Some Notices of Kentucky,

particularly of its chief town, Lexington.

Kentucky was admitted into the Union in 1792. Its population was 73,675 in 1790, 220,939 in 1810, and 582,446 in 1820. Lexington was founded in April 1779, but made slow progress for some time; as in 1797, it contained but 30 houses. It has, since that period, increased rapidly, and now contains about 1000 houses and 6000 inhabitants. The streets intersect each other at right angles, and the houses, which are generally of brick, are handsomely built. The roads are superior to those of most other towns in Kentucky, and the superior advantages afforded by steam navigation to Louisville and Cincinnati, which have drawn off a portion of the trade that formerly centered in Lexington. The trade of the city is large, and the superior advantages afforded by steam navigation to Louisville and Cincinnati, which have drawn off a portion of the trade that formerly centered in Lexington. The major part of the citizens of the South-western states, who formerly either sojourned in Lexington or passed through it, during the summer months, now direct their attention to Louisville.

There is a literary society in the town, called the Lexington Institute, founded by the late President Holt, of which the members meet at each other's houses monthly, in alphabetical order.

The trade of Lexington is not quite so flourishing as formerly. This is directly from the superior advantages afforded by steam navigation to Louisville and Cincinnati, which have drawn off a portion of the trade that formerly centered in Lexington. The major part of the citizens of the South-western states, who formerly either sojourned in Lexington or passed through it, during the summer months, now direct their attention to Louisville. This has cut off a source of the prosperity of the former town.

In order to revive the trade and commerce of Lexington, some of its public-spirited citizens contemplate the formation of a society for the promotion of internal improvements, similar to that formed in this city, which gave such acceleration to the canal system in Pennsylvania.

The object is to disseminate, as widely as possible, essays calculated to arouse the citizens generally to the necessity of facilitating the communication between the different parts of the state, so as to act upon the Legislature, and impel them to adopt efficient measures for the purpose.

The scarcity of water debarred Kentucky from the prospect of ever enjoying the advantages of canals, except on a very contracted scale.

A railroad is contemplated from Lexington to Louisville or Cincinnati, or perhaps ultimately to both. This measure would be exceedingly important to Lexington, and would prevent any further diminution of its trade, but would generally enhance it, and pay a noble interest to the undertakers.

Lexington, however, enjoys advantages of which she can never be deprived. She has numbers of important manufactures, unfailing sources of wealth and prosperity.

There are in the town, ten manufactories of cotton bagging and bale rope, in which 200 people are employed, of whom not more than two per cent are white. There are in other parts of the state as many more. The annual produce is nearly one million of yards of cotton bagging, and 2,000,000 lbs. of bale rope, besides large quantities of twine and yarns.

There are ten cotton manufactories, some of them on a large and respectable scale. The Fayette factory, near the town, spin weekly between 4 and 5000 dozen cotton, and has recently put up looms to make about 200 pieces of muslin, 50 yards each, per week. Mr. James Wight's cotton factory works up about 350 bales of cotton per annum. There are three woollen manufactories.

The Lexington white and red lead manufacturing company, manufactures annually from 80 to 100,000 lbs. of white, and about 10,000 lbs. of red lead. The stock is about $50,000, and the dividends are about $1 per annum.

Besides these manufactories, there is a great number of other establishments, embracing nearly all the varieties of employments that contribute to human comfort or security—grist mills, paper mills, breweries of beer and porter, rope walks, distilleries, foundries, manufactories of nails, &c. &c. &c. In the neighborhood of Lexington, about 2000 tons of hemp are raised annually. The culture has greatly increased of
lads. Besides hemp, the state produces for export, tobacco, Indian corn, wheat, rye, oats, barley, flour, horses, cattle, sheep, hogs, mules, &c. &c.

There are three papers published in Lexington, two political and one religious. In the state there are from 20 to 25.

Kentucky has suffered greatly by the fluctuations of her paper currency, by the bankruptcy of her banks and by her reissues. She is now recovering from her difficulties; and has one specie paying bank, with a number of branches, of which the paper is in a perfectly sound state. Her broken banks are winding up their concerns. The bank of the United States has two branches in the state, one at Lexington and the other at Louisville.

Louisville is a very thriving town, and is supposed to have about 6000 inhabitants. The important canal at the falls will probably be completed next year. Opinions are much divided as to its effects upon the prosperity of the surrounding country, and as to whether it will prove highly beneficial, and other ways true to the reverse. The former opinion appears the more natural. It will be very injurious to Shippingport, a town about two miles from Louisville, containing about 2000 inhabitants, the prosperity of which depends in a great measure, upon being the depot for merchandise, which, except when the river is high, cannot be conveyed round the falls, by water.

In Lexington and Louisville, a custom prevails, which adds greatly to the comfort of society, and which is not usual in our great cities. In nine cases out of ten, where intimacies exist between married men, they extend to the females of the respective families. Whereas it is well known that in Philadelphia and New York, intimacies frequently exist for years between married men, whose wives are unknown to each other.

It now remains to take a rapid sketch of the character of the citizens of Kentucky. The character is on the whole estimable. Its distinguishing features are, a high degree of shrewdness and intelligence—natural politeness unadorned by the formality, the etiquette, and the distinction of caste, that generally prevail in older stages of society—and genuine hospitality towards strangers. In these three very important items, Kentucky will advantageously compare with any state in the Union. This character is derived from an impartial examination of its citizens, in steam boats, in taverns, in stables, at ordinaries, in private circles, and in large parties. I am well aware that it by no means corresponds with the prejudices of the generality of the citizens of the other states, and shall endeavour to shew wherein those prejudices rest, and the reason why they are so erroneous. Such prejudices are highly pernicious when they prevail among members of the same family of nations, exciting alienation and hostility—and I therefore hope that the attempt to obviate them will not be regarded with indifference by those whose good opinion is worth cultivating.

There are few sources of error more prolific, than the habit to which mankind are prone, of generalizing without adequate data—and from individual cases inferring the character & qualities of communities and nations. We have heard of travellers, who pronounced dogmatically on the character of a nation from an interview with a few persons in a town or city—and one is particularly renowned, who, having seen, in the day of his arrival, a number of old and homely women, and none either young or beautiful, is reported to have very judiciously entered among his memorials, "N. B. All the women in this place 'must be ugly.'"

It is not very Inorable to human nature that this tendency towards generalization is more prevalent as regards deformity of character than the contrary. Fifty upright or virtuous individuals of any particular profession, community, or nation, will not be so likely to induce us to pourtray the whole mass couleur de rose, as ten or a dozen fraudulent or worthless persons to lead us to assume a general worthlessness.

When once a nation is brought into disrepute, whether right or wrong, every incident that occurs, tending to afford any sort of support to the blemish, is caught at with avidity, and regarded as "confirmation", as proof from holy writ." Whereas ten cases equally strong, occur twice in nations not lying under such blemish, attach no national disgrace.

It is within the recollection of most of us, that a strong prejudice prevailed against the people of New England, at a very distant day; & every petty trick perpetrated by a New England man was triumphantly adduced in full proof of the correctness of the prejudice. Thus the whole district of country, containing above a million and a half of souls, was made responsible for the misconduct of every individual in it. The injustice of this procedure is now well known and acknowledged by men of liberal minds—although it still lingers among a few of the low & the vulgar.

To apply this reasoning to Kentucky, among the early settlers in that state, were many low, disorderly, and profane characters, by whom it was regarded as a place of refuge, an asylum for the abandoned. This was the character bore but a small proportion to the mass of the population, they served to affix a stigma on the whole. Such a stigma is not easily removed—and much has been regretted that little or no pains have been taken to remove it, although a total change has taken place—and although the people of the state may fairly vie with their fellow citizens of other states.

One circumstance which tends to perpetuate the prejudice is the conduct of the Kentucky boatmen on the Ohio and the Mississippi, some of whom appear to pride themselves on the roughness and rudeness of their manners—"Half horse, half alligator," &c. But it would be quite as just to characterise the inhabitants of New York from the conduct of the boatmen who ply at the ferries on the Hudson or the East River, as the people of Kentucky from the boatmen of the Ohio and Mississippi.

Many people believe that human life is most wantonly sported with to Kentucky—want that there is danger of murder in passing through the state. This is a miserable error. That homicide has increased within a few years in the United States, is a lamentable truth—and that Kentucky has partaken of the crime is beyond doubt. But it is equally true that it is full as prevalent in some, and more prevalent in other states to which no particular censure attaches on this ground.

The writer of this has travelled a considerable distance through the state—sojourned some time in Lexington and Louisville, and had very extensive intercourse with citizens of various descriptions, and different parties; and during the whole time never met with or saw a single instance of the slightest departure from the strictest rules of personal decorum, either in classes among whom such a departure is elsewhere not unfrequent. So far as Lexington is concerned, he believes that in every thing that renders society respectable, it is not inferior to any city or town in the Union.

HAMILTON. Philadelphia, Aug. 23, 1838.