

**WOODBOURNE: A NOVEL OF
THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD
IN VIRGINIA AND MARYLAND.
IN TWO PARTS. PART I**

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Woodbourne: a novel of the Revolutionary period in Virginia and Maryland. In two parts. Part I by Joseph Mayo

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JOSEPH MAYO

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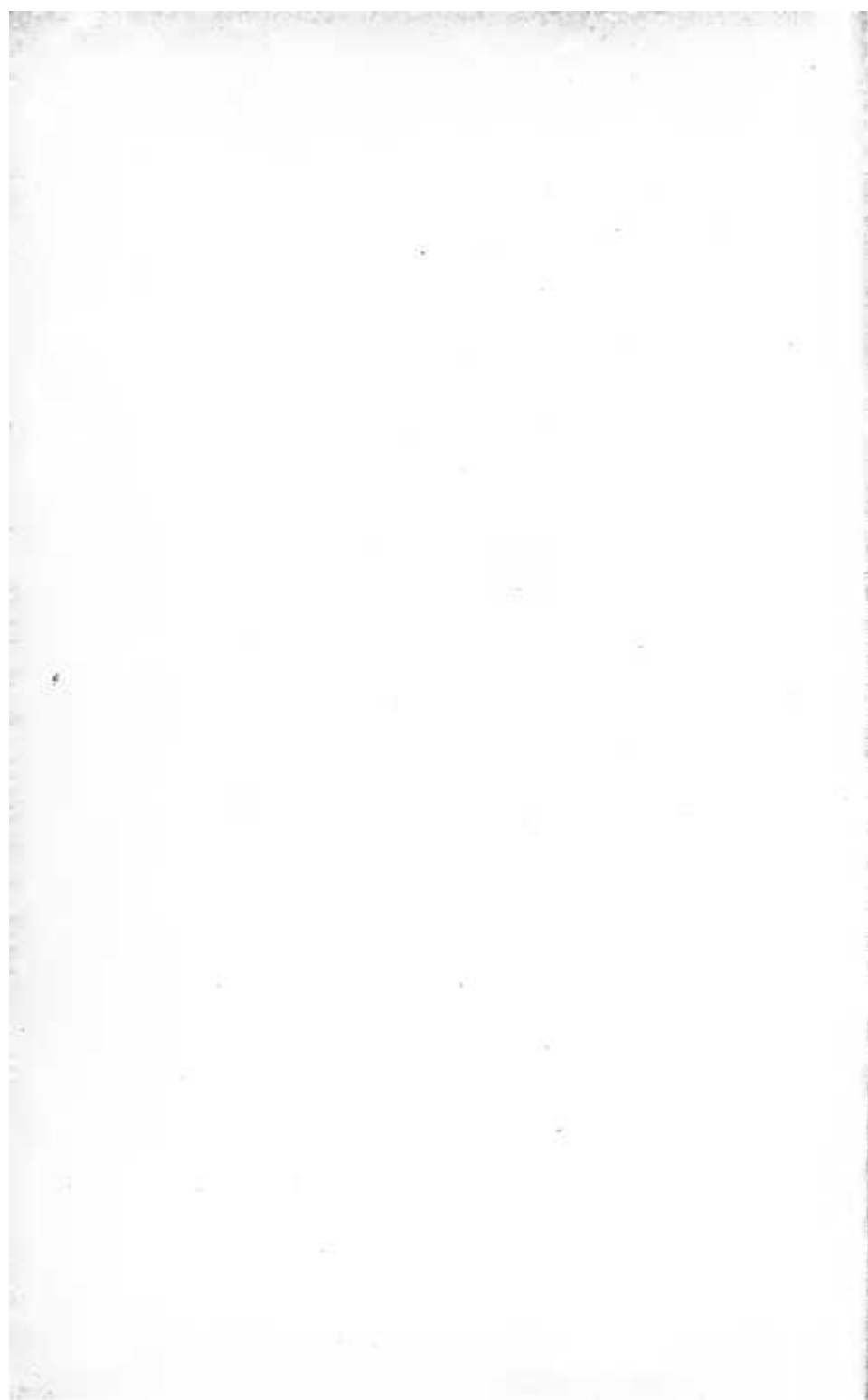
BY COLONEL JOSEPH MAYO.

PART I.

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PREFACE.

THE principal events recorded in these pages relate to the most interesting epoch of American history. The scene is chiefly confined to a little spot of that "Land within the Capes," which its first explorer has described as bearing the prerogative over the most pleasant places known. In our unambitious narrative, which is concerned with the fortunes of two or three families, we profess to deal with subjects of general public interest only as they may serve to elucidate the main design. We do not propose to write a society novel, nor yet a pure romance, nor to try and bedizen a prosy array of unimportant events in the trumpery garb of sentimental fancy. Much less shall we undertake to draw an elaborate picture of the every-day manners and customs of the ancient proverbial cavaliers of Virginia—cavaliers still in spite of the disgust which some people affect to have for the name. Yet in giving to the American public our "poor account of rich doings," we deem it eminently proper to devote a short space to the task of correcting some of the erroneous impressions of our fatherland and its inhabitants which have gone abroad unchallenged over the face of the earth. First and foremost, then, let it be distinctly affirmed that the Vir-

gians of that day were no more Mr. Thackeray's "Virginians" than is the country in which they dwelt the same which is prefigured in the chart of his fruitful imagination. True, their landed possessions were in several instances as large as many a petty European principality; and the owners of such vast domains were, doubtless, entitled to as great consideration as any beggarly landgrave or boorish count palatine, yet it is a tinge of prudent fancy to suppose that these manorial nabobs all lived in solitary habitations twenty miles apart each from his neighbor, and surrounded by savage wilds where, as the nursery rhymist says,

"Naked men in forests prowled,
And bears and panthers roamed and howled."

And whatever may have been their capacity for getting over the ground, they surely were not equal to the task of performing impossible journeys over impassible roads in preposterous yellow vehicles, "carrying six insides."

In all seriousness, if the chief merit of fiction consists, as Macaulay has remarked, in its resemblance to a model with which we are already familiar or to which we can constantly refer, in the name of the fairy muse what shall be said of the incongruous brood of extravagancies which one sees in the Virginia booth of Mr. Thackeray's teeming bazaar? When Colonel Henry Esmond—the only fine, real gentleman who figures in his own memoirs—sought at once refuge from villainous company and balm and solace from gout and *ennui* amid the charming solitude of his plantation in Virginia, it is certain that he found the moral atmosphere of his new

abode to be a vast improvement on the mephitic impurities of the *grotto-del-carne*, from which he had escaped in a half-asphyxiated condition. Here, at least, he was rid of the beastly Yahoos of Vanity Fair. Here the unsophisticated country people called things by their given names. My Lord Mohun, the grand sachem of the civilized Mohocks, was rated as a consummate ruffian and knave, and the fairest of the frail nymphs of St. Germain's and Soho square was a very locate of moral deformity because of the shame,

"Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,
Did spot the beauty of her budding name."

The votaries of fashion, the roués of the salon and boudoir, the maccaronis of the club-house and the gambling den, the starveling villipenders of Grub street, the swarms of seedy political pimps, panders and prostitutes, were in their eyes the same disgusting caricatures of humanity, whether paraded in Steele and Addison's polished periods, or pilloried by Pope and Swift in "Images from the dunghill and lazar house." These were the early and late associates and boon-companions of this courtly chronicler of scandalous small beer, who would make us believe that half the women in England of that day would have been most profitably employed in beating hemp in Bidewell to make "cravats" for three-fourths of the men. The world he has described is that in which the dramatic fancy of Congreve and Wycherly revelled with delight, where "the women were like profligate, impudent and unfeeling men, and where the men were too bad for any place but Pandemonium and Norfolk Island." What, after all, is this tiresome

old male gossip, but one of those "coxcomb birds, so talkative and grave," who from his cage pelts the passers-by with ribald words and scurvy jests?

"Though many a passenger he rightly call,
We hold him no philosopher at all."

With like indignant emphasis do we repudiate the exaggerated portraits of our good ancestors which grace the galleries of certain native artists, who appear to labor under the strange delusion that the subjects of their delineations spent the best part of their lives in stalking around the circle of stiltish, purse-proud arrogance, and swaggering in a "high-kilted" Babylonish dialect, which out-gasconaded Gascony. It is farthest from the truth, moreover, to suppose that the typical Virginian cavalier found his only pleasures in fox-hunting and cock-fighting; carousing in tap-rooms, and wrangling over cards and dice, betting at races, and whispering vapid sentiment in the ear of simpering beauty. On the contrary, he was as exquisitely alive and keenly sensitive as any "mortal mixture of earth's mold" to those lofty impressions and delicate touches of feeling and passion which elevate the soul, expand the intellect, enliven the fancy, kindle in the heart the generous flame of sympathy and love, and strew with flowers the thorny paths of life. And in the hour of severest trial, when Red Battle's stern alarm rung out over hill and dale, he approved himself a manly, robust, bold and independent freeman, who bared his bosom to the howling storm and recked not of danger and sacrifice in his country's cause. Of Toryism, as the term was applied during the Revolu-