## A FRAGMENTARY MEMORY OF JOHNSON HOOPER.

By James G. Burr.

The impressions made upon the mind in childhood and youth are always the most vivid and enduring, and though in the daily pursuits of life, in the arduous struggle for success and the jarring conflicts of adverse elements, those impressions may for a time be obscured or forgotten, yet they are never lost. As age creeps upon us and we live in recollection more than we do in hope, that longing for the past of our boyhood cleaves to us all. Our thoughts fly backward to the scenes and associations of our youth and fasten themselves upon them with a longing that nothing else can satisfy. The present and the future are alike unheeded, for our yearning hearts centre only upon the days that have faded into distance. At such moments, incidents the most trivial will excite emotions to which we have long been strangers—a withered leaf, a strip of faded ribbon that bound the ringlets of a lost and loved one, a line traced by a hand long moulded into dust, a little word in kindness spoken, a motion or a tear, will evoke recollections that genius can not trace or inspiration fathom.

This train of thought has been excited by finding in a package of old papers that had long lain hid, some lines written many, many years ago by one who has long since passed to his rest, Johnson Hooper, a Wilmington boy. He was the son of Archibald Maclaine Hooper, one of the most accomplished scholars of his day, who edited for a number of years the *Cape Fear Recorder,* the only newspaper published in Wilmington for a long period. He was a near relative of William Hooper, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. The family removed to Montgomery, Ala., where Johnson became connected with the *Montgomery Mail,* a newspaper of extensive circulation and great influence. He found time, however, from his arduous duties to indulge his humorous fancies, and while connected with that paper, gave the world several humorous works of great merit, viz.: *Taking the Census, Captain Simon Suggs,* and others which gave him rank among the best humorous writers of the day. He died in Richmond, Va., shortly after the transfer of the Confederate Government to that city.

Nearly, if not quite eighty years ago, an Englishman, Mr. Anthony Milan, was British consul at the port of Wilmington.



He was an educated gentleman, but possessed certain peculiarities to an unusual and disagreeable extent, was dogmatic and overbearing in disposition, and exhibited continuously a haughty, aristocratic bearing, which he took no pains to conceal. His "personal pulchritude" was immense, but he was always scrupulously neat in his attire, wearing fine broadcloth and ruffled shirts of spotless whiteness. A gold-framed eyeglass dangled from a ribbon around his neck and was conspicuously displayed upon his breast, while a number of massive gold seals hung pendant from his watch fob. He was altogether English, haughty and presumptuous, with a growl at everything and at almost everybody, and could not tolerate democracy in any form. He was an exaggerated type of class intolerance in the official life of the town, and his pompous air and personal decorations were the delightful derision of the small boy.

Upon one occasion, at the corner of Market and Front Streets, Mr. Milan was discussing with an important functionary a question of public affairs in the presence of the newly elected constable—the only policeman—who incautiously interjected the remark that in his opinion, etc. Mr. Milan stared at him with unmitigated contempt—"And pray, sir," said he, "what right have *you* to an opinion?" (*Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis.*)

About that time a ship had been built at the southern extremity of the town, and the day appointed for the launching had arrived. As the building of a ship in those days was quite an event in the history of the town, almost the entire population turned out to witness the launching, and an immense crowd gathered on the wharves and the surrounding hills. Of course, the British consul was there in full dress. The tide unfortunately was too low at the time for the ship to float when she left the ways; she grounded, and just then Mr. Milan, by some accident, fell overboard, but was quickly hooked up out of the river all dripping wet, with his bald head glistening in the sun like burnished gold. He was not at all injured by his involuntary ducking, but excessively chagrined. Of course, the boys were delighted, for he was exceedingly unpopular with them, and the next day Johnson Hooper, one of the youngsters, produced the following lines, which exhibit, even at that early age, his playful fancies: