

## VIRGINIA.

### The Battle-Fields of Seven Pines and Fair Oaks—Political Affairs—Miscellaneous.

From Our Own Correspondent.

RICHMOND, Friday, Oct. 19, 1866.

Two days ago, with the gladsome beams of the October sun dancing among the pines, and the hazy dreaminess of an October day about us, a party of four made a tour of the battle-fields of Seven Pines and Fair Oaks. At respective distances of seven and nine miles from the city, these battle-fields are more frequently visited by the visitors to Richmond than any other of the numerous scenes of by-gone deadly strife that encompass the city, because more accessible. So far as Seven Pines and Fair Oaks are concerned, the tourist finds little to reward him for his jolting over the horrible roads leading from the city to the fields, which the armies reduced to nothing more than a series of ruts, and which have never been repaired. Going out on what is called the Nine-mile road, at about six miles from the city the outer line of the defences of Richmond is reached, and here the sight-seer had best make his longest pause, for here the hand of war has been laid so heavily upon the earth that the impress of the stroke will last for years. This defensive line is probably the longest and most elaborate ever constructed for field defence. Beginning on the James River, it sweeps around the city at an average distance of six miles from it, until it touches the North Anna far to the northward. Up and down the hillocks run the great trenches, clasping between them on every summit a bastioned fort, whose huge sides of yellow earth are landmarks for miles in their front. There is a newness of appearance about these works that is remarkable, when the fact is considered that the rains of a quartette of years have beaten upon them. But the fact may be partly explained by considering the care and skill with which they were originally constructed, and by remembering that they never felt the shock of battle, for they have all been built since that disastrous Spring when, from the marshes of the Chickahominy, McCLELLAN was endeavoring to reach out his hand to take Richmond by the throat. But, though unstained by blood, there they stand to-day, most impressive memorials of the gigantic dimensions our civil war assumed, and of the skill, fortitude and energy with which it was waged.

#### FAIR OAKS.

Standing at the fort on this line, which frowns grimly upon the approaches to the Nine-mile road, down in the front, a mile away, a group of isolated oaks, trenching upon the edge of a pine forest, can be observed. These are the Fair Oaks, and they are passing fair to the eyes in that wilderness of pines and dwarf growth. Between these oaks and pines and the hue of works where LEE's lines then were, is open ground—once cultivated fields, now abandoned wastes, save here and there a patch of corn-field. In the pine forest to the right of the Oaks CASEY was encamped that terrible day when the enemy pounced upon him, and converted the pinery into shamble. There are few traces of the struggle visible now. Scrutinize closely and the trees can be seen to be marked with bullets, here and there one shattered with a cannon ball; at intervals open graves, from which the dead have been removed to other sepulchres, and these are all. I have seen battle-fields while the battle raged, have traversed them as soon as it ceased, and I must say that if then they were exciting, at four years after the battle they are more agreeable places of resort. Of the torn and mangled forms of men and beasts and the hardly less sorrowfully-suggestive debris of armies that then always cumbered and affrights mother earth, there is here at Fair Oaks not a trace. The dead have been buried or have mouldered out of sight; the wounded have been carried away to get well or die; the broken muskets, the blankets, canteens and other articles that fall from the nerveless soldier as the bullet strikes him, have all been carried off by tourists or utilized by the people of the surrounding country. Fair Oaks is to-day then nothing but a solitude, holding yet beneath its bosom the mouldering bones of many of its victims, but bearing on its face hardly a scar of the terrible strife that so hacked and mangled it four years ago.

#### SEVEN PINES.

Southwardly and eastwardly two miles from the grove of oaks touching the edge of that horrible corduroy road, called in irony the Williamsburgh pike, at precisely seven miles from Richmond, is the beginning of a heavy pine forest; hence the name of Seven Pines, suggested by the distance from the city and not descriptive of the number of trees, for they are almost as sands on the sea-shore, sweeping over a great breadth of ground down to the Chickahominy and over the barren hills beyond. The ground known as Seven Pines bears no more impress of the terrible scenes once enacted upon it than does Fair Oaks, and the two fields are so contiguous as to be blended in one—as the battles were so coincident in time that only the pen of critical history can draw the line between them. Our accounts, indeed, if I remember rightly, class them as one, under the name of Seven Pines; but the Confederates seem to consider them two separate and distinct actions, and have christened them Fair Oaks and Seven Pines.

It matters little whether one or two, there lies the ground to-day seven miles away from this populous city, and it is a wilderness and a solitude. I know not whether before the war it bore the same aspect or not, but as it looks now it does not require a lively imagination to consider the curse of the shedder of blood is upon. On very few acres of the entire breadth has the plow followed in the track of havoc, and where it has, the vegetation is stunted and has a sickly appearance. The pines seem murmuring an everlasting requiem; the few of human kind ever to be seen about the place wear a dejected look; in short, the whole scene brings vividly to mind that painting of desolation, HOOD'S "Haunted House."

#### THE CEMETERY.

Not the least sorrowful of the inspirations of Seven Pines is one of those cemeteries with which the Government is disfiguring, I might almost say desecrating, all the battle-fields of the war. Three acres of ground have been purchased on the field skirting the Williamsburgh road, laid off into an exact square inclosed with a high paling fence white-washed a staring white, and into this square eighteen hundred dead have been huddled, being transferred from where they fell and were buried on the surrounding battle-field. A gate opens into this field of death secured with a cow-shed padlock, and bearing over it in garrisoned letters the inscription "Seven Pines National Cemetery." At the head of each grave is a board painted that inevitable white, bearing so much of the name, regiment and company, of which the bones beneath once formed a part, as could be discovered. But very rarely indeed does a full descriptive list appear upon these boards, and the great majority of them bear only the words: "Unknown United States Soldier." Sometimes the fragment of a name, sometimes initials have survived, and these are painted upon the boards.

These cemeteries, if this one at Seven Pines be a type of them, are repulsive in the highest degree. In some of the great cities of the dead, like Greenwood, death has been clothed with such poetry that the rambler among the tombs might wish himself dead solely for the pleasure of sleeping in the midst of such beauty; but the most care-tossed mortal, looking on one of these national cemeteries, would pray heartily for life to be brought to rest in the midst of

them is stiff, everything garish; nothing suggestive of the sweeping lines of eternity, but everything squared to the angularity of life. As all these dead rested in their original graves with the moaning pines above them, and a mossy green clinging to the earth that wrapped them, there was about them something of the softness that should encircle death; but here, with not a shrub or a blade of grass—nothing but the yellow earth and glaring white boards and fences—it is a sight to hurry from, and we did. Not even the haziness of dreamy October could give a charm to such a scene as this. One reflection, and one only, redeems the scene from utter hideousness, and that is the evidence it gives that the Government has not forgotten those who died for it, but stretches over them its remembrance in a kindly fashion. In the mound in the centre of the inclosure is the flag-staff from which sometimes the starry banner is floating, an emblem of the supremacy of the Federal Government. And this is one thing more to rob the place of its unsightliness—but these are all.

#### A MODEST SOUTHERN UNIONIST.

Coming to the mere recent dead, I must mention the decease yesterday of TRUEWORTHY DUDLEY, one of the Grand Jury that indicted JERKERSON DAVIS at Norfolk. Mr. DUDLEY was a native of Massachusetts, but had been a resident of Virginia for twenty years, having been engaged in the liquor business in this city, where, says the *Richmond Times*, he was highly esteemed before the war. Of all the steadfast Union men of this section Mr. DUDLEY was one of the most sensible and valuable. Fashioned of very different material from HUNNICUT WARDWELL *et al.*, he never attempted to make his Unionism an article of trade—never assumed the I-am-hoher-than-thou air which makes those Southern loyalists such disagreeable company. Mr. DUDLEY was unwavering and sincere in his fealty to the Union, and frankly honest in the expression of his opinions, but never blatant, never frothy over the fact, like so many who have a far less consistent record.

#### POLITICS DULL—NEWSPAPERS AND THEIR IDEAS OF ENTERPRISE.

I have dwelt thus far on the dead past, and what now of the living present? I hardly know. I have traversed the columns of the newspapers of the entire State for the past week, and found not a word politically that is significant. The newspapers are beginning to eschew politics altogether, and fill their editorial columns with articles about internal improvements, crops, European questions, and other subjects of like nature. For a day or two past, indeed, some of them have had approving words of the rumor that Gen. SHERMAN is to assume Mr. STANTON'S place as Acting Secretary of War. It is an idea they seem to like—their antipathy to STANTON makes them welcome SHERMAN with cordiality; but this, perhaps, is hardly doing them justice. There is in Virginia a genuine respect for SHERMAN as a brave, frank soldier, and an able man. The conviction is general that, intellectually, he is the great man developed by the war on the Northern side, and Virginians have respect for mental power wherever found.

This Virginia field, just at this moment, is the most barren on earth for the letter-writer. Everybody is attending strictly to his own private affairs, and letting those of everybody else, including the nation's, severely alone. There are no outrages on freedmen, no "treasonable" societies, no political meetings or meetings of any kind, no uproars or rows of any sort or kind. This perfect quietude is the best thing possible for everybody except the newspaper-writer, and therefore he must not grumble.

The Press of this city partakes of the general lassitude and stagnation, and does not consider a show of enterprise necessary. For instance, this morning it did not contain a single Associated Press dispatch that was not received in this city by 4 o'clock yesterday; whatever came after that hour they will publish to-morrow as morning dispatches. In local matters the Richmond Press is prompt and energetic, but in news from the world beyond it is lamentably behind the age—that is, it is usually just twenty-four hours behind Washington and Baltimore. But laboring under the disadvantages the newspapers here do, it would perhaps be requesting too much to ask more enterprise of them. They have just made their quarterly returns of advertising to the Internal Revenue Assessor, and return in round numbers the *Times*, \$9,000; the *Dispatch*, \$6,000, and the *Whig and Examiner*, \$4,000 each. With these receipts there is scarcely a margin for enterprise in the conduct of the papers.

E. C.