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Alexander Brown and the Renaissance of Virginia History

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ALEXANDER BROWN
AND THE RENAISSANCE OF VIRGINIA HISTORY

by

Marvin E. Harvey
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
of
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for the degree of
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Not until the second half of the nineteenth century, and then primarily as a result of the influence of the Civil War, was there a place in the curriculum of the nation's public schools for the teaching of history.\(^1\) The War of Secession, however, gave rise to a feeling of nationalism which found its greatest expression in the writing and in the teaching of history. Magazines, notably Harper's, took the lead in supplying this new thirst for historical knowledge, and the publishers of juvenile books substituted material on history for the conventional Biblical stories.\(^2\)

In the South, where problems far more pressing absorbed the minds of the people, historical studies lagged during the years immediately following the close of the war, as indeed they had done before the outbreak of hostilities.\(^3\) The North and especially New England had early looked back upon the past and found that it was heroic, and that the giants of those days were worthy of study. Their compact settlements were conducive to efforts at intellectual independence of the Old World. They, moreover, made possible the formation of numerous historical societies, after which history was written in a prodigious number of volumes. In contrast the South early fell behind in its

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2. Ibid., 292.
3. Ibid., 353.
historical consciousness. Social factors and racial strains combined to make the Southerner individualistic and to deny him that introspection characteristic of the New Englander. Rural economy and frugal Scotch-Irish settlers were not the least important factors in the development of Southern individualism.4

Other causes of this ante bellum lethargy in historical studies may be noted. For one thing the South, always conservative, clung to the English classics which inhabited a desire for native literature, historical or otherwise.5 And the neglect of popular education prevented a proper appreciation of historical endeavors. This cogitation led a Virginia writer in 1847 to declare that

It is only in Virginia itself that any extensive sale of works on the history of Virginia could be expected; yet strange to say an unaccountable penurious-ness or a total want of interest has disgusted the publishing "trade" with all such undertakings.6

It was doubtless this same problem which a hundred years before had prompted William Stith to wrathfully conclude his famous history with the observation that he had "intended to add several other very curious Papers and original Pieces of Records. But I perceive to my no small Surprise and Mortification that my Countrymen, and these, too, Persons of high Fortune and Distinction seem to be much alarmed that a complete History would run to more than one Volume and cost

more than one half a Pistole.\textsuperscript{7}

Still another factor was the strong preference of Southern youth for political and military careers. "The gentlemen of the higher classes in Virginia," said a commentator of the last century, "are so much occupied with the duties of government and politics that they have no time to spend over the records of the past."\textsuperscript{8}

Closely connected with politics was slavery, the defense of which consumed the time of the most talented Southern writers. But for that issue the brilliance of Thomas Roderick Dew might have directed itself more fully toward the evolvement of a profound philosophy of history. But for the predilection of the youth of the Virginia aristocracy for military science the same might have been true of the superb intellect of Robert E. Lee.

These factors notwithstanding a much larger output of history was written on colonial Virginia during the first half of the nineteenth century than was written on colonial New England.\textsuperscript{9} For example Force's Tracts Relating to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America contained twice as much material on Virginia as they did on the more northerly colonies. But when the North and South came together in conflict it was the North that won, and the nation was thereafter governed in accordance with her principles. Consciously or unconsciously this consideration began to effect the views of the past

\textsuperscript{7} William Stith, The History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia (Williamsburg, 1747), Appendix, iii.
\textsuperscript{8} The Southern and Western Literary Messenger and Review, XIII, 1847, 1.
\textsuperscript{9} Anonymoue, "Virginia and New England," The Atlantic Monthly, LXVI, 1891, 700.
and to the scholars and historians of the Northern universities the origins of New England seemed vastly more worthy of study than did the origins of Virginia.

To the scholars and historians of Virginia this shift of emphasis, coming as it did fast on the heels of defeat, could not be allowed to go on. To them the neglect hitherto rendered the historiography of the Old Dominion became a matter of grave concern. Writing about the beginning of the century's last decade, a leading Virginia educator deplored the propensity of Virginians for being content with the making of history while the writing of it is left to others. 10 "As a result", he said, "much has been left unwritten and many of the records have been irretrievably lost. The investigator of a particular point in the history of Virginia is hampered by the lack of originals and must take evidence second or third hand." 11 However the author saw a ray of hope in that this defect was "gradually being corrected as far as it is now possible to correct it." 12 He called the attention of his readers to the publications of the Virginia Historical Society, to the efficient work then being done by its President, by its Corresponding Secretary, by the Chairman of its Committee of Arrangements, 13 and above all to the publication at intervals for the past sixteen years of the Calendar of Virginia State Papers and to the recent valuable work on The Genesis of

11. Ibid., 3.
12. Ibid., 3.
13. These were W. W. Henry, R. A. Brock, and L. O. Tyler.
the United States which "show that there is historical activity in the state and that we are waking to the importance of bringing the records of the past to the attention of the present and of interesting the people of this day in the deeds of their ancestors."14

The present study chiefly concerns itself with the author of "the recent valuable work on The Genesis of the United States. But before going into the details of the life and work of Alexander Brown it is pertinent, I believe, to say something of his associates and contemporaries and of the state of Virginia historical writings during the age in which he lived, for without some comprehension of that renaissance of Virginia history of which he was an integrant part, and which culminated in some of the great contributions to American historiography, no understanding of the life and works of a participant in the movement is possible.

Though the revival of interest in Virginia history did not burst forth until the later part of the nineteenth century one must go back a full fifty years to find its primordial roots. On the night of 29 December 1831, through the efforts of Dr. Jonathan P. Cushing, President of Hampden-Sydney College, a group of citizens met in the Hall of the House of Delegates in Richmond.15 The leading spirits among this small group, in addition to Dr. Cushing, were Conway Robinson, an eminent jurist; John Floyd, a brilliant young barrister

who twenty years later would be governor of the state; and John Marshall, Chief Justice of the United States. The venerable President of Hampden-Sydney called the meeting to order, and John Marshall, then in his seventy-seventh year, was elected the first President of the Virginia Historical Society. None of these men were trained historians. Only Marshall had sought to achieve a name for himself in the annals of historical scholarship. His single effort—a biography of Washington—was motivated partly by a desire to liquidate his heavy indebtedness and partly by a desire to idolize the life of his hero. Ignorant of methods and sources, he found the exacting toil of research too irksome. The result was almost a complete fiasco.

But despite the amateur standing of its leaders the Society flourished for a few years, and then, for some reason which no record explains a dormant period followed. However during this period of latency there were a number of scholars passionately devoted to the cause of historical learning. Of these Charles Campbell and Hugh Blair Grigsby were among the most important. In 1844 Campbell, using The Southern Literary Messenger as a medium, began a campaign to induce the Virginia legislature to finance the procurement of manuscripts which "slumber in the English state paper office." Grigsby, publisher of the Norfolk

Beacon, soon became his powerful ally. They of course failed in their purpose but their efforts were not without effect. About this time Campbell published his Introduction to the History of the Ancient Colony and Dominion of Virginia. Though this was later superseded by his History of the Colony and Ancient Dominion of Virginia, it aroused considerable interest and was one of the finest histories of Virginia which at that time had been published.

In 1647 the Society reorganized and established its headquarters in the same building which housed The Southern Literary Messenger. If R. B. Thompson, editor of the Messenger, was even a member of the Society the record of it has been lost, but he lent himself to its affairs and took a keen interest in its new publication, The Virginia Historical Register and Literary Note Book edited by William Maxwell. Maxwell endeavored to bring before his readers "all such memorials, accounts of events, or transactions relating to the history of the state which are still extant in print or manuscript and ought to be better known." Under its new leadership the Society made an intense effort to interest its members in matters of a historical nature, and endeavored to capitalize on the pride which the people felt in the Old Dominion and its achievements. This trend is clearly manifest in the William C. Rives' presidential address at the meeting of 1848:

The spirit which has summoned this Society again into activity after a slumber of several years is to be regarded, I trust, as one of the omens of a better

21. Editor's Introduction, Virginia Historical Register, iv i.
day for our ancient Commonwealth. Too long have we followed after strange gods and turned our backs upon those of our own household. The false glare of national honors has been wont to dazzle the eyes of Virginians and to make them forget the duty and service they owe to their own state.22

The Register, as its title implied, brought, along with a great amount of non-historical matter, much material on early Virginia history. But in 1856 a shortage of funds forced the closing of its pages. Moreover the Society itself was two years later without a home, and its papers were placed for safe keeping in the hands of its members. Thus it happened that of its early records and papers many were lost in the fire of 1865 which reduced much of Richmond to ashes.23

During the early years of Reconstruction the struggle for existence superceded any thought of historical activity. Then in 1870 a group of citizens, foremost of whom were J. L. M. Curry, T. H. Byrnes, and Conway Robinson reorganized the Society, and in 1881 the Westmoreland Club gave the rejuvenated body the use of the third floor of its spacious three story house on Eleventh Street.24

By the year 1881 the renaissance of Virginia history may be said to have really begun, for in that year the New Society, spawned by the same progressive spirit that gave rise to the New South, re-elected

24. Ibid., XXXIV, 7.
Robert A. Brock Corresponding Secretary with a salary sufficiently large to engage his full time services. To the indefatigable labors of this enterprising trailblazer of research in Virginia history the students of this generation owe a debt of infinite gratitude; and almost equally worthy of praise are the men and women whose financial sacrifices made possible the fruitful labors of Brock and his successors. Truly they were all pioneers to the past!

Robert Alonso Brock was the son of a wealthy Richmond businessman. Therefore it is most surprising to learn that he left school at the early age of thirteen to work in a lumber establishment in order to buy and read books commensurate with his own desires. After the war he established his own lumber business, retiring in 1881 to devote his time exclusively to historical and genealogical studies, and to his duties as Corresponding Secretary of the Virginia Historical Society, the reputation of which he so firmly established in this country and abroad that at the time of his death seventy learned societies in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain had received him into honorary membership in recognition of his outstanding achievements against almost insuperable odds.

Brock's greatest claim to fame is the eleven volumes known as the Virginia Historical Society Collections which, under his editorship, for the first time made many priceless manuscripts available to students of early Virginia history. Not the least important portions of the

25. Ibid., XXXIV, 8.
Collections are the editor's introductions and notes. Among the manuscripts for the first time published are The Official Letters of Alexander Spotswood which form the first two volumes of the series and The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie which comprise volumes four to six inclusive. The Dinwiddie papers had not hitherto been used to any great extent except by Sparks and Chalmers, but even their examinations had been superficial and their attitudes not altogether impartial. The Spotswood letters were lost for many years but finally they were located in England. In 1783 the Virginia Historical Society purchased them from their English owner, and once again an important collection of source materials was made available to historical investigators.

Of greater interest to students of the earlier period are Robinson's Abstracts of the Proceedings of the Virginia Company of London. To record the efforts of various individuals to secure publication of the records of the Virginia Company would require volumes. William Byrd I bought the original manuscripts from the Earl of Southhampton. William Stith acquired them from Byrd for use in his history of Virginia. From Stith they passed into the hands of Peyton Randolph. After the death of Randolph, Thomas Jefferson purchased his library and thus he became their owner. His library eventually became the property of the Library of Congress, and with it the manuscript volumes of the Company's records. For many years they lay in the Congressional Library, where they were not readily accessible to researchers. As early as 1858 John W. Thornton

insisted upon the importance of their publication. In 1869 Edward D. Neill proposed to Congress that he be allowed to edit the records without compensation, but the lawmakers turned a deaf ear to his plea. In 1877 Brock himself entered "A Plea for the Publication of the Records of the Virginia Company" in the columns of the Richmond Daily Dispatch. While in England (1853-1856), Conway Robinson, an eminent Virginia jurist, made copious extracts from the originals in the Public Record Office. Upon his death the family gave these abstractions to the Virginia Historical Society. Under Brock's editorship they were published as the last two volumes of the Collections. They included only about half the original documents; but until Miss Kingsbury brought out her monumental Records of the Virginia Company, scholars, other than a chosen few, had no other access to these important manuscripts.

There is another equally important product of Robert A. Brock's insatiable desire to serve American historiography. Among those students who study the War Between the States the twenty-five volumes of the Southern Historical Society Papers which bear his name perpetuates his fame as do the Collections among those who study colonial history. The Southerner who at the close of the Civil War mournfully predicted that "to the South's overflowing cup would be added the bitter taste...

of having the history of the war written by Northerners for the next fifty years was only partially correct. In a sense the *Southern Historical Society Papers* are the voice of the vanquished South answering the scornful accusations of the victorious North regarding slavery and the war. In some instances they render the only eye witness accounts of important events. The many interpretations of Southern thinkers on various aspects of the conflict which they have preserved make them, as it were, the South's counsel for the defense before the bar of national opinion.

No other historian of this period, within the larger purview, did so much for the cause of Virginia historical scholarship. But others possessed more brilliant minds and produced more creative studies and, because of participation in the much vaunted John Smith controversy, are more widely known. One of these is William Wirt Henry.

In view of his heritage it was almost inevitable that the grandson of Patrick Henry should turn his attention to historical studies. Henry's original contributions to historical research were not numerous; but his influence was widely felt, his aid and advice sought by many. Among these the name of Henry Adams conspicuously stands out. This is surprising in view of Henry's extreme pro-Southern and anti-New England attitude which he frequently expressed in regard to the John Smith controversy. Nevertheless we find among the Henry papers a number of letters in which Adams seeks and gratefully acknowledges

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33. See for instance *The Settlement at Jamestown*, Richmond, 1882, 12.
Henry's aid in the preparation of his life of Albert Gallatin—biography not yet superceded in the opinion of at least one competent historiographer. Henry also gave Adams some aid in preparing his volumes on the administrations of Jefferson and Madison. If Henry's letters to Adams are still extant they are doubtless very revealing.

Another renowned scholar with whom Henry carried on a voluminous correspondence was Moses Coit Tyler. Henry submitted his Life, Correspondence and Speeches of Patrick Henry to Tyler for his criticism. The Cornell scholar was "greatly satisfied with the method and tone of that great work." Later Tyler wrote an article for the Yale Review on the Henry treatise which he feared would displease his friend. So he wrote to explain that "what I say in praise of your book should have weight, as it would not were it mere eulogy, I have dealt with it in a critical manner, especially pointing out some little mistakes which I noticed here and there in reading it." In the preface Henry appropriately acknowledged Tyler's aid. Tyler was indebted to the Virginian for help received in his own life of Patrick Henry which had come out some years previously. Henry furnished manuscripts without

34. Letters of Henry Adams to W. W. Henry, Sept. 11, 1877 and Sept. 26, 1877, Henry Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Box No. 2
37. Letter of M. C. Tyler to W. W. Henry, Nov. 13, 1892, Henry Papers, Box No. 3.
38. Letter of M. C. Tyler to W. W. Henry, Feb. 2, 1893, Henry Papers, Box No. 3.
40. H. Mumford Jones, Moses Coit Tyler, Ann Arbor, 1933, 224.
which he could never have finished the book. Thus in their mutual
studies of a common subject the two men were of a great help to each
other.

Henry was active in the affairs of the American Historical Asso-
ciation, and in 1891 he became its President. Some of his most pene-
trating works are to be found in the Papers and Annual Reports issued
by the Association during these years.41 They are logical and force-
ful though we may not always agree with their conclusions.

Henry became deeply involved in the John Smith controversy which
during the latter half of the nineteenth century occupied the attention
of such masters as Henry Adams, John G. Palfrey, Edward D. Neill and
many others. Of all the pro-Smith writers Henry’s arguments are the
most irrefutable. This aspect of his career fits elsewhere into the
narrative because of the many verbal blows he exchanged with Alexander
Brown on the subject.

Also of singular importance in the rebirth of Virginia history is
William Glover Stannard. Like Brock he became interested in local re-
cords, and in that field he prosecuted the investigations which give
him a high place in the annals of historical scholarship.42 From the
records of town and county he compiled Some Emigrants to Virginia, "the
first attempt ever made to collect the names of the various emigrants
to Virginia whose parentage, family connections, or former homes could
be learned."43 It includes in its pages all ranks from the lowest

41. See Annual Report for 1891, 13-29; Annual Report for 1893, 3-16;
Papers, III, 445-484. There are also numerous abstracts, passim.
42. Virginia Encyclopedia of History and Biography, III, 282.
43. L. G. Tyler, in William and Mary Quarterly, XX, Per. 1 304.
servant to the most exalted knight or lord.

Using the various local records, Stannard was able to unearth many interesting social and economic aspects of colonial Virginia. For example he collected notes on racing in the colony which he published in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, hoping that his "sketch might be of use to some one who might desire to write a book on the subject."44 He established the introduction of racing into the colony at about 1640, though the first record of it is in 1674 when John Bullocke was fined £100 for "racing his mare against Mr. Matthew Slader's horse, it being only a sport for gentlemen."

A more important achievement was editing and publishing the records of the Virginia Committee of Correspondence. For years its records had lain in a garret in the capitol unthought of and unused. About 1904 the untiring Stannard brought them to light and published them in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*.45

Likewise the Virginia land patents were accumulating dust in the land register's office. The questing investigator searched them out and published extensive abstracts with copious notes in the first eight volumes of the aforementioned magazine. Beginning in 1623, he carried them through the year 1637. They form a valuable index to the social and economic status of the inhabitants during the last years under the Company and the first years under Crown rule.

In addition to the output of his pen William Glover Stannard

45. Volumes IX-XII.
performed other distinguished services to the historiography of his native state. In 1900 he was appointed the Virginia adjunct for the Public Archives Commission. Through his influence the Commonwealth appropriated $12,000 for investigating, preserving, and indexing documents relating to the history of Virginia.46

Limitations of time and space do not permit us to consider all the products of his prolific pen prior to and during his thirty-five years as editor of the Virginia Magazine of History and Biography. Despite the great mass of material which he published in various journals only a small part of his research ever found its way into print. For this reason he has been appropriately called the Action of Virginia.47

Another outstanding figure in Virginia's historical renaissance was Lyon G. Tyler, for many years President of the College of William and Mary. His claims to fame are many, not the least of which is the fact that he was the founder of the oldest extant historical magazine in Virginia.48 He established the William and Mary Quarterly and for twenty-seven years operated it as a private undertaking at his own expense. During these years Dr. Tyler's great familiarity with state and county records plus his intimate acquaintance with the earliest Virginia families have greatly enriched the historical literature of

48. The William and Mary Quarterly was founded in 1893 and the Virginia Magazine of History and Biography the following year.
the state he loved so well. In 1921 the College itself assumed the responsibility of publishing the Quarterly. Under its new management it took on greater prestige among professional historians, but to Dr. Tyler goes the credit for pioneering in the field of historical journalism in Virginia—an undertaking which entailed a great amount of painstaking labor, to say nothing of the expense involved.

The youngest and most brilliant of this group of historians was Philip Alexander Bruce. According to no less an authority than L. G. Tyler he was the best informed man in Virginia on the colonial history of the state. Like the others he took a deep interest in records and manuscripts. As editor of the Virginia Magazine of History and Biography he endeavored to bring as many of these as possible to the attention of his readers, and under his editorship "there could nowhere be found so many interesting and valuable documents relating to Virginia history as in one issue of the magazine."49 His intensive study of the official records and other original documents enabled him to compile his monumental Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century.

In 1881, when only twenty-five years of age, Bruce, in delivering the commencement address at Onancock Academy predicted that before the century's end there would be a resurgence of interest which would result in important studies on Virginia history.50 The young prophet did

not then realize that within a few short years his own scholarly works on the social, economic, and institutional aspects of colonial Virginia would catapult his own name into the front ranks of the nation's historians. Because he made use of hitherto unused records and manuscripts the Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century is a milestone in the historiography of the Virginia colony. As the author tells us he was the first attempt to describe the purely economic life of the people in detail during the colony's first century of existence.51

Ten years later, using the same sources, Bruce published his Social History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century. And shortly thereafter an Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century was forthcoming. In the preparation of these two volumes Bruce spent several years in England "gathering material in the Public Record Office, Fulham and Lambeth Palaces and the like."52 These three studies taken together present a complete picture of conditions in the colony previous to the year 1700.

These, then, are the men who lived in and wrote about the Virginia of Alexander Brown; the men with whom he talked and with whom he sometimes took issue on the historical controversies of the day, or who in some way took part in the reawakening of Virginia history. Time and space does not permit even an enumeration of all the worthies who took part in this wave of learning. But we fain must mention Joseph Bryan

through whose influence the Virginia Historical Society received its present home. 53 This interesting man of culture and affluence took an interest in learned societies after the war because he believed that they were the agencies through which he could best aid in fostering a spirit of conciliation between North and South. 54 Thus it happened that he was interested in the affairs of the Society of the Cincinnati, the Society of Colonial Wars, and the Sons of the American Revolution. In 1892 he was chosen president of the Virginia Historical Society; thus it was under his leadership that the Virginia Magazine of History and Biography was founded.

Another important minor figure who could be mentioned is Armistead Gordon, who as chairman of the state library board, established a department of archives in which the records of the state and colony could be better preserved. Through his efforts calendars and indices were prepared so that the records could be made more accessible to students. 55

We could thus go on for many pages but the narrative of the life of Alexander Brown compels our attention. Therefore we leave these leaders of Virginia's historical renaissance and turn our attention to "the most interesting character of all Virginia historians." 56

Chapter II

Ancestry and Early Life

Of Scotch and English ancestry, Alexander Brown the historian was born September 5, 1843, at Glenmore, Nelson County, Virginia. He was removed on the paternal side by only two generations from the Highlands of his ancestors. The first of his Scottish forebears mentioned by the historian was Lawrence Brown of Tibbermoor, Perthshire, his great-grandfather. This gentleman of Scotland about whom we know so little married Elizabeth Henderson, a grandniece of Robert Dinwiddle, one of the last of Virginia's governor's under the Crown. She could, moreover, take additional pride in the fact that her mother was a member of the famous Fleming family, now the Steward-Shaw family in the English peerage.  

Though Lawrence and Elizabeth Brown were certainly not wealthy, we may, in view of the foregoing, assume that they were more than an ordinary couple. To them on March 27, 1796 was born a son whom they named Alexander. When the boy became old enough his parents sent him to Perth Academy, one of the finest preparatory schools in the Scotland of that day. Thus when the son of Lawrence Brown emigrated from his native land to the New World he was much better equipped for the task of earning a living than was the average immigrant of the early eighteen hundreds.

This is how the young Alexander's emigration from Scotland came

about. Shortly after the close of the American Revolution, Mrs. Brown’s brother, the Reverend James Henderson, came to America. SETTling in Virginia, he became rector of Westover Parish and later a professor in the College of William and Mary. In 1811 James Henderson returned to Scotland for a visit. For some reason not now known Lawrence and Elizabeth Brown determined to send their son to America under the care of his learned uncle. And thus it happened that the earliest progenitor of this line of the Brown family in America settled in Virginia.  

The young immigrant, now fifteen years of age, settled with his uncle in Williamsburg. For a time he attended the famed college at which his kinsman taught, but it seems that he did not take a degree. Upon reaching his majority young Brown went to Lovingston in Nelson County to manage a mercantile business which James Henderson had established there in partnership with Parker Garland. In Lovingston he met Lucy Rives, daughter of Robert Rives, a scion of Cabell blood. And there on April 27, 1819 he married her. If Alexander Brown had not already a start in life his marriage to Lucy Rives gave him one. His father-in-law, a large landowner as well as one of the county’s leading merchants, took him into a partnership, and when the partnership was dissolved several years later, he, "because of his natural love for his daughter...and her husband, Alexander Brown, gave them an estate known as the Variety Mills Tract." This consisted of

3. Ibid., 464.
1,068 acres of land, flour and corn mills, a saw mill, and a tannery. In addition the generous father-in-law included fifteen slaves. On this estate the historian's grandfather built "Belmont," a mansion comparable to those of his neighbors in the valley of the James.

From this time on Alexander Brown took a leading part in public affairs. In 1824, when the Marquis de Lafayette visited Monticello, we find Major Alexander Brown of the Virginia Militia acting as chairman of a committee to "interview him and ascertain whether it will comport with his convenience to pass through the county of Nelson." Since Major Brown's namesake does not further elucidate the incident we may presume that it did not "comport with the convenience" of the distinguished French visitor "to pass through the county of Nelson."

It seems that the first Alexander Brown took no great interest in politics, but he was for many years a justice of the peace; and in 1857 at least he was the presiding magistrate. This we know from a legal document among the Brown Papers in the William and Mary College Library. This document has a double interest. For in addition to being indicative of the status of the Brown family during the years previous to the outbreak of the Civil War, it shows the precautions then being taken to prevent slave uprisings. Therefore it is quoted in full.

Nelson County to wit.
I, Alexander Brown, a justice of the peace of the said county of Nelson, do in the name of the Commonwealth, command you, the said (names repeated), to patrol and visit until the first day of

5. Ibid., 378.
6. Ibid., 379.
county court of the said county within the bounds of the said county at least once a week all negro quarters and all other places suspected of unlawful assemblies, or such slaves as may stroll from one plantation to another and to take all such persons found in unlawful assembly, or found strolling, to some justice of the peace near the place of capture to be dealt with according to law. And I appoint you, the said Moses H. Philips captain of the said patrol. Given under my hand this 19th day of September, 1857. 8

Alexander Brown, J. P.

To this prominent Scottish immigrant and his wife were born one son and two daughters. One daughter, Margaret, married Richard H. Wilmer, an Episcopal minister and son of a former president of the College of William and Mary. Richard Wilmer rapidly climbed the ecclesiastical ladder, and in 1862 he became the bishop of the Alabama diocese. The other daughter, Elizabeth, also married a clergyman, though a less prominent one, in the person of the Reverend Richard Kidder Meade of Charlottesville. Except for a brief reference to "Aunt Betty" with whom he lived while attending school in Charlottesville, the younger Alexander Brown never mentioned either of his father's sisters in any of his existing correspondence.

But of Robert Lawrence Brown we fortunately know considerably more than we do of his sisters. Along with them he was taught by private tutors at Belmont. The most important of these tutors was Thomas Stanhope Flournoy, but recently graduated from the University of Virginia. 9 A man of learning and ambition, he later became a member of Congress and an outstanding politician; consequently in

8. Legal document in the Brown Papers, College of William and Mary, Box No. 6.
1876 he was chosen to make the speech seconding the nomination of Tilden before the Democratic National Convention of that year. That the squire of Belmont employed the very best of instructors for his children there can be no doubt.

Thus prepared for higher education, Robert Lawrence Brown entered the University of Virginia in 1836, and three years later he received his bachelor's degree. He wished at this time to become an artist, and, as his father's means were sufficient, he spent the next two years studying in Europe. But his ambitions in this respect were greater than his abilities and the undertaking had to be given up.10

Upon his return from Europe the would-be artist married Sarah Calloway of Lynchburg. To them as related above, Alexander Brown was born September 5, 1843. Later another son and a daughter were born but neither of them survived infancy. In 1849 Sarah Calloway Brown also died, and for the next several years the future historian was reared by his grandmother, Elizabeth Calloway.

After his return from Europe Robert Lawrence Brown became an educator of no mean repute. He established a private school at Belmont and there among a treasury of books the young Alexander received his early education. A few years later Robert L. added to his laurels by becoming director of the Lynchburg Female Seminary at Lynchburg. A man of versatile tastes, the prototype of the historian's father would indeed be hard to find today. L. G. Tyler says of him:

He combined the life of a farmer with that of a teacher and was a man of culture and intelligence, a typical representative of a class of ante-bellum Virginians who could finish you off a quotation from Horace or Virgil more easily than an American gentleman of this mercenary age can round out a familiar passage from Pope or Shakespeare.\textsuperscript{11}

So much for the paternal ancestry of Alexander Brown. Before taking up his early life an examination of the maternal line is pertinent.

Since the time of William the Conqueror the men of Cabell blood have left their imprint upon the pages of English and American history. The first of the line to settle in Virginia was Dr. William Cabell of Warminster, Wiltshire, England, believed to have been a surgeon in the royal navy. When his ship put into a Virginia port he visited the interior and "was so pleased with what he saw that he determined to make it his future home."\textsuperscript{12} Accordingly he returned to England, married, and sometime after 1725 returned again to Virginia. This enterprising physician settled far up the valley of the James outside the pale of the Tidewater settlement. At the time of his death in 1774 he was lord of 27,000 acres of land and thousands of slaves.\textsuperscript{13}

On this land Colonel William Cabell, Sr., son of the founder, built the house known as Union Hill. Completed in 1787, it was of palatial proportions with the usual appanages of a southern plantation house. The builder of this famous mansion was the father of Colonel William Cabell the Younger who was the father of Mary Elizabeth Cabell. This

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\textsuperscript{11} L. G. Tyler, \textit{Men of Mark in Virginia}, Washington, 1909, V, 45.
\textsuperscript{12} Alexander Brown, \textit{The Cabells and Their Kin}, Richmond, 1939, 35.
\textsuperscript{13} Alexander Brown, \textit{The Cabells and Their Kin}, Richmond, 1939, 87.
\end{flushright}
grand-daughter of the builder of Union Hill married Dr. George Calloway, a Lynchburg physician, himself a scion of a famous pioneer family. He was a nephew of Colonel Richard Calloway, one of the founders of Kentucky. The daughter of Dr. George and Mary Elizabeth Calloway was the mother of Alexander Brown. Thus the historian's maternal ancestry was an unbroken line from the founder of the family in Virginia.

With such a background it was only natural that Alexander Brown should become a scholar of no mean proportions. His Brown ancestry in both the Old World and the New had connections of which he might well have been proud. His Cabell heritage, too, he justly held in exalted esteem. Of this remarkable family one of the present century's most influential men of affairs felt impelled to say that

Their high brows and cheek bones, their aquiline noses and other physical markings conspired with authentic genealogy to refer their surname to the Norman use of the Latin word Caballus rather than to the Latin word Equus for that knightly animal, the horse. Few families in the history of our country have been so productive as the Cabell's and their kin of ability ranging all the way from the practical sagacity of skillful business management to brilliant professional and political talents.

Alexander Brown spent the years of his boyhood among the peaceful rusticities of his native Nelson County. In his father's library he early became acquainted with the best in the literature of Europe and America. To the deeds of the heroes of the past the adventurous spirit

15. See genealogical chart at the end of the chapter.
16. William C. Bruce, Recollections, Baltimore, 1936, 58.
of the young reader thrilled. And to him as to many another Virginia boy before and since his time the stories of Captain John Smith had the greatest appeal of all. Not until he had become a settled man and had been twice married did he exchange Captain John Smith for Lord De La Warr (or Delaware) as the savior of the first permanent English settlement in America.

When the lad was thirteen, and had learned all that his father and the teachers in his father's school could teach him, he was sent to Charlottesville to receive instruction in the school of Horace Jones. During the middle years of the nineteenth century this rigid disciplinarian was considered one of the most gifted educators in Virginia, and indeed of the South. What the future historian studied under his guidance we can only conjecture. Presumably he was indoctrinated with the classics, with the standard historians, and perhaps with Latin and Greek. These were the studies in which a gentleman of the Old South would wish his son to indulge.

Among the known Brown correspondence there is only one letter written during the years at Charlottesville. This lone letter to his father, written at the age of thirteen while undergoing his first year under the tutelage of Horace Jones, shows little indication of a future literary career. He wrote:

Dear Father: As I have finished my studies for the night I must write home and tell the little news. I have

not got quite strait in school as yet, I think. Mr.
Jones has more boys than he can attend to, that is 16 or
17. Frank and myself have been sick, Frank from Monday
until Friday, I from Thursday until today (Tuesday). I
am homesick a little as yet, but I hope soon to get over
it. Our school house is now the back room to the Old
Albemarle Insurance Company which is on the square;
therefore he is very strict. He takes in at nine o’clock
and gives recess at one lasting from 15 to 30 minutes,
lets out in the evening at ½ past 3. The boys must go
strict home after school without stopping to play on the
square. Aunt Betty is buying in fall goods for the child-
dren and the servants. Ask me a good many questions in
your letter for news is scarce. Tell me the names of all
the new scholars and who you expect. All are well and
doing well. Love from all to all.

Your devoted son
A. Brown

P. S. Write as soon as possible a long letter full of
news. There were no circulars last week but will be
this,19

This letter, with erroneous spelling and punctation is doubtless
better than the average entering high school student could write today.
The copious use of the semi-colon; though faulty, shows more than an
ordinary grasp of the rudiments of grammar. Yet in view of the fact
that he had been brought up among the best books and had had the best of
instruction, I believe the letter shows little indication of a future
literary activity. This lack of any marked writing talent is explained
partially at least by the fact that his mind at this age of his de-
development was directing itself into a scientific and not into a literary
channel. Now he wished to become a civil engineer.20

In 1860 Robert Lawrence Brown went to Lynchburg to assume the

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19. Letter of Alexander Brown to Robert Lawrence Brown, Oct. 12, 1856,
Brown Papers, College of William and Mary, Box No. 12.
20. L. G. Tyler, Men of Mark In Virginia, Washington, V., 15.
directorship of the girl's seminary there. That same year his son completed his studies under Horace Jones. Naturally, therefore, the young Alexander elected to enter Lynchburg College that autumn to begin his engineering studies.\textsuperscript{21} For father and son that school year must have begun with happy auguries. Since his mother had died the future historian had spent but little time in his father's house. But now the elder Brown had married again and family relationships could again be realized. Neither of them knew that before the academic year ended both would have left the classroom to answer the Confederacy's call to arms. It would be interesting to know the courses of study upon which the would-be engineer entered. Since the students of that day had not the latitude of choice which those of the present day have, we may conclude that he still pursued to a great extent the humanities and the classics. But he no doubt took up scientific studies as much as it was possible for him to do so.

When the session of 1861 began many of the promising students of the year before had gone to war, and among them Alexander Brown. Though only seventeen he was among the first to enlist.\textsuperscript{22} Our information on the historian's military career, or how his family stood upon the issues that rent the nation in twain is sadly lacking. We have already noted that the elder Alexander Brown received fifteen slaves as a part of his marriage dowry. The records yield one other reference to the ownership of slaves by the family where one Robert Camp and one William

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\textsuperscript{21} Anonymous letter to Alexander Brown, February 10, 1862, Brown Papers, Box No. 1.
\textsuperscript{22} Colonel William Lamb, "The Death of Virginia's Great Historian," Landmark (September 2, 1906), 10.
\end{flushleft}
Sheffield promised "to pay or cause to be paid to Robert L. Brown, his heirs or assigns the just and full sum of ten dollars in current money, it being for the hire of a Negro boy named Ezra for the present year." Thus almost from the beginning of their establishment in America down to the Civil War the Browns were slave owners. Their attitude toward the institution of slavery was probably no different from that of the typical Virginia planter.

For some unexplained reason we have almost none of Alexander Brown's correspondence during the war years. There is one extant letter to the young soldier from a college girl friend whom he had met while a student at Lynchburg. It is the first known reference to him as "Sandy," a name which was to cling to him throughout the rest of his life, and which had doubtless been given him by friends in Lynchburg. The anonymous writer of this letter, we may infer, was the object of the historians first love. She assured him that when he left on his next furlough that

I will keep my promise. Now you have it in black and white if I should happen to deny it. It was not because I did not like you well enough to kiss you, Sandy, that I did not do so, but enough of this kissing business.

This letter further affords an example of the attitude of the more intellectual youth toward that portion of the population which did not immediately and wholeheartedly plunge into the war.

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Mary Davis actually raised enough men here to have a party. The girls in Lynchburg seem as well pleased with these cowards as if they were all generals. For my part I would not deign to accept their love or attention. The bravest are the tenderest and only the loving are the daring.25

The young Virginia gentlemen of 1861 had a predilection for service in the cavalry and the artillery. Alexander Brown chose the latter.26 His father also laid down the ferule and was now Lieutenant Robert L. Brown of the Lynchburg Provost Guard.27 Unfortunately the military activities of the father are even less known than those of his more famous son. Since the biographical sketches given in The Cabellis and Their Kin and the Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography barely mention these facts we may assume that Lieutenant Robert L. Brown remained in and about Lynchburg for the duration of the war.28

Other than the fact that he immediately joined an artillery company, the military adventures of Alexander Brown are lost from our ken until the war is about to come to a close late in 1864. In December of that year General Benjamin F. Butler and Admiral David D. Porter launched a combined land-sea attack against Fort Fisher, North Carolina. Because of the speed with which the South was subsequently conquered, the importance of this near impregnable bastion as a major key in the

27. Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography, IV, 421.
28. The historian himself states that his father was director of the Seminary from 1860 until his resignation in 1870. See The Cabellis and Their Kin, 464.
Confederate defenses has been greatly underestimated by students of the conflict. It was the guardian of Wilmington, the South's great importing center; and General Lee himself advised the Confederacy that if Fisher fell his army could not subsist. Therefore its commander, Colonel William Lamb, was instructed to hold the Fort to the last. 29

On the night of December 20, 1864 the attack began with a heavy bombardment from the sea. According to a ranking Union naval officer present it was the largest naval force "ever before assembled under one command in the history of the American Navy." 30 The defenders beat off the initial attack in which the besiegers lost heavily. Thereupon the Federal commanders hit upon the idea of exploding a powder-boat so near the fort that the resultant concussion would destroy it. Accordingly the Louisiana, an old gun-boat no longer serviceable was loaded with two hundred and fifty tons of powder. At midnight on December 23rd it was towed as near the fort as was deemed feasible. After performing their perilous duty and applying the match, the volunteer crew escaped to the main fleet which then moved out to sea to await results. According to Confederate reports the explosion was "harmless," 31 but according to the official Federal report

It created a perfect panic, stunned and disabled the men so that they refused to fight, notwithstanding the

30. Captain Thomas O. Selfridge, "The Navy at Fort Fisher," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, IV, 655. Capt. Selfridge, who should have known gave a total of sixty vessels as the largest force ever before assembled under one command in U. S. naval history.
efforts of their officers, and the severe bombardment that followed so completely demoralized them that two hundred men could have gone into and taken possession of the works.\[^32\]

Regardless of which report is the accurate one, the fact was that "the next morning the fort still stood grim as ever, apparently uninjured by the experiment, and an eye-witness Federal officer pronounced it an "ignominous failure."\[^33\] In his narrative of the siege Colonel William Lamb does not once refer to the incident.\[^34\] It seems, therefore, that the powder-boat explosion had no great effect on the outcome of the struggle for possession of the Fort. However, there was one casualty—one of great consequence to the individual concerned, and, as it proved, to American historical scholarship. The Staunton Hill Artillery Company, of which the future historian was a member, was stationed at Masonboro, five miles to the North of Fort Fisher to guard against a land attack from that quarter. On the night of the explosion Private Alexander Brown was sleeping wrapped in a blanket on the ground beside his gun.\[^35\] The concussion resulting from the explosion, though it did not wake all the men at Masonboro completely destroyed the hearing in Brown's right ear, and so injured the mechanism of the left that a few years later he lost the use of that ear also. For the last thirty-five years of his life the historian scarcely heard a spoken word.\[^36\]

\[^32\] Frank Moore, ed. The Rebellion Record, (New York), XI, 612.
\[^33\] Captain Thomas O. Selfridge, "The Navy At Fort Fisher," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, IV, 655.
\[^34\] Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, IV, 642-654.
\[^36\] Ibid., (September 2, 1906), 12.
It is not to be supposed that the fortuity of this event caused the harassed Confederate forces to release Brown or that he received any more treatment than was immediately demanded. It is very probable that the future scholar continued with his duties as though no accident had happened.

After the end of the war, Brown, like many others formerly in the upper financial and social strata of the South, had the problem of earning a livelihood. We first hear of him in Washington where for the next three years he was clerk in a grocery store. Here he was doubtless more fortunate than those Confederate veterans who had returned to their former homes and had tried to fit themselves into the places they had once occupied. In Washington he at least did not suffer for the necessities of life. But by 1868 the hearing in his left ear had so deteriorated that he could no longer perform his tasks. So in that year he returned to his native Virginia to take up there the life which, though obscure was destined to lead to a high place upon the honor scroll of his country’s historiography.
Genealogical Chart of Alexander Brown's Maternal Ancestry

Dr. William Cabell

Colonel William Cabell Sr.

Colonel William Cabell the Younger

Mary Elizabeth Cabell
  married
  Dr. George Calloway

Sarah Cabell Calloway
  married
  Robert Lawrence Brown

Alexander Brown
Chapter III
The Middle Years

1. Business Life

It has often been supposed that when Alexander Brown returned to Nelson County in 1868 that he was almost completely destitute. But such, happily was not the case. It is true that for the whole of his adult life he suffered greatly from financial embarrassment, but an impartial study of the historian's papers and correspondence leads the investigator to the unavoidable conclusion that friends and relatives intentionally or unintentionally took advantage of his generosity — that in his desire to help others out of their troubles he brought trouble upon himself. This, rather than a lack of hard work or frugality, seems to be the cause of his continual indebtedness, of his numerous appeals to his more fortunate friends for pecuniary aid — appeals which were usually answered in the negative. Among the Brown papers there are a great number of requests to "dear Sandy," or to "dear Cousin Sandy" for loans varying from trifling amounts to as much as two hundred dollars,\(^1\) which during the post-war years was a great deal of money. Some of these letters were written in behalf of friends who "don't know you well enough to ask for it themselves." It is, moreover, very obvious that men who knew him but slightly would sometimes seek his aid. Consider for instance the following uncouth letter:

\[1\] Letter of C. B. McClelland to Alexander Brown, (undated), Brown Papers, College of William and Mary, Box No. 6. This request for $210 is the largest of many requests for loans. For other requests see Box No. 5 and Box No. 6, passim.
Dear Mr. Brown—I want $100 until next week. Can you let me have it. I will be under obligation to you. I will return it for certain next week. Send it by mail tomorrow.

Cas Matters²

We have no way of knowing for sure whether Brown complied with these numerous requests or not. But it is extremely unlikely that so many people would ask so many favors of a single individual unless they were reasonably sure of favorable answers.

As stated above, the future historian was not in bad financial straits when he returned to Virginia. Sometime prior to 1868 Robert Lawrence Brown incurred obligations which he could not meet. To secure this debt to the creditors, commissioners appointed by the Nelson County Circuit Court sold three hundred and fifty-three acres of land at public auction.³ Dr. Paul Calloway, the debtor’s brother-in-law, bought this land. Through his mother, Alexander Brown held an interest in some "dower property now in the possession of Eliza Calloway."⁴ In 1868, while working in Washington, he conveyed his claim to this property to his uncle, and Dr. Calloway on his part turned over to his nephew the property formerly owned by the latter’s father.⁵ The following year Brown sold this three hundred and fifty-three acres to Paul Stratton for twenty-five hundred dollars cash-in-hand.⁶

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² Letter of Cas Matters to Alexander Brown, (undated), Brown Papers, Box No. 6.
³ Nelson County Deed Book (Lovingston, Va.), XVI, 416.
⁴ Ibid., XII, 369-370.
⁵ Ibid., XVII, 256.
⁶ Ibid., XVI, 416.
Twenty-five hundred dollars was a considerable sum of money in 1869. In addition to this rather large amount, Brown had no doubt saved a part of his earnings during the three years spent in Washington. Therefore, compared with the average Confederate veteran the returned native was exceedingly fortunate in obtaining the means to make a new start in life.

Evidently Brown had liked the mercantile business. For upon his return to Nelson County he immediately established a store of his own in Norwood, one of the county's smallest hamlets. It will be remembered that Alexander Brown the immigrant demonstrated an extraordinarily sagacious business ability. Apparently this aptitude for business management passed from the grandfather to the grandson. At any rate, for the next few years he successfully operated a general merchandise store in the town in which he had chosen to live. Then the people of the surrounding countryside could buy groceries, dry goods, and farming equipment.

In 1871 Brown secured the appointment of postmaster for Norwood, which further increased his income. His salary as postmaster in a town of only two or three hundred could not have been large. But judging from the efforts to remove him from the office it must have been a desirable position in those days. In this connection there was an attempt to blot the fair name of Alexander Brown with a charge of malfeasance in office. Among the denizens of the vicinity, it would seem, there was a large number of Republicans. These adherents of the Grand Old Party accused their postmaster of discriminating against them in the delivery of the

8. Brown's accounts with Henry Loving & Sons, Robinson Tate & Co., D. B. Payne & Sons, all wholesalers, give a reasonably clear picture of Brown's business. See Brown Papers, Box No. 2, Box No. 3, Box No. 4, passim.
malls. An investigation was made of the affair, and the following letter from the postal investigator is of interest:

Dear Mr. Brown -- I very much regret that you were away when I visited Norwood on the 18th inst. I understand you disclaim being a partisan and deny the charge of any disposition on your part to make any discrimination against Republicans.

The complaint I have heard is that you will not deliver Republican documents sent to your office for distribution, and that you electioneer actively at the polls.

I do not presume any Republican would care about your opinions. All I understand them to ask is that you take no active part in politics and that you will do your duty to Republicans as well as to Democrats in the delivery of papers. I understand that you are delicately situated; that Mr. Patterson, in whose employment you are, is a bullying Democrat and may require you to stand at his back and assist him. I hope, however, that you have too just a sense of your duty to the administration that appointed you to do his bidding in this respect; and I feel sure that you would not abuse my confidence by thus acting while you lead me to suppose that you will be under no political bias as an officer. To be plain with you, therefore, it is necessary for you to say that you will not meddle in petty politics and that you will do your whole duty as Postmaster in circulating and delivering Republican documents. You must at all times act with scrupulous justice to all customers, Republicans as well as Democrats, in your delivery of the mails.

Yours very sincerely,

Alexander Rives. 9

It will be recalled that at the time this letter was written the political corruption of the Grant Administration was at its worst. The surprising thing about the affair is that Brown, the Democrat and Confederate veteran, obtained the appointment at all. Equally astonishing, though pleasantly so, is the fact that a postal officer under the Grant Administration wrote in so friendly a spirit to a member of the

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opposition party. Some days later the postmaster was gratified, we may imagine, when he received from the same official a notification that "charges of discrimination against certain of your customers have not been sustained."10

Apparently, as far as his superiors were concerned, the matter was ended. But it by no means ended the efforts of Brown's enemies to drive him from the Norwood postoffice. As the year drew to a close, an acquaintance wrote the following letter:

Dear Sir — I am sorry to say that I found Colonel B. in no condition to approach on the matter we were talking about. A gentleman told me yesterday he saw Patterson a few days ago and he was doing all in his power to have you removed. Now don't mention my name in connection with this. I will tell you my informant when I see you. It is reliable. This is strictly confidential. I only wrote to put you on your guard. I would advise you to see Judge Rives at once. Mr. James Rogers will go to Lynchburg on Monday and he will find out all he can. If he finds out anything, I will write you by Tuesday's mail.11

If the writer of the above letter dispatched by Tuesday's mail any information discovered by Mr. James Rogers in Lynchburg, it is not now among the Brown papers. Early in 1876 Brown received the following crudely written letter from a well wishing citizen:

Mr. Brown. Dear Sir — I saw John Dilliard yesterday, Sunday, I ask had anything been done with your office yet. he said not yet, But they had a meeting last Saturday for that Purpose. He said there would be something done about it soon. Old Patterson and all the dam Radicals in the county was there. I could not git any more out of him as

11. Letter of W. K. Estis to Alexander Brown, March 20, 1876, Brown Papers, Box No. 6
he was in a hurry but I will see him again soon. You need not say I said anything to you about it. 12

It would be of singular interest if we knew more of Mr. Patterson and the nature of Brown's business connection with him. But unfortunately there is no further mention of him in any of the historian's known correspondence. Whatever its nature, Mr. Patterson was not able to pressure the future historian into impolitic political activities, and Brown held his postmastership until 1831. Whether his retirement at this time was voluntary or not it is impossible to say with absolute certitude. But that same year he sold his store to his brother-in-law, William D. Cabell,13 compelled to do so, he tells us, because of his almost total deafness. Thus, we may presume, he left the post office for the same reason.

The year 1873 was an important year in Brown's life. In that year he married Caroline Augusta Cabell, daughter of Mayo Cabell of Union Hill. If a fractional part of the things said about Caroline Cabell by the historian's friends were true — and there is no reason to doubt them — she was indeed a remarkable woman.14 Her death three short years later was, we may well believe, a severe blow to Alexander Brown, and perhaps to his future work.

Brown climaxed his matrimonial adventure with the acquisition of

12. Letter of M. M. Map to Alexander Brown, March 20, 1876, Brown Papers, Box No. 6.
13. Letter of Wm. D. Cabell to Alexander Brown, May 22, 1837, Brown Papers, Box No. 3. There are no indications as to terms of the transaction.
14. See Letter of Allen Rives to Alexander Brown -- numerous others, Box No. 6, passim.
Union Hill. Here again the correspondence and records indicate that the marriage of the future historian led him into serious financial difficulties. This does not impugn the honor and integrity of Mayo Cabell or any member of his family. On the contrary, the fact that he kept such a large estate intact for forty years in the face of serious physical handicaps and civil war is a fitting testimony to the fortitude of the man who became father-in-law to Alexander Brown. Yet the fact remains that by 1868 bankruptcy was staring Mayo Cabell in the face.

"The circumstances of your house suggest to us the propriety of strong measures," wrote his creditors' attorney. "While we have no desire to embarrass you unnecessarily, you should see the full force of our request for a full and prompt statement of your condition. We are told that we may rely upon both your judgment and your candor. Please let us know what you have lately done or suffered and if you have any propositions to make."16

The George W. Reed & Co., for whom the above letter was written, held a claim against Mayo Cabell for twelve hundred dollars. In addition, another Richmond firm, Johnson & Bonsford, held a mortgage, the exact amount of which cannot be determined from the Brown papers, against Union Hill itself.17 In 1869 Mayo Cabell died, leaving these debts unsettled. When Alexander Brown married Caroline Cabell, he assumed the burden of the mortgage against Union Hill and secured the

15. Mayo Cabell suffered the loss of his right leg in 1841 and in subsequent years his health was extremely poor. See The Cabells and Their Kin, 424-425.
16. Letter of Stiles Christenson to Mayo Cabell, Jan. 4, 1868, Brown Papers, Box No. 5.
17. Legal document in Brown Papers, Box No. 1. This document is so small that it is illegible in many places.
property from his mother-in-law as a reversion in dower. The last installment of two thousand dollars was paid in 1876.

We have now seen that Brown returned to Virginia with the means to make a new start in life; that he had a business in Norwood which, together with the post office, must have given him a fair income. After his retirement from business in 1881, he devoted his time to farming the Union Hill estate. In that year the Nelson County records reveal that he sold ten acres of land to Francis A. French of New York for one thousand dollars, but at almost the same time he borrowed fifteen hundred dollars for a purpose now unknown and mortgaged a portion of his land to secure it. This was not paid until 1898.

Shortly after his marriage he sold two hundred and ninety-one acres of land to a Lynchburg attorney for twenty-five hundred dollars. Thus it is difficult to see why the historian should have always been so in want of money. The only plausible explanation is that he could not say no to the importunities of those he deemed less fortunate than himself; that a sizeable portion of the money he let out was never returned. The fact that in 1880 he paid a debt of only twenty-five dollars, incurred three years before, for his step-mother's coffin, would seem to be proof enough of the procrastination of his debtors.

After the liquidation of his Norwood business, the historian, as stated above, devoted his time to farming as a means of earning a living. As a farmer he seems to have been altogether a grain producer, there

19. Ibid., XXI, 374-375.
20. Ibid., XXIV, 226.
21. Ibid., XXIV, 237.
22. Letter of J. A. Dinguid to Alexander Brown, February 26, 1880, Brown Papers, Box No. 7
being numerous recorded instances of corn and wheat sales, but none of livestock. He also acted as a tobacco buying agent for the Richmond firm of Siblett, Cary & Co., which, it would seem, increased his income by about fifty percent. It would seem, further, that he seldom drew these payments because he borrowed from the company and was generally indebted to them when their accounts were settled. Siblett and Cary, on their part, seemed to place implicit trust in Brown's honesty and ingenuity to repay these loans. Thus in July of 1887 they sent Brown three hundred dollars for which he asked, and stated that "we have no fears of ever regretting anything we may do for you in this line." The correspondence with Siblett and Cary forms a most fitting testimonial to the historian's character and honesty in his business relationships.

Beginning about 1875 and continuing for some years thereafter, Alexander Brown had high hopes for the development of copper mining operations on his property. He interested the Schuylkill Copper Works to the point that they sent an investigator from Pennsylvania to Nelson County. This investigator advised Brown that he saw very little indication of copper in his neighborhood, except at Mr. Peter's place. However, a geologist from the University of Virginia led Brown to believe

23. Receipts for these sales may be found in the Brown Papers, Box No. 1. I estimate his average income from this source as $300 - $1000 out of which came the expenses of operation.
that there might be copper deposits on the Union Hill estate.\textsuperscript{27}

It was the Tyson Mining Company of Baltimore which finally interested itself in copper mining prospects on the historian’s property.\textsuperscript{28} It seems that they planned to form a partnership, the nature of which the correspondence does not make clear. The company sent Brown the money to finance the preliminary ground work, and they occasionally sent a man to Norwood to advise the hopeful farmer on the conduct of his work. The head of the firm, W. W. Tyson himself, was several times a guest at Union Hill.\textsuperscript{29} They made an effort to acquire the Peters property when the Schuylkill agent saw strong indications of copper ore. But evidently Mr. Peters was not receptive to their overtures for the property was never secured.

By 1877 Brown and Tyson were certain that they had found a copper vein. However, the industrial demands for copper during these years were not heavy. This consideration alone prevented the Tyson Company from investing heavily in the venture.\textsuperscript{30} But as the market was not healthy, their work was only experimental and preliminary, and Brown did, or supervised, this work himself. From July 1777 to April 1880, the company sent Brown some nine hundred dollars with which to carry on the project.\textsuperscript{31} Presumably a portion of this money was for over-head

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{27}. Letter of James Harvey to Alexander Brown, January 27, 1876, Brown Papers, Box No. 1.
\textsuperscript{28}. See Letters of W. W. Tyson to Alexander Brown, April 24, 1876, to Feb. 2, 1881, Box 5 & 6.
\textsuperscript{29}. Letters of W. W. Tyson to Alexander Brown, Nov. 25, 1878 and April 14, 1880, Brown Papers, Box No. 6.
\textsuperscript{30}. \textit{Ibid.}, May 24, 1879; July 14, 1879; April 14, 1880, Box No.
\textsuperscript{31}. \textit{Ibid.}, May 7, 1878; May 24, 1878; July 14, 1879; April 14, 1880, Box No.
\end{footnotes}
expenses and a portion to pay Brown for his labor. While the earlier analyses did not show a high percentage of copper, Tyson and his men for some reason believed it would improve. The surface ore, they told Brown, was what miners call "very kindly." 32

The historian’s financial troubles are clearly revealed by his correspondence with W. W. Tyson. On the security of the supposed copper vein, Brown hoped that Tyson would relieve him of at least a part of his financial strain. But here, too, he was disappointed. In answer to his proposal, the head of the mining firm wrote:

I am truly sorry circumstances are such as to render it impossible for me to do anything in your matter. I am carrying a heavy load and cannot in justice to others do so at the time. Otherwise, I would gladly advance the money you will so soon need. With such security as you can give can’t you find someone who has the money to loan and enable you to await the demand for such property which is sure to come when the price of copper ore reaches its nominal figure.33

This correspondence further affords direct testimony that the historian allowed his friends to impose upon his free-hearted nature. In another communication Tyson wrote: "In your efforts to help others out of their troubles during the last few years you have added much to your own. The last case you speak of does seem a hard one. I shall be interested in knowing how it comes out." 34

Unfortunately, we do not know how the case came out, but these words do tell us that the historian’s willingness to help others led his

32. Ibid., Oct. 5, 1777.
33. Ibid., Sept. 22, 1879.
34. Ibid., Sept. 14, 1879.
own affairs to the brink of ruin.

To complete the story of Alexander Brown's business life during these middle years between 1868 and 1890, it is only necessary to say that copper ore of a sufficiently high grade to warrant mining operations proved completely lacking. Once again hopes of economic security were dashed to the ground. At this time he was engaged in his historical studies. Thus the success of the project was particularly desirable to give him the time and the means to do research. In 1886 and again in 1887 storms and floods destroyed his crops and during the next few years his economic position was extremely difficult.35 Not until he had almost reached the end did the historian liquidate his debts and achieve a measure of security.36

36. Letter of Mrs. Cabell Robinson to the author, March 4, 1887.
2. Literary Life

That phase of the renaissance of Virginia history known among historians as the John Smith controversy was the factor which directed the intellectual faculties of Alexander Brown into the field of historical research, and so changed the whole course of his life. The fact that the controversy once more turned the eyes of the nation’s historians toward Virginia gives it added importance from the standpoint of this study.

For almost three centuries Captain John Smith was the first and last authority on the early history of the Jamestown colony. Then in 1860 Charles Deane, a Boston merchant turned historian, performed a distinctive service to colonial historiography. It had been made known to this man of affluent culture that there was, in the great library of the Archepiscopal Palace at Lambeth, a manuscript relating to the establishment of the Virginia colony, and which was then unknown to students of early Virginia history. For well over two hundred years this musty manuscript had lain there unused and unread except by J. S. M. Anderson who had used it in the preparation of his Church of England in the Colonies. Anderson, however, had been unable to identify it. Deane, though an English friend, procured a transcript and recognized it as Edward Maria Wingfield’s "Discourse on Virginia". Soon thereafter he published it with a splendid introduction and elaborate explanatory footnotes. Thus another important

37. Published in London, 1845.
addition was made to the source material for the study of early American history. In one of his footnotes to this interesting narrative written by the deposed first president of the first colonial council in America, the Boston historian observed that neither Smith, in his minute personal narrative39 of the first year's events in the colony, nor his companions in the Oxford tract of 1612 made any mention of his rescue from the execution block, and that the announcement was first made to the world in The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles, published in 1624.40

In 1866 Deane made yet another notable contribution to the historiography of colonial Virginia by editing and publishing "in his own admirable manner with fullness of learning and great accuracy"41 Captain John Smith's A True Relation of Virginia 42 in which he commented still further upon the redoubtable Captain's failure to mention the incident.43 He also explained that the original manuscript itself had never been found and that the first editor, one who identified himself only as J. H., had deleted a portion of the manuscript as "fit to be private."44

41. Moses Coit Tyler, A History of American Literature during the Colonial Time, New York, 1897, I.
42. The Southern and Western Literary Messenger and Review had reprinted A True Relation in 1845 but it was very inaccurate. See Vol. XI, 1845, 66-82.
43. Charles Deane, ed., A True Relation of Virginia, Boston, 1866, xii.
44. Ibid., xxii.
These notes, representing the unbiased judgment of a trained historian and experienced antiquarian, were as nothing compared to the attacks that were soon forthcoming. Henry Adams, seeing that he "could break as much glass by throwing a missile in that direction as in any other," launched a broadside attack. He pointed out several glaring inconsistencies in *A True Relation* and *The Generall Historie*. According to the former account, said Adams, Smith received better treatment as a prisoner among the savages than he could have received anywhere else in the world; while in the latter work he represents himself as expecting a cruel death every moment of his captivity. He further pointed out that neither Wingfield, Strachey, nor Hamor had mentioned it, and that John Rolfe's numerous letters to England were silent on the matter. The latter argument was, to say the least, a formidable one.

Others, some of whom became extremely violent in their assertions, joined in the fray. For example in 1869 Edward D. Neill brought out his *History of the Virginia Company of London* in which he not only accused Captain John Smith of being a liar of the crassest sort, but presented a mass of circumstantial evidence, none of it very convincing, that Pocahontas was the mistress and not the wife of John Rolfe. Neill's work was the last important output dealing with the subject until the

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47. Ibid., 21.
49. Ibid., 90-91, 97. See also *Virginia Vestusta*, Albany, 1885, 141-142.
eighties when it flared up with renewed violence and continued with unabating fury into the twentieth century.

In brief this was the stage of the controversy when in 1876 Alexander Brown, an unknown farmer and a keeper of a country store, read for the first time Deane's edition of *A True Relation of Virginia.* Herebefore Brown had taken little or no interest in historical studies, at least not from a researcher's point of view. But since from boyhood he had been acquainted with the best of books, and as the deafness caused by the Fort Fisher explosion had rendered it impossible for him to enjoy a normal social life, he doubtless was an avid reader both of history and of literature in general. Certainly he had not before this time questioned the accuracy of the adventurous narratives of the man who had been his boyhood hero. But the scholarly introduction and notes to Deane's edition of *A True Relation,* which it seems came into his hands quite by chance, "set him to thinking." He had become, or at least he soon became, acquainted with other writings dealing with the Smith controversy. He was struck by the fact that all of these men continuously harped on the improbabilities of the Pocahontas rescue. To him this seemed trivial and unimportant.

For generations men had been taught to accept *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England and the Summer Isles* as the standard authority on the planting of the English race in the New World. Charles Deane and

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the controversialists who followed him had clearly shown that there
was good reason to doubt the story of the Pocahontas rescue; and to the
young Virginia farmer, now thirty-three, the story was thoroughly dis-
credited, and with it the author's reliability as a narrator of history.
Therefore questions far more vital raised themselves in the mind of the
future historian: Was the Generall Historie compiled by a disinterested,
properly qualified person who gave the evidence in an honorable and un-
biased way or was it not? And on the basis of the answer to this ques-
tion should we continue to regard it as an authority and its author as
the founder and father of English colonization in the New World or should
we not? For the next two years Brown closely studied Smith's books and
read widely in the premises from secondary material. This study con-
vinced him that the answers raised in his mind were clearly in the negative:

These questions seemed very important to my mind, and I de-
termined to make a careful study of his work, and I did so.
I noted the fact that the whole trend of it was to the glo-
rification of its author, who imagined himself to be a sec-
ond Julius Caesar; that nearly all credit was given to him-
self, and all blame was laid upon others. And I noted that
this was the trait of all the writings known as the works of
Captain John Smith.
I became convinced that our earliest history was without
form and void, and that darkness was upon the face of the
birth of the nation....

In the books which he studied, Brown believed the facts had been
so obliterated that it was impossible to tell what the true history was.

from the Author," Magazine of American History, XXVI, 1892, 58.
54. Ibid., XXIV, 58-59.
But he became more and more convinced that Smith had not given the true account, that a great historic wrong had been done the real founders of the nation. Therefore he decided to go regularly to work and try to find out exactly of what the historic wrong consisted and causes of it, to correct the wrong and if possible to remove its causes.55

In 1872 he began to labor in the field of original research, and when two years later he gave up his business pursuits the task began in earnest. Fortified by his vast store of newly acquired knowledge he began contributing articles to the Richmond dailies.56 These articles caused considerable interest and brought a number of invective answers from William Wirt Henry and others.

Gradually Brown came to believe that no one man could have been the founder of Virginia, which in the larger purview would mean the founder of America; that the true founders were all those who supported the movement of which the Virginia Company of London was the spearhead. Thus the founders were those in England who gave their wealth, and those in Virginia who gave their labor and oftentimes their lives to insure the success of the movement.57 And herein are found the issues which inspired the enthusiastic farmer to write. These are, first, the historic issue between Captain John Smith, the author, in England and the managers of the movement, in England, on whom the success of the enterprise was

56. See Daily Dispatch (Richmond, Va.) for April 2, 1882; April 27, May 7, 1882 for Brown's earliest published opinions on the John Smith controversy.
57. Alexander Brown, The Genesis of the United States, Boston, 1890, i, xii.
dependent, and secondly, the personal issue between Captain John Smith and his fellow actors in Virginia. Long misunderstanding of these issues had caused grave injustices to be done, and these injustices must now be righted. While no one man could be the founder of a new nation, the man who had done most "to plant a new civilization where none before had stood" was Sir Thomas West, the third Lord De La Warr, or so the inspired student believed. And there were many others, among them Captain John Ratcliffe, Captain Gabriel Archer, Captain John Martin, whose sacrifices were deserving of the everlasting gratitude of the nation whose foundations stones they had helped to lay. But instead of honor they had received oblivion and their thousands of unknown and unmarked graves among the marshes of the environs of Jamestown had become only a legend fast disappearing from the people's ken. The character of many of these men, moreover, had been impugned by the licensed historians of the Crown, the chief of whom was Captain John Smith. And as this was true of the men, so was it true of the women. Doubtless Pocahontas was deserving of her laurels, but at the same time there were heroines and ministering angels among the English women who aided in the founding of the republic, and who were as deserving of as much praise as has been lavished upon the Indian princess.

Thus convinced of the existence of a great historic wrong, and having set himself the task of correcting it, Alexander Brown now was faced

60. Alexander Brown, The First Republic in America, Boston, 1897, xii.
with the problem of collecting and presenting the evidence. The years between 1609 and 1619, it seemed to him, comprised the period in which the greatest damage had been done. Therefore, on these years—the years comprising the period of the first foundation—he would devote his study. Those scholars who viewed the question from the Smith standpoint would demand that he present the last jot and tittle of evidence in support of his claims. And in order to be sure that he could meet every counter-argument he would collect every contemporary reference to the period regardless of in what part of the world they might be, whether in letters, in manuscripts, or in books. With these before him he would compile the first history of the period of the first foundation of America. This he determined to do no matter what the cost. But his knowledge of these source materials was very limited, and soon the historian-farmer realized that he must have aid and guidance if the almost insurmountable obstacles were to be overcome. The Virginia scholars and historians to whom he revealed his plans were discouraging in their attitudes. Even Robert A. Brock advised that the undertaking be given up. Of all the men in Virginia with whom he corresponded only Hugh Blair Grigsby, publisher of the Norfolk Beacon, believed that the project could be brought to a successful conclusion. When Brown began his work that venerable old scholar was fast approaching the end of his long and useful life, but as long as he was

62. Ibid., April 9, 1882.
63. Letter of Alexander Brown to Charles Deane, April 18, 1882.
able he wrote his young friend long letters filled with encouragement and advice. 64

Almost as soon as he began his research Brown felt very keenly the severe limitations placed upon his undeveloped abilities. Moreover he did not know where most of the rare tracts and little known letters and manuscripts which he would need could be found. He knew of the existence of some, but he had no idea of where he should look; while of others he was ignorant of their very existence.

Faced with this dilemma he determined to seek help from beyond the confines of his native state. He had been deeply impressed with the rare learning shown by Charles Deane in his reprint of A True Relation of Virginia. Besides that, it had in some way come to his knowledge that Deane's library, consisting of more than thirteen thousand volumes of rare tracts, original manuscripts, and out-of-print books, was one of the finest in the country. 65 After careful consideration he determined to write the learned Boston scholar and entreat his aid.

At this time Charles Deane was sixty-nine years old. In some respects his rise from an obscure country boy into the front ranks of American historians was even more remarkable than that of Alexander Brown himself. The precocious son of a country physician in a small Maine town, Deane, like Brown, was denied the fruits of a college education. Both his father and his older brother died when he was fifteen, 66

and the future scholar went to work in a country store to support his mother and himself. At nineteen he went to Boston and secured a position as clerk in the great mercantile house of Waterson, Pray & Co., leading Boston clothiers. Seven years later he entered into a junior partnership with his employers, and soon thereafter he married Helen Waterson, daughter of the senior member of the firm.66

This prototype of a typical Horatio Alger hero in the course of time became one of the leading authorities on colonial American history. Yet when he was thirty he did not know that Plymouth colony and the colony of Massachusetts Bay were two separate and distinct colonies. His studies early made him a master of the beginnings of New England, but of almost equal interest to his inquiring mind was the settlement on the James. By 1880 he had authored numerous books, articles, and pamphlets on the various aspects of England in America.67 Besides an impressive array of creative work Charles Deane discovered, or rescued from oblivion, several important treatises on the nation's founding. Of these Wingfield's "Discourse" and Smith's True Relation have already been noted. He also secured a transcript of the manuscript of the lost History of the Plymouth Plantation by William Bradford under much the same circumstances that Wingfield's narrative had come to him. This he annotated and published under the auspices of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and it is today one of the priceless books to which all students

of Pilgrim history must go. It is also interesting to note that he was a close adviser to Edward Arber in the editing of the *Travels and Works of Captain John Smith*. 68

Such were the achievements of the man to whom Alexander Brown, in the spring of 1881, appealed for aid. The first letter was followed by one hundred and eleven others, and to these we may be sure there were at least one hundred and twelve answers. But unfortunately this portion of Brown's correspondence has been lost, so we have only half of an interesting and very important chapter in our country's historiography. To him whose fortunes are such that he is able to read these remarkable letters, carefully preserved by the Massachusetts Historical Society, a great work of scholarship is revealed in its making—*The Genesis of the United States* unfolding the secrets of its creation before the reader's eyes.

The correspondence began in March of 1882 in this manner. William Wirt Henry had just published *The Settlement at Jamestown*, a point by point answer to all the criticisms which had been heaped upon Captain John Smith and his writings. Brown undertook to refute these arguments in the pages of the Richmond *Daily Dispatch*. 69 Henry, who was then a member of the Virginia legislature, notified his antagonist that he would himself answer the articles when the lawmakers recessed. To fortify himself for the coming battle, the Norwood farmer wrote the retired Boston merchant inquiring where he could buy or borrow his reprints of Wingfield

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69. See *Daily Dispatch*, Richmond, Va., March 22, 1882.
Other than that it was kindly and encouraging it is impossible to say just what the answer to this letter was. But during the following weeks there was an effluent exchange of ideas between Cambridge and Norwood. The older man gave his young friend some much desired information on the early writings of early Virginia.

Brown, because he was unable to buy the more expensive books had been employing copyists to make extracts from books in the Richmond libraries. At this time there was not a set of Purchase in the Virginia State Library, and Brown wished Deane to have extracts made of those portions relating to Virginia. His instructions for this to be done "in copy books about eleven inches long with a two inch margin for notes at the side and bottom" gives an idea of his method of study.

About this time Brown wrote his first paper with a view to publication in a professional journal, and sent it to Cambridge for the older man's consideration. The following is his answer to Deane's inquiries concerning the article, his plans, experience, and training.

My Dear Sir: I write at once to thank you for your kind letter of the 12th inst. I was not only willing but very anxious for you to criticise my article, and I am grateful that you have been kind enough to do so.

I am comparatively speaking a young man, and I am very much interested in history. I live in the country, having neither libraries nor people of similar tastes near me, and as far as I am able to learn I am the only man in Virginia devoting any time to the history of the foundation, the beginning of the colony. I have been forced to go alone on my own devices, and many times I need advice and guidance for which I naturally look to men of greater learning and experience than I have; but I have not really

71. Ibid., March 31, 1882.
72. Ibid., April 10, 1882.
known to whom I could apply with any chance of success. I really do not think there is a man in Virginia who could give me the advice I long for. Of course, I have no right to trespass upon your time or attention, but I do not think there is a man in America more capable of giving a young man proper advice and guidance, nor who is better informed in the premises than yourself.

If you think it advisable for me to rewrite the article of course I will do so. I hope you will be kind enough to correct and annotate wherever you think proper, and call my attention to any item or give me any advice you deem fitting in the premises.

If volume IX, 4th series of the Massachusetts Historical Society Collections are not to high I would like to buy it.73 I am anxious to get anything that is reliable authority on the English in Virginia prior to 1650.

I do not think you and I are far apart as to the Negroes. I infer from Burke that the Treasurer had consorted with a Dutch man-of-war, and I know that the man-of-war visited Virginia about that time, but I believe that the twenty Negroes landed in Virginia in August, 1619 were some of the one hundred taken by the Treasurer from a Spanish ship,74 but of course you know more about that than I do.

Please send the article back and I will do whatever you advise me to do with it. I certainly do not wish to have it published until it meets with your complete approval. If I ever trouble you too much or impose too much upon your kindness I hope you will tell me. I am

Very truly and most respectfully yours,

Alexander Brown75

The article referred to was the topic of discussion for the next several weeks. Among these letters was one upon which Justin Winsor dwelt at some length in an address some years later before the Massachusetts Historical Society. In Charles Deane's splendid library

73. Volume IX, 4th series is The Aspinall Papers. Deane was head of the Society's publication committee and hereafter sent Brown all of its publications.


75. Letter of Alexander Brown to Charles Deane, April 18, 1882.
there was an original edition of The Oxford Tract which was one of six in the United States and valued at no less than $650. Brown felt that the book might be of value to him in the preparation of his article, a dissertation on Sir Thomas West, the third Lord De La Warr. Thus he attached a footnote to one of his letters: "As to your Oxford Tract I will not ask you to lend it to me, but I will say, which amounts to the same thing, that if you would be willing to do so I would pay expressage both ways and have it insured for whatever you think proper." 76

Six weeks later he had not heard from Cambridge, so he sent a straightforward letter to his friend of which the following is an abstract.

I have not heard from you since I last wrote asking the loan of the Oxford Tract. My old colored mammy used to tell me that if I wanted anything I should ask for it and if it was right for me to have it I would get it. So as I did not get the loan of the Tract it seems that it is not right for me to have it. I write now to ask if you would be willing to have the second part copied for me and if so how much it would cost. 77

Such determination to have needed material at any cost was indeed commendable. But it is pleasant to record that the book arrived and its receipt acknowledged in the very next letter in which Brown wishes to know if John Smith is mentioned in any of the following and if so where copies of them can be found: "Sermon by William Symonds", 1610; "Sermon by William Crawshaw", 1610; "Sermon by Patrick Copeland", 1622; "Sermon by John Donne", 1622; "A Good Speed to Virginia", 1609; "A True and Sincere Declaration"; and "A Brief Relation." 78

77. Ibid., January 18, 1883.
78. Ibid., March 27, 1883.
It is impossible to say just when Deane began to help Brown plan his work but it was certainly by the time this letter was written and its request complied with.

Though he couldn’t afford it, Brown at this time added Purchase to his library because he “couldn’t stand the longing for it any longer.”79 This year was also memorable because he prepared a paper on “The True Captain John Smith” and submitted it to the Virginia Historical Society. Much to his chagrin they rejected it, and said that “if you would devote your conscientious and useful energy to some other subject we believe it would benefit you more.”80 Brown was so disgruntled that he was almost on the verge of giving up his writing endeavors.81 But the scintillating letters of his distant friend soon revived his eagerness. Deane was so complimentary in his remarks on Brown’s article “Sir Thomas West, the Third Lord De La Warr” which had appeared in the January number of the Magazine of American History, that the newly initiated writer feared his friend had refrained from criticism out of deference to his feelings.

In July of 1883 Brown for the first time definitely says that he is working on a history of the colony of Virginia from the viewpoint of the leaders of the Virginia Company of London.82 For the remainder of 1883 and throughout 1884 the documentary evidence for this history is almost the only topic of discussion in the correspondence. Of these

80. Ibid., April 20, 1883.
81. Ibid., January 18, 1884.
82. Ibid., January 18, 1884.
Tyndall's map of the James River from the mouth to the falls is the most important. Robert Tyndall, gunner to Prince Henry, accompanied Newport on his voyage of discovery in 1608 which took the party to the present site of Richmond. Tyndall mapped the river and, according to Brown at least, his draught is only one of several used by Smith in making his famous Map of Virginia. By this time Brown had investigators searching the public depositories of England for documents on the founding of Virginia. One of these investigators found the draught and this is significant as the first of a number of discoveries made by Alexander Brown which greatly enriched the history on which he worked so long and so diligently. Tyndall was one of those "leaders of the period of the first foundation who has been lost to our history by the great shadow cast over them by Captain John Smith." 83

The correspondence of the year 1885 began with Brown's inquiries as to where he could obtain a copy of *Eastward Ho*, a sixteenth century comedy by Ben Johnson, George Chapman, and John Marston. This became the prelude to *The Genesis of the United States*. 84

Beginning in 1885 Brown frequently prepared "Memoranda for Mr. Deane's consideration". From this time until the completion of the Genesis the memoranda is the most interesting aspect of the correspondence. The following is offered as being typical, and also because it offers some novel theories regarding *A True Relation* and the romance of the country's beginning.

83. Letter from Alexander Brown to Charles Deane, April 8, 1884.
It is evident to my mind that
I. Master Nelson carried a letter from Captain Smith to a "most worshipful friend in England." This letter was filed at Stationers Hall for the public view and was published as A True Relation.

II. Captain Henry Hudson received a letter from his friend, Captain Smith in Virginia telling of a route to the South Sea by the North of the South Virginia colony, giving charts, directions, etc.

I believe these letters one and the same; if not, I believe them twin sisters. If not twin sisters they were sent in the same package. If not sent in the same package they were sent at the same time and in the same ship. Nelson sailed from the colony June 2, 1608, arriving in England about the 7th of July.

The Stationers Co was interested in the colony and I am quite sure that everything objectionable to the company would be carefully detached from the ms. before a license would be asked for. We have the tract as first published and as it was first handed around.

Of course "the most worshipful friend" knew the author's name. There was naturally great caution in giving to the public a ms. containing matter originally fit to be private the fear still lingering that something might still remain which should have been deleted.

The "most worshipful friend" gave or sold these charts and the original ms. to Captain Henry Hudson who took them to Holland. I do not know when the negotiations between Captain Hudson and the Dutch began, but he contracted to enter their service on December 29, 1609--O. S.--. In making the contract Smith's letter and charts were among Hudson's trump cards.

Meanwhile back in England "the most worshipful friend" is reassured, and J. H. (John Hudson) inserts a preface and in an embarrassed way told the public of private matters omitted. The evidence is circumstantial, but I believe strong.

This interesting bit of memoranda ushers in the first evidence of another able adviser. At the bottom of the foolscap page in Deane's handwriting are the words "Get D. J. W.'s opinion on this."

85. "Memoranda for Mr. Deane's Consideration," submitted with letter from Alexander Brown to Charles Deane, April 15, 1885.
From this time on "Submit to D. J. W." or "Get D. J. W.'s opinion" written in the margin is a recurring feature of Brown's letters to Deane. We cannot suppose that D. J. W. was any other than Dr. Justin Winsor.

The most important historical publication of 1884 was Justin Winsor's *Narrative and Critical History of America*. Once more Brown relied on Deane for valuable reference material which his financial troubles would not permit him to procure for himself. The following letter, written late in 1885, is particularly expressive of the Virginia historian's recognition of and appreciation for all that the Massachusetts scholar had done for him.

My Dear Sir: I return by today's express the *Narrative and Critical History of America* which you were so kind as to lend me. It was very hard for me to part with it and now I want it more than ever I did before I saw it.

I send you a list of some of the things I have which I wish you to inspect closely for me. I have found a great deal of red tape across the way for procuring complete copies of material in the *Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports*. Do you think our minister could or would help me procure these things when needed?

My deafness has about cut me off from the world and I live among my books. I have often, very often denied myself the necessities of life to buy books. I am very anxious to write a real history of the founding of Virginia with biographies of the founders—*Our Genesis*—*The Beginnings of a New World*. And I believe I can do it if I can only keep my mind clear for a time from the cares of my financial circumstances which weighs very heavily upon me sometimes. And this state of my affairs makes me all the more grateful to you for your kindness and repeated assistance to me.86

86. Letter of Alexander Brown to Charles Deane, October 22, 1885.
In 1884 Brown had received membership in the American Historical Association. This honor he had not expected and his election came as a complete surprise to him. Therefore we may imagine how much more surprised he was when early in 1886 he received a letter from Justin Winsor, the learned President of the Association, inviting him to deliver a paper on some aspect of early Virginia history at the annual convention which would meet that year in Washington from April the twenty-seventh through the twenty-ninth. Never in his life had Brown tried to make a speech and he was frightened at the very thought. A powerful incentive to attend was his desire to meet Charles Deane in person, but he had already arranged to be married on the twenty-eighth; and if that were not excuse enough he feared that his deafness would deter him from making a creditable showing even if he were otherwise competent. Nevertheless he prepared his paper to which he gave the title "New Views of Early Virginia History." Then, after some hesitation, he reluctantly decided to submit the paper to the Secretary of the Association and not go to Washington himself. He was pleased and gratified when he learned that the Program Committee appointed his Boston friend to read the paper for him.

In his paper Brown showed that in the beginning it was against the interest of the Company and the Colony to make public their affairs, and for that reason the leaders of the Virginia Company never themselves published a history of the Colony, nor were their records ever used by

88. Ibid., April 4, 1886.
others for that purpose. Hence we have been forced to rely almost en-
tirely upon the partisan works of John Smith and his associates for our
knowledge of the first English foundation in America. In drawing their
opinions from unfriendly sources historians have been unjust to the
leaders in the Company and Colony who founded Virginia.89

The author revealed that his ten year labor trying to collect copies
of every remaining contemporary reference during the foundation period was
now almost complete.90 He then treated in some detail the organization,
officers, members, meetings and objects of the Virginia Company.91 He
gave the names of leading members of the Company hoping that should his
words "fall under the eyes of any of their present representatives they
might be able to throw some lights on manuscripts and documents relating
to the Company.92

At his own expense Brown printed two hundred copies of his paper
and distributed them throughout western Europe. He hoped that they would
prompt some reader to give information concerning the location of some of
the letters and manuscripts for which he so eagerly sought. He was not
disappointed. From England, France, and Spain came sixty copies of
sixty letters and manuscripts which he added to his fast growing collection.93

The distribution of "New Views of Early Virginia History" directly
led to the opening of the Spanish Archives to American scholars. The
only previous attempt to gain access to that treasure house of source

89. Alexander Brown, New Views on Early Virginia History, Liberty, Va.,
1886.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
material had been made in the late 1840's by Jared Sparks and Bucking-
ham Jones. Their failure to do so had discouraged scholars from mak-
ing any further attempts. Thus a great unknown number of papers
relating to European colonization movements in the New World were de-
nied to the researchers in our colonial history. Upon receipt of the
communications from his Spanish readers Brown at once contacted J. L. M.
Curry, the American ambassador extraordinary to the Spanish court,
and sought his aid. This kindly teacher, preacher, and diplomat was
at once interested. He had endeared himself to the Spanish people and
court; accordingly the government immediately gave him permission to
put investigators to work, the expenses of course to be borne by Brown.
This part of Brown's inexorable labors entailed a considerable financial
sacrifice on his part, but it is now impossible to determine what the
complete outlay was. The five remaining letters written by the diplomat
to the historian, now in the Curry Collection in the Library of Con-
gress, are not very revealing as to the details of the investigation.
But they do tell us that as of January 1, 1887 the cost amounted to
$318.45 An undated letter, apparently one of the last the historian
received from Madrid, stated that "the last of copying the manuscripts
you desire will be about $100. I will not authorize the expenditure
until I hear from you. If you wish me to have the work done I can

94. William R. Shepherd, "The Spanish Archives and Their Importance to
the History of the United States," *Annual Report of the American
Historical Association for the Year 1903*, Washington, 1904, 145.
95. Letter of J. L. M. Curry to Alexander Brown, Curry Collection,
advance you the money and you can refund my agent in Virginia."96 If Brown authorized the spending of this last one hundred dollars—and his zealous desire to acquire the last bit of evidence would suggest that he did—his total expenditure in acquiring the Spanish manuscripts was something over four hundred dollars. However Curry himself bore a part of this expense, or at least he greatly desired to do so. In June, 1887 he wrote:

In view of your self-sacrificing labors and the recent losses you have sustained I beg to add, as a contribution toward a true history of Virginia, the amount I mentioned as having been paid for postage and transcription. I shall esteem it a personal favor if you will withhold the remittance for that amount.97

We do not know the "amount I mentioned for postage and transcription," but that Brown felt a great obligation to Curry we know from the preface to The Genesis of the United States,98 Therefore we may assume that Curry's contribution could by no means be passed off as being paltry.

The American Historical Association held its annual meeting for 1887 in Cambridge, and Alexander Brown made enthusiastic plans to attend. He had an invitation to be a guest in the Deane home for the duration of the meeting, and he looked forward with keen anticipation to being a few days with the man to whom he owed so much. But heavy floods and a hail meteor wreaked havoc with his crops that spring, and the historian-farmer

97. Ibid., June 1, 1887.
felt that he must deny himself that pleasure. He therefore consoled himself with being able to send for the inspection and comments of his friend "over one hundred new things."\(^9\) The material for compiling the history of the period of our earliest history was now almost complete.

As if floods and hail were not enough, a severe storm followed the former disasters and destroyed what was left of the years planning in the James valley. Nevertheless Brown worked tirelessly on. In May he wrote Deane regarding his latest acquisitions from Spain.

I should like you to see the sketch of Ft. St. George,\(^{100}\) but I think I will wait and let you see it in the book. I find that the older historians like yourself have covered the work so well that there is little for me to do but gather your work together. This and a few other things are all that I have found in my years of search that seem to be really new. You will not have long to wait now. I am working day and night, and if storms and such will leave me alone for awhile I hope soon to have it ready for the press.\(^{101}\)

With the coming of the year 1888 the reward for a labor of twelve years was in sight. At last there would be a history that would give conclusive evidence of the falsity of Smith and his history. Here at last would be proof that the celebrated Thomas Arundel wished to betray his country into the hands of Spain,\(^{102}\) and that Admiral George Monson was in league with the great national enemy of England for the destruction of incipient colony of Virginia.\(^{103}\) The tentative title as the

\(^9\) Letter of Alexander Brown to Charles Deane, May 2, 1887.
\(^{100}\) For an account of this sketch and for notes on Ft. St. George see The Genesis of the United States, I, 190-194.
\(^{101}\) Letter of Alexander Brown to Charles Deane, September 25, 1887.
\(^{102}\) The Genesis of the United States, I, 311, 324.
\(^{103}\) Ibid., 418, 455.
work drew to a close was *Our Genesis: A Documentary History of Our Foundation with Biographies of Our Founders.*

As the work neared completion the author and his friends began casting about for a publisher who would undertake the responsibility and risk concomitant with placing so academic a work before the reading public. Few publishing houses will promulgate a book of this type unless there is a sufficient number of advance subscribers to insure its success, or the author himself secures the cost of its publication. In this respect Brown was exceedingly fortunate. Among Charles Deane's many friends was Horace E. Scudder, a ranking editor of the house of Houghton, Mifflin and Company, who, because of his close association with Deane, took a keen interest in Brown and his work.

When the manuscript was completed the tired but elated author sent it to Cambridge for the consideration of the friends who had so faithfully and ably advised him in the various stages of its creation. In their experienced hands the farmer-historian placed the outcome of his long years of study, knowing that they could and would appraise the finished product with the keen eyes of competent critics, and with a view to its improvement and final publication. Thus on October 22, 1889 he wrote:

> I will make any alterations which Mr. Scudder, Mr. Winsor, and yourself think advisable. I have had no advisers on the final draft of my manuscript, and I would be very gratified if you three would take an interest in it, then talk it over "among ye," and then submit your ideas to me. I will be guided by them.

I have just been assured that I could find a publisher in Richmond without expense to myself. But I love my work. It has been my constant companion, beating both to my heart and to my mind for twelve years, and I cannot bear the idea of seeing it come from the press in a slipshod style. I would make any sacrifice to have it done on the splendid press of the great house of Houghton, Mifflin and Company, the publisher of the wonderful Narrative and Critical History of America. They have published Cooke's Virginia based on Smith's history, and as an act of justice to the Founders of Our Country I hope they will give the people a chance to read the whole story.

This was the last letter that Alexander Brown wrote his friend and helper, a man whom he never saw, through seven years of difficult but productive labor. For on the night of October 13, 1869 the noble life of Charles Deane came to an end almost as he entered his seventy-seventh year. What Alexander Brown's reaction was to the death of the man on whose unseen shoulders he had, as it were, placed his problems through seven long years of toil and disappointments we do not know. After Deane's death, such help and advice as the rustic Virginia scholar needed and received was, no doubt, supplied by Justin Winsor and Horace Scudder. But the arduous task was even then almost completed. For early in the following year the first edition of The Genesis of the United States came as the author had hoped from the "splendid press of the great house of Houghton, Mifflin and Company."
Chapter IV
The Apex and the Decline

When *The Genesis of the United States* was published in 1890 Alexander Brown, then forty-seven, was at the zenith of his intellectual powers. His life had been one of hard work, and, as we have seen, his financial affairs had for some years been a source of anxiety to him. But now respite from his troubles, he had reason to believe, was at hand. His expectations of pecuniary reward from his first important literary venture indeed soared high. Not only did he anticipate that it would liquidate his debts, but that it would also give him the means with which to further do historical research.¹ True his publishers had refused to print a first edition of more than five hundred copies, though he had been certain that he himself could dispose of at least a thousand.²

At this point a consideration of the nature and contents of this very important contribution to our colonial historiography is pertinent. It is first and foremost a documentary history of the movement in England, 1605-1616, which resulted in the plantation of North America by Englishmen. It begins with a brilliant introductory sketch of what had been done by England in the way of colonization and discovery prior to 1606 for the purpose of showing those political and religious motives which impelled Englishmen to plant settlements in the New World. Then by locating the narrative in London, which was the base of operations,

². Ibid., August 22, 1888.
the author by skillfully presenting the documents in the same order of
time as they were presented to the people then interested, enables the
reader to view events as they developed. There are numerous comments
but they are in the main academic. Thus the reader has complete leeway
for the formation of his own opinions regarding the controversial aspects
of the conflict between the Crown and the Company for the control of the
colony.

As a contribution to the documentary history of the colonial period
The Genesis of the United States is in truth unique. In 1787 historians
knew of only five documents relative to the colonization of America
written between 1606 and 1616. By 1857 twenty-two others had been added
to the original five, and within the next thirty years only forty-four
additional documents came to light. To these seventy-one Alexander
Brown added three hundred. Of these the one hundred and twelve obtained
from the Spanish archives at Simancas are the most interesting, as well
as the most important, in that they reveal a strong Spanish interest,
which had not been known before, in that portion of the New World which
the Elizabethians called Virginia. These manuscripts are, in the main,
the correspondence of three successive Spanish ambassadors to the court
of James I with their king. Spanish prisoners, captured from a caravel
sent to spy upon the Virginia settlement, are the subject of these letters.
They reveal, among other things, the presence of spies among the English
in Virginia who carried letters from the Spanish prisoners to the Spanish
ambassador in London. They reveal an hysterical fear of Spanish attack
on the part of the colonists, and also throw much light on Argall's
campaign against the French in North Virginia. For the first time the presence of a motley mixture of French, Spanish, and Indian prisoners at Jamestown, and the dangers their presence entailed, have into the historian's ken.3

 Everywhere scholars received the new publication with wide acclaim. The Magazine of American History promptly called it "one of the most important productions of the decade."4 After discussing the importance of the manuscripts and the merits of their presentation the magazine concluded: "The biographical and genealogical information is of the first importance. Enough is given of at least twelve hundred persons prominent in the movement to locate or identify them, and thus we may form a correct estimate of the character of those engaged in the movement. Mr. Brown has performed a great national service and has done it marvelously well. His two sumptuous volumes must necessarily go into every good library in the land, and we heartily commend them to the attention of all scholars and students."5

 Other commendations from the highest ranking scholars in the nation were forthcoming. Said Harvard University's Professor Albert B. Hart: "In execution the work leaves nothing to be desired. More sumptuous volumes have seldom come from any American press. Mr. Brown knows how to furnish those conveniences of table of contents, introduction, and index which make a work accessible to other scholars. He will find

5. Ibid., 268.
his reward in the acknowledgments of those who follow in the path he
has hewn out, for while the work is indispensable to scholars, it has
little appeal to ordinary students." Professor Hart's prophecy that
the author would find his reward in the acknowledgments of those who
wrote after him has well been born out. For example Charles M.
Andrews in a single chapter of his monumental work, The Colonial Period
in American History cites The Genesis of the United States no less than
thirty-four times.7

One of the greatest commendations of the book, and one of the most
gratifying to the author, came from his old antagonist, William Wirt
Henry. Said Henry: "In The Genesis of the United States Mr. Alexander
Brown has made an invaluable contribution to the history of the colo-
nisation of America by the English in collecting and arranging three
hundred and sixty documents relating to the movement between 1605 and
1616 which resulted in the settlement at Jamestown. Of the documents
printed nearly three hundred are for the first time given to the public,
having been for the most part unearthed in Europe by the indefatigable
labor of the author. The whole present as an all-absorbing panorama
the grand movement which established in North America a bulwark against
the all-absorbing Spanish power and finally gave North America to the
English people as a theatre upon which to demonstrate that man is capable

6. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, II,
1891-1892, 685.
Haven, 1934, I, 98-140.
of self-government.

"Mr. Brown is to be congratulated upon the grandeur with which he has invested the movement and in preserving the facts relating to it. And for his painstaking in this, as in the sketches of the actors appended, he deserves, as I am sure he will receive, the hearty thanks of all students of American history."8

With so much to recommend his book it is no small wonder that the farmer-historian entertained ideas of a modest monetary gain as a result of his labors. According to the terms of the contract which Charles Deane had made for him, Brown was to receive a twenty per cent royalty on each copy sold with an additional ten per cent for each copy sold by himself. The price was set at fifteen dollars per set. This contract would have been an exceptionally good one had there not been a proviso that in event of failure the author must make good the company's losses.9 The company, as is customary, was to make a semi-annual statement of sales and at the same time advance the author's share of the proceeds, if any. The Genesis of the United States enjoyed a good sale, and when the first settlement was made at the beginning of 1891 enough copies had been sold not only to defray the cost of publication but to give the author an advance of $500 as his share of the profits.10 To the surprise of the publisher and the delight of the author the entire stock was exhausted before the second statement was due. Accordingly

a second edition of fifteen hundred copies was immediately printed.\textsuperscript{11} Again Brown tried to prevail upon his cautious publishers to bring out a large edition but they felt that "while the number of libraries and scholars willing to buy so costly a book is increasing it still is not large enough to warrant the printing of more than the number of copies we have suggested to you in our previous communications."\textsuperscript{12}

For a few years the second edition also enjoyed, comparatively speaking, an enormous sale. At the time of the author's death in 1906 eleven hundred of the fifteen hundred copies had been sold. Thus Brown's total income from the \textit{Genesis} during his life time amounted to $4800. The last of the remaining four hundred copies was sold in 1912.\textsuperscript{13} Alexander Brown was a bitterly disappointed man at what he considered the public's unappreciative reception of his book, but the sales by far exceeded anything that Houghton, Mifflin & Company had dared to hope.\textsuperscript{14}

In the nineties Brown continued his attacks on Captain John Smith which continued to elicit answers from William Wirt Henry and others. This was the time when patriotic and historical groups were conducting drives to raise funds for the erection of a monument to the controversial Captain at Jamestown. Brown, on his part, conducted a one man campaign in the pages of the \textit{Daily Dispatch} to inform the people of the character of the man whom they were asked to honor.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{11} Letter of Houghton, Mifflin & Co. to Alexander Brown, August 11, 1891, Brown Papers, Box No. 1.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., September 5, 1895.
\textsuperscript{13} Letter of Houghton, Mifflin & Co. to the author, August 8, 1947
\textsuperscript{14} Letter of Houghton, Mifflin & Co. to Alexander Brown, January 12, 1898, Brown Papers, Box No. 1.
\textsuperscript{15} See \textit{Daily Dispatch}, Richmond, Va., September 20, 1891; November 27, 1892; December 25, 1892.
From this time on Brown devoted his time exclusively to his studies and to his literary endeavors, supplementing his income from this source by renting out his land and cultivating only enough himself to supply the needs of his table. Thus there was a prolific flow from his pen during these years. In 1892 appeared "The English Occupancy of North America" in The Atlantic Monthly. In this well written article the author stressed two cardinal points: first, the English fear of Catholicism as a factor in colonization, dating from 1565 when the Huguenot survivors of the Fort Caroline carnage arrived in England, and which the betrayal of Hawkins at Vera Cruz in 1568 further accentuated; and secondly, the part played by the Crown in gaining a British foothold in the New World. In sharp contrast to his later opinions Brown at this time believed that great credit was due James I for the success of the incipient Virginia colony.16

In 1895 appeared a second major publication, The Cabells and Their Kin. As early as 1876, the year he began his research in early Virginia history, Brown desired to write an account of that famous family to which he was bound by ties of blood and marriage.17 Though he was working hard on the Genesis throughout the eighties, he still found time in which to collect material on the Cabells. In June of 1894 the manuscript was ready for the publishers. This was published on a partnership basis.

17. Letter of William D. Cabell to Alexander Brown, July 1, 1876, Brown Papers, Box No. 6.
after five hundred subscriptions to it had been obtained. This, Houghton, Houghton estimated, would pay the cost of publication and net about $1000 to be equally divided between publishers and author. It is impossible to say just what Brown's income was from The Cabells and Their Kin because it is not known how many copies above the five hundred subscriptions were sold. The Cyclopaedia Publishing Company purchased the right to use the Cabell material in an encyclopedia it was then projecting, but our knowledge of the deal begins and ends with this fact.

During these years Brown became a contributor to the new Virginia Magazine of History and Biography. In "Sainsbury's Abstracts and the Colonial History of Virginia" he pointed out certain mistakes made by Sainsbury, especially as to dates, in copying his famous abstracts. This article has an interest apart from the information it gives on Sainsbury's work, for in it the author announced his theory of the office of history: "We have no guide for the present or the future except the past. It is the function of history to furnish mankind with this guidance." In "Captain John Martin's Case" Brown, while having only praise for Captain Martin, accused the Crown of granting this and other special privileges for the deliberate purpose of creating discord among the planters in order to have a more potent excuse for the dissolution of the Virginia Company.

It had been the historian's original plan with the Genesis to

20. Ibid., 189.
21. Ibid., 268-275.
collect everything he could and index the matter under chapter headings—one chapter relating to events during a given period in England, the next to a corresponding period in America," but later he decided to allow the American chapters to remain on the stacks for a history of the colony on the James to be completed hereafter. These chapters so shelved became The First Republic in America. This, the third of the historian's major publications, is a creative narrative of the origins of America from 1605 to 1627. The author made use of the documents printed in the Genesis as his sources for the period prior to 1616. Some of the material for the later period were documents discovered since 1890 but nowhere does Brown gratify our curiosity by indicating what these documents are. Indeed the one criticism of The First Republic is the author's laxity in indicating his sources. For the period prior to 1616 the inquiring student can easily check The First Republic against The Genesis of the United States for the source, but after that date it is only a guess. Brown freely stated his opinions in the book without giving either reasons or authority for them. Thus several competent critics have ventured to question the accuracy of some of his citations.24

The First Republic in America is by far the best of Brown's

creative works. It is an apologia for the valiant colonizing efforts of the Virginia Company of London. It was one of the first and one of the very few efforts to lift the John Smith controversy from the trivia of the Pocahontas rescue to the more important task of analyzing Smith as an authentic historian. Regarding the Pocahontas incident the author says:

The Pocahontas incident has been woven into a pretty story which has appealed so strongly to human sympathies as to overshadow matters of the greatest historic importance. The contending for it has been like fiddling while Rome was burning. We should have directed our time rather to saving our earliest history from the smoke and flame with which it has so long been concealed or obliterated. It is more important to rescue our foundation as a nation from the ideas conveyed by Smith than it is to contend over the saving of Smith.25

As a factor in the renaissance of Virginia history The First Republic in America ranks near the top. The author's first work was designed to appeal to Americans everywhere, and so it did. But The First Republic contains an appeal to Virginians to take the lead in rescuing their earliest history from falsity and oblivion. Thus Virginia received a stinging rebuke for not keeping alive the memory of Virginia Laydon as North Carolina has of Virginia Dare. Virginia Laydon was the first child to be born to an English and Protestant marriage in the New World. The Virginia Company, as the author points out, recognized the importance of the event in the form of a grant of

five hundred acres of land to the father of the child, while "the only fact known of Virginia Dare is that she was born on Roanoke Island in 1587. With that fact her history begins and ends. Yet her memory has been kept ever green by the people of North Carolina, and there is no reason why the people of Virginia should not take as great an interest in Virginia Laydon whose name has never been honored in song and story."26

John Smith came in for his share of indictments.

Why was it that of all the members of the Council of Virginia who lived any length of time became enemies of Captain John Smith? Why is it that so many of those who left their testimony with their lives on the sacred soil of the Old Dominion have defamatory or unhonored records in our histories, while Smith who returned to England before the victory was won and remained there is lauded in song and story? Is not the testimony of those who died on the field of honor or action as worthy of our belief as those who published the licensed dispatches.27

And again:

The question has been asked whether the drawing furnished by Smith for his "Map of Virginia" was made by himself or whether it was one of the drawings that came into his hands while he was President. Other important questions are, who furnished Velasco (Spain's ambassador to England) with these charts? Who first gave them to the enemy? We know who first gave them to the world.28

In the years following the publication of The Genesis of the

27. Ibid., 118.
28. Ibid., 146-147.
Brown gradually became convinced that he had erred in ascribing religious motives to the colonizing movement and that the official records, being written by royal officials, were *ex parte* evidence. No longer did he believe that James I and the court were friends of the movement. Rather he saw now that James and his advisers plotted to defeat the aims of the Virginia Company, led by Sir Edwin Sandys and the Earl of Southampton, to plant a free and democratic government in Virginia. The loss of the original company records to him was proof of a deliberate attempt to destroy the evidence and pervert the truth by means of licensed historians. To John Smith, Brown now added the Rev. Samuel Purchas as an instrument to accomplish this purpose.

Such is the theme of *English Politics in Early Virginia History*. This last work of the historian represents him in decline, in pursuit, as it were, of a phantom. He swept aside all the evidence except that left by the Sandys party itself. Thus he became violently partisan, giving nothing to support his thesis except his own beliefs. The efforts of the Crown to suppress the evidence of our patriotic foundation, he would have us know, by no means ended with James I but was continued by his successors until the reign of George III, when in some way not made clear the American revolutionaries stopped the efforts.

*English Politics in Early Virginia History* is not history but a conglomeration of opinions and ideas, a high proportion of them without

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30. Ibid., 85.
any reasonable basis. It was the only one of Brown's books for which his publishers assumed complete responsibility, but few copies were ever sold. It paid no dividends to the author and was almost a complete loss to the publishers.31

Of the historian's social and business life during these last years the evidence is lacking. His deafness precluded his living a normal social life as a young man, and as old age advanced he doubtless more and more withdrew into seclusion. We have seen that he made several thousand dollars on the fifteen hundred copies of The Genesis of the United States sold during his life time. On The First Republic in America complete figures are unobtainable, but the first six months sales netted the author $880.04 32 Therefore it is safe to say that The First Republic paid its author something near $6000 during his life time.

It seems that Brown's financial affairs became rather stable after 1890. In 1898 there was a mortgage for $1500 against the Union Hill estate which was of course worth a great deal more than that. This debt the historian met by selling his Spanish manuscripts to the New York Public Library.33 And this seems to be the last debt that the historian ever owed.

Almost with the publication of his last book the brilliant and useful career of Alexander Brown came to an end. On the late afternoon

32. Ibid., January 31, 1899.
33. Letter of G. L. Rives to Alexander Brown, September 6, 1898, Brown Papers, Box No. 10.
of June 5, 1901 he entered his home and announced to his wife that for the first time in his life he was clear of debts with money ahead. He further told her to get ready, that they were going to Lynchburg and get some furniture she had been wanting so long. While Caroline Brown was preparing for this trip the historian went out to mend the garden fence. When Mrs. Brown went out to get him an hour or so later she found him lying helplessly on the ground, the victim of a paralytic stroke. From that time until the hour of his death Alexander Brown never walked. For five long years he lingered suffering greatly and beyond medical aid. The end finally came August 25, 1906, and the following day the great historian was buried in the family cemetery at the back of the Union Hill mansion.34

34. The information contained in this paragraph was obtained from Mrs. Cabell Robinson of Amherst, Virginia, a close friend of the Brown. Her husband, the late Cabell Robinson, was the constant attendant of Alexander Brown through his last illness.
Bibliography

I. Manuscript Sources

Brown-Papers, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. This collection of Alexander Brown's correspondence is very valuable for a study of his business life. There are also numerous letters to and from his relatives and close friends. They are of no value for a study of his literary endeavors.

Curry Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. The five letters in this collection from J. L. M. Curry to Alexander Brown contain a great amount of pertinent information on the problems and expense of obtaining the Spanish manuscripts used in The Genesis of the United States.

Deane Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts. The 112 letters from Alexander Brown to Charles Deane in this collection are by far the most important years of Brown's intellectual growth, and they are very revealing concerning his relations with Charles Deane, Justin Winsor, and other historians.

Henry Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia. William Wirt Henry's prolific correspondence with numerous historians of his day makes these letters extremely valuable for a study of Virginia historiography in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

II. Secondary Works


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