe blow in the death of its first rector, the Reverend William Thurston. Of that faithful servant of God Bishop Ives wrote: 'As a friend, a presbyter, the rector of the school at Valle Crucis, and my associate in that self-sacrificing enterprise, his simplicity and guilelessness, and fidelity, and unflinching toil, had not only endeared him to my heart, but also made his loss a severe trial to my faith in the important work (to which I felt myself so urgently called) of spreading the light of life through our mountain wilds.' After the death of Mr. Thurston the Reverend Henry H. Prout became head of the mission and the Reverend Jarvis Buxton (son of the Reverend Jarvis Barry Buxton) had charge of the school. In time the Reverend William Glenn French succeeded Mr. Prout as head of the mission. In addition to those already mentioned in connection with Valle Crucis, quite a number of others lived there, at one time or another, who were either then in the sacred ministry or later took holy orders. Among these may be mentioned William R. Gries, William Passmore, George Patterson, Frederick Fitz-Gerald, Joseph W. Murphy, Richard Wainwright Barber, Charles T. Bland, William West Skiles and Thomas F. Davis, Jr. There were probably others also. In the report of the Committee on the State of the Church for 1848 we find the announcement: 'It is understood that the religious house at Valle Crucis will henceforth devote its energies to the instruction of candidates, or those who desire to become candidates, for holy orders. The importance of this institution to the diocese is immense, as the nursery of a future ministry. It appears to possess peculiar advantages for this work, not only in the retirement, for the time being, of its students from the distractions of society, and the hardy and useful discipline to which they are inured, but also in the great economy with which the work can be conducted—your committee being informed that \$50 apiece, per annum, may be made to cover all necessary expenses, except clothing.' By 1849 the mission at Valle Crucis had begun to drift away from the teachings of the Church, and was fast becoming a feeble and undignified imitation of the monastic institutions of the Church of Rome. . . . In connection with the Valle Crucis mission it is but just to the clergymen there stationed by Bishop Ives to add that when he abandoned his Church a few years later not one followed his example. Their vow of 'obedience' did not carry them that far. After the defection of its founder the above mission was almost deserted for nearly half a century, though the Reverend William West Skiles faithfully labored as a missionary in that vicinity until his death, Dec. 8, 1862. The work there was revived, many years later, chiefly through the instrumentality of Bishop Cheshire; but it is at present situated within the missionary jurisdiction of Asheville, under Bishop Horner—an enthusiast on religious education—and is now daily doing the work for which it was originally founded."

The following has been written concerning Dr. Walter Scott, who was sent from Mr. William Bingham's great school at Hillsboro to Valle Crucis: "He was sent to Valle Crucis, a school that had been established by Bishop Ives in the mountains of Ashe (now Watauga) county, about ten miles from Blowing Rock, at the foot of the Grandfather mountain. It was a 'grammar school' with academic and collegiate pretensions, conducted in connection with a divinity school, and here were gathered the teachers of both schools, mostly ministers, as Dr. Thurston and Messrs. French, Gries, etc., and among the young divinity students, who also acted as tutors, was Dr. Scott's life-long friend, Rev. Dr. Jarvis Buxton, to whom he sent his son to school in after years, and who spent the last years of his useful life as rector of St. James' church, Lenoir, of which Dr. Scott was senior warden.

"The romance and the tragedy connected with the history of Valle Crucis are not a part of this story, but, in spite of the fact that the school did not survive the apostasy of Bishop Ives, during the few years of its existence it was a high-grade institution, and being situated in the highest, wildest, healthiest and most beautiful part of the Blue Ridge mountains it was considered by many parents in middle and eastern North Carolina an ideal location for a school for their sons. Established in the midst of a royal domain of several thousand acres of forest, meadow and pasture land, rolling land for barley, buckwheat and other grains, Valle Crucis was a seat to arouse the enthusiasm of lovers of the chase, for all around it abounded deer and smaller game, and in the fastnesses of the Grandfather mountain quantities of black bear made their lair. Naturally the boys took to the sports and exercises that Nature afforded them, and when the Christmas holidays came round, a lot of robust, healthy lads, brown as berries and almost as brawny as their mountain neighbors, returned to their lowland homes to illustrate the beauty of mens sana in cano corpore. Everybody had a gun of some kind, and Walter Scott, although lame, had the weak ankle of his shrunken left leg strongly braced and vied with the most athletic of his schoolfellows in field and woodland sports. He was a famous rifle shot and during his two years' stay at Valle Crucis brought down several deer. Once in a drive his stand was near the brink of High Falls and he heard the hounds in full cry coming down the creek; soon he saw a magnificent buck come loping toward him, and, lost in admiration of the beautiful apparition, he was overcome by 'buck fever' and forgot all about having a gun. Pushed by the hounds and terrified by the scent or sight of the boy lying in wait for him, the stag leaped frantically over the falls and down a precipice of ninety feet, to his death. These falls, near the Valle Crucis school, have a grandeur that would be sublime if the creek were larger, but it is only a large-sized brook or rivulet. On another occasion John Starke Ravenscroft Miller, a friend and schoolmate of Walter Scott and afterwards his brother-in-law, found a big buck snared, with horns tangled in a bramble bush, near the foot of these falls and boldly laid hold upon his horns, at the same time yelling for help. Despite the struggles of the deer he was held down until assistance came, when he

was dispatched. That night there was venison for supper at Valle Crucis, a place was selected on the walls of the Hall for hanging a pair of antlers and the tanner was given a deer-hide to put in the vats."

As has been stated, Mr. Robert C. Miller eventually became owner of the Valle Crucis property and ran it as a stock farm. The Valle Crucis farm is referred to above as a "royal domain of several thousand acres." It was undoubtedly a fine piece of property, but that description probably is an exaggeration. An old manuscript memorandum kept by Mr. Miller in his Valle Crucis papers and dated 1845 sets forth the following items:

"Wm. Thurston and L. S. Ives; Deed from Joel Mast, 400 acres, recorded in Ashe.	
"L. S. Ives to R. C. Miller, bond.	
"1. L. S. Ives and Wm. Thurston, V. C. . . . .	400 acres
"2. Entered in name of L. S. Ives. . . . .	100 "
"3. Entered in name of W. W. Skiles. . . . .	100 "
"4. Entered in name of C. & M., East Ashe. . . . .	50 "
"5. Hair Ridge, No. 11204. . . . .	300 "
"6. Entry No. 11111, North of original purchase. . . . .	238 "
"7. Murphy . . . . .	25 "

1313 acres"

Mr. Miller's 1313 included, it would seem, the "original purchase" of the "V. C." land, 400 acres, and 250 additional acres entered by the Valle Crucis people, not to speak of the 25 acres entered by Rev. Joel Murphy. He himself entered Entry No. 11111 of 238 acres. It is not clear by whom Entry No. 11204 of 300 acres was made.

(2) Eli Perkins Miller, born 1823, died unmarried in 1853, was a young man of marked business ability, handsome, a general favorite and gave promise of making a successful career for himself; he died at Asheboro, Randolph county, where he was engaged in gold-mining.

(3) Dr. William Walter Scott, born at Elm Grove, Perquimans county, married Eliza Snell Miller, the only daughter of Elisha P. and Sidney C. Miller. Dr. Scott was of old Albemarle Quaker stock, his father, William Copeland Scott, having lost his birthright by marrying Martha White "out of the meeting." He was a lineal descendant of that Joseph Scott, a member of the Colonial Assembly, at whose house brother George Fox, the great English Quaker, makes record of sojourning during his visit to America in 1672, and where he held a "precious meeting," as stated in the Colonial Records. In the early forties of the last century William C. Scott, leaving his Elm Grove farm in Perquimans in charge of others, took up a temporary residence in Hillsboro for the education of his children, which move placed young Walter Scott under the tutelage of the distinguished educator, the late William Bingham, noted for the thoroughness of his teaching and the strictness of his discipline. From this great school he was translated to the Valle Crucis school and spent several years there advantageously. Whatever else may be said of Valle Crucis, it was a good school while it lasted. Major Miller of Mary's Grove had those of his sons, who were young enough, at school at Valle Crucis, and in the summer months resided with his family there much of the time. In this beautiful and romantic place Walter Scott met Eliza Miller and the result was that they were married in 1852. But before that event he had to finish school, read medicine with Dr. Richard Browning Baker of Hertford (later of Hickory), go to a medical college in Baltimore two years and wind up and graduate, as a full-fledged doctor, at Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia. Then he was married and settled down as a country doctor at Hertford, Perquimans county. But Mrs. Scott, raised in the west, could not stand the eastern climate, and in 1854 he moved to Lenoir and began the practice of his profession there. Although lame from his childhood and exempt from military service, Dr. Scott was surgeon of Company B, 17th Battalion (Major Avery's command) and an examining surgeon for the conscript service, during the war. After the war he found himself, like so many others, high and dry financially, and in 1866 he accepted an offer to engage in the drug business in Norfolk, Va., where he remained until 1877, when, having somewhat recouped his war losses, he returned to Caldwell and settled on his farm, two and a half miles west of Lenoir, adjoining Mary's Grove; here he remained, practicing his profession and farming, till 1889, when he moved to Lenoir and engaged in the drug business again. He was Treasurer of Caldwell county from 1882 to 1890, the only elective office to which he ever aspired. His skill and success as a physician were well recognized in the State and the practice he was called upon to do was always greater than he could attend to, extending into the adjoining counties. As Mr. H. S. Blair, who wrote of him in the Lenoir Topic when he died, said: "He was beloved by all who knew him." No citizen of the county, however rich or poor, had any hesitation in sending for Dr. Scott, night or day, knowing that the question of pay would never come up till later and, when it did come up, that inability to pay would be as good as a receipt in full. He gave much to the poor and was beloved by the poor. His sweet and gentle character was well recognized by all who knew him. The old-time doctors were generally good men, and this is certainly true of Dr. Scott's old friends, colleagues and contemporaries, Dr. Scroggs and Dr. Beall; and we know that the Lord has given credit to these three worthies for much of free and loving service performed in behalf of the Lord's own poor, who are nearer to Him than the rich. Dr. Scott died Oct. 3, 1896, and Rev. Dr. Jarvis Buxton, rector of the Episcopal church in Lenoir, who performed the last sad rites, had been his preceptor at Valle Crucis, Dr. Buxton being a clerical student as well as a preceptor and Dr. Scott a lay student. He had been a member of the Episcopal Church from childhood and was Senior Warden of St. James' parish at his death. Mrs. Scott was educated at home, in Morganton, in Lincoln and finally at Epworth School, Greensboro. The home school was under John William Frederick Gates (probably Goetz) whom Major Miller employed to teach his children; the children of neighbors also came to school to Mr. Gates and the children of Burke relatives came down and lived at Mary's Grove and enjoyed the privileges of learning under him. He was a German, tall, straight, military in his movements, strict in discipline and at stated intervals subject to disappearing, upon which occasions he was generally credited (or debited) with being in his cups. Upon the rare occasions when he appeared openly under the influence of liquor he was apt to speak darkly of great European personages who were forced for political reasons to reside incognito upon foreign shores; he had probably heard the claim made by Peter Stuart Ney, the Iredell-Surrey school teacher contemporary with himself, that he was Marshal Ney in disguise. He was said to have been an excellent teacher, especially strong in mathematics. He was certainly a good "scribe." A well-bound manuscript prepared by Mrs. Scott is still extant, which contains on every page "examples" in the rule of three, tare and such intricate mathematical problems, worked out and written down in detail, and the writing is something marvelous. The most perfect mechanical "script" cannot excel it. There are some exquisite "copies" by Mr. Gates, which, however, do not much surpass in excellence the work of his young pupil. There are still living in Caldwell elderly gentlemen who recount with glee, at this late day, the powerful thrashings they received at the hands (and hickory switch) of "old man Gates." But this story is of Mrs. Scott. The rare character of this dear lady is a cherished remembrance to all who knew her. Duty, with all that it involved, was, to her, life; truth was everlasting, the opposite chaff. This creed, based upon her Christian faith, was the rock upon which she stood. The sweet simplicity of her nature invested her with a dignity that put her at ease under all circumstances; gentle but steadfast, never allowing tact to overstep the bounds of truth, there was something heroic in her mould; for the poverty of war times, the poverty of the times succeeding the war, the ungalant threats and abuses of invading enemies in arms—all were met with high courage and uncompromising trust in a Power higher than worldly forces. In 1899, at the ripe age of 74, she passed away, but never during her life did she give the impression of being an old lady. Dr. and Mrs. Scott had four children, three of whom are living—William Walter, Jr., lawyer, for fifteen years editor of the Lenoir Topic and now employed in the Treasury Department, Washington, D. C.; married to his cousin, Mary Anderson Miller, who traces back to John Perkins both through R. J. and Mary Perkins Miller and John Perkins the second.—Robert Eli, died in infancy.—Martha White, married to Capt. Edmund Jones of Lenoir, N. C.—Mary Sidney Caldwell, wife of Rev. Dr. C. B. Bryan, rector of Grace Protestant Episcopal church, Petersburg, Va.; seven children, six living; Elizabeth, wife of J. Morton Townsend, a Petersburg lawyer; one daughter and three sons living, one son died in infancy;—Delia, wife of George West Harrison, a Petersburg merchant; two daughters and one son;—Mary Sidney Caldwell, unmarried;—Corbin Braxton, 2nd, married to Alice Kent, one son; first lieutenant in National Army, booked for France but did not embark on account of armistice;—William Walter, Walter, unmarried, second lieutenant in National Army, booked for Siberia but did not embark on account of armistice. (Both C. B., Jr., and Walter enlisted, the one in the Richmond Howitzers and the other in the Richmond Blues, and received commissions after being detailed to officers' training comps.)—Frances Bland Tucker, unmarried.

(To be Continued Next Week.)

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Guilford county Farmers' Union met Saturday and passed resolutions demanding the repeal of the property revaluation act, contending that it unjustly throws the burden of taxation on the farmers and will drive them from the farms.

## Clogged Body Works Untold Damage

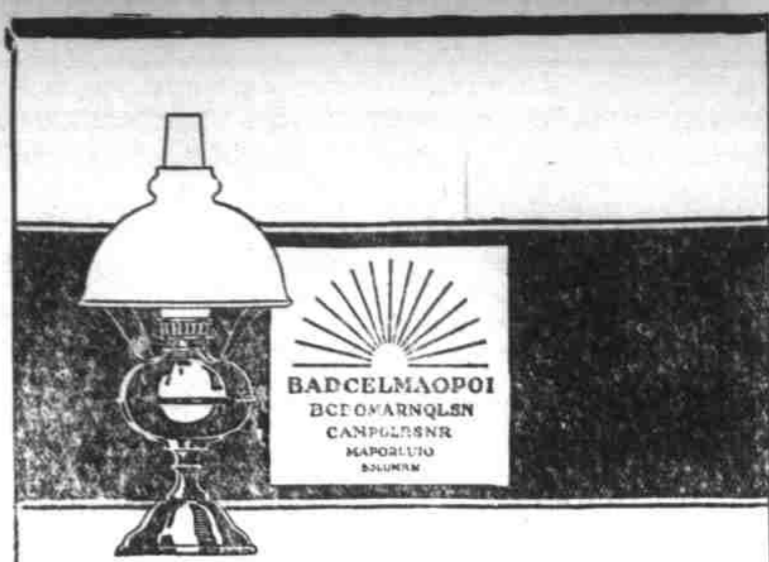
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