

CHAPTER XV.

Washington to Richmond.—Legislature of Virginia in Session.—Substitution of White for Slave Labor.—Progress of Negro Instruction.—Slave-dealers.—Kindness to Negroes.—Coal of Oolitic Period near Richmond.—Visit to the Mines.—Upright Fossil Trees.—Deep Shafts, and Thickness of Coal Seams.—Explosion of Gas.—Natural Coke.—Resemblance of the more modern Coal-measures to old Carboniferous Rocks.—Whites working with free Negroes in the Mines.

Dec. 16, 1845.—FROM Washington we went to Richmond, and were glad to find that the great southern line of railway from Acquia Creek had been completed since we were last here, by which we escaped twelve miles of jolting over a rough road, described with so much humor by Dickens.

At Richmond I went into the Supreme Court of Appeal, and, as I entered, heard the counsel who was pleading, cite a recent decision of the English Court of Chancery as bearing on his case. The Houses of Legislature of Virginia were in session, and I heard part of a debate on a proposed railway from Baltimore to the valley of the Great Kanawha, in Western Virginia. Much jealousy was expressed lest the metropolis of Maryland, instead of Richmond, should reap the chief fruits of this project, at which I was not surprised; for Virginia, with a population of 1,100,000 inhabitants, has no towns larger than Richmond and Norfolk. Beverly, and the early writers on this state, say, "that the people were prevented from congregating in large towns by the enjoyment of an extensive system of river navigation, which enabled merchant ships to sail up every where to the warehouses of each planter and receive their freight. Hence there was less activity and enterprise, and a want of the competition, which the collected life in cities promotes."*

One of the senators, whom I had met the day before at a dinner party, conversed with me on the publication of the geological

* See "Graham's History," vol. i. p. 145.