THE RIVER COUNTIES.

The sixteen counties from Onslow to Richmond constitute what has long been known as the Cape Fear country. From their first settlement the inhabitants of these counties have been allied in business and social interests, and their association has been so close that their history is largely inter-related.

The Upper Cape Fear having been settled principally by Highland Scotsmen, whose descendants still remain near where their forefathers found a home, the predominating strain in that region is Scotch. Lower down, the settlers were chiefly English and Scotch-Irish.

Since the Revolution there have been no considerable accessions from abroad, and the development has been through internal growth, which was very slow during those decades when so many North Carolinians were migrating to the new lands of the South and West. But on the cessation of that migration population began to thicken, and industries have been diversified to the great advantage of the entire region. Indeed, the development of all the counties of the Cape Fear country has been most gratifying, and, while every township has reason to rejoice in its social and material improvement, the uplift of the region has had a potent influence on the centres of trade. Especially has Wilmington felt the beneficial effects in the enlargement of its business and the strengthening of its financial resources, and in its increasing importance as an *entrepôt* of foreign and domestic commerce. While it is beyond the compass of this volume to describe the historical events of the entire region, whose history is so full of interest and such a source of pride to the inhabitants, yet the writer can not omit some slight mention of the river counties, Cumberland, Bladen, and Brunswick. New Hanover was laid off from Bath in 1729, and five years later Bladen was laid off, extending indefinitely to the west and reaching the Virginia line to the north. Bladen was named for one of the members of the Board of Trade, which had charge of the colonies, who was personally interested in North Carolina, as he owned lands in Albemarle and his son-in-law, Colonel Rice, had made his home on the Cape Fear. Bladen, so vast in extent, in time became the mother of counties. Its western and northern territory, clear to the Virginia line, was, in 1749, erected into a county called Anson. Then,

five years later, Cumberland County was likewise cut off from Bladen. After the Revolution another part was taken off and called Robeson, in honor of one of Bladen's heroes. Finally, in 1808, a slice of Bladen, added to a part of Brunswick, became Columbus.

Cumberland was for many years a very large county, but in 1784 Moore County was cut off from it, and in 1855 Harnett; and, more recently, Hoke was formed from parts of Cumberland and Robeson.

While Bladen and Cumberland were so extensive they played a most important part in the stirring events that mark the history of the Cape Fear. During the Revolution the inhabitants were much divided, many adhering to the government under which they had lived and to which they felt that their allegiance was due. But in both counties there were ardent Whigs, and civil war at times raged, with deplorable consequences. No Whigs were more determined than those of Bladen and Cumberland, and battles were fought in each county, some account being given elsewhere of the Battle of Elizabethtown.

After the Revolution, Fayetteville, being at the head of navigation, became the market for western products and the distributing point for imported goods, needed even beyond the mountains. Its importance was so fully recognized that the Legislature held sessions there, and it was regarded as the natural point for the State capital. Although improperly deprived of this advantage, Fayetteville continued to flourish, becoming in many respects the most important center in the State. There was to be found one of the most elegant social circles in the State, and her citizens were foremost in enterprises. In 1818 they started the steamer *Henrietta* to run on regular schedule between Wilmington and Fayetteville, and they led in the erection of mills to make paper and cotton goods.

From the beginning Cumberland could boast of many families of superior intelligence, virtue, and refinement, and the passage of time has only added to its high reputation in this regard. The men of Cumberland were ever the equals of the best in the State—the Hays, Rowans, Groves, Eccleses, Mallets, Donaldsons, Winslows, McAllisters, McQueens, Campbells, Murchisons, Smiths, McNeills, McCormicks, McDearmids, Bethunes, Cochrans, Dobbins, Henrys, MacRaes, Camerons, Rays, Hales, Steeles, Shepherds, Stranges, Shaws, McLaughlins, Robinsons, Tillinghasts, Halls, Worths, Haighs, Huskes, Kyles, Cooks,