

Chillicothe Ohio 1881

OHIO'S FIRST CAPITAL.

TWO hours' railroad ride southward takes the traveller from the present capital of Ohio, the local seat of government for over three millions of people, to the quaint, conservative old town which was the birth-place and cradle of the State—its capital at the beginning of the century, when it contained only a few thousand scattered settlers.

Chillicothe presents at this



OLD STATE-HOUSE.

day an appearance which is suggestive of its age and early importance. Modern architecture has done but little to brighten the sombre aspect of the dignified, substantial old residences which line the quiet, deeply shaded streets, or to modify the antiquated and somewhat grimy appearance of the long lines of business blocks which many years ago formed the busy mart of "the ancient metropolis." One of the earliest settlements within the present boundaries of Ohio, Chillicothe, from a combination of natural advantages, as well as from the energy and ability of its leading men, came suddenly into prominence, and for many years occupied a position which made it the envy of all the other embryonic cities of the West. It did not fulfill, however, the golden promise of its youth, and was eclipsed in a few decades by towns which had no existence until a score of years after the date of its own origin. It

was the adopted home of a class of men who were as judicious and as enterprising as any who came into the territory northwest of the Ohio, and as the residence of quite a coterie of eminent men and the capital of the infant commonwealth of the West, it was widely and favorably known

throughout the Eastern States. Located in the heart of as rich a region as could be found from ocean to ocean, and favorably established at the start, there was a prospect that the prosperity of its early days would only be the forerunner of a long career of constantly increasing strength;

but there was disappointment in store for those who had high expectations, even if they were founded upon the best of reasons. The great Ohio canal, of which De Witt Clinton was projector, gave the busy little town a powerful impetus of growth, and for many years its life was fed by this active artery of commerce. As the usefulness of this really vast internal improvement was superseded, however, by other means of transit, the stream of traffic upon the canal became rather venous than arterial in its flow, and Chillicothe lost its richest source of nourishment. Losing at an early day its political prestige as the State capital, it still continued to thrive in business; but losing the canal commerce, and being slow to secure the benefit of railroad stimulus, the old town which had proudly led all of its rivals, and passed through a period of phenomenal progression, arrived at almost a stand-still condition.

Chillicothe is classic ground. It was here that the first State northwest of the Ohio was ushered into organic being; and upon the heights of Cemetery Hill repose the mortal remains of four famous men who have been its Chief Executives. Two historic houses, rich in associations which recall the bravest of pioneers, men who were among the founders of the State, stand stately and sentinel-like upon a high plateau overlooking the old town. The academy, which was the *alma mater* of

