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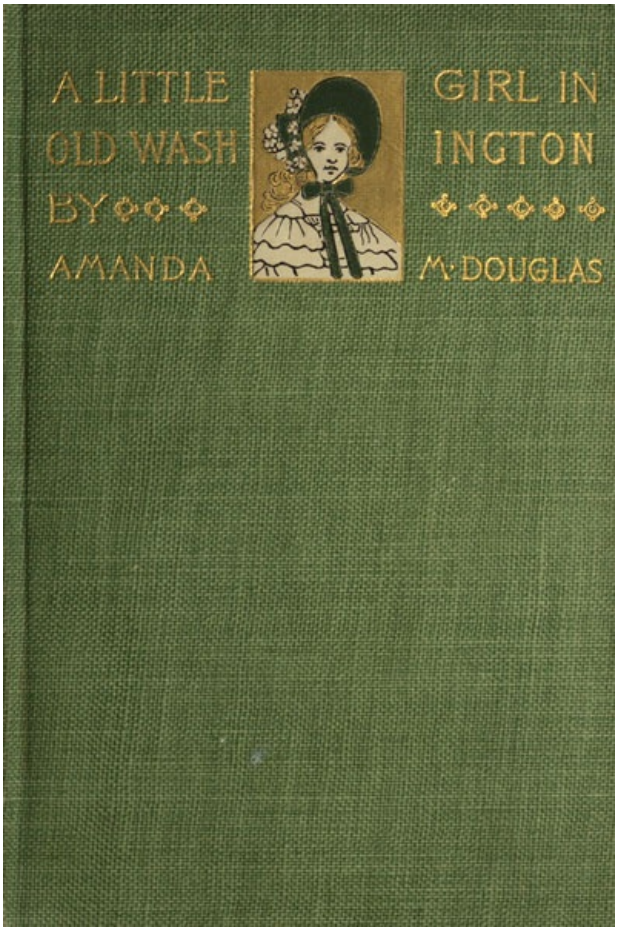
Transcriber's Note:

Obvious typographical errors have been corrected. Inconsistent spelling and hyphenation in the original document have been preserved.

On page 50, "race ruffles" should possibly be "lace ruffles".



BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD NEW YORK.
HANNAH ANN: A SEQUEL.
A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD BOSTON.
A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD PHILADELPHIA.
A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD WASHINGTON.

SHERBURNE STORIES.

SHERBURNE HOUSE.
LYNDELL SHERBURNE.
SHERBURNE COUSINS.
A SHERBURNE ROMANCE.
THE MISTRESS OF SHERBURNE.
THE CHILDREN AT SHERBURNE HOUSE.
SHERBURNE GIRLS.
THE HEIR OF SHERBURNE.

A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD WASHINGTON

BY

AMANDA M. DOUGLAS

AUTHOR OF "A LITTLE GIRL IN OLD NEW YORK,"
"SHERBURNE STORIES," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1900

THE MERSHON COMPANY PRESS,
RAHWAY, N. J.

JAQUELINE BAKER BEALL:

To you, whose ancestors made worthy efforts in the earlier history of the South, and lived romances, this little story is affectionately inscribed.

Amanda M. Douglas.

Newark, N. J.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

A NEW HOME.

"But you will have to take sides," declared Jaqueline Mason, "and it would be ungrateful if you did not take our side. You are going to live here; you really belong to us, you know. Your mother was own cousin to our dear mother, and Patty was named after her——"

"I don't see why I should be called Patty when you've given up Jack and make such a fuss!" interrupted a slim, unformed girl, who was nearly as tall as the first speaker.

"Well, Miss Patty, I am sixteen and in long gowns; and next winter I expect to go to balls and parties, and be presented at the White House. Oh, I wish it was a court!"

A young fellow, astride the low window seat, laughed with a teasing, bantering sound in his voice, and his deep eyes were alight with mirth.

"You think you are a great patriot, Jacky, but you hanker after the fleshpots of Egypt and royalty, when we have fought for our freedom and gained our independence and set a noble example to the downtrodden nations of Europe. Sighing for a king and a court!"

"I'm not sighing. One can think of a thing without wishing it—"

"And he called you Jacky!" cried Patty, with a certain triumph ringing in her tone. [2]

"Father said you were not to." Jaqueline Mason raised her head with dignity. "I used to think it rather funny when I was romping round, and it teased Aunt Catharine; but I hate it now, and I've given up romping. There is a great difference."

"And Cousin Annis is eager to hear about *her* side. You hardly know which side you are on yourself."

She gave him a withering look, and turned to the little girl who stood in a shrinking attitude, and whose eyes had a certain lustrousness, as if tears were in their limpid depths.

"I wish you wouldn't interrupt, Louis Mason! I am trying to explain. Grandfather Floyd isn't our very own grandfather—he married grandmother—and he believes we shouldn't really have separated from England, or at least we should have modeled our government upon hers and had a king. He thought Washington ought to have stood up for some grandeur and state, and he is afraid now we shall all go to ruin. He never did like President Jefferson. But you are too little to understand politics, Annis, and I was going to explain—father and Aunt Catharine are *own* brother and sister; then there are five Floyd children, uncle and aunt's too. You really are not related to them. You are on our mother's side."

"Jaqueline, you will be qualified to write the genealogy of Virginia," and Louis laughed mockingly.

The girl colored with vexation. "Well, everybody is married to almost everybody else; and now your mother has married our father, and that in a way makes us sisters."

The little girl standing by the window, where the sunshine sifted flecks of gold through the green clustering vines, looked up wistfully. She had wished out in Kentucky that she had a sister, and now that three had welcomed her and taken possession of her, she was not sure that she wanted [3] sisters. She had slept with Varina, who was about her own age, but who had not taken to her very cordially. There was a still younger child, a boy, curled upon the next window ledge, poring over an old copy of Froissart, dog-eared and well worn. Varina was petting two doves, who arched their necks and strutted about.

"Yes, people get queerly married, up or down or crosswise. I mean to marry someone quite new and strange. But we were glad that father chose a cousin of our own dear mother's, and I am sure we shall all like her. What do you suppose they are about! Why don't they come to breakfast?"

This was the great dining room. Four windows faced the east, two the south, shaded by the wide porch roof and the vines. There was a massive sideboard and a china closet with glass doors, wherein were many family heirlooms. The antlers and head of a great buck were suspended over the mantel, which was graced by a pair of silver candlesticks with several branches and a snuffers and tray. There was a large, roomy sofa and some high-backed chairs, quite stiff enough for the dames of early eighteen hundred. The floor was bare, but laid with various-colored woods. It had a hospitable air, altogether, in spite of its massive furnishing. The table was set for breakfast, and a tall silver coffee urn graced one end of it.

There was a stir in the hall, and the sound of servants' voices mingling with a mellow masculine greeting. The little girl made a rush for her own dear mother, and ran into Chloe, but her new father rescued her from harm, since the woman was carrying a dish of savory fried fish, followed

by other servants with numerous viands.

He lifted her in his arms and kissed her, and her mother bent over to give her another caress. Then he stood her down, and she almost buried her face in her mother's gown and impeded her progress. [4]

"Well, chicken," and the round, cheery voice sounded as if a laugh was at the back of it, ready for the slightest provocation, "how does it seem with all these brothers and sisters? For that's what you are to be. Children, here is your new mother, by daylight. Take a good look at her and love her, though she will be more like a big sister than a mother. I could have been her father. For when I first saw her she was no older than you, Patty."

The children thronged about her. Second marriages were quite common occurrences, and the children of those days were expected to accept and make the best of them. Miss Catharine Mason had taken excellent care of her brother's household, and now gone to Williamsburg to take charge of the Rev. William Conway's rectory and be a mother to the three children. There had been a governess, a certain Miss Betts, from farther North, who somehow could not easily adapt herself to Southern ways, and a rather turbulent household. There had been numerous complaints, and at the summer vacation she had resigned. Miss Jaqueline had in a measure taken the head of the house, with Maum Chloe and Mammy Phil, who had brought up the younger part of the flock and comforted the elders in times of difficulty and trouble.

The new mother held out her arms. Jaqueline and Patty gave her a warm embrace. Louis shook hands with the grace of a gentleman, and smiled out of fine soft-brown eyes. A very good-looking young fellow of eighteen, home from his first college year.

"Oh, children, I hope you will all love me, for I have had a sad, lonely time for the last five years. It seems so good to get to a real home, and have a corner in your father's big heart. And we will all try to make each other happy." [5]

She was rather tall and slim, this new Mrs. Mason, with light-brown hair and blue eyes, and a sweet, wistful smile. Nine years before this, she and her husband and baby had gone out to Kentucky with a colony, and though the valley was extraordinarily beautiful and fertile they had known many hardships and more than one Indian skirmish. Still, they were young and happy and prospering when death came to Philip François Bouvier, and for five years she had been full of perplexity and sorrow, when the coming of her dead cousin's husband had brought a glimpse of rest and the proffer of a haven of delight.

"And this little one." She reached out her hand to Varina. "You and Annis cannot be far apart in age, and will be excellent friends, I trust. Was there not—" glancing around.

"Charles, put up your book and come and speak to your new mother. And then to breakfast. I shouldn't blame Chloe if she put us on short commons this morning, we are shamefully late. Your mother and I had several points to discuss. We will do better to-morrow, Chloe. I hope you have not allowed these marauders to tear down the house nor tear up the garden. Ah, good-morning, Homer."

Homer was the tall, stately major-domo. The Indian blood in his veins showed in his erect stature, his straight nose, and his hair, which, though quite frosty and curly, was not kinky. And Homer felt as proud of his blood as any of the Rolfe descendants.

They were all settled about the table presently—a household to be proud of. Mrs. Mason took her place at the urn; Annis had a seat beside her. Varina was on one side of her father, Charles on the other. A fine-appearing flock, truly; Jaqueline and Patricia giving promise of much beauty. Louis was tall and manly, though one could see he had been bitten with the follies of early youth by a certain aspect of finery that young men affected. [6]

The meal was long and entertaining to the partakers. There was so much to tell. Many things had happened in the six weeks' absence of the head of the house, and everybody running wild. True, the overseer was a man of judgment and foresight, and of wide experience, and the estate had not suffered. Chloe had managed to keep what she called the "whip hand" of the house servants. It was the children who had suffered most. Indeed, if Aunt Catharine could have looked upon them now she would have thought them demoralized beyond redemption.

But Squire Mason was an easy-going man, and had a feeling that most things come out right if you give them a chance. Prosperity is apt to make one buoyant and cheerful. And though the country was in a bad way and the rulers in high places were disputing as to whether it could hold together, and there were no end of sinister predictions even among those who had borne the strain and burden of making a country. But crops had been excellent, and on the large estates everything needful was raised, so there was no stint. The Virginia planter, with his broad acres, had a kingdom in virtue of this plenteousness.

Mrs. Mason watched the two chattering girls, the little Varina, who held whispered confidences with her father, the abstracted boy Charles, surprising herself with a sort of desultory conversation with the young man who was explaining the many changes in men and events and places in nine years.

"And we have brought the Capitol to Washington," he said, with the dignity of his eighteen years. "You know there was a tremendous attempt to locate it at Baltimore." [7]

"Yes. Baltimore is dear to me. All my young life was passed there."

"I suppose there were some good reasons, but we Southerners made a grand fight. We had Mr. Jefferson on our side. I think Virginia never had full credit for her brave share of the war. At all events we had the crowning victory, the surrender of Cornwallis."

"I have quite a desire to see Washington."

"It is so hard to get grants to go on with the buildings and improvements. The country ought to have more enthusiasm. But the eastern States are not over-cordial yet. Why, there could have been next to nothing done when you went away!"

"There had been some trouble with Major l'Enfant, I believe. And everybody was counting on a fortune for the ground."

"As they are yet," and the young man laughed. "Father has a tract of swamp and elder bushes. When the streets reach out to us and the population increases, we may go in. At least some of us younger ones. I don't suppose anything would induce father to give up the estate here?"

"You are right there, Louis. This old Randolph place will last my time out," said his father, who had caught the last of the sentence. "We are near enough, and can get over to see the shows, while we keep out of the quarrels. Some day it will be a fine town, and the country at large may be proud of it. But there must be no end of money sunk in the bogs. We will go over and inspect it."

"I hope Mrs. Madison finds more for her comfort than Mrs. Adams did," said Mrs. Mason, with a smile. "I can appreciate pioneer life."

"Mrs. Madison isn't lady of the White House absolutely, but she is sent for to receive everybody. And she entertains delightfully herself. You know," Jaqueline said this to her new mother, "that [8]
Aunt Jane lives in the City—"

"She has not yet made Aunt Jane's acquaintance, or, if she did, it was when Aunt Jane was a mere child. You were here on a visit—when, Patricia?"

"Just before I was married, fifteen years ago, or nearly. And Jaqueline was a little yellow-haired baby."

"Oh, how queer!" cried Patty.

"You see, mother was a widow some years, and her second family is still quite young. Yes, Jane has married very well, a surveyor and civil engineer. But it will not do for us to sit over the breakfast table all day if we are going to mother's," and the squire rose, pulling himself together with a sort of shake.

"Must we go to-day?" Mrs. Mason's voice was beseeching.

"Oh, mother would consider it an unpardonable slight! She is a great stickler for deference and attention, and all that. Yes, and it is a good long drive. We can return home by moonlight, however." He was coming around to his wife's side. "We must take this little one and show her to her grandparents. Rene, do you not want to go along?"

Varina looked undecided. She was not quite sure she wanted a new sister so near her own age. She had been the pet and the plaything of the household, and last night Mammy Phillis went over to the newcomer, who had gone to bed for the first time in her life without being cuddled by her own dear mother.

The squire pinched his new little girl's cheek softly. She leaned it gently down in the hollow of his hand in a mute caress. He was very fond of children.

There was the confusion of everyone rising, and all of them talking at once, it seemed. [9]

After her good night's sleep and her week of happiness Mrs. Patricia Mason looked both young and pretty, though now she was not much past two-and-thirty.

"I want to ride over," declared Jaqueline; "I have not been in ever so long. And Marion is to have a party on her birthday, early in September. What a pity Louis will be gone! She's desperately sweet on Louis."

The young man flushed scarlet.

"You can't marry your aunt any more than you can marry your grandmother," said his father in a teasing tone.

"Jack is always thinking about marrying," flung out the brother. "It's a nasty way girls have."

"There! there! No disputing, or the new mother will think she has fallen into a hornets' nest. Go and get ready. I'll take a glance at the stables and see Dixon for a moment," and he turned away. But Louis caught his arm and kept step with him.

"Well, what is it?" he asked rather impatiently. "Money again? You young people think the well is exhaustless."

"No, it isn't money." His tone was a little husky. "Jerry is lame. I rode him rather hard one day—"

The squire smothered an oath. He had promised his young wife he would not swear at everything. It *was* a bad habit, a bad example to his boys.

"How did that come about? I told you Jerry was not to be taken on tramps. You young fellows have no sense."

"I was over to Kenyon's one day. They bet her against Kenyon's mare. I tried to get out of it—"

"And you were beaten! Served you right! My poor Jerry!" with a touch of desperate anger in the tone.

"No, I won!" There was a ring of elation in the young voice. "He came in five seconds ahead. There was a great time, you may be sure, and Kenyon was for trying it again. He thinks nothing [10] can beat the mare. I think Jerry trod on something. His foot and leg have been swollen. Cato has him almost well, though."

"I meant to keep shady and enter him next year. I do believe if you hadn't beat I should just take it out of your hide," and the squire laughed. "Now it will go abroad that I have a crack horse. Well —and what did Cato say?"

"He was lame the next morning, but Cato thought it wouldn't be much, and when he grew worse Cato worked over him faithfully. He is sure he will be all right."

"You are beginning early, young man. Next time you let my especial horse alone. Well, I'm glad it's no worse. But I won't have you turning out a horse jockey."

They had reached the stables, where two or three old men and half a dozen negro boys were making a pretense of being busy, but they rushed to welcome the squire. Cato and Jerry were both interviewed, and when the master emerged with a pleasant face and scattered a handful of coppers for the small fry to chase about, Louis felt quite relieved, for, truth to tell, he had had several rather wretched days about his father's favorite.

The squire ordered up the carriage, and Julius came down with missy's commands.

Annis had followed her mother up the broad staircase to the large, light room where a slim young colored girl was putting away various articles in drawers and closets. The small wardrobe had been increased during the brief time spent in Baltimore, but was not very extensive yet.

When Randolph Mason had gone to Baltimore to settle the estate of one of his wife's cousins, as he had been named executor, he found Patricia Bouvier mentioned among the heirs. He recalled [11] the pretty, attractive girl his wife had taken such an interest in, who had married an enthusiastic young French Huguenot, and some time after joined a colony of emigrants to the "New Countries," as the Middle West was then called.

"She was left a widow some years ago," said one of the relatives. "She did write about coming back, but it is a long journey for a woman and a little child. Latterly we have not heard. I dare say she is married again."

There was a company going out to settle some boundary question and make surveys, and on the spur of the moment the squire's adventurous blood was roused and he joined them. They had magnificent summer weather, and his enjoyment was intense. He found the little settlement and Mrs. Bouvier, who had known varying fortunes since her husband's death. She had been kindly cared for, and more than one man would gladly have married her, but her heart yearned for her own people. To take the journey alone seemed too venturesome, and she well knew the perils of frontier travel. So she had waited with a longing soul for some deliverance. She would go back gladly.

There was no difficulty in disposing of her claim in the settlement. She bade good-by to the grave it had been a sad, sweet pleasure to tend, and with her little girl and her delightful guide and convoy set out on the journey.

Before they reached Baltimore a new tie had sprung up between them. True, Squire Mason had thought occasionally during the last year of marrying again. His sister Catharine had said to him before her departure:

"The best thing you can do, Randolph, is to marry soon. The girls will need someone to supervise them and see that they make proper marriages. Mrs. Keen would be admirable, as she has no [12] children. And there are the Stormont girls; any of them would be suitable, since even Anne is not young. I wish I had taken this in hand before."

"I wish you were not going away, Catharine. My girls ought to be nearer to you than Mr. Conway's," he said ruefully.

"I will still do what I can for them. There is excellent society at Williamsburg, and I can give them pleasant visits. But I never saw a man more in need of a wife than Mr. Conway. It's a good thing clergymen wear a surplice, for I am sure he never could tell whether he was decent or not. Surely it is a plain duty."

"And you leave me in the lurch?"

"But, you see, a clergyman needs a person well fitted for the position, which, I must say, every woman is not," with an air of complacency.

"And you think anyone will do for me!"

"How foolish you are, brother! I think no such thing. You certainly have sense enough to make a wise choice."

But he had not chosen, and now he thought he should like this sweet, sorrowful, tender Patricia. How bright he could make her life!

He was so strong, so sincere and cheerful. He made friends with shy Annis, who sat on his knee and was intensely interested in his girls—he always called them little. And before they reached Baltimore he had asked Patricia to marry him, and Annis had consented to be his little girl. Mrs. Bouvier's small patrimony was to be settled on the child. But, then, she could not have imagined Mr. Mason being mercenary.

Word had been sent to the household of the marriage. They had not thought of objecting. In the great drawing room there was a portrait of their mother in a white satin gown, with pearls about her neck. It had been painted during a visit to London. They all went and looked at it, and wondered if the cousin Patricia would be anything like that! [13]

"I don't believe she is as beautiful," declared Jaqueline.

There had been several delays on the latter part of the journey, and it was evening when the travelers reached home. The welcome had been a hearty one, and when supper was over Annis was nodding. It was past Varina's bedtime. Charles had already stolen off.

"Take the children to bed, Phillis," said the master. "They're to be sisters, so they may as well begin by sharing the same room. You won't feel lonesome, little Annis?"

"I'll go with her," said the mother in her soft voice.

"Nay." Randolph Mason put his hand on his wife's arm and kept her a prisoner. "Phillie is the best of mammies. And you belong in part to me. You have had a hard time, and now there is someone to wait upon you and ease you up. Good-night, little ones."

He kissed both children. Annis wanted to cling to her mother, for even through these three days of her married life her mother had heard her little prayer and put her to bed, so she had not felt really separated. But when Philly took her hand it came with a sudden wrench. She dared not cry out in the face of them all. But, oh, was her own dear mother not hers any more? Did she truly belong to father Mason? And all these large children? Had she given herself away when father Mason had put a ring on her finger and called her his wife?

She was out in the hall—being led upstairs, and Phillis' hand was as soft as a crumpled rose leaf. Her voice was soft and sweet too. There were two small white-covered beds, and when they were undressed and within them Phillis crooned a low melody, and the little girl, being very tired and sleepy, forgot her sorrows. [14]

Then in the morning Phillis came and dressed them both and curled Annis' soft, light hair. Jaqueline seized on her the moment she entered the breakfast room.

"I hardly had a look at you last night," she began. "I do hope you won't feel strange and that you will like us all. And there are ever so many other relations. Did you never have any brothers or sisters?"

"No," answered Annis, with a kind of wistful regret, raising her eyes shyly.

"We have another lot out at the Pineries. It's queer, but we don't call them uncles and aunts, except Aunt Jane, because she is married and the oldest. And we always dispute—it's very funny and queer. Grandfather is a Federal—well, a sort of Tory, too—and father's a Republican. People who live in a republic ought to be Republicans. That's what we fought for."

Annis stared. "Out home—there," indicating the West with her head, "they fought the Indians."

"Well—it is all about the same thing, only there are not many Indians around here. And we don't *fight* each other."

"I don't know about that!" and the young man who was toying with the ears of an English hound laughed.

Then had come the puzzling question, and Annis Bouvier wondered what side she must take and was sadly mystified. [15]

CHAPTER II.

THE PINERIES.

Annis ran and threw her arms around her mother's neck and kissed her fervently.

"Are you glad to come here and do you like them all?" she asked when she found her breath. "And

it is so queer, with all the black people and the great house and—and everything!"

"It is a little strange. You will like it better by and by," glancing tenderly down in her child's eyes.

"And you—must you be mother to *all* the children? Am I never to have you any more?"

"You have me now. Yes, you will always have me. Don't you remember you used to wish for a sister like Sallie Reed? Her mother loved all the children."

"But she had them when they were cunning little babies," was the decisive reply.

"Dear,"—her mother knelt down and put her arms around the child,—"it is this way. We have come to this lovely home which is to be ours, and all the pleasant things a good friend can give—a kindly, generous friend. I used to feel anxious and worried about your future. There was no good school. The life was very narrow. And if I had been taken away—"

"But they never would let the Indians take you. Oh, mother dear!" with a fervent embrace. She had not meant that, but she would not give the other explanation.

"And all these children are going to share their father's love with you. He will give you this beautiful home, clothe you, educate you, and he puts me in the place of their dear mother who is dead. He is going to care for me and keep me from toil and sorrows and perplexities. When you [16] are older you will understand better. I hope you will try to love them all, and this good dear friend who will be a father to you."

"But I shall love you the best."

"Yes, dear," with a proud certainty.

"And you will love me better than anyone else?" and Annis clasped her mother with a child's unreasoning exclusiveness.

"Yes, dear."

A merry voice went lilting through the hall. Jaqueline paused a moment at the door. She was in her pretty green riding habit, and her straw hat had a bunch of iridescent cock's-plumes. She held her riding whip in one gloved hand, and she really was a picture good to look at.

"Oh, are you ready?" Mrs. Mason asked.

"Yes, and the carriage has come, but father is still down at the stables. Rene doesn't want to go, from some queer freak, and Patty does. I don't believe father would mind—would you?"

"Why, of course not," in a cordial tone.

"Rene is queer sometimes." Jaqueline studied Annis, and smiled in an odd fashion, for Varina had just declared she "wouldn't go anywhere with that new girl, and that she did not mean to like her, for after all she was not a real sister, and they had done very well without any mother, and she just wished father had not brought her home."

"It's the big carriage," said Patty, "and I could go if Rene did not want to. I hate to stay home all alone."

Jaqueline understood that this would be the easiest way of settling the matter, for Varina had a streak of obstinacy that was conquered soonest by "giving her her head," as Phillis said.

"Never mind about the box," as one of the men had come in with hatchet and hammer. "I won't unpack it this morning," began Mrs. Mason. "Is Patricia getting ready?" She tied Annis' hat in a [17] big bow under her chin, and then putting on her own they walked downstairs while Jaqueline went for Patty. Varina was nowhere to be seen.

Mrs. Mason had hardly noted her new home in the dusk of the evening, except to be aware that it was very large. The broad veranda was like a hall. Four fluted columns ran up to the second-story windows, with vines trained on trelliswork in between. The house had but two stories, and an extensive observatory on the top that really was a delightful room during the spring and autumn. A lawn filled with clumps of shrubbery and well-grown trees stretched down to the road, the drive winding around in a half-curve. From the front there was nothing to mar the handsome outlook where the ground lay in a line of curves to the Potomac. The stables, the workshops, and the negro quarters were cut off by a tall, thick hedge.

Mr. Mason came around the corner of the house. Jaqueline was feeding Hero lumps of sugar, to the amazement of Annis. Patty flew across the veranda in a whirl, and her father merely nodded to her explanations as they were put on the back seat. Jaqueline waved her hand, and Hero started off at a sharp canter.

Patty could not keep still very long, and began to question Annis as to what the Kentucky home was like, and if she was glad or sorry to leave it. There had been only Seth Bowers, who worked the farm, and an Indian woman to help about the house, but just across a little yard space the Browns had lived, and beyond were the stockade and the blockhouse. Then the log houses were ranged around.

"But were you not afraid?" asked Patty. "Suppose the Indians had come?" [18]

"All the Indians about were friendly. We were not afraid of them."

"But what did you spend your time at—if you didn't go to school?"

"Mother taught me. Sally Brown came in when she wasn't too busy, and we studied. Mrs. Brown spun and knit, and Adam Dodge had a loom where he wove cloth. Oh, there were a great many things!"

"A hard life it was for you," and Mr. Mason glanced at his wife's countenance, which had fallen into thoughtful lines.

"There have been many pioneers," she returned with a half-smile. "Virginia is full of their graves. And the northern coasts. Our people were wiser. They chose a less rigorous clime."

"True. The story North and South is full of romance. But, then, what country is not? The old Romans colonized, sometimes very cruelly, tearing people from their homes. We came of our free will, except such as were redemptioners."

"And slaves," in a low tone.

"That is a serious question," and the squire's rugged brows knit. "That they are better off is beyond cavil. In their own land they fight and destroy each other, make slaves, and many tribes are no doubt cannibals. The President has always considered it bad for the country. But we have needed labor. And in Bible times men were permitted to enslave other nations. The dominant race gets the upper hand, and it is right that knowledge and improvement should have a chance against ignorance and degeneracy. But this is a somber talk for such a fair day. Look! Over yonder is the Capital."

She saw the gleam of the white buildings, and here and there an imposing mansion. It was in truth a magnificent day; the balmy breath of forests and the coolness of the river tempering the heat. In and out by dainty edges fringed with grasses, some standing sentinel-like, some dallying coquettishly with the breeze, flowed the broad river. There were innumerable little islets of rank greenness looking as if they were set asail on its bosom, and here and there a spike of blossom. All this great marsh the hand of man and the wit of his brain were to transform into one of the great cities of the world before the century ended. Long, straight barren places were to be beautiful streets, but now they were gray and dreary in the sunshine. She liked the woods better, the winding road that now was in a dense shade from the overarching trees, and now came out to broad spaces of sunshine. Squirrels chattered and ran about, whisking their feathery tails like a fan; bird notes, clear and sweet, dying to most exquisite softness, made melody in the air; bees hummed and crooned, secure of their hidden sweets. Patricia Mason drank it all in with a great feeling of gladness. It was so unlike the primeval solitudes where the few clung together, when the darkness fell, with a nameless terror, or listened to the great shivering woods, wondering if an enemy lay in ambush. God had watched over her and her child and raised up kindly friends, and had now given her home and rest—and, yes, love. How could she do otherwise than love this large-hearted, generous man! And she must train Annis to pay him something more than mere respect. [19]

The pretty young rider put her horse through his various paces. Now and then she was lost to sight by some turn in the road, then she waited with a laughing face and paced demurely alongside of the carriage, chatting gayly with her father or Patricia. She was not quite at home yet with her new mother.

The day grew warmer. They drew up in a densely shaded place. [20]

"Let us get out and rest," said the squire. "There are some fruit and a little luncheon, for we shall be late at the Pineries. It is too warm to drive fast. But it will be delightful coming back after sundown."

Jaqueline slipped off her horse. Patricia sprang out with the litheness of a kitten. But the squire took Annis in his arms and as he stood her down, kissed her, which brought a quick blush to her cheek.

They found a fallen tree and a great flat rock that looked as if Nature had set her table for travelers coming by. They spread out their lunch. The girls had the ready hunger of youth. Annis went round by her mother. It was all so new and strange. She could not feel afraid of this second father, and yet she did grudge his claim upon her mother a little, the mother who was now in a rather gay conversation with the two young girls. Jaqueline *was* amusing in her descriptions of the Pineries, and though her father checked her rattling tongue now and then, she did not greatly heed it. Aunt Catharine had been rather free in her strictures on people and events, and the family at the Pineries had not escaped.

Then they resumed their journey, and the road grew wilder. Washington and Georgetown were left behind, the houses were less frequent, but the river still ran along by their sides, and now and then a boat of some kind passed them. Then they came to a clearing and a great stretch of tobacco plantations, a winding drive through giant pines that rustled like a river hurrying over a rocky bed. In the midst of a woods, it seemed, so close were the trees, with a fine open space in the front, stood the mansion.

On the wide porch sat an elderly man with flowing silvery hair, inclined to curl at the ends, but not fastened in the fashion of the day. His frame was large, but one could see there had been a

gradual shrinking of the flesh, for his face and his long thin hands were much wrinkled. Still, there was a tint of pink in his cheeks, and his eyes were very blue, rather piercing. [21]

"Randolph Mason!" he exclaimed, standing his big volume down on the porch floor and taking the flight of steps deliberately. "This is indeed a surprise! You have been a great truant, and I hope your quest was satisfactory. When did you return? We have heard nothing for at least a fortnight. Your mother was wondering—"

"Last night. I spent a few days in Baltimore. And I have brought home a new wife, so we came at once to pay our respects to my mother."

"Jack, summon Madam and Marian. Allow me to give you congratulation," and he held out his hand to Mrs. Mason with impressive dignity. "You will have a good husband, madam, though we have for some time considered him proof against woman's charms. But we all succumb sooner or later. I was quite a bachelor when Mrs. Mason conquered me. Jaqueline, how do you do? And, Patricia? Why—"

He stared at Annis.

"This is my new little daughter Annis Bouvier. We have not had time to change her name yet. I found Mrs. Bouvier without much difficulty, and persuaded her to return to her relatives at Baltimore, and to the small fortune awaiting her. There I suddenly was seized with a new mind and persuaded her to marry me."

Squire Mason laughed with a kind of boyish gayety. Mr. Floyd looked scrutinizingly at the two girls, as if wondering how they had taken this unexpected new mother. But the brilliant faces showed no disapprobation.

They had reached the porch, and the master rang his bell loudly for some servants and began to berate them all for a lazy, worthless lot, pushing chairs hither and thither and inviting the guests to be seated, and in the midst of the confusion a dignified woman crossed the room and came out to them. [22]

Even now Madam Floyd, halfway between sixty and seventy, was a fine, imposing woman, stately and rather stout. Her petticoat of embroidered satin was displayed by the skirt of her gown being drawn aside and edged with lace that made cascades of the creamy stuff as she walked. Her sleeves came to the elbows and her round arms were white and plump, and the bit of neck left by the stomacher of lace showed scarcely any sign of age. On her head was a large turban-like cap of fine sheer muslin much affected by the elderly woman of that time.

She was of course surprised at her son's marriage, and said rather sharply that "it might have been done with less haste," but to the new wife—"You will find men have not over-much consideration. And I suppose it was a matter of satisfaction to leave that wild land behind you and return to the home of your childhood? But you found many changes, doubtless. You were of the Moore branch, I believe, kin to my son's first wife?"

Jaqueline and Patty had gone to hunt up Marian. Dolly had gone off in the mountains visiting. So Madam had the guest to herself, and between them they picked out all the descent of the family from the coming of Lord de la Ware down to the present time. Even the Huguenot Bouvier was not wanting in good birth, so that matter was satisfactorily settled. Then Madam bethought herself that the travelers must have gone without dinner, and ordered a table set out on the porch, with cold chicken, tempting slices of fresh bread, and wine, and gave charges for a high tea at an early hour, since the guests had not come to stay.

Mr. Floyd and his stepson were already deep in politics and growing quite heated. The country was all astir, as in the autumn there would be a Presidential election. [23]

"There will be no chance for the Federals," said the elder man sharply. "The President will have things all his own way and put in his man, who, if he shilly-shallies, as they have been doing, will give England another chance. She beats us out of everything, you may as well admit. And this embargo hasn't hurt her, and it will not. There will be no French to call upon this time for help. And you mark my words, we shall go back like whipped hounds! I knew the Colonies never could hang together. The East wants one thing, the middle States another; and they demand the freedom of coming in and regulating our affairs. No, there will never be a settled peace until England has really conquered us and put us back in our proper place."

Squire Mason laughed. "That will never be. We have had too long a taste of freedom, of ruling ourselves. And if we could not be conquered before, it would be the wildest folly to attempt it now. Besides, she has her hands full."

"She and the other nations will join to finish that upstart Napoleon. And the country will be foolish enough to just throw itself at her, and she won't take that! Two kings can't govern a country, and we have a dozen different kings, with their panaceas, and they have brought the country to the verge of ruin. Washington had some wisdom, I will admit, and Adams some sense, but since then, with this half-infidel who believes in every man having his own religion, and no state church to rally about, and considers that one man has just as much rights as another, and that drivel that all men are born free and equal! They are not, I tell you. And I believe in a state church and the power to make it respected."

"Don't get so excited, father," admonished his wife. "Come, Randolph, have a bite of something [24]

and a glass of wine. You must be half famished, Mrs. Patricia—the name come in very handy, you see. And the little girl. Annis is quite out of the family lines. I don't remember hearing it. It has a Puritan sound. I think myself it is a shame the world should be so mixed up on religion. There is but one Bible, and there should be but one way, and the scoffers and unbelievers be set by themselves."

"Where are the girls?" asked their father.

"They have looked up Marian, I dare say; and she has Sukey Martin and two of the maids taking apart gowns and fashioning them over in modern style. A friend sent Jane some patterns from Philadelphia, and she passed them on. Did you see much that was new in Baltimore, Madam Patricia? Though this flightiness of dressing is much to be deprecated, and fills the minds of young people with vanity. But Jane has insisted that Marian shall come and make her a long visit this winter. They are to get in their new house in September. I do hope son Jettson is not going on too fast."

"He may as well make the money as anyone," subjoined grandfather. "The quicker they build up the quagmire the better it will be for the permanency of the Capital. And if some time those canting Puritans want a separate government of their own, they can take New York or Philadelphia for their center."

"They are improving rapidly," said the squire. "It will be a fine city. Daniel Carroll's mansion is an ornament, and the Van Ness house is planned for much gayety and large companies. And there are many others in process of erection."

Annis sat beside her mother and thought of the talk with which the day began. If she had to take sides it would be that of her new father, who was smiling and good-humored and did not bring his fist down on the table or the edge of the chair with such a thump that it frightened you. She did not like the grandfather, she decided. Yet he was a handsome old man, with his ruffled shirt front, his flowered waistcoat, his velvet smallclothes, with silver buckles in a bow just below his knee and others set with brilliants on his shoes. [25]

The ladies discussed the bringing up and the education of girls. They were to be good housewives, trained in all useful arts, and their chief business in life was to make good marriages. And Madam Floyd admitted that she had sent Dolly away because there was an undesirable in the neighborhood, a young Mr. Sears who had been abroad and who played high and drank more than was seemly—a degenerate son of a good family. Dolly was very light and trifling.

"Catharine was a very good, steady girl, but her lover, a most worthy young man, died, and she lost all heart for gayety. And when I married Mr. Floyd"—she bent her head over and spoke in a lower tone—"I thought he had some feeling—men are given to jealousy, you know, and as Catharine was fond of staying with her brother, and the new family increased so rapidly that somehow we were weaned away. I was almost struck dumb when she came and told me about her marriage—a settled old maid such as she was! However, I hope it is for the best, and that really made it necessary for Randolph to marry."

The men had gone at politics again.

"Marian and Dolly were too young to go and look after such a family, even if their father would have spared them. And I think my son has made a wise choice, though I can't tell you how surprised I was, with no notice beforehand."

"It was very sudden. I could not have done it with—with a stranger," and Patricia colored. "I had been very fond of my cousin. And Mr. Mason was so kind, so thoughtful—" [26]

"He and Catharine hardly seem like my children," and their mother gave a faint smile. "I have been Mr. Floyd's wife twenty-five years."

Mrs. Floyd summoned a servant presently and said she would show her new daughter the house, so they left the men to their pipes and their disputes. The old house had been built long ago and had many rare belongings, for one ancestor had been a seafaring man and brought home no end of curiosities. The wide hall went straight through the middle, but the kitchens were not detached. There were a great storeroom and linen press and bedding chests crowded to the brim. Drawers were sweet with napery laid in lavender and rose leaves. The very air was delicious with old-time fragrance.

"In the new countries one has little time to lay up stores," Madam said, "and I suppose there are no instructed maids. It is the story of Jamestown and the eastern Colonies over again. But we have been civilized this many a year, and kept in touch with the mother country as well, though I am not so sure that we would be better off under her government. My forebears made a brave struggle, and I would not have it go for nothing. But one finds it idle work contradicting one's husband," and she smiled faintly. "There are ways to get along more peaceably. Though it seems as if we may all go to pieces yet."

She opened the next door, where three slaves were spinning piles of carded wool for winter wear, and the hum of the wheels had the rush of water over gentle descents. Then they went up another broad staircase to the sleeping chambers.

"My daughters will have a good outfit," she said proudly. "Jane is a notable housekeeper and the

others are being trained. A woman needs to know all suitable things." [27]

The sound of girls' voices and merry laughs reached them, and Madam Floyd frowned sharply. They inspected the sleeping chambers, where most of the furniture was massive and dark with age, in vivid contrast to white hangings and blue-and-white spreads.

When they went down to the drawing room Madam Floyd sent a servant rather sharply for her daughter. A young girl of nineteen or so entered with a somewhat demure aspect.

"You seem to have forgotten your duty to your brother's wife, Marian! I am ashamed of you, since you knew she was here! Your head is so filled up with finery there is no room for manners," the mother exclaimed shortly.

"I am sorry. I thought you and my father would want them both a while." She held out her hand to Patricia and gave her a welcome and good-wishes.

"And now order the tea at once. Randolph thinks he cannot remain all night, and it is a long ride home. But it will be much pleasanter than the journey hither."

When they went out on the porch—where most of the time was spent in the warm weather—they found the men had gone to inspect the crops and the stock.

"You will find Randolph rather easy-going," Madam Floyd said to her new daughter. "And the children have grown quite lawless this year, though I cannot say Catharine kept them with a firm hand. Those two have their father's ways in a great measure. I hope you will not find it too hard, Mistress Patricia, and in any perplexity I will try to give you good counsel. I hope we shall be the best of friends."

"I am thankful for your kindliness toward me," returned the daughter-in-law. "I feel quite alone in the world. So many of the Baltimore cousins are dead. And I lost my own mother when I was so young." [28]

"The little girl seems a nice quiet child," the elder said presently. "Girls are more manageable when they are small, but troublesome enough when the time of lovers begins."

Annis sat on the step watching the great peacock strutting about and the meek peahens seemingly lost in admiration of their lord's grandeur.

Then there was a bountiful supper and a fine ride home in the moonlight and the deliciously fragrant air. Annis leaned down on her new sister's shoulder and fell asleep.

CHAPTER III.

APPLES OF DISCORD.

It was very hard for Annis Bouvier to give up so much of her mother. Her new father teased her a little, but when he saw she was really pained and the tears came into her eyes he would stop and give her a caress and a kiss. He was a very kindly master, and the overseer grumbled a little at times and made up by undue severity. Then he certainly was an indulgent father. Patricia despaired at times of establishing any authority.

The house was so large, the servants so numerous, the confusion so great after the quiet life she had led in the far-away settlement. And at first not a day passed without some visitors, who came to pay their respects to the new mistress. Jaqueline ordered her pony and rode off with a mere announcement to anyone standing near. She seemed to have no end of girl friends and was mostly a law unto herself. She and her sister had numerous squabbles that never degenerated into quarrels. Annis liked Patricia very much, but she and Varina looked askance at each other, with considerable jealousy at the bottom. [29]

Mrs. Jettson came over with her nurse and two babies, and Annis was delighted with them.

"But they are not yours in any way," said Varina. "They belong to us and Grandma Floyd."

"That is being a selfish little girl, Rene," said Aunt Jane. "Annis is to be like a sister to you."

"But I don't want her for a sister. I have enough sisters. She shall not ride on my pony nor feed my pigeons nor have any of my books."

Annis' heart swelled within her.

"I don't want any of them," she made answer. "And I wish mamma and I could go away. She belongs to me and—and a little to your father, but most to me. But I wish she didn't belong to any of you!" and the soft, deep eyes overflowed with tears.

"Oh, Annis! what is this all about?" Patricia flew in and clasped the little girl in her arms in spite of a protest. "I'm beginning to love your mother very much. You see, she *does* belong to us, and now you can't take her away. And we are glad to have you—"

"I'm not glad." Varina stretched up every inch of her size. "I'm sure we were well enough before."

"It's mostly Rene's dispute," began Aunt Jane. "Annis was enjoying the babies. Come here, dear."

Annis rushed out of the room sobbing. Where was her mother?

"Rene, you naughty little girl!" and Patricia gave her a shake. "Why, Jane, we have all been getting along in the very nicest manner. And *she's* just lovely. We couldn't quite resolve at first whether we would call her mother; but father wanted us to, and now it seems natural enough. Louis likes her ever so much. And Jack says she's like a big sister. She's nicer than Aunt [30]
Catharine was at the last, she fretted at us so. I hope her little girls are pretty bad, and then she won't think we are the worst."

Aunt Jane laughed. "I dare say Aunt Catharine will have some trials. That is a funny wish. Rene, you must learn to like this little girl. I think her very nice and sweet. I shall ask her to come over and visit me."

"Then I won't come." Varina's eyes flashed.

"But why do you not like her?"

"She sits on father's knee, and—and Charles read to her yesterday and showed her pictures in his book and said she understood better than I did. And Mammy said her hair was beautiful."

Varina began to cry.

"So her hair is beautiful," said Aunt Jane decisively. "And perhaps she *is* smart. You are dull at your book, Varina, and if you are going to be cross and jealous your father will not like you. Fie, for shame!"

"If you are going to roar like the bull of Bashan you will have to go upstairs by yourself. And I must find little Annis," declared Patricia.

Annis had seen her mother walk down the path under the mulberry trees, and she ran swiftly, sobbing as if her heart would break with a strange, yearning homesickness for the home in the forest and her mother all to herself once more. Then she caught her foot in the root of a tree that had pushed up out of the ground, but two friendly arms clasped her, and sitting down on the bole of a tree that had been sawed off to thin the dense shrubbery, he held her tenderly.

"What is it, little Annis? What has happened to you?"

"I want my dear mother," the child sobbed. "I want her to go away and take me. I can't stay here. I'd rather have Sally Brown to play with, and the great woods. I think I shouldn't even mind [31]
Indians, nor dark nights."

"Has Charles been cross to you?"

"No, I like Charles. Let me go find mamma."

"You can't have her just now," said Louis in a soothing tone. "Father has to have her on a little matter of business."

"You *all* have her!" resentfully.

"That is because she is so charming and sweet."

Annis looked up into the face that was smiling and sympathetic.

"Tell me the trouble. Surely Patty or Jacky have not been scolding you? For you couldn't have done anything bad. You are such a shy, quiet little thing."

"I was playing with the babies—"

"Surely it wasn't Aunt Jane?"

"No." She had stopped sobbing and raised her sweet eyes, the tears still beading the lashes.

"Why do you want to go away, then?"

There was no answer. Did she really want to go? The arm about her was very friendly. She had felt almost afraid of this big brother, but his voice went to her heart.

"I think we cannot spare you. I know we cannot spare your mother."

"Annis! Annis!" called the clear girl's voice.

"Here, Patty," answered her brother, and the young girl ran down to them. She smiled at Annis.

"What happened?" Louis asked.

"It was that little cat Rene! She didn't scratch, though. Rene has been spoiled by everybody, and she believes now that no one has any rights but herself."

"And we'll stand by Annis. Come—you do like us a little, do you not?" [32]

He put both hands on her shoulders and smiled in a very winsome manner.

"Of course she does." Patty stooped and kissed her. "You must not mind Rene when she gets in a temper. See, there's Jacky and I, two girls on your side, and Louis and Charles, I am quite sure. Don't you know Jack told you we were always taking sides?"

"But—what will—Rene do?"

The tone was so half-reluctant, pity fighting against inclination, that Louis could not forbear smiling while he hugged her to his heart.

"Rene must be punished. It isn't the first time she has been snappy, Louis. She quarreled with Charles the other day because—"

Patty finished the sentence with raising her brows and making very big eyes.

"Because," said Annis in a low tone, "he was reading to me and would not leave his book to go and play."

Annis looked very pretty with her downcast eyes and the softened truth in her tone.

"Charles was a gentleman. All Virginia boys should be. And now, little Annis, isn't it all made up? You will not want to go away?"

"I like you both," Annis said simply.

"Come back and see the babies," and Patricia held out her hand.

Louis bent down and kissed her. Of course no one would ever grudge her any love, not even Rene when she understood. It was a mere childish ebullition.

Jaqueline had come in and heard the story, and, as she was quite accustomed to authority, Rene had been handed over to Mammy Phillis with strict injunction to keep her a prisoner for the next two hours. Jane had come out on the lawn and little Floyd was rolling over the short turf in the care of a laughing darkey boy, while Arthur lay on his back crowing and chewing his fat fists for an interlude. There was her mother with some needlework in her hand, and Annis flew to her, hiding her face in the little hollow between neck and shoulder, with a great heart-throb of thankfulness. [33]

No one remarked on Rene's absence at the dinner table. It was a jolly family gathering, and there was a great deal of talk about what was going on in the City and the coming election and the return of Louis to college. Jaqueline would go with him and pay Aunt Catharine her first visit, that she was very urgent about. She missed the young people sadly, she admitted.

They also discussed a tutor for the younger children. Although education had not taken a very wide range for girls as yet, the necessity was beginning to be felt. Ministers appointed abroad would want intelligent wives, and even now, in Washington, foreigners appeared in society, and it was considered an accomplishment to talk French and to be entertaining.

The elders went to take an afternoon nap, a favorite habit with the squire when he could.

"Come," Charles said to Annis, "let us go down under the pines and read," and she was nothing loath. The old heroes of Froissart were like fairyland to the children. Then there were marvelous pictures, the roughest kind of woodcuts, but they picked out their heroes with great satisfaction.

Annis had seen few books. There were some old French volumes belonging to her father, and Patricia had begun to teach the little girl as a solace for her long and often weary hours. This was a garden of delight, even if Charles did puzzle over the long words and miscall them.

Jane took Varina home with her, which was a great source of elation after the enforced seclusion of the day. She gave Annis an indifferent nod as she stepped into the carriage. [34]

"You must be a good little girl and mind Aunt Jane," said her father.

"Children's tiffs are natural," he remarked to his wife. "Varina has been the baby so long she cannot tolerate a rival. Years ago she crowded Charles out of his place."

He was not quite sure but the winsome little Annis, with her shy sweet ways and ready interest, was the more companionable. Yet he must not be disloyal to his own.

Were they all on her side? Annis wondered. And would she need to take sides anywhere? She was very happy and content. Louis took her out riding on Varina's pony. She demurred at first, but the squire promised to look up a suitable one for her in a day or two.

The new wife soon became settled in her agreeable surroundings. She had not an aggressive nature, and the house servants soon learned that her rule was not as severe as Miss Catharine's, while quite as wise. She really desired to win the affection of her husband's children. Neighbors were near enough for pleasant rides and drives. There was much hearty sociability among these Virginian people. There had grown up a certain ease and carelessness since the strenuous days of the war. Though finances had been troublesome and grave questions, as well as bitter disputes, had come to the forefront of the young republic—in spite of all there had been a certain degree of prosperity on the large estates, where nearly everything was raised and much made for home consumption. Georgetown was rather a thriving and fashionable place. Bladensburg was quite a summer resort, on account of a mineral spring many thought efficacious for numerous diseases. Vessels laden with tobacco still sailed from its wharves down the Anacostia. There was the noted

dueling-ground also, where proud-spirited men went to satisfy their "honor." Around, in many directions, were handsome Colonial mansions with picturesque grounds. Washington was slowly emerging from the chaos of unfinished streets and buildings, but had not yet outgrown the flings of the envious and disappointed. The Capitol shone in its white glory. The President's mansion was imposing and habitable, though, through the administration, it had been graced largely by Mrs. Madison, the charming wife of the secretary of state, and one of her sisters. [35]

When Annis Bouvier went over with her mother and stepfather to bring home Rene, who had tired of the babies and was longing for her pony and the larger liberty, and, perhaps, her disputes with Charles and the teasing of Louis, as well as the merriment of her sisters, the child stared at the stately row of buildings that quite met her idea of a palace. The long and wide avenues running off into unfinished spaces, the trees already beginning to make a brave show, the handsome dwellings here and there were a fair augury of things to come, and seemed wonderful to her. Out in the settlement it had been vaguely speculated upon. Was it not a dream?

They drove about in some of the most passable streets. People were out for an airing this pleasant afternoon; numbers of men stood in groups in eager discussion, some gesticulating quite as fiercely as Grandfather Floyd had done. There were pretty young women on horseback, with their attendant cavaliers, laughing and jesting, and a few boys running about. The broad river, with its curves, receiving in its bosom the springs and rivulets and edged with swaying grasses topping into feathery fronds, while multitudes of wild flowers sprinkled the verdure that, from its moisture, still kept the greenness and fresh aspect of spring.

"Now you can take a good look at everything," said the squire, leaning over to Annis. "We hurried through so, and it was nearly dark when we came from Baltimore. It is the palace of our republic." [36]

Annis was to see it under various phases and to spend a night of terror in it, then to watch it arise from the ashes of destruction. But she could always recall this lovely afternoon and the birds flashing hither and thither in flame-color and gold—the Maryland yellow-throat, the redbird, with his high cockade and his bold, soldier-like air. Child as she was, the beauty of all things touched her deeply, and she hardly heard Varina's chatter about what she had done and where she had been, and the spinet at Aunt Jane's house, "which I do think more refined than a fiddle," declared the little miss disdainfully. "A lady can play on it. Of course fiddling is the right thing to dance by, and it seems proper enough for the slaves. And some of the real elegant people come to Aunt Jane's. Your mother hasn't any gown half as pretty as they wear."

"No," returned Annis, without a touch of envy.

"Jaqueline is to have some new gowns to go to Williamsburg. Oh, I just wish I was a big girl and could have fine things! I hate being little! You get sent out of the room when the ladies are talking, and you have to go to bed early, and you can't come to the table when there is company. I am going to try my very best to grow and grow."

Annis wondered whether she would like being a young lady. Jacky was nice, to be sure.

Jaqueline seemed to enjoy it very much. The new tutor, who was a Mr. Evans, a young man, was to take charge of the girls' studies, as well as those of Charles. Patricia quite envied her sister, and declared French was the greatest nuisance that had ever been invented.

"You don't invent a language," corrected Charles. "It grows by slow degrees and is improved upon and perfected—" [37]

"It was just sent upon the world at the Tower of Babel," interrupted Patricia. "After all," laughing—and a laugh always came to end Patty's spurts of temper—"it must have been very funny. Think of a man asking for—what were they building the tower out of? Bricks, wasn't it? and water, and the other man not understanding. And I suppose bread had a dozen new queer names, and everything! What a jabber it was! And that's where the languages came in, Master Charles," with a note of triumph in her clear, breezy voice.

"Just wait until you study Latin and Greek!"

"Girls don't have to, thank fortune! The French will destroy my constitution, and, unlike the United States, I haven't any by-laws, so I shall be finished out."

"There have been some learned women and wonderful queens."

"I can't be a queen. I don't want to. Think of poor Marie Antoinette!" and Patty shivered. "I *might* marry someone who would be President, but it is doubtful. No, like Jacky, I shall go in for the good time."

Charles thought there was not much comfort talking to girls, except Annis, who listened with attentive eyes, and asked such sensible questions—as if she really wanted to know things. The very first day the boy warmed to his tutor, and Mr. Evans was quite delighted with this small scholar. But, as the trend of the day was then, he also had no very exalted opinion of girls, and considered their highest honor that at the head of the household.

The great trunk in the storeroom that Aunt Catharine went through religiously once a year, to see that no corrupting influences, such as moth or rust, should gain surreptitious entrance, was to be opened now, and Jaqueline's portion of her dead mother's treasures bestowed upon her. Aunt [38]

Catharine had divided them as equally as possible, and done them up in separate parcels for each girl. In her early married life Mrs. Mason had made a visit to Paris, while Franklin was still abroad. There had been a sojourn in London as well, and she had brought home enough to last her brief life and to descend to her children. Mrs. Conway specified which gowns should be refashioned a little for her niece and what of her mother's jewels it would be proper for her to wear. Jaqueline would fain have confiscated all.

"Do as your aunt advises," said her father, with a sound of authority in his tone not to be gainsaid. "She was always a woman of good sense until she took up with those ultra views of religion, and Conway. She was so settled in her ways, too, that no one would have dreamed it, either; but there's no telling what a woman will do until she's past doing. And it's natural for them to marry. But Catharine could have had her pick in her youth. She held her head mighty high then."

There was no little confusion getting the two young people ready. Louis brushed up some studies with Mr. Evans, for his summer had been one of careless fun and good-fellowship with the neighboring young men. Still, he was ambitious to stand well and not drop behind his last year's record. Then they had to go up and bid grandmother good-by, and there were neighborhood gatherings quite as important as if these young people were going to the unexplored wilds of Africa.

Their departure made a sudden hiatus. With so many people in the house and on the plantation, it did not seem as if two could be so sincerely regretted. Every slave, from Homer down to the rollicking pickaninnies, bemoaned "Mas'r Louis"; and Mammy Phil, who had nursed every one of the "chillens," had a double dose of sorrow, and so many reminiscences that Patricia was provoked. [39]

"As if there were never any children in the world but Louis and Jaqueline!" she flung out with some vexation. "Mammy, you wouldn't make as much fuss if I was going to be buried."

"'Fore de Lord, chile, dat would break Mammy's heart cl'ar in two! You can't 'member how de joy went roun' in all de cabins when young mas'r had a son born to be de heir. Why de 'clar' o' peace wan't nuffin to it!"

"I shouldn't think I could remember that!" said the girl, with great dignity and a withering accent, "seeing as I was not in the rejoicing. You are getting old and doted, mammy!"

The old slave woman wiped her eyes. But to her comfort she had found a delightful listener in little Annis, who never wearied of the family legends, and who studied the portraits in the great drawing room with a mysterious sort of awe. There was a cavalier of the times of the first Charles, with his slashed doublet, his Vandyke collar and cuffs of what had been snowy linen and elegant lace, and his picturesque hat with its long plume: a sharp-featured, handsome face in spite of a certain languid indifference. There was another in a suit of green camlet, richly laced, and the great periwig of close-curled rings. The hand, almost covered with costly lace ruffles, rested lightly on the jeweled hilt of the rapier that hung at his side. There were two plainer men: one suggestive of Puritan times; one, round, rosy, quite modern in the half-Continental costume, that one would easily guess was the squire in his youth. Beside it was Mistress Mason in her wedding gown of satin trimmed with a perfect cloud of Venice point, a stomacher set with precious stones, and a brocaded petticoat. Like a soft mist a veil floated about her exquisite shoulders, fastened at the top with a diamond clasp. There was the beauty of the Verneys and the Carringtons in her face. [40]

"That is our own mother," said Varina as she was showing Annis the ancestors of the house. "She is a great deal handsomer than your mother, and yours has no such fine gowns. This has been laid away, and we shall all wear it as a wedding gown when our turn comes. Aunt Catharine said once there was a fortune in the lace. Has your mother nothing?"

"She has a string of pearls and some beautiful rings, but I have never seen any gowns."

"And she is not handsome," declared the young miss with a decisive air.

"She is beautiful to me, and sweet and kind, and loves me," replied Annis with a swelling heart.

"Well—our mother loved us. It was very cruel in God to take her away. I would a hundred times rather have her than your mother."

"I am sorry she is gone. Everybody must love her own mother the best."

The tone was sweet at the beginning and confident at the end, yet it hardly suited the daughter of the house.

"You would not have been here, then," triumphantly.

"No. But we should have left the settlement and come to Baltimore. I liked it there. And there was a kindly old lady who begged mother to leave me with her, but your father said 'Nay' quite sharply. And at first she would not consent to the marriage."

There had been some jesting discussion at the Carringtons'. Annis had not clearly understood it.

"But she would have had to. Father makes people do his way. He is the master of everything."

Annis was silent. She did not yet clearly understand the mystery, but she sometimes thought she

would be glad to go back to the settlement and have her mother all to herself. Something seemed to come between continually. There were numerous cares for the housewife on so large a plantation, with children and servants, visitors and a rather exigent husband. [41]

There were many beautiful articles and curiosities in the great drawing room. But Annis liked Charles better as a guide. They never jarred upon each other, and he had no jealousy. Then, he really liked his new mother.

Varina cared little for books. Besides the worn Froissart there was a copy of Captain John Smith's adventures, which were wonderful to both children, and here Annis could supply many queries about the Indians, who were rapidly disappearing from this vicinity. Gentle and quiet as Charles was, he had a great desire for adventure, and a soldier's life appeared very heroic to him. But the War of the Revolution seemed ages ago to the younger people, though the slaves often gathered about the brushwood fires and related stirring scenes almost as if they had been eyewitnesses.

Christmas was a great festival. At nearly every plantation there was a gathering of neighbors and friends, and in some houses visits of days, when extra guests were invited to dinner and a dance given for the young people. And though the exchange of gifts had none of the costly features of the present day, there was much real affection and generosity. Annis thought it delightful. There was an influx of cousins, with some little girls who were very merry and who found Annis quite charming.

It had been planned for Jaqueline to return, but no reliable acquaintance seemed ready to undertake the journey. Truth to tell, Jaqueline was tasting the sweets of incipient bellehood, and was quite a prize to the young collegians. His parish duties not being very onerous, the Reverend Conway added to them a professorship in the college, and the rectory was quite a center of society. What with frequent guests and the care of two small girls, Mrs. Conway found her hands quite full, and unable to restrict her nieces' pleasures to her own ideas of what was advisable. Then, she was glad to have the gay, lively girl, who was ready to sing at anyone's bidding, and had a gracious way with the elders as well as the young. She had often longed for the children of this first motherhood, though she accepted her new duties in a satisfactory manner. [42]

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW PRESIDENT.

The inaugurations at New York and Philadelphia had been marked with a certain degree of pomp and stateliness. The first one in Washington had been simple almost to indifference. There had preceded it a bitter campaign, and the Federalists kept the peace with a silent dignity that was chilling in the extreme. Mr. Adams left Washington at once. And the city then was in a dismal stage, with few improvements perfected. There was really no accommodation for visitors, and many still believed the Capital would be removed. They delighted to call it "The Wilderness City," "Capital of Miserable Huts," and "A mudhole almost equal to the great Serbonian bog." Mrs. Abigail Adams had not been charmed with the White House nor the city. The great marsh stretched out in a most forbidding and discouraging manner. Piles of rubbish and heaps of stone, with unsightly masses of timber, gave the place anything but a homelike aspect. There was no accommodation for the wives of congressmen if they had chosen to come. Gay New York and charming Philadelphia disdained Washington. [43]

Eight years had changed much of this. True, Georgetown was more attractive and growing faster, but streets were beginning to be cleared up, mudholes filled in, walks laid, and handsome houses erected. The wife of the secretary of state, charming Dolly Madison, had healed many differences, and Mrs. Madison's drawing room was a favorite resort for senators, ministers, and diplomats. She was often asked to preside at the White House. Mrs. Randolph, the President's daughter, on her very first visit had been delighted with her, and the two became lifelong friends.

Her bright and vivacious sister, Anna Payne, had added no little zest to social life, and her marriage had been quite an event in the slowly growing city. The Van Ness mansion was also the scene of much gayety. Old Virginia belles came up for a few weeks, and there were balls and parties at Georgetown, and no end of tea drinkings. The young women found plenty of cavaliers, and when riding was possible gay parties sallied out, stopping at some country inn for midday refreshments.

And though there were many grave questions pending, this promised to be a day of unwonted satisfaction. For the first time great preparations were made. Washington and Georgetown people invited friends, as in those days people were given to hospitality.

Mrs. Jettson had kept her sister Marian a large part of the winter, much to Dolly's discomfiture, but Mr. Floyd had sent for Marian and refused them both the anticipated pleasure of the inauguration.

Jaqueline had come home an undeniable young lady, with her hair done high on her head and sundry touches in her attire that made her very attractive and coquettish. There was great rejoicing, from least to greatest, much envying on Patricia's part, much delight on Varina's and [44]

Charles', and a pretty, shy, winsome admiration from Annis.

There was of course the duty visit to the Pineries. Then Jaqueline came down to her Aunt Jane's.

"I'd planned such a delightful time!" declared Mrs. Jettson, between satisfaction and vexation. "There is to be a gay season, with balls and parties and dinners. And, really, the young men are getting to be quite factors in society. I wanted both the girls and you; and, Jaqueline, you've grown monstrously pretty, and your manners have improved so much that you might be fresh from London or Paris. There have been so many fine people here the last two or three years, and building is going on at a rapid rate. Philadelphia and New York will not be able to look down on us much longer. I meant to give you young people a dance and supper, and father won't let the girls come. Marian was mad as a hornet, and poor Dolly stamped around. Father grows queerer about them. But *I* wanted the company as well. I'm not an old woman, if I have two babies. And I'm quite sure it will be a success if you will come."

"Of course I shall be delighted. Why, it's just charming!" and the pretty face was alight with smiles.

"I shall ask all the folks up for the grand event. You see, brother Randolph is a true Madison man. And, do you know, I like your new mother wonderfully. She is quite like an elder sister, and you'll have a fine time. You'll be just spoiled," laughingly. "But you're not to call me Aunt Jane any more. I won't have it from a tall girl like you, who will no doubt be married herself next winter. How many disconsolates did you leave at Williamsburg?"

"None, I think, so deeply smitten but that a course of Greek and Latin will restore them. I did [45]
have a splendid time, though Aunt Catharine would persist in considering me about twelve. It was positively funny. But I had Louis to manage for me. Oh, Jane, I'm awfully sorry about the girls! They cried with disappointment. And they did not know about the party!"

"No, I hadn't the cruelty to speak of that. But I'll whisper to you, Jaqueline, and you must not breathe it. Somebody here has taken a tremendous fancy to Marian. He is well connected, a young civil engineer, and a militia lieutenant; but we are afraid father will blaze out and perhaps refuse to listen. He has quite set his heart on Marian marrying their next neighbor, that Mr. Greaves who lost his wife last summer and has no one to look after his four children but the slave mammy. And Marian just hates him. The idea! Oh, Jaqueline, it is just comforting to have someone to talk to, a young person that you can say anything to!"

"Marian told me. Of course there is the fine estate and the slaves. I do suppose old people think a great deal of that," and there was a touch of regretful wisdom that sat oddly upon the young girl. "And four children! I wouldn't want 'em."

"A young girl has no business with another woman's children. I want you to see this young man. And I want to get your father interested. I think after a little I'll bring it about."

"Mr. Greaves doesn't seem very"—Jaqueline knit her pretty brows, thinking of the fervent tones and impassioned glances that had marked her victorious sway—"very deeply smitten. He and grandfather talked politics and war all the evening."

"But he means business. He has asked for her. He thinks it only respectful to wait a year before beginning his new addresses. So we have until July." [46]

"I wouldn't marry him," declared Jaqueline with much vigor.

"I dare say your father will be easy enough about lovers if they are of the right kind. Don't be in a hurry. Have a good time first. You are so young."

Mrs. Jettson had insisted upon taking in the whole family, and they came the evening before, being comfortably stowed away, although some of Mrs. Mason's relatives who had lately come to Washington insisted upon sharing the honors.

Annis and Charles had been much interested, and questioned Mr. Evans in every conceivable manner as to what it was for, and why America did not have a king or an emperor. Patricia was bubbling over with delight.

Fortunately the day was fair, and everything seemed auspicious. Salutes of cannon were fired from the navy yard at dawn, and responded to from Fort Warburton. The militia from Alexandria and Georgetown, in fine array, marched into the city to escort the new President to the Capitol. Thousands of people gathered along the way, and there was a great hurrahing, emphasized by the waving of hats and handkerchiefs. Mr. Mason and his wife and the two younger children were in a carriage, while the two girls went with Mr. and Mrs. Jettson.

Annis looked out curiously at the scene. There was the tall form of Mr. Jefferson, quite in contrast with the smaller one of his friend, who bore himself with becoming dignity. At twelve Mr. Madison reverently took the oath of office and made his inaugural address, when the cheers and enthusiasm became deafening. It was the first really grand ceremony of the kind that Washington had witnessed.

And now the new President reviewed the array of soldiers, and eager interest marked every step. It was indeed a gala day. Many people were driving around in their carriages, enjoying the [47]
sunshine and the crowd.

Then the President, with most of the officers and senators, returned to his home, where Mrs. Madison had prepared tables of refreshments for all who chose to call and pay their respects to the new magistrate.

A fine young fellow in Continental uniform paused at the carriage of the Jettsons, and greeted them cordially.

"This is something like," he said. "Simplicity may be very good in its way, when one cannot help himself, but the nation ought to honor its ruler. I am proud to be in it."

Mrs. Jettson turned and introduced Mr. Ralston to the girls, who smilingly acknowledged his presence.

"Then you could not persuade Miss Floyd?" and he glanced up wistfully.

"Father is not quite in accord with the administration, and he would not consent to her return."

"I am desperately sorry. I managed at the eleventh hour, which was early this morning, to get a ticket to the ball. Some dear friends of mine would have been delighted to chaperone Miss Floyd, if she could have consented to so short a notice. And there will be so many festivities!"

"I regret it deeply," returned Mrs. Jettson. "What a shame!" she said to her husband when Mr. Ralston had left them. "At Long's there could be only a given number accommodated. And to have missed such a fine array of people! I should like to be there myself."

The ball was considered quite a sumptuous affair. A host of beautiful women in their most elegant attire, military men who had not laid aside their trappings "in the piping times of peace," and the brilliant uniforms of the different legations, made a picture quite worthy of the young Capital. Mrs. Madison, in her robe of yellow velvet, her Paris turban with its bird-of-paradise plume, her [48] neck and arms adorned with pearls, dispensed her smiles and greetings with the wonderful tact and sweetness which were never to desert her; jest and repartee ran round the circle; and Mr. Jefferson shone in his genial cordiality. Someone remarked upon his gayety, and the gravity of the new incumbent.

"Can you wonder at it?" he asked. "My shoulders have just been freed from a burden of cares; he is just beginning to assume them." Yet he gave his friend a glance of sympathy and tenderness that indicated a continuance of the lifelong friendship.

Some glowing accounts of the ball found their way to different papers, and it seemed as if Washington was suddenly looming into conspicuousness.

The children were tired with the day's pleasures and ready to go bed. But the next morning they were eager to inspect the Capitol.

Mrs. Adams' plaint about it still held good in many respects. The wings alone had a finished aspect. There were the Senate Chamber and House of Representatives, the nuclei of many things to come. But to Charles and Annis, who looked at it through the romantic eyes of childhood, enlarged by their rather narrow reading, it was grand.

The two elder girls were more interested in Jane's party. There were some of the younger representatives, not averse to dancing with pretty girls and having a merry time while they were off duty. If Philadelphia and New York rather disdained the social pleasures of the newer city, it was a great favorite with the more southern States; and Virginia did all honor to her fine line of Presidents.

For, after all, the provincialism was not so marked. There were people who dared the voyage to Europe with as much complacency as the steam traveler of to-day, and who studied the best [49] Europe had to offer. Young men were sent abroad for education; not a few young women had a year or two of finishing abroad. There were noted foreigners, too, who left an impress on society: Albert Gallatin and his charming wife, the learned Swiss scholar and the American girl who had grafted some delightful foreign ways on a very thorough foundation of patriotic culture. Mrs. Monroe was a famous New York beauty who had lost her heart to Virginia, and the Vice President was from the northern State that was slowly accepting the new city. There were foreign ministers and their wives who accepted the republican methods and the dignified simplicity, if it did lack the stately elements of the courts abroad.

Mr. Arthur Jettson was one of the enthusiasts, and already saw great possibilities for the infant city. On the staff of engineers and largely interested in building, he laid the plans of the future before new acquaintances and had the good fortune to interest many. Old David Burns had already made a great fortune in shrewd land speculations. And although the Presidential mansion was toward the eastward, there were many who argued that the trend would be more westward. There was Georgetown, a really thriving place, whose gravity did not depend on Congress in session.

He had already persuaded Mr. Mason to make some investments, though the elder man shook his head rather ruefully at the unpromising aspect as they drove around.

Jaqueline and Patricia were much more interested in the invitations to the party. But the day after the inauguration Lieutenant Ralston came in, though now in citizen's attire, with an eager manner and sparkling eyes.

"I wonder if you could be induced to take the young ladies to a reception to-morrow evening?" he inquired. "It will be rather informal and a crush, to be sure, but they will be able to see both [50] Presidents, though not the White House. That will come later on. Next week the Madisons will no doubt be domiciled there. If you would prefer waiting—"

"Oh, no!" replied Mrs. Jettson. "The crowd will be well worth seeing. I do not despise crowds," laughingly. "Did you go to the ball?"

"Yes, with some brother officers, and wishing all the while your sister could have been there. It was an elegant scene, I assure you. I am proud of the beauty of my countrywomen. Mrs. Madison has been accustomed to honors, to be sure, but this was in a new rôle, as chief lady in her own right. And she graced the occasion. She is charming. We shall have a brilliant administration in spite of the perplexities. Well—you will go, then?"

"We cannot afford to miss it. Mr. Mason talks of returning in a day or two."

"I have hardly seen the young ladies. Can you not lay an embargo on them?"

"I shall try, for my own sake," she returned laughingly. "Thanks for your trouble."

"It is a pleasure to me."

The party had gone out for views of Washington and an inspection of the Capitol. When they returned Jaqueline ran up to Jane's room, her face beaming with interest, since she had been introduced to several representatives. Mrs. Jettson looked up from a pile of finery.

"You suggest a hollyhock in brilliant array," said Jaqueline mirthfully. "Are you going to hold an auction?"

Jane gave a half-amused sigh. "You have had an invitation out, and there is very little time to prepare. I am trying to think what can be altered. There is my pink paduasoy with the race ruffles. I cannot get into the waist any more, but you are so slim. Just try it on. Anything will do [51] for a child like Patty."

"But where to in such fine feather?"

"To the Madisons'. Not a regular levee—something much more informal. Lieutenant Ralston has it in hand. I have my new brocade and the embroidered petticoat. We can take this gown over to Mrs. Walker's, and coax her to make it more youthful. I haven't worn it since Floyd was a baby."

Jaqueline hurried off her woolen frock and slipped into the pretty silken garment. The skirt answered, but the bodice needed considerable alteration.

"And I thought I was slim; Jack, you have an elegant figure. Now we must go at once to Mrs. Walker's, or it may be too late. It's just down Pennsylvania Avenue. Scipio will take it for us, and we will go over and do the marketing. You will like the pink, won't you? It's very becoming."

"Oh, how good you are! Yes, I just adore it. Do you really mean me to have it? How can I thank you?"

Jaqueline patted and caressed it with her soft fingers.

"I did mean it for Dolly, but father is so queer about things—and gowns. He and mother keep in the same little round, with the same friends, and think that it is all-sufficient for the girls. And I'm so afraid Marian will give in to the constant dropping that is said to wear away the stone. Jacky dear," in an almost plaintive tone, "won't you be—that is—I mean—I can't think just how to put it —only you won't try to win away Lieutenant Ralston, will you, dear? I've set my heart on his making a match with Marian. *You're* so pretty and coquettish!"

The color came and went in Mrs. Jettson's face, and her voice dropped to a pleading cadence.

"Why, no! But what has he to do with—"

"Oh, he brought the invitation! He knows just how to bring about everything. And the Ralstons [52] are delightful people—well-to-do and all that. Marian would be so happy! It is a shame she isn't here. But we must not dawdle. Get into your coat and hat again."

Scipio, the butler and upper servant, came with his best bow and put the parcel carefully into the big basket, covering the delicate stuff with a napkin. Then he trotted along behind the two ladies, looking as if weighty matters devolved upon him.

Mrs. Walker kept three rooms upstairs. In the front one she displayed her goods: silks, velvets and laces, flowers and feathers. She had laid in a new and extensive stock. Two or three women were chaffering. But Mrs. Walker left them presently, and when she heard the errand summoned them into the adjoining room. Jaqueline hated to leave the beautiful show on which her eyes had feasted.

And though women were fond enough of gay attire shipped from London and Paris, and Belgium frippery and laces when they could get them, they were beginning to think it was not always necessary to send to Philadelphia or to New York. And to her stock of materials Mrs. Walker had added a workroom, not so much for the making of garments as the altering and refurbishing of party gowns, caps, and turbans.

Jaqueline was put in the pink gown again, and when Mrs. Walker looked her over she decided upon the sort of bodice there must be for a young girl, and promised to have it done the next afternoon. Scipio would come for it.

Center Market was the only place of account to household purveyors. They went thither followed by the slave, meeting other ladies with an obsequious attendant. Marketing was one of the duties of a good housewife. Some had come in their carriages. There was an exchange of friendliness, as [53] is often the case in the infancy of towns, and some bits of family gossip, some references to the ball at Long's Hotel.

All the others had come in when they returned. Charles had his brain full of marvels. Varina was tired and cross.

"I shall have to send you back home," declared her father. "Indeed, perhaps we had all better go to-morrow. We are to take supper to-night with the Carringtons, over at Georgetown. Jaqueline and Patty, you must go with us—that was Madam Carrington's orders. She has not seen you in a long while."

Annis crept around to her mother and took her hand, looking up wistfully. It seemed as if everyone wanted her mother.

"No, you can't go to-morrow," said Mrs. Jettson. "At least, the girls cannot. They have a state invitation, and I have been to get a proper gown for Jaqueline," and she laughed mischievously.

"Jane!" said the squire sharply; "what nonsense! Jaqueline has gowns and frocks and fal-lals enough. You will make her vainer than a peacock. What is this invitation, pray?"

"To pay our respects to Mr. and Mrs. Madison. Dear me, Randolph, think how father would rail at such republican crowds as have haunted the place to see plain Mr. President! They are to move to the White House early next week, when Mr. Jefferson goes to Monticello; and then, no doubt, there will be more state. But the Madisons have always kept such an open, hospitable house, and welcomed guests so charmingly."

"Jane, you are getting to be an astute politician. No doubt Arthur has his eye on some street or creek or stream for improvement, and is engineering a grant through the House. Not but what Washington needs it badly enough. There's muddy old Tiber, and lanes full of pitfalls, and last [54] year's weeds like battalions of an army. Well, I must not grumble, for I have a finger in the pie. Virginia Avenue, for all its high-sounding name, is a disgrace to the State standing sponsor for it; and I am quite sure my money is buried in bogs. So you and Arthur try your best with the new administration. I'm too old a dog to be apt at new tricks."

"But it isn't Arthur's doings. Lieutenant Ralston is to convoy us thither," returned Jane.

"Well, go and get ready, girls. We will start soon after dinner and return early. Lucky the fandango wasn't to-night, or the brave lieutenant would have to content himself with Jane."

Annis kept close to her mother. After dinner she followed her to her dressing room.

"I suppose, mamma, I couldn't go with you?" she asked wistfully, as her mother was making great puffs out of her abundant hair.

"My dear—there will be all grown people, and nothing to interest a little girl," was the soft reply.

"But I don't mind interest. I could sit very still and watch the rest of you. I—" The child's voice faltered.

Her mother bent over and kissed her, endangering the structure of hair she was piling up.

"Oh, my dear, to-morrow perhaps we will go home and you will have me altogether. It will be only a little while. You see, people do not ask little girls out to tea."

"But you always took me before. Oh, mamma, I can't like all these people, there are too many of them! I do not want anyone but you."

The child clung convulsively to her mother. Patricia Mason's heart was torn between the two loves. For each day she was learning to love her generous, large-hearted husband with a deeper affection, and taking a warmer interest in the children. The hurt and jealous feeling of Annis was [55] very natural; she could hardly blame her little daughter. Indeed, it would have pained her sorely if the child had been easily won away. Yet scenes like this smote the very depths of her soul. As Annis grew older she would understand that nothing could change a mother's love, though circumstances might appear to divide it.

Patricia kissed her tenderly, unclasped her arms, and went on with her preparations. The slow tears coursed each other down the soft cheek in the grave quiet harder to bear than sobs.

"Patty! Patty!" called the good-humored voice up the stairs, "don't prink all the afternoon, or you will outshine your old husband and put him out of temper. Girls, come! The horses are tired of waiting."

A quick footfall sounded on the stair, and Jaqueline's voice was heard laughing gayly. Then Patty the younger, peered into the room.

"Oh, I thought I was the last! Can I do anything for you? Here is your cloak. We are not in

summer yet. It really is warmer at home; but I'm glad to be here, all the same. Why, madam mother, you look so pretty and young father will have to introduce us as sisters—the Three Graces. Here are your gloves. Good-by, little Annis. Charles will look after you."

Mrs. Mason kissed her little girl. "Will you not come downstairs?" she whispered.

Annis shook her head.

She heard the merry voices, and presently the sound of the wheels. Then she leaned her head down on a chair, and felt more solitary than in the Kentucky forests. [56]

CHAPTER V.

ROGER CARRINGTON.

"Wasn't it queer that Lieutenant Ralston should happen in!" exclaimed Jaqueline at the breakfast table. "We were just going in to supper, and Madam Carrington would have him join us. She is a charming old lady, and Mrs. Carrington, the daughter-in-law, is bright and entertaining. They're some way back connections of our own mother's, of both mothers," with a bright blush, nodding over at Patricia. "And there are two sons, fine young men—one is private secretary to Colonel Monroe. We shall see him to-night. Only what do you think? He advises us to wait until Mrs. Madison is in the White House. And Mr. Ralston said, See her in her own house."

"Jack," said her father, using the detested cognomen, "your tongue is hung in the middle and swings both ways. Jane, Mrs. Carrington sent her regards to you, and would like very much to meet you, since both of her grandsons are acquainted with Arthur. The relationship seems to puzzle most people, and they take you for my daughter. Do I really look old enough for a grandfather?"

Mrs. Jettson laughed at that. It was rather confusing at times.

"And they begged us to come over and make a visit. Both ladies are so fond of girls. Madam Carrington said they tried to keep someone with them all the time. And, Annis, they were so much interested in hearing about you, and wished you had been brought along."

Annis raised her eyes to her mother with a soft reproach in them. [57]

"But I am the oldest," said Varina with jealous dignity.

"When next I go out to supper I shall have to take a caravan," declared Mr. Mason humorously. "Jane, *do* you think you can manage these girls for a few days and keep them out of the clutches of the young men? You will have your hands full. But I am needed at home, and I feel that we must go. So after breakfast we will gather up the small fry. Charles, have you seen enough of Washington?"

"Not half enough, but I'll come back some time. And I think I'll be a senator."

"What—not President!"

"I should have to be Vice President first," he returned gravely, at which they all laughed.

"I do not see why you should hurry!" exclaimed Jane. "The house is large enough for you all."

"There's a storm brewing, for one thing, and it's a busy season. Then we do not desire to drive you into insanity."

"My brains are on a more solid foundation than that would imply," retorted Jane.

There was quite a confusion when they rose. The squire was always in a hurry when any arrangement was settled upon. And since Jane was like an elder sister to the girls—

"You will have to keep them over to next week," he began. "I shall not be able to get away before —well, the very last. You might let them spend a day or two with the Carringtons."

"Oh, we shall get along all right, never fear!"

"They're only children, you know," and the squire knit his brow over a phase of fatherhood he could not make plain to himself, much less explain to another. "I had an idea Catharine would sober Jaqueline down a little, being a clergyman's wife and all that, but she's just as much of a child as ever." [58]

"Oh, you need not feel worried about Jaqueline. And it will be very nice for them both to see the President and Mr. Jefferson, who is sure to be there. Everybody is rushing to do them honor. I wish you could stay."

"I've seen them both many a time, Jane, and every other President. Your father is right in one thing, Washington *was* a grand man. There—do not let the girls run wild."

Annis scarcely let her mother out of her sight. Mrs. Jettson kissed her and said she was a nice

little thing and must come again. Charles was enthusiastic over his good time, and had much to talk about on the homeward journey.

"You have used your eyes to some purpose," said his mother with smiling commendation.

Mr. Evans thought so, as well. He was very proud of his pupil.

Annis enjoyed the great world out of doors more than she did her lessons. When they were over she and Charles rambled about the beautiful country-sides, gathering armfuls of flowers, listening to the singing birds that filled the woods. The whole plantation was astir with life. Corn and tobacco, wheat and oats, were the great staples, but there was much besides in fruit and vegetables, in flocks and herds. Slaves were busy from morning to night; it seemed as if the place was dotted with them. Randolph Mason was an easy master. Mrs. Mason found the care of so large a household no light thing. It was truly a colony of people depending upon them for advice and training of all sorts, for comfort in sorrow or death, for a willing ear in all troubles.

[59] It was a full fortnight before Mr. Mason could find time to go for his girls. Jaqueline had sipped pleasure continually. The reception had indeed been a crush and an informal affair, a mere calling upon the head of the nation in a congratulatory way. Yet there were beautifully gowned women, and famous men, and Mrs. Madison was cordial and affable. In the dining room the table was replenished continually, and the smiling waiters seemed at everyone's elbow.

After that Mr. Jefferson had gone to his beloved Monticello, although there was no wife to welcome him, and only one daughter now. And the new President was established at the White House. First there was a state dinner to the ministers and the official family, and then a levee.

Jaqueline and Patricia were surprised by a call from Mrs. Carrington, who had driven over with her son to give her invitation in person and take them back with her to Georgetown.

A quaint old house full of nooks and corners, and a garden laid out with curious winding walks, full of old-fashioned flowers and shrubs, some having been brought from the royal gardens of Paris, and one queer space with clipped yews and a great tulip bed, so sheltered from the wind and with such a sunny exposure that it was showing color in the buds already.

Patricia, with her girlish eagerness, went to the heart of Madam at once. She was so frank and chatty, and laughed with such an inspiriting sound, that it gave the quiet house ripples of gayety.

[60] Jaqueline and Mrs. Carrington fraternized in a delightful manner. She was a rather small, fair woman, whose education abroad and whose family had been her chief virtues in the eyes of her mother-in-law, who was a great stickler for birth. She had made a good wife and mother, though it must be confessed that when Madam Carrington lost her son she took complete possession of her grandsons. In spite of strong patriotism Roger had been sent to Oxford for three years, and had taken his degree at law in Baltimore. Ralph was quite a bookworm, but extremely fond of agriculture.

The longing of both women had been for a daughter. Though they seldom compared notes on the subject, Roger's wife was a matter of much speculation to them. Early marriages were the rule rather than the exception; and though they were ready to invite relatives and friends for visits and select admirable girls, Roger was single at twenty-four, an admirer of the sex and quite fond of pleasure, and ever ready to make himself agreeable.

Squire Mason had insisted that his girls were but children, but Jaqueline was assuming the graces of womanhood rapidly. Mrs. Carrington admired her slim, lithe figure, her pretty face with its fine complexion and laughing eyes that often twinkled from an overflow of mirth. There was in the young people of that day a very charming deference to elders, and with all Jaqueline's wildness and love of fun there was the innate touch of good breeding, the debt it was considered one positively owed to society.

Mr. Ralph had gathered quite a menagerie of small pet animals; and, as no one was allowed to disturb the birds, the garden and strip of woods still remaining were filled with their melody. There was a summerhouse that, while it looked light and was overrun with blossoming vines, was secure from rain and had one furnished room which was a great favorite with the young man.

[61] The little eminence gave a fine view of Rock Creek and the wilder country to the northward. When improvements begin, as is often the case, an estate not large enough for a farm becomes unprofitable. The town was growing rapidly; indeed, it had been a refuge when the first Congress met in Washington, as there were so few houses in the Capital. The patrician resort, where men of note had mingled and discussed the interests of the country over their choice Madeira and before the blazing fire of their host, was Suter's tavern, which kept its old reputation, being one of the historic places while history was yet so new. And the Convent of the Visitation was still a favorite with those who did not want to send their daughters away from home, or were of the same faith. Maryland had been settled largely by Roman Catholics, and Virginia was the first State to insist on equal rights for all denominations, while her people were generally stanch Churchmen.

There was a cordial, attractive, and refined element in Georgetown, and much gayety among the young people. It was quite a common thing for foreigners to sneer at the lack of courtly usage in the Colonies, and the want of fine distinctions one found in foreign life, which were the outgrowth of years of training and experience, and where common people were held in awe by the "divinity that doth hedge a king." But the men who had fought side by side, slept on the

ground, endured all kinds of hardships for the sake of a free country, were imbued with that sense of equality quite different from the mushroom adjustment of the French Revolution. There was a more generous culture of the soul, and much more intelligence than the period is credited with. When one looks back at the long line of statesmen, all more or less identified with the great struggle and the pioneer mode of life, one finds a galaxy of noble men that few lands can equal, and who built an enduring name for themselves in building their country.

Many of the young people had been educated abroad, but Harvard, King's College, Nassau Hall, and William and Mary were even now taking a high stand in educational matters. And both Boston and Philadelphia had some finishing schools, while the Moravian Seminary was already quite celebrated for the repose and refinement of manner young girls acquired within its nun-like seclusion. But the ideal training of women had not gone far beyond what was considered the strictly feminine boundary: to be graceful and attractive, with a certain freshness of repartee, to dance well, to entertain, and to order a household. For in the higher circles one might have to receive a count or a traveling lord or a French marquis, or be sent abroad as the wife of some minister. [62]

Georgetown had the advantage of more stability than Washington, and had grown up around home centers. Representatives came and went, often not considering it worth while to bring their families. Senators were still largely interested in the welfare of their own States, rather than that of the distant Capital. Thus it came to pass that Georgetown was really attractive and rapidly improving. Streets had a more finished look. Gardens were large and well kept, as there was no need of crowding.

The Carrington young men had seen the progress of advancement and yielded to it with a sense of foresight. The outlying land had been cut up into squares—some places sold, some rented. Roger had many excellent business traits. Enough was left for beauty and a boundary of fine forest trees on two sides, a third a prettily diversified space sloping down to the creek, the other commanding a fine view of the town.

"You ride, of course?" Roger had said the next morning after their arrival.

"What Virginia girl does not?" Jaqueline returned with a gay smile. [63]

"It bids fair to be a pleasant, sunny day, mother. What is that despondent song you sing so much?

"'Many a bright and sunshiny morning
Turns dismal'—

and he paused—

"'Turns to be a dark and dismal day.'

"Well, don't sing it to-day, and I will come home early if I can get away, and take Miss Jaqueline out. Ralph, you might invite Patricia. We will go up the creek road. The birds are out in force already; the shore larks and the thrush are making melody that would rejoice the heart of Robin Hood."

"But—I have no habit," replied Jaqueline, her bright face shadowed with disappointment.

"Oh, mother can look you up something. We have attire that came over with my Lord de la Ware's ships. Why shouldn't we be as proud as of old *Mayflower* tables and cups and cloaks that the New Englanders dote on?"

"I can find something, I am sure," was the motherly reply.

"Come out and take a breath of this delicious air."

That was meant for Jaqueline, who followed the young man out on the porch, down the steps, and then they loitered through the garden walk. The old white-haired gardener was clearing up the garden beds.

"Mornin', massa and young missy," he said, with a touch of his hand to his head, that looked like a wig of crinkly wool.

Roger paused and gave some orders. Then he gathered a few wild violets and gave them to the girl with a graceful gesture.

His mother was watching. "If he only would come to care for someone!" she mused. He was a general admirer of the sex, as the young men of that day were wont to be. "And the Masons are a fine family. I would like nothing better." [64]

How many times she had given anticipatory consent!

Jaqueline sent him off with a pretty smile that he forgot all about when Ajax whinnied and thrust his nose into his master's hand. He had been waiting the last fifteen minutes for the well-known voice.

"Fine old fellow!" his master said, with a caressing touch of the hand. "And now we must be off, or the colonel will be in a fume."

"I'll go up in the storeroom," began Mrs. Carrington, glancing the young girl over. "Mother, I do believe that green velvet jacket would fit Miss Jaqueline. You wouldn't believe that I was once quite as slim as you?" to the young girl.

"I'm sure you're not to be called stout now," said the madam, who despised a superabundance of flesh and yet hated leanness. She was a fine, perfectly proportioned woman, straight as an arrow, in spite of her more than seventy years.

"But it always was tight in the shoulders. You see, my dear, when things are ordered abroad there's not an inch to alter them with—and then I went in mourning. Would you like to come upstairs with me?"

Patricia had gone off to look at the guineas and peacocks who had stoutly insisted upon early broods. Madam had gone over to the open window with some fine needlework. Jaqueline followed her hostess up the broad stairway, through the spacious hall lighted by the cupola above, and into an ell where the main storeroom was snugly hidden.

What big old chests, with brass and iron clamps and binding and hinges! A row of deep drawers that held the best family linen and napery, some of it saved from destruction thirty years ago in the war that was already half forgotten. There was a sweet scent about the room, made by bunches of lavender, rosemary, and a sweet clover, much cultivated in gardens, and the fragrance of dried rose leaves. [65]

"There have been so many things laid by. We hoped there would be girls to take them," and Mrs. Carrington gave a soft sigh. "What a merry household you must be! There are younger girls—"

"Yes, Varina, our own sister, and Annis, mother's little girl."

"I am much interested in your new mother. She seems a very kindly, amiable person. Back some distance she was connected with the Carringtons, you know."

"And she was our own mother's cousin. Oh, we are all in love with her, I assure you. And it is quite delightful for father to have someone to consider him first of all. It's funny what marriage does to a woman," and Jaqueline gave a light laugh. "I suppose we *did* try Aunt Catharine, but she used to nag at father until sometimes he would lose his temper. And now she is always quoting and admiring Mr. Conway, and runs around after him as if he was a child. I am sure father is much more delightful to live with, he is so merry and full of fun. Not but what Mr. Conway is a gentleman and kind of heart."

"But your aunt was no longer a young girl."

"And falling in love is a queer happening. Love is writ blind," and Jaqueline laughed daintily.

"The little girl of your mother's?—I was sorry not to see her. Is she like her mother?"

"She is a shy, dainty little thing, with a sweet temper and a kind of homesick way now and then, as if she longed to fly away somewhere with her mother. Of course we all like her, and father has taken her to his heart. Charles thinks her a nonesuch, since she is never weary of hearing him read aloud. And though Charles is the youngest, Varina has always been the baby, and I think she is jealous. It is very amusing at times." [66]

"I am glad you get along so well together. It must be a great pleasure to your father to have a companion of his very own. And you girls will presently marry."

"I mean to have a good, merry time first. What a pity the winter is gone just as we have a new President! Congress will soon be adjourned, and Jane says Washington is dismal in the summer."

She opened a box, where the garment had lain many a year, being taken out at the annual cleaning, brushed carefully, and laid away again. It had a high collar and lapels worked with veritable gold thread that had not tarnished.

"Yes—many people do go away. The town has not improved as we all hoped it would. But there is an old adage that Rome was not built in a day. And we are a comparatively new country. Oh, here is the jacket!"

"Oh, how lovely!" cried Jaqueline.

"The buttons want rubbing up. We will take it to Betty, who can tell if it needs altering. I keep the sleeves stuffed out with cotton so it will not wrinkle or mat. A London tailor made it, yet it looks fresh as if it had just been sent over."

They found Betty, who was supervising some of the sewing girls. Most of the ordinary wearing clothes of the family and the servants' belongings were made in the house. There was fine mending and darning, and much drawn work done by some of the better-class house slaves.

Jaqueline tried on the pretty jacket, and there was not much alteration to be made in it. The young girl felt curiously gratified as she studied her slim figure in the mirror. She had never owned anything so fine, and certainly it was most becoming. [67]

"Then, Betty, alter the band of my black cloth skirt. That is the best we can do just now."

"Oh, you are most kind!" and Jaqueline took both hands in a warm clasp, while the glancing eyes were suffused with delight.

"And now if you both like we will go out for an airing, as I have some errands to do."

Jaqueline was ready for any diversion. Ralph proposed to drive them, as he had a little business to attend to.

There were several attractive shops in Georgetown, and the hairdressing seemed to be brisk, judging from numerous signs. In one window were wigs of various colors from fair to dark. Indeed, there had been a great era of wigs for both men and women, and especially among the fair sex, who thought even two wigs much cheaper than the continual bills of the hairdresser, when they were crisped into curls, pinned up in puffs, and a great crown laid on top of the head, built up in the artifices known to fashion, to be surmounted by feathers. The wide hoop was diminishing as well, and graceful figures were likely to be once more the style.

The dinner-hour in most society families was at two, and at the Carringtons' it was quite a stately meal, with often an unexpected guest, made just as welcome as if by invitation. And to-day a Mr. and Mrs. Hudson had driven up from Alexandria—old friends who had many things to inquire about after a winter of seclusion, and most eager to learn how the new President had been received, and whether there would really be war.

No one was in a hurry. People truly lived then. Patricia thought it rather stupid, as no one referred to her with any question or comment; even Mr. Ralph, who had proved so entertaining [68] all the morning, scarcely noticed her, as he had to play the host. But Jaqueline quite shone. When Mrs. Hudson heard she had been at the reception, she must describe not only the ladies and their gowns, but whether Mr. Jefferson was as ready to lay down the cares of state as most people said, and if Mrs. Madison had not aged by the continual demands that had been made upon her.

"For she is coming quite to middle life," said Mrs. Hudson.

"And could discount fully ten years," returned Ralph.

"They all paint and powder, I have heard. So much dissipation cannot be good for women. But, then, she has no children to look after. Her son is at school. It does make a difference if one brings up half a dozen children and has to think of getting them settled in life."

She had had her share, good Mistress Hudson. Three daughters to marry, which she had done well; one son to bury; one rambling off, whether dead or alive no one knew; and one still left, a prop for declining years, but his mother was as anxious to keep him single as Mrs. Carrington was that her sons should marry.

They had risen from the table, and the horses had been ordered when Mr. Carrington came in. He saw how Jaqueline's face lighted up.

"The days are a little longer, and we will have our ride yet," he said in a whispered aside. But there was still some talking to do. Jaqueline made her adieus and went to put on her habit. Standing in the hall above, she waited until patience was a lost virtue.

Then Roger Carrington called to her.

"I thought they would never go, they prosed and prosed so!"

"We shall be old ourselves some day," he returned with a smile, "and perhaps prose while young [69] people are waiting."

Then he turned her around with gentlemanly grace, admiration in his eyes.

"Is it the jackdaw that appears in borrowed plumes—some bird I have heard tell of. Why birds should borrow plumes—I am shamefully ignorant, am I not?" raising her eyes with a spice of mischief.

"Let us go and ask Ralph," he said with assumed gravity. "It will not take him long to run through two or three tomes."

"And ride by moonlight?"

"There is no moon."

"Does she not look well, Roger? A tailor could not have fitted the habit better. Do not go very far, for the air might grow chilly again."

"We will go up the creek a short distance."

Then he mounted her upon the pretty mare, his brother's favorite, for Ralph had not cared to ride. Patricia looked on a little disappointed, yet she did not really wish to go, for Madam Carrington had been telling her a curious love story about a little maid who had been sent over with a number of redemptioners, as those who were bound for a number of years were called. She had attracted the pity of a kindly man, who had purchased her years of service for his wife. Then the son had fallen in love with her, which had roused the mother's anger, when she sent her son to England to be educated and perhaps fall in love with a cousin. The little maid was rather hardly treated, when someone came to the colony in search of her, and it turned out that she was well born and heiress to a grand estate, held by a relative who had formed a villainous plot

against her and reported her dead. Now that he was dying without heirs, he was desirous of making tardy reparation. [70]

There were few story books to fall into girls' hands in those days. Swift and Sterne and Smollett were kept out of reach. Miss Burney was hardly considered proper, and Miss Austen had not been heard of in the Colonies.

Patricia was fond of old legends and ghost stories, with which the plantation was rife, and which had grown up about old houses. Unhappy lovers had a weird, fascinating interest for young girls, even if the lives of the day were the reverse of sentimental. All through the dinner she had been wondering if the little maid met her lover again; but that she came back to America, she knew, for her portrait hung in the hall among the Carrington ladies.

Ajax and Daphne rubbed noses, flung up their heads, and started off. Tame enough now is the winding creek, which was rough and rapid then, and which traveled from the upper edge of Maryland, gathering in many a little stream, rushing along in some places over great stones, winding about placidly in others, and then joining the Potomac.

CHAPTER VI.

A TOUCH OF NATURE.

There had been a breath of spring in the air for a day or two, and all nature welcomed the softness, with the numerous sounds of awakening life. Wild bees were out foraging. The catkins of the alders had swelled to bursting, the maples were showing red, tufts of grass were assuming the peculiar hazy, suggestive green through the furzy deadness of winter, while here and there a field of grain displayed the brilliance of a velvet carpet. The trees had that dreamy purplish tint of springtime, and waved their leafless branches with wooing softness.

The road ran alongside of the brook and was in fair order for the time of the year. Now and then some bird flung out a note of rejoicing. They went by degrees down a valley until they struck a wild gorge with overhanging rocks, where a multitude of crows were holding council, and suddenly wheeled off, making a dark shadow over the path. [71]

"A month later it will be beautiful," Roger Carrington said. "But I suppose you have a surfeit over the Potomac?" nodding his head to the southward. "Or perhaps you would have liked it better about Georgetown. I fancied my mother had shown you everything worth seeing. Few people know how fine the road is up this way."

He looked a little doubtfully at his companion. Perhaps she was too young to appreciate it.

"I have never been this way before. We were out on the Potomac last summer when we were visiting my sister, the first time we came to Washington. Regulation philosophy considers home the best place for children," and she smiled archly.

"I like large families. You can't think how your father interested us in the description of you all. How many are there?"

"Five of us and the sister of adoption."

"Mrs. Mason quite charmed us. She has had a rather eventful life. There is a brother—"

"We begin and end with boys. Charles would delight your brother Ralph. Louis is in college. He has some aspirations for the law or political life, but his present desire runs the way of pleasure and fun. The college boys are quite adepts at mischief."

"You were down there?"

"My aunt married and went to Williamsburg, you know. And Uncle Conway is connected with the college. Yes, I had a good, gay time. And I like—fun." [72]

She looked it, with the sparkle in her eye and the changing color on her cheek. She was very pretty, but an eager child.

"And if we had some girls to make merry! Real girls, I mean, like Patty, who is charming to have about. Suppose we keep her for the next year or two?"

"You will have to settle that with Patty and father. And Patty has a way of breaking out of bounds that might startle you. She is on her best behavior now."

"And we cannot always keep up to the mark—is that what you mean me to infer?"

"I couldn't, I am sure, if the mark was set high," and she laughed. "It is, up to grandmamma's. And Dolly, who really is my aunt, you know, is not much older than I am. We have royal times when she comes to the plantation. But grandpapa is very strict and of the old—there's a French word I ought to use," and she blushed. "My French will not always come to the front; and so, you see, I cannot put on grand airs."

Carrington laughed. Her frankness was so piquant.

"*Régime*—that I think is the word you want."

"Yes. A man who believes we have had no manners since the days of Washington and Mr. John Adams. Oh, do you truly think the country will go to ruin and split up into fragments?"

"No, I really do not. Young countries, like young people, make mistakes. Well, older countries do likewise. There have been many changes in the policies of all governments, many rulers. I've quite decided this will last my time out."

"I don't understand about the Non-Intercourse Act and all that. Father thinks it would be good for the women not to get so much finery from abroad. But, then, if we sell tobacco and other things to England and France—why, it seems to me it is a good thing, a sort of give and take. And [73] grandpapa thinks Mr. Madison will finish what Mr. Jefferson began, and that England will get hold of us again. Are you to go to the levee?"

"Oh, yes."

"I am so glad! I am to make a real bow to Mrs. Madison. Oh, no; I suppose it is a courtesy. I like to see people dressed up in pretty clothes, and I have not been to the White House yet. And to see all the grand men nearby, not simply in a jostling crowd. Don't you sometimes feel a little afraid of them?"

There was a charming half-curiosity in her eyes, and a pretty smile quivered about her red lips. What a child she was! If he was to ask her to marry him both mother and grandmother would be quite content. As for him—well, he had no drawing toward matrimony, but that innate chivalry and admiration for all women so common in the men of that day, who were trained to pay the highest respect to their mothers.

"I find myself wishing I was as wise and as experienced, and had the clear insight that some of our best men have had, nay, have to-day. But that comes with age and profound knowledge."

"Oh, don't get any older! I like the young men. And as for wisdom—"

She paused and colored, turning her face half away, but the roundness of the young cheek and the graceful curve where it softly lost itself in the white neck were truly lovely.

"We will dismiss wisdom and age," laughingly.

"Oh, where are we going!" She reigned her horse in sudden alarm.

"This is the last of the ravine. I wanted you to see the picture beyond. Nay, there is nothing to fear."

The frowning rocks and overhanging trees on both sides almost shut out the daylight. It did quite in summer when the foliage was thick. Then it lightened, and the clear whistle of a bird rang out [74] as if heralding the end. The break was almost a level. The creek broadened out here. The westward sun struck it and made beautiful reflections on the undulating stretches of land. The leafless trees showed golden and brown-red tints through the dun haze, the birches wore a rosy silver light. Back of it the hills rose with the mysterious suggestiveness of coming spring, full of quivering lights as the wind made perceptible waves in the air.

"It is wonderful!" she said softly. "It is like those emotions one can never describe, that penetrate every nerve, that make you feel half awed. Oh, the world is beautiful!"

The eager, yet chastened, expression of her face moved him. She sat her horse finely, girl as she was, her head proudly erect, her shoulders in the velvet coat shaped exquisitely, the sleeve showing the arm's perfect roundness at the top and the slope down to the slender waist.

He had meant to call her attention to this scene, but her quickness of vision gratified him.

"It is my favorite prospect," he said. "I have watched it many a time just at this hour in the afternoon. From early spring to midwinter the sun makes a picture of it. We are rich in beautiful scenery, and when we are done fighting and quarreling we should be a nation of artists. So far we have only been inspired to portraits."

"It would be curious to be able to paint a picture. I never thought of it before."

"That is genius, I suppose. Now, here is a nice clear bit of road. Let us have a sharp canter out to that bend in the creek and back, then we must hasten home before the evening dampness sets in."

Daphne threw up her head at the touch of the whip, and was off like a flash. Roger Carrington allowed her to reach the bend first, to the discomfiture of Ajax. Jaqueline turned her bright, rosy [75] face, full of smiling triumph.

"I accept," nodding with gallantry. "We should have been timed to a second. You are an excellent rider."

"Seeing that I have been trained from babyhood it would be disgraceful if I were not. Oh, what crazy things we have done—Louis and I! And then we would bind ourselves by a solemn promise not to betray each other. Children must have charmed lives!"

"You are hardly out of childhood yet."

"Wait until you see me in the gorgeousness of a train and a top-knot. You will wonder at my dignity. Perhaps you will not recognize me. The gown is pink. That may be some help."

"Pink. The pink roses are the sweetest, I believe."

She nodded with a spice of coquetry.

"And now are we to crawl through this dismal glade? Think of Indians lying in ambush!"

"Nay, do not spoil a pleasant ride by such a grewsome suggestion."

He led the way, and they soon emerged to the open again. The Capital loomed up; the scattered houses made quite a show, after all.

That evening Roger and she were partners at whist against his mother and grandmother, and the ladies won.

The next day the girls went over to Washington.

"I wish your visit could have been longer," Mrs. Carrington said. "I should have enjoyed asking in the young people about here and having a dance."

Patricia was very sorry. She had been on the extreme confines of young-ladyhood.

"It was just delightful!" Jaqueline explained to Mrs. Jettson. "Both ladies are lovely, but Madam is grand and holds you in a little awe. She looks like some old picture stepped out of a frame. And they are just crazy over girls—no, you cannot imagine such stately ladies being crazy over [76] anything. They made so much of Patty that she put on airs."

"I'm almost as tall as you, Miss Jaqueline!"

"But you would look ridiculous with a train and your hair done up high, and a mincing step—"

"I didn't think that you minced very much!" interrupted the younger. "I saw you run down the garden walk, and Mr. Ralph said—" making a sudden halt.

"Well, *what* did he say?"

Patty paused, for she recalled the fact that Mr. Ralph's comment had been distinctly complimentary.

"Don't dispute, girls. Patty, you are nothing but a child, if you are tall, and you know you wouldn't like to give up racing and climbing and dancing to old Sam's fiddle. You girls do have the best of everything, while poor Dolly and Marian—"

"I'm glad grandpapa isn't any real relation to me!" exclaimed Patricia. "I like father a million times better."

"That comes of being a bachelor when you are married. I'm sure an old maid couldn't be any queerer. But then Mr. Madison is said to be very indulgent to his wife, and I'm sure he treats her like a prince. And father seems to be just as bitter against him as he was against Mr. Jefferson. It seems to me the world goes around just the same, no matter who is President. Mr. Ralston came in this morning and begged me to send for Marian. I couldn't tell him exactly *why*; and I'm sure I wish Mrs. Greaves was back again, and there wouldn't be any look for Marian."

"Lieutenant Ralston was over to the Carringtons' a while last evening," said Jaqueline, and somehow she flushed in a quick manner that surprised herself, then added—"Mr. Carrington will be at the levee." [77]

"Oh, of course. It will be a fine affair. And Congress will adjourn so soon, I doubt if there will be another. There are to be state dinners to the Cabinet and the diplomats, but next winter there will no doubt be many gayeties. Jaqueline, you must run to bed and get your beauty sleep, there is no knowing how late we will be up to-morrow night."

"I think Jane might feel a little sorry that I can't go," said Patty lugubriously, as they were preparing for bed. "It's Marian all the time."

"You don't understand, Patty—"

"Yes I do. That handsome young Mr. Ralston is in love with her, and grandpapa is going to make her marry that old Mr. Greaves because he has a big farm next to his. I'd marry the man I liked."

"Nonsense! I'm not thinking about marrying."

"Jaqueline, would you marry Mr. Roger?"

"I've understood that it was good manners to wait until you were asked," turning to hide a blush.

"I mean to marry someone," answered the younger.

"Sleep on it first, Patty."

The next afternoon the hairdresser came and added much state to Mrs. Jettson's appearance. There was pearl powder, a luxury to be indulged in only on great occasions. And though rouge

was used, Mrs. Jettson had enough color of her own, and Jaqueline was resplendent with youth and health.

This affair was in the state drawing room, which had grown rather shabby. Congress was considering an appropriation of five thousand dollars for refurnishing. The sofas were stiff, faded, and worn threadbare, and the window hangings were limp and had lost their color. But the light from the numerous candles softened and relieved the impairment of time.

Mrs. Madison was in the yellow velvet; new gowns were not considered necessary for every occasion. Her beautiful neck and arms, which still kept the roundness of early womanhood, were adorned with strings of pearls, the short puffed sleeves rendered still prettier by a fall of exquisite lace. The skirt was drawn aside and displayed a white satin petticoat embroidered with gold thread, and her slippers were adorned with buckles that almost covered her dainty feet. [78]

About her were arranged the members of the official family, the ladies on one side, the gentlemen on the other. It was quite a little court. Most of the senators and the wives who were brave enough to give up home comforts to spend a winter in Washington had already met Mrs. Madison; indeed, by this time there were not many among the strangers who had not been presented.

And so Miss Jaqueline Mason made her bow to the first lady of the land and glancing up with a quick rift of color caught the cordial smile that came with a warm clasp of the hand.

"You have a good old Virginian name," she said. "Many of us are proud to call it home. It is my second home, the first in my affection now," and she gave the child another sweet smile.

Jaqueline was more abashed than she had thought possible. She stepped aside in a little confusion.

"Ah, here is Mr. Carrington. Shall I commend this young lady to your care? There are some places she might like to see and some curiosities. You are so much at home here."

Roger Carrington bowed. Mrs. Jettson had found a friend in the wife of one of the more recent senators, and they were having a little chat, as it was that lady's first visit to Washington to attend the inauguration. So Roger slipped the fair hand within his arm, and they began a tour of the still unfurnished White House, though much nearer completion and in a better state than Abigail Adams had found it in her brief sojourn. [79]

Mrs. Madison's tact and grace had brought about a more congenial state of affairs even while wife of the secretary of state. There was in the conduct of both men and women a trifle of formality verging to a certain grandeur, yet gracious and truly courteous. There was no mad rush then for the first places.

Presently the company broke up into chatty little groups. Jaqueline found herself quite a center in the midst of other centers. Here were two or three elderly men who had known her father. She saw a young neighbor in the throng whose eyes expressed so much amazement that she could not help smiling. Lieutenant Ralston had come in his soldier trappings, and there was quite a sprinkling of military men, with others in the Continental costume that gave such a picturesque aspect.

Jaqueline had a fresh, girlish charm, and to-night she certainly looked lovely. Women and girls, when they were admitted to society, were expected to make themselves agreeable. No abstruse learning was required, and though they might have strong political preferences they were delicately veiled. Mrs. Madison had gone through four years of unusual stress, and the few enemies she had made were only those who envied her popularity. She had been discretion itself outwardly, and her opinions, her conferences, and her advice had been lodged only in her husband's bosom.

Jaqueline had no care, no experience to conceal, and she had already tried her prentice hand on the students at Williamsburg. And that natural art of making men pleased with themselves, that charming deference, so great a factor in that day, was hers in an eminent degree. Roger Carrington watched her as she caught up the merry badinage and returned it with gay sparkles, and the pretty air that was half girlish demureness, the other half the indefinable charm of budding womanhood. [80]

Lieutenant Ralston took her in to the refreshment table set in the large dining room.

"I wonder when you will see Miss Floyd?" he began in a low tone. "I hoped to the last moment that Mrs. Jettson could persuade her parents to let her sister come for a few days. You go to the Pineries quite often?"

"Why, yes—some of us. Father has a truly fervent regard for grandmamma, and the girls come down frequently. They like better to come to us, I think. There is no real fun in staying at the Pineries. Of course when we were children we went dutifully."

She gave a soft, light laugh.

Ralston was considering. "Mrs. Jettson would be likely to know—of a visit?" hesitatingly.

"She might—if we sent her the word."

"I wonder if you will ever feel friendly enough to invite me? I like your father extremely. I was

very glad to have the opportunity of meeting him. And your mother. You know we are all interested in Kentucky just now."

"I think my parents would give you a very pleasant visit," Jaqueline said with a grave yet encouraging smile. The sort of conspiracy interested her. It was quite tempting to be able to hold out a hand of encouragement to Marian, who hated the dull life at the Pineries and did so enjoy amusement. Then, a real love affair thrilled Jaqueline with a delightful sensation.

He was considering how to obtain the invitation honorably, when she furnished the key.

"I think you would like my brother Louis," she remarked with a becoming shade of diffidence that went to his heart, it wore such a charming air of innocence. "He will be home in the early summer, and he always comes up to Mrs. Jettson's at once. Arthur takes a great interest in him. [81] He is to study law and the science of government, if there is such a science. Father has an eye to the Presidency for him, I think."

They both laughed at that.

"The summer is a long way off," he commented rather despondingly.

"The robins are singing and violets are in bloom. At home, no doubt, I shall find trailing arbutus."

"They are spring indications."

"You are hard to satisfy."

"Am I? Well, I would rather have that reputation than one of being pleased with trifles."

"Sometimes the trifles prove very agreeable."

Mr. and Mrs. Cutts, Mrs. Madison's favorite sister, came sauntering slowly down with a bevy of friends, greeting many of the guests. She paused and glanced at Jaqueline. There was some of the charming affability about her that characterized the wife of the President. Indeed, she had been trained on the same lines.

"I should like to be certain of this young lady's name. I did not quite catch it when she was introduced," Mrs. Cutts said in a tone that was complimentary in itself.

Lieutenant Ralston presented his companion, who in turn was presented to several other notables.

"Mason," she repeated. "Yes, I should guess you were a Virginian. My sister, you know, adores her home at Montpellier. Are you anywhere in her vicinity? That is, when she is in her true home? Though we have both become endeared to this ugly, unfinished Washington that we all have to look at by the eye of faith, and not only that, but make our friends see through the same lenses. Lieutenant Ralston, shall we ever have a Capital worthy of the nation?"

"That knowledge is not quite in my line," he returned laughingly. "If war should come it will be [82] my business to fight for it. And you can recall the old adage that Rome was not built in a day. Is it a historical fact or a Shaksperean apothegm? If the fact, we can take courage and go on."

"Why, of course it took centuries to build imperial Rome," and Mrs. Cutts' eyes twinkled with amusement.

"But they were always tearing down, you remember. Every emperor demolished so much that his predecessor had done. There must have been a good deal to start with."

"And we started with nothing. I wonder anyone had the courage to leave lovely, refined, and gay Philadelphia for this desert! Now, if the tent had even been pitched in Baltimore it would have been more appropriate."

"But, you see, when we built a country we wanted to try our hand at building a Capital to match. It will be fine enough when it is done, in a dozen years or so. And it unites the warring factions. One city cannot be jealous of another."

"Miss Mason, this young man bewilders me and leads me astray. See what it is to be a soldier and a patriot. Now I am going to carry you off and introduce you to some girls. Are you going to stay long enough to go to a ball? Every Virginia girl dances."

She was so bright and pretty that Mrs. Cutts was oddly interested in her.

"Oh, I adore dancing and riding! But I am afraid—my father is to send for me in a few days. If he were coming himself I might beg off. Your suggestion is so tempting."

"Perhaps you can. Now, here are some young people you must know," and turning away from the elders she introduced Jaqueline to a merry group.

"Miss Mason and I are old friends," declared Roger Carrington with a smile. "She has been [83] visiting with us and left us inconsolable."

"Quite a compliment to your charms."

Jaqueline blushed. "Or to the delightful hospitality of Madam and Mrs. Carrington. My sister was with me, and she was quite melancholy. We did have a charming visit. I am afraid we shall be so

spoiled that our Virginia wilds will prove desert wastes."

"Mr. Carrington, you must manage to keep Miss Mason over. The Dearborns are to give the young people a ball. We want it to be the event of the season, and that will soon be ended, alas! And we must gather the beauty and the chivalry."

There was quite a gay little whirl for some moments and more merry badinage. More than one envious eye was cast upon the young girl, for Roger Carrington was considered one of the prizes in the matrimonial market. Sir Augustus Foster, who was secretary of the English Legation some years before, had said there was no lack of handsome women, and that he never saw prettier girls anywhere, and that the City was one of the most marrying places on the whole continent.

"We missed you so very much," Roger began, when he had detached her a little from the group. "I had half a mind to come and confiscate one of you."

"Patty would have been glad enough."

"But *you* were full of pleasure! Perhaps we seemed dull to you? We are rather quiet folk."

He uttered the pronoun quite decisively, so much so that it brought the color to her cheek.

"Oh, no, it was not dull! I enjoyed it extremely."

"And if you stay for the ball will you not come over again? Mother liked you both so much. You will find it delightful at the Dearborns'. And I shall claim some dances." [84]

"You will hardly be crowded out, in that happy event," she returned brightly.

Then there were some other introductions to noted people. Colonel Monroe was standing by, and shared them. Mrs. Madison came presently, leaning on Mr. Clinton's arm.

"I hope you have had a pleasant time," the lady said graciously; "and that we shall see you frequently. I am very fond of young people."

"I felt as if I ought to kiss her hand," Jaqueline whispered, with a scarlet face, to her companion. "That is the obeisance people are expected to pay to a queen."

"Not in a republic. And every lady is a queen to a man at some period of her life."

"Oh, Mr. Carrington! no one would suspect you of such a pretty speech."

"Wouldn't they? Do I look as if I had no courteous speeches at my command?"

He looked very handsome and winning at that moment.

The company was breaking up. People came and went early on these occasions. Mrs. Jettson hunted up her charge.

"I declare, Jaqueline, you have been one of the belles of the evening. Such a mere chit, too! And you looked very grand parading around with Ralston and Mr. Carrington. Poor Marian! It is a shame she couldn't have been here. And, Jaqueline, please don't forget that Lieutenant Ralston in a way belongs to her."

The tone was rather sharp, but Jaqueline was too happy to resent it. Other young men had noticed her, as well.

"He does not forget it. He was very sorry she was not here," Jaqueline replied after a moment.

The well-trained maid helped them on with their wraps, and the footman found their carriage.

Yes, Jaqueline was a pretty girl, Jane ruminated; but so much attention would soon turn her head. [85] She was proud of her, and yet a little jealous for her sister's sake, who could enjoy pleasure quite as well. And Lieutenant Ralston was in the way of promotion, if he was not rich.

The very next day a message came from Mr. Mason. A friend would be in Washington on Monday, and Tuesday morning they must be ready to start home with him. It was too late to get word back, and Jane took it for granted that they must go. Jaqueline gave a sigh and was minded to shed a few tears, but on Saturday Mrs. Carrington drove over for the girls to spend the Sunday with them.

"Try and not be too coquettish, Jaqueline. It makes a young girl seem very forward," Mrs. Jettson advised.

"Jane is growing unpleasant," Jaqueline thought to herself. "She wants Marian in everything."

However, after the ball and one more levee there was not much gayety in the City. Congress adjourned, senators and representatives went home to consider at their leisure the grave questions pending. Mrs. Madison was much engrossed in the judicious use of the grant Congress had made. There were some new mirrors set, some dining-room furniture and china, new curtains and hangings, and upholstery done in gorgeous brocaded yellow satin. Still further, there was added a pianoforte; and the President ordered a chariot in Philadelphia for his wife, and the two horses were increased to four. The White House was to make a character for itself. [86]

CHAPTER VII.

THE BEGINNING OF A LOVE STORY.

"Why, you can just ask him down as you do any other friend," said Jaqueline with an air of innocence. "I half promised he should have the invitation. You will like him ever so much. *I* like him," laughingly.

"But Polly is coming—"

"Don't ever let grandfather hear that 'Polly,' or he won't even leave you enough to buy a mourning ring. He thinks so highly of old English customs. What a chum he would have been for Sir Charles Grandison! Are people born too late or too early! What are you smiling at?"

"The way you leap from one thing to another."

"Which shows a variety of wit and knowledge, young collegian. Didn't Shakspere call it nimble wit? I have learned a great many things since I saw you last."

"In an hour?" incredulously, and Louis raised his fine brows.

"One might learn many things in an hour. And now, Mr. Tender Conscience, don't worry about Polly, as you have taken to calling her. She may come, and she may not. And if she comes she may be sent for the very next day. The Fairfaxes are sure to come; they have accepted. I warn you that Betty is a dreadful coquette. And Georgie Baker, and the Carringtons—at least Roger. And he is great friends with Mr. Ralston."

"But we must not get in a row with grandfather. And a girl who hasn't spunk enough to stand up for the man she loves—"

"Perhaps she isn't really in love with him. That ought to give any girl courage—to run some risks." [87]

"Well—I'm off. A long and sad farewell," and the young man assumed a tragic air.

"Very good," she returned gravely. "Does a young man appreciate his inestimable privileges when he has a sister on whom he can practice?"

He laughed and kissed her. Jaqueline went to her room and wrote a very properly worded letter to Marian. Maum Chloe had two new pudding recipes that were delicious. She had the latest sleeve pattern, and Madam Weare had been to spend the day, and wore such a lovely cap that she was quite sure grandmamma would like it. They had concocted one out of some old mull, the torn breadth of a gown, and Marian could take it home. Then Elizabeth Fairfax was making some of the prettiest darned lace, a Vandyke cape that was just coming in, and she would be here for a few days next week. If Marian could come down, even if she could only stay one night. The week afterward there would be an influx of company. It would be just delightful to have her and Dolly then—perhaps they *might* be able to come—but Marian had better come and stay over. They would not want to be poking over lace-making and all that when there was lots of fun going on.

Shrewd as Grandmother Floyd was she fell into the trap so adroitly set by this flighty young person.

"Madam Weare is very genteel in her tastes and is not given to foolish things because they are new. I hardly know anyone who dresses so suitably. I do think Louis or Jaqueline might have ridden up. And I do not see what Patricia is about, or your uncle either, to let Jaqueline have her head so much. She ought to be learning something useful. The Fairfaxes are well enough, a nice family, and Elizabeth is a very well-behaved girl—industrious, too. But I'd like to see the lace Jaqueline will make!" with a strong touch of scorn in her voice, and a slight lifting of the nose to make it more emphatic. [88]

"The Vandyke capes are very pretty and graceful. Mrs. Lee brought one from Paris, and it cost a fortune," remarked Marian. "And darned net—"

"I think I know what it is. Of course it is the pattern and the amount of work that makes it valuable. You might do one through the course of the summer, Marian."

"If I knew how"—and the girl gave a little sigh.

"Let me see the letter." Marian had been reading it aloud. "I don't know but you *might* go, but I don't care to have you in the rabble of the week after. It would be a grand thing if that young Carrington would fancy Jaqueline and she would have sense enough to accept him. But such girls go through the woods and take a crooked stick at last."

Nothing more was said for a day or two. Marian found an old engraving of a Vandyke collar and cuffs, only they were done in point lace. What kind of net was used, she wondered. And then her mother decided she would go down for the day and leave Marian for a night or two. But grandfather had a poorly spell, and she thought it best not to leave him. Marian rode her horse down, attended by old Cato, who had to go to Alexandria on some business and would escort her home on the third day.

"Oh, good gracious!" cried Jaqueline; "if she *had* come! For the rabble is here already, and

someone *you* will like to see. They've gone off fishing. Betty and Hester Fairfax and Georgie Baker are out on the west porch. We're in for a good time. Mr. Ralston and Roger Carrington came down with Louis, and to-night we are going to have a little dance."

"Mother approves of Elizabeth Fairfax. And I *do* want to know about the Vandyke cape and the cap pattern. Oh, Jacky!" [89]

Marian clasped her arms about her cousin, and the obnoxious name was forgiven. For the warm pressure was full of gratitude.

"You are so wise about things, Jaqueline. Of course mother sees all our letters—"

"As if I didn't know that," laughed Jaqueline.

"But I wonder—oh, Jaqueline, do you suppose I will have to marry Mr. Greaves? You see, father has set his heart upon it. And I should be so near them, and so—"

"The idea! A man double your age, and four children! You don't even like him. What is youth for but a time to be merry and glad and to have good times? And it was a shame you could not come to Washington! Lieutenant Ralston would have taken you everywhere, and Jane was up to white heat about it. It was all splendid. You're not engaged—you can't have been so foolish!"

"Oh, Jaqueline! I wish I had your—"

"Spunk!" Jaqueline exclaimed with a laugh, while Marian was considering.

"You see, no one really governs you. Your father is so indulgent."

"Oh, I don't have quite everything my own way, I assure you! But what have *you* done in this matter?"

"Why, Mr. Greaves has explained to father and mother. Of course he will not say anything to me until the year is up. He is very punctilious, and I am so glad he believes in the year. He comes over and we have a game of whist, which I hate, and get out of when there is other company. But father expects me to stay in the room. Occasionally he questions me about something—household affairs generally. Mrs. Greaves was an excellent housekeeper—much superior to his sister, he thinks."

[90]

"Oh, Marian! I should die if I had to marry such a man. Come, let us go down to the girls and forget all about him. Cassy will put away your things."

Marian lingered.

"Well—what else?" impatiently. "You don't really want to tell me that you have a fancy for this wretched old fellow?"

"Oh, no, no! But, Jaqueline—of course I did not know Mr. Ralston would be here, yet I had a sort of presentiment that you had planned something. And is it quite fair, do you think? I mean honest to—to enjoy it all? I am afraid he likes me."

"I am quite sure he does. But I wasn't sure of his coming. Louis met him at Jane's, and likes him immensely. There are other girls here—it isn't at all as if you were the only guest. Don't worry, but let matters take their course. Come and see the lace-making."

The three girls welcomed Marian warmly. Elizabeth Fairfax was nearly her own age, Hester younger, and Georgie Jaqueline's compeer and near neighbor. Elizabeth had a sweet Madonna face, with large, downcast eyes and a soft, deferential voice, but the eyes did ready execution on the hearts of the young men. She was always busy about something, and it was a study to watch her hands, they were so shapely and beautiful.

Georgie was recounting amusing episodes, and in a few moments they were all laughing and talking. A table near by was loaded with fruit and cake, and a pitcher of homemade "shrub" gave them a delectable nectar. Betty had attended the inauguration, and as Marian listened her heart grew hot and rebellious that she should have been kept from the pleasure. She and her sister had been trained to a sharp obedience, kept in bonds like very children. Mr. Floyd had never cordially approved of his son-in-law. He considered it almost a crime to have been born north of Baltimore, [91] and Mr. Jettson had grown up in northern New York, and to some extent made his own fortune. Jane had gone to Philadelphia for a year's schooling with an old friend of Mrs. Floyd's and come home engaged. Mr. Jettson had a business proffer in Washington, and somehow the marriage was pushed through in haste. Mr. Floyd had an objection to new people, to business people, to the manner in which things were being conducted at Washington, and to the Jefferson party generally. But he was fond of his daughter, and though he would not have confessed it he did admire her style, her knowledge of the City, and the fact that she was in the best society. But, after all, a large landed estate gave a man true dignity. Mr. Greaves agreed with him in politics, was of good old stock, and had aristocratic tastes, while Arthur Jettson really was plebeian. Since there was an opportunity Marian should marry to his liking.

"I've been telling about your cape, Betty, and Marian wants to know how to do it. Spread it out. There, isn't that lovely?"

The Brussels net was fine, and the flowers were made in outline and filled in with stitches that seemed a little raised, they were so close together, and had a satin-like effect. The shape was

very graceful, with the points at the shoulders and in front.

Fine needlework and lace-making were much esteemed. For years imported articles had been very high, besides the difficulty of getting them unless one went abroad. Beautiful specimens have come down to us, and one wonders at the patience and taste, when there were so many cares to life. Occasionally a slave woman evinced a peculiar genius for this delicate work, and the family considered her quite a treasure.

"It is exquisite!" declared Marian, who was no mean needlewoman herself. Indeed, the work rather bewitched her. "Oh, I really must have one! But it will take a great deal of time." [92]

"Why, you see I have mine three-quarters done, and I take it up at odd spells and when I go visiting. And it is very easy when you once get started. You see, you follow the pattern in outlining. Then, some of my leaves and flowers are not wholly filled, and it has a very pretty effect, making a variety and less work. Jaqueline, can't you find a bit of lace; and Marian may outline this end of the pattern, and I can show her some of the stitches before the boys come home. We are going to ride then, I believe, and dance in the evening. We improve all our time when we are over here."

"I shall be delighted," returned Marian. Jaqueline found some lace, and Marian went at the work eagerly. They spiced the employment with merry gossip and laughter and bits of teasing. The squire and Mrs. Mason came home from a business drive to a neighboring town. They had taken the two little girls for to-day; Varina had been in a most amiable mood. Then the fishermen returned, rather disgusted with their want of luck.

"You know we did not want you to go," and Elizabeth raised her soft, reproving eyes.

Mr. Ralston came around to Marian's side.

"This is a pleasant surprise. I was hoping all the time. Only Miss Mason is such a torment. She was quite sure you wouldn't come. We almost quarreled about it this morning. And yet she is a charming girl. This house is the very embodiment of comfort and delight. I suppose you know I met the Masons at the inauguration? Oh, you can't think how disappointed I was! I had counted so on seeing you."

Marian Floyd glanced in the speaker's eyes and hers fell, while a fluttering color crept up her face and her whole body seemed to thrill as at the touch of some subtle magnetism. She suddenly wished he would go away; he seemed to take the strength out of her. [93]

"Are you glad to see me?" in a breathless sort of way that seemed to demand an affirmative.

"Yes." She did not mean to say it. The word came of its own accord. It was almost as if she had answered it to another question.

"Come, fellows," began Louis, "let us drop our plebeian garb, with its ancient, fishlike smell."

"That's good, considering there wasn't fish enough to make any sort of smell. Keep truth on your side."

"And misquoting Shakspere, when it has been presented to us all winter in every aspect! Williamsburg has had a feast or a surfeit from college exercises to strolling players—some very good ones, too. Jaqueline, have you ordered the horses?"

"Why, no!"

"Then go at once, while we make ourselves beautiful. We shall not have too much time."

Mr. Carrington had gone immediately to his room, and came down as Jaqueline was going through the hall.

"The fishing was not much of a success. I would rather have sat under the trees and talked to you. Ah, here is your father."

When they had greeted each other Jaqueline explained her errand.

"Let us all go out together!" exclaimed Mr. Carrington. "My poor fellow will be glad to see me."

"Marian must have a fresh horse; she rode hers all the way down. Oh, there are the Johnsons! Just in time for the fray," and she nodded over to two young men sauntering up the avenue. [94]

"Jaqueline, you ride the mare and give Marian your pony. I will go out and see to things."

Jaqueline turned back, and the two young men gallantly dismounted, escorting her to the porch, where soon the five girls assembled in equestrian array, and the five cavaliers were at their service.

"Do not stay out too late," admonished the squire.

Marian hesitated. Louis led off with Elizabeth, who was much amused at the young collegian's aplomb. Hester was supposed to have a more than friendly interest in the elder Johnson brother. Mr. Carrington kept close to Jaqueline, and Ralston wheeled his horse around to Marian's side.

"I wonder if there is a little fate in that?" and the squire nodded to the last couple. "Father has other plans for Marian."

"You don't mean that he is in real earnest about that widower and the houseful of children?" inquired Mrs. Mason.

"And you did not hesitate at five!" smiling humorously.

"I *did* hesitate. I think you can never know how much. But I was older and more experienced, and a good deal in love with the father of the children," flushing girlishly, "while Marian shrinks from Mr. Greaves. I do not think he would attract any young girl. Jane feels dreadfully about it. I like Lieutenant Ralston very much myself."

"He is a fine fellow, but not really abounding in this world's goods, and that goes a great way with father."

"Suppose it were Jaqueline?"

"I had rather it would be Carrington."

"But if she loved him?"

"I do not think Marian is in love with anybody. I suppose I am too lax, but father Floyd is too rigid. And mother upholds him. The girls have been trained to obey. What will you do when [95]
Jaqueline refuses some nice, suitable, prosperous young man and sets her heart on a spendthrift —a ne'er-do-well?"

"Turn her over to her father."

Mr. Mason shrugged his shoulders, and his eyes twinkled.

"And Annis?"

"That is going a long way off."

"But it isn't wisdom to throw Marian in temptation's way when it can only bring about trouble."

"If Marian really fell in love that would solve the difficulty. Youth ought to mate with youth. Then both have the springtime of love. Did not you find it sweet? Answer truly."

He smiled, and was silent a moment. Then he bent over and kissed her.

"The summer has a richness as well. A cold, untoward spring never makes a fruitful summer."

Then Mrs. Mason turned away to household cares. Charles was walking under the larches with his arm about Annis' waist. He was suddenly shooting up—a Mason trick—and was taller than the little girl and very devoted to her. Varina was upstairs trying on three different newly ironed white frocks. Patricia had gone to visit Aunt Catharine.

"Chloe, have you made preparations for a host at supper, and a hungry host again about nine o'clock? I should call it a party."

"Supper's all right. Dere's biskit 'nuff for a regimen'. And cake by de bushel. Chloe see company afore in dis ole house. De ham pink as a rose and de col' chicken 'nuff to make yer mouf water. An' cream an' jells an' fruit. De young folks no need to go to bed hungry."

The mistress smiled. [96]

"Jest take a peep at de table."

The snowy cloth, ironed to perfection, the quaint old silver service, the sparkling glass and china of various dates, and the great bowls of flowers made a picture. Through the open windows came the soft low caroling of birds calling each other home, and the tranquil noises of a country evening were like wafts of music. How delightful to be amongst it all, and at home! Yes, love was the great evangel of human life.

The ride was most delightful. Gay young people seize every salient point of enjoyment. They were a little late to supper, which was a mirthful meal; then Sam and Darius began to tune their fiddles on the porch, and some young neighbors were added; and as no night was ever too warm to dance, they had a merry time.

There was another long day of enjoyment to Marian Floyd. They went down to the bank of the Potomac on a picnic, with loads of provisions. They rambled about; they had a lazy, drifting sail adown the shadiest bank; they sang and jested, and went home gay, tired, happy, full of the gladness of youth.

Marian was sharing Jaqueline's room from choice. The latter had grown into young-ladyhood so rapidly that it hardly seemed as if there was much difference in their ages, even though Marian was so much more sedate, and latterly had become rather timid.

"I have had such a good time!" she said with a sigh. "I don't know when I have enjoyed anything so much. There are so few young people around the Pineries. Mother will be just delighted with that pudding, but she will think I ought to have done more lacework. I wonder if I will have time to finish that flower in the morning?"

"You can get up early," suggested Jaqueline. "Very early—for we are going for a canter before breakfast." [97]

"Well—Cato can't get here before ten, I think. That will be after breakfast."

"Then you can come to bed with a clear conscience. I think I am asleep everywhere but the tip of my tongue and a little spot in my brain."

"And—I wanted to talk to you."

Jaqueline tumbled into bed and squeezed up her pillow.

"Talk fast," she said good-humoredly.

Marian sat down on the side of the bed, combing her hair and twisting it up in two soft coils. Then she put on her nightcap, a dainty bit of lawn and ruffling, and looked pretty enough to charm anyone.

"I don't know what to do! Oh, Jacky, I am the happiest girl and the most miserable girl alive!"

Jaqueline raised on her elbow, quite wide awake at the admission.

"Did you guess that Lieutenant Ralston cared? It is so—so wonderful to have a real lover, who can put his meaning in his eyes and in the clasp of his hand, and make you feel it all about you, just that way your father loves your mother. All day to-day I have been in that curious tremble; I wanted to look and I did not dare, and then I looked in spite of myself. And this evening—"

"Yes—I managed that you should go off by yourselves. And now, Polly, you won't marry that Mr. Greaves?"

"Oh, what can I do? You see, father is set upon it. And Mr. Ralston wants to come up and ask father, and I didn't dare tell him about it, and don't know what to do."

"Why, let him come up. And if grandpapa won't give in, I'd run away, that's all. Oh, Polly, I am so glad! It must be just lovely! Though I do not want to be engaged just yet. I like fun. And there are so many fine gentlemen in Washington who say such pretty complimentary things and dance so [98] beautifully, and Mrs. Carrington expects me to make her a long visit next winter. I'd rather have a dozen lovers than just one. But it is different with you, and you are older; and at home grandmamma treats you like a little child. Yes, I'd let him come and have it over."

"But it would be awful. I never could get the courage to tell; and if father was taken by surprise —"

"Why, I should say that a friend was coming—"

"But he knows that Mr. Ralston paid me a good deal of attention when I was at Jane's, and that was why he would not let me go to the inauguration. And if I were to say he had been here two days, and I had ridden and walked with him, and he had said—he did not ask me to be engaged of course, until he had seen father."

"And what did you say? You couldn't refuse altogether?"

"I am afraid I said too much—that is, I let things go. I love him and I don't dare to, all in the same breath. And I know father will never let me marry him."

"But Jane married the man of her choice."

"There wasn't anyone else just then. And he thinks Jane might have done much better. You see, Mr. Greaves is there on the spot. And July will soon be here. Oh, dear!"

Marian leaned down on Jaqueline's shoulder and cried softly.

"Oh, I should be spunky! You are very sweet, Marian, and you give up too easily. You haven't any fight in you. They cannot force you to marry Mr. Greaves. Fathers might have done that years ago; and if you are firm and say you won't—"

"Jaqueline, don't talk all night," said an admonishing voice.

Marian was very shy and reserved the next morning during the ride, but more deliciously sweet [99] to her lover, as the men of those days expected to really win their sweethearts. After breakfast she packed up her recipes and the cap pattern, and sewed industriously at her lacework. Louis drove Georgie home, and then was to do an errand for his father. The two young men were to go to Washington presently. Roger Carrington planned for the visit his mother was to make, and then they were to return it and bring Annis. He had taken a great fancy to the child.

There was only time for a brief farewell when Cato came.

"Shall I write to your father, or come?" the lover inquired in a decisive tone.

"Oh, wait—I will tell you!" Marian answered hurriedly, frightened at the thought of the future, yet deliciously happy.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ANGRY FATHER.

Jaqueline was very busy paying visits and having a good time. They had been up to the Pineries twice without her. Truth to tell, she was a little afraid of her own counsel, and hoping Marian would have spirit enough to assert herself. One day she was very much surprised by the advent of Mr. Ralston.

"Yes, honey; he jes' done ask to see you, not yer mar ner ennyone! And he looks jes laik a lover comin' to de house," announced Julia, one of the waiting-maids.

Jaqueline went down with a deeper flush on her cheek and a beating heart. There was a courteous greeting, and then a touch of embarrassment. Ralston was first to surmount it. [100]

"Miss Mason," he began abruptly, "when have you seen Miss Floyd?"

"Not since she was here. I have been away from home. Papa and part of the family were up last week."

"Will you read this note?"

It was from Marian—very brief and cold. She had considered the matter, and felt that it would be impossible to keep up the acquaintance. It would be useless either to come or to write.

"If Miss Floyd was merely amusing herself, of course that is the end of it. Do you know whether she has a lover? There was some mystery about her I could not quite fathom. I may have been misled, but I thought she cared for me. Indeed," he added, flushing a little and softening his tone, "it seemed a case of mutual attraction at first sight. We became such friends while she was at her sister's."

Jaqueline considered a moment. Then she said: "I had better tell you the whole story. And if you knew grandpapa—he is as arbitrary as a king. He looks like one too."

She recapitulated the advances of Mr. Greaves, and admitted that Marian was yielding and stood in awe of her father. "But I am quite certain she loves you," declared the incautious girl.

"I felt rather certain," with a satisfied half-smile. "And I can understand that Mr. Greaves is a rival not to be despised. I have no broad acres nor ancestral home, but youth and ambition and a good profession. Surely when Mr. Floyd comes to understand, he cannot force his daughter's inclinations! I will devote my whole life to her, my best energies. I am sure I shall succeed."

"Marian never could resist him if she saw him now," Jaqueline thought, he looked so proud and so in earnest. But Grandpapa Floyd! [101]

"You give me hope. You are young to advise anyone in a love affair," and he laughed in a genial, amused fashion. "I came here because you knew about those two days, and I thought you might be more in Miss Floyd's confidence than her sister, though I can count on Mrs. Jettson's influence and approval, I am certain. Do you think Miss Floyd may have told her father?"

"Oh, no; I am sure she has not. Only I do think some influence has been brought to bear upon her, and she has felt afraid—"

Jaqueline looked very pretty and spirited, standing up straight and slim, her dark eyes aglow with earnestness and eager interest. She would not be afraid to stand up for her lover.

"Shall I go or write?"

"Oh, I am afraid to advise!" She turned pale then.

"And it is unmanly to ask it."

"Perhaps papa could tell better."

"I wonder if I might see him?"

"Oh, yes. Will you amuse yourself while I find him? Louis is away, and the children are having a picnic down in the grove."

Mr. Mason was ensconced in a willow easy-chair, with a high back and a cushion, while his wife was reading aloud from the pages of Oliver Goldsmith. He glanced up, and Jaqueline suddenly realized the gravity of the matter in hand.

"Mr. Ralston is here, and would like to see you, papa!" she exclaimed persuasively.

"Ah—can't you bring him out here?"

"It is quite important and—" hesitatingly.

"Yes, I'll come." He reached for his coat, and sighed at the added warmth.

Jaqueline slipped her hand through his arm.

"It's about—Marian." [102]

"I was afraid there would be trouble. Jack, was their meeting here pure accident? Tell me the truth. Or did you have mischief in your mind?"

"It wasn't *quite* that. But Marian did not know. And I did not really promise Mr. Ralston."

"I wish you had kept out of it, my girl."

"But Marian *does* love him. And surely grandpapa will never make her marry that stupid old Mr. Greaves!"

"Take care. I am getting old."

"But you will never be stupid." She reached up and kissed him.

"You know grandfather is very fond of having his own way. Mr. Greaves isn't so bad, when all is said."

"You wouldn't make me marry him?"

"I am afraid I would have a tough job," and he laughed.

"Now I shall leave you to your own wisdom."

The squire nodded.

The young lover presented his case in a very straightforward, honorable fashion. Mr. Mason's heart went out to him, but he understood his stepfather's obstinacy and his dislike to be meddled with or thwarted. His mother was in favor of the marriage also, which would make it harder for Marian.

"If you write to Mr. Floyd you will receive a polite but decided dismissal. If you see him I am afraid the result will be the same, and less pleasant to remember."

"Do you suppose I am coward enough to relinquish the woman I love in such an emergency as this? If I heard from her own lips that she did not care for me, that would influence my conduct. But I am certain she does care, and I want her to know that I am ready to take any step for her happiness. I am too much of a soldier to give up without an effort, even if I have seen only fair-weather service. What would you have done in your youth?"

[103]

"Made a good fight," smiling at the other's eagerness.

"Then I shall go. To be merely dismissed would be mortifying. And any woman would despise such a tame lover! Thank you for your cordial reception. In any event I shall count on your friendship."

He shook Mr. Mason's hand warmly.

"But you will stay and have some supper with us? And why not accept our hospitality for the night?"

"Thank you. I have some important matters on hand to-morrow morning. I am truly sorry not to have a delightful evening with you, and I am indebted to you for this kindly attention on a troublesome subject. I sincerely trust that some day I shall stand in a nearer relation. You can wish me success—I hope?"

The truth and honor in the lines of the face appealed to the elder man. He had found so many charms in his new wife, so much sweetness in the daily love, that he could be generous in his wishes.

"Yes, I hope you will succeed," and the squire said it from the depth of his heart, although his latent judgment was not so hopeful.

"He will go to the Pineries," he said as he rejoined his wife and daughter. "It will not do any good, and I am afraid we are in for a family fracas. Marian may refuse to marry Mr. Greaves, but her father will not accept Ralston. I am sorry. They would make a nice, happy young couple."

"But she might wait a year or two."

"It isn't easy waiting when there is no real hope, and the influence is all on the other side. You see, Grandfather Floyd has trained his children to habits of obedience. He isn't turned about with every wind of doctrine, as I am. Not a child stands in awe of me. And when I pick out my future son-in-law, Miss Jaqueline, I expect you will turn up your pretty nose and utterly refuse him."

[104]

"I shall if he has four children belonging to another woman."

Her father raised his brows. The young girl turned scarlet and clasped her arms about Mrs. Mason's neck.

"Mother dear, forgive that awkward speech. We are all glad to have you, as you must be aware by this time, and since you are such a comfort and pleasure to papa it would be the height of jealous unamiability not to love you. But if *you* had left four children you wouldn't want me for their stepmother, would you, now? Confess the truth."

She looked very arch and pretty, and her voice had a persuasive cadence that amused her father.

"They might fare worse, my dear girl," returned Mrs. Mason. "I should trust Annis anywhere with you. And Marian would make a charming mother, but I do think she is entitled to some young, sweet life of her own. I cannot help thinking how one extreme begets another. Your grandparents are very authoritative—"

"Domineering is better," interposed the squire laughingly. "You are great for picking out the softer words, Patty. Mr. Floyd is of the old school, and his beliefs intensify with age. His children were put in the world to honor and obey him. Brandon married an heiress with an estate and no end of slaves. Jane slipped through with the man of her choice, but you can notice that he is rather captious about Arthur, who is doing very well and will be a rich man if he doesn't blunder in the Washington bogs. I think myself Marian and Dolly are kept in very narrow bounds. Dolly has a way of slipping out, but Marian is rather timid."

"The system has made her so, but I should think she would have inherited a good deal of spirit and force of character." [105]

"I think I shall turn over a new leaf myself," declared the squire, with a twinkle of humor in his eye. "In the future, Miss Jaqueline, I wish you to consult me about your goings-out and comings-in. You are to say 'Sir' to me in the most respectful fashion. Perhaps your mother would like you to address her as 'Madam.' You are to take no hand in the affairs of foolish young lovers. You are not to go careering about the plantation on horseback, but to be sober, discreet, and industrious with your needle. Perhaps it would be well for you to keep a journal. Is there anything else? I must consult Aunt Catharine. Your mother is quite too easy."

There was a laugh in every dimple and line in the young girl's face. Any pretense of austerity sat oddly enough on the squire's round, humorous countenance.

There was a sudden interruption of the three younger children racing up the patch in a breathless fashion. Annis went straight to her mother's arms, Charles halted at his father's side and snatched his hand.

"Is Annis my sister truly, papa?"

"But it's just the same," interrupted Varina, whose tone indicated that she had been in a warm discussion. "And, papa, can he marry her?"

"More family difficulties!" declared the squire. "Is the world going crazy? And, Varina, marriages do not begin with the babies of the family."

"I'm not a baby." Charles straightened himself up to his tallest. "I said when I was a grown man I should marry Annis. I am going to study hard and go to Congress; perhaps I shall be sent abroad on some mission."

"And isn't the husband always the oldest, papa? Charles is almost two years younger than Annis."

[106]

"One year and eight months," corrected Charles. "I don't see what difference it can make. I shall be the tallest and earn the money. And she isn't my own sister. She isn't any real relation. But if she was my cousin I could marry her."

The squire laughed heartily, which rather disconcerted Varina.

"Truly," he said, "love seems to have broken out as a distemper. And so you want Annis for a sweetheart, Charles? What does Annis say to all this?"

Annis was caressing her mother's hand.

"She likes me better than anybody except her mother."

"Oh, little Annis, have you thrown me over? And after the pony, too!"

The squire's voice was whimsically upbraiding, and his glance touched her tender heart. She flew over to him.

"Oh, I do love you!" she cried. "But you have mamma, and I know I can never get back all of her."

"Do you want all of her back? Would you take her away?"

"I wouldn't have any home to take her to. And she likes it here and all the children and you, and I like it too now. I don't mind giving part of her away."

"And next she likes me." Charles went around and stood by her side in his manliest pose. They made a pretty picture.

"I thought you loved *me* a good deal," interposed Jaqueline.

"Oh, I love you all!" said the child, though she glanced doubtfully at Varina.

"But, then, girls don't marry ever, no matter how much they love each other," said the young admirer.

"And she *is* our sister," persisted Varina.

"Not in that sense, my little girl. And the age makes no difference. So she can be Charles' sweetheart until he goes to college and gets another one." [107]

"But I do not mean ever to get another one. And we were playing keep house under the big hemlock. Dinah had made us some cookies. And Rene was the company—"

"I shall not be company any more," returned the child, with a toss of the head. "If you want Annis, take her then."

"There, children, no quarreling. Aren't the cookies good enough to be peacemakers?"

"But we've eaten them all up."

Varina marched off in a huff. Jaqueline was laughing. Mrs. Mason looked annoyed. The stepfather kissed Annis tenderly.

"There," he said, "run off and finish your play. Be the best of friends, and have the best times you can. The world will look different to you a dozen years hence, and love will settle perplexities."

Jaqueline had followed her sister, though she knew Varina was generally the marplot in their play.

"Oh, Randolph, how could you!" exclaimed Mrs. Mason, with a touch of upbraiding. "Such matters are too grave and serious for children's plays."

"Yet I suppose we have all taken a hand in it. When I was a boy of nine or ten I was very much in love with a young relative who used to visit us. She taught me to dance, and I remember I wrote some verses to her. She must have been at least fifteen, for two years later she married, and I was so surprised and hurt that I think I always hated her husband until I was nearly grown and fell in love again. And after that I met your cousin."

Mrs. Mason still looked unconvinced.

"It won't hurt Charles. I like to see boys chivalrous and devoted, and Annis is such a darling. It would delight me if they were old enough to have it all in sober earnest. There, do not look so [108] grave over a little childish nonsense. Let us rather be fortifying ourselves for the avalanche that is to descend on our devoted heads. One can hardly blame Jaqueline, but I am afraid poor Marian will have a hard time. Presently *we* shall begin to be plagued with lovers."

Mrs. Mason gave a little sigh. It had been quite a task at first to induce Annis to be really friendly with the children; now she and Charles were inseparable. At first Varina had tormented them with childish jealousy, though there were not many of their enjoyments she wanted to share. Boisterous games and frolics were more to her fancy than books, but Annis could have listened forever. They were both extravagantly fond of flowers and rambling about. Mrs. Mason had so many duties to the household and the slaves, that she was often relieved when the little girl found amusement elsewhere. And Charles was an admirable companion, with his even temper, his heroic romances, his innate love for whatever was noble and true, his courtesy and kindliness. In the earlier years Varina had quite tyrannized over him, but as their tastes began to differ he quietly emancipated himself with the rare art born in some people. The tutor had given him a dignity of position. Annis appreciated this quiet side of his nature, though she enjoyed the songs and dances and frolics of the pickaninnies, and often joined in a game of romps.

Just now the mother had a half-jealous feeling that her child should find satisfaction elsewhere. There were so many years between her and womanhood that it was foolish to pay heed to the child's play, she knew.

From various causes they had not made their usual weekly visit to the Pineries. Jaqueline half wished Patricia would insist upon going, but she did not. As for herself, she hardly dared venture, [109] lest some untoward questions might be asked.

And so one day the old-fashioned yellow coach with driver and footman turned up the avenue. There had been a recent rain, and the air was cool and fragrant. Mr. and Mrs. Mason were out on the wide porch at the northern end. Dinner was over, and the squire had tilted back his chair where he could lean against the great square column, and prepared for his siesta.

Mrs. Mason was sewing. The girls were in the big swing under some great sycamore trees, and Louis was lounging on the grass.

"Randolph, your mother and Mr. Floyd," said his wife, startled.

Mr. Mason rose, but the footman had helped out Mr. Floyd, who sat nearest, and Mr. Mason clasped his mother's hand after she had alighted.

"This is a great surprise and pleasure, but the air is magnificent, just the day for driving. I was over to the courthouse most of the morning. I've had that bother of the Chaffee estate on my hands, but we are getting it into shape. It has taken a good deal of my time."

"We had looked for you up," returned his mother, with a touch of asperity in her tone.

"Scipio, see that the horses are put out—"

"The horses have been attended to. We stopped at Rhoby's and had a little rest and a bite of something."

"But you will have dinner—"

"No, no!" Mr. Floyd waved his long white hand impressively. "We have not come to stay, and will drive back presently."

Mrs. Mason had come forward and greeted her guests. But she felt the storm in the air, and caught the perplexity in her husband's eye.

"Shall we go within?" [110]

"No; it is so much pleasanter here. There is enough time in winter to be shut up in rooms. Give me the great world out of doors, when it is neither too hot nor too cold."

"All are well, I suppose?" asked Mrs. Mason.

"Brandon's little son is quite ill—the second child. We only heard last evening. Some kind of a fever. I hope it will not be severe. They are fine boys," declared their grandmother with pride.

"We have escaped wonderfully on the plantation. Very little sickness so far," Mr. Mason remarked, and there was an ominous pause.

"Mr. Mason," began the old gentleman, clearing his voice, "I had a visitor a few days ago, who, I understood, had your countenance in a very impertinent matter. I was amazed that you should for a moment entertain the thought that anything he might say would be acceptable to me—to us," glancing at his wife.

Randolph Mason met the issue squarely.

"You mean Lieutenant Ralston?"

"That ill-bred puppy who, if he wants to do his country any service, had better go out against the Indians and protect the border people from their depredations instead of flirting around after women. I wonder that you sent him on such a fool's errand. You knew my plans concerning my daughter Marian?"

"I advised him to write to you, but he was very much in earnest and thought he could plead his cause better."

"The fellow is a silly, insufferable idiot! Yes—I know," waving his hand authoritatively, "the kind of people Jane consorts with, and I might have been certain the society there would do the girls no good. But that you should not only aid and abet him, but allow your home to be made the scene of an intrigue, is treating your mother and myself shamefully, and exposing your young [111] sister to the machinations of an unprincipled fellow! If you choose to allow your daughters to consort with such cattle—"

"Hold, Mr. Floyd! I will not have an honorable young man accused in that manner, neither will I allow you to traduce my household. There was no intrigue, but an accidental meeting here—"

Mr. Floyd rose in a passion, his eyes sparkling, his face flushed.

"Do you dare to tell me there was no underhand plan in all this? Jaqueline's adroitly worded note, that might have aroused suspicion if we had not considered you above such a scheme. It was atrocious, sir! We had refused to have her visit her sister on that account. She had met the young man there. And how was it *he* should come at this particular juncture?"

"My son brought him down from Washington. He is in the habit of asking his friends. Another friend was coming, Mr. Roger Carrington."

"Where is Louis? Let me see him. Let him deny his part of the plan, if he can, with truth."

"Mr. Floyd, do common justice to the young man. He is a fine, highly esteemed person, in a good position, and numbers his friends among the best. His attentions would be no insult to any woman. That a pretty young girl should be admired is no uncommon thing; that more than one man should want to marry her is nothing derogatory. You may not care to accept him for a son-in-law—"

"She should not marry him if she never married at all!" thundered the irascible old man. "I had other and better plans for her. Some months ago one of our most estimable neighbors, a man of large property and unsullied reputation, asked for her hand. Being a widower, he would make no advances until the year of mourning had expired, which certainly evinced a delicacy worthy of all [112] commendation. Marian knew she was as good as betrothed. Ha! Louis!" as the young man crossed the porch. "Tell me the truth, sir? Did you not bring that scheming adventurer down here to meet Marian?"

"I have no idea to whom you refer. I have no such person on my list of acquaintances," declared Louis haughtily.

"That beggarly lieutenant! Don't tell me he wouldn't be glad enough to marry a girl with a good dower."

"I certainly asked Lieutenant Ralston to come with Mr. Carrington. I knew the Fairfax girls were to be here, but Marian was a surprise to me."

"You are not telling the truth, young man."

"Very well. Believe as you like." Louis turned on his heel and walked off indignantly.

"Father," said Mrs. Floyd reprovingly, "Jaqueline must have known. It was her letter that made all the trouble. I dare say Louis was not in the plot."

Mrs. Floyd was proud of her fine-looking grandson. He had always been a favorite.

"Yes; where is that deceitful girl? I warn you, Randolph Mason, that you will have trouble with one so headstrong and lawless."

"You forget you are speaking of my daughter."

"I don't care whose daughter she is!" the old man roared in his anger. "I want to tell her that her schemes have fallen through, that she has only made Marian a miserable, disobedient girl in encouraging this wicked fancy when she was on the eve of an engagement with her parents' approval and sanction."

Jaqueline walked across the path and up the steps with her head held haughtily erect.

"I am here to answer for any crime I may have committed," she said in a clear, cutting tone. [113]
"Papa allows us some liberty in choosing our friends, and certainly as guests in the house they are under his supervision. The Fairfaxes were old neighbors. The Carringtons were old friends of my own mother and her dear cousin. Mr. Ralston is held in high esteem in Washington. I was not at all sure Marian would come when I wrote, but I thought it a good opportunity—"

"For that fellow to turn her head with his wretched nonsense, to make her silly and disobedient and full of romantic notions. But it will do no good, I tell you! She has been proposed to in due form by Mr. Greaves, and you may notify your friend that she is engaged. And, Miss Jaqueline, I warn you not to write her any letters upholding your views, which are certainly most pernicious and shocking for a young girl. Until she is married you are not to meet again. I call you a dangerous girl."

"That will do," said Randolph Mason, coming and taking his daughter's hand in his. "I think you quite forget yourself, Mr. Floyd. If Marian had not cared for this young man there would not have been any trouble. Beware how you compel her to marry one man while her heart is another's!"

"My daughter has been trained to habits of obedience and respect for her parents' opinions," returned the old gentleman loftily. "You will find that you have made a great mistake in the rearing of yours. But, on the other hand, they have been bereft of a mother's wisdom and care, such as *your* mother has given to mine," and he bowed in a courtly fashion to Mrs. Floyd. "I am afraid that you, madam," turning to Mrs. Mason, "will find your way a thorny one indeed, if you have any regard for the probity and welfare of these children you have undertaken to train." [114]

"We will not go into a discussion of methods," returned Mr. Mason with a sort of dry austerity. "I am sorry that Marian's meeting Lieutenant Ralston here should have led to such an unpleasant culmination. Young people of to-day do have more liberty than the older generation, yet I should have taken it very hard if Jaqueline Verney's father had compelled her to marry a man she did not like when she loved me. So we cannot blame the young man for trying—"

"That was a suitable, sensible match," interrupted Mr. Floyd. "This is a foolish, sentimental affair. And I have to say if it receives any more encouragement from this house, it will make a lasting breach. If Marian should dare to leave her home and throw herself on this fellow's protection we should cast her out altogether, and she would be no daughter of ours."

"Father, father!" entreated Mrs. Floyd, placing her hand upon his arm.

"I mean it. This is my warning. I will not be interfered with."

Mr. Mason had been standing beside his wife's chair. Now he advanced toward his stepfather.

"I have made my apology. I am sorry such a thing should have happened here, though I cannot find it in my heart to blame the young people. And now let us heal the difference. Have a glass of wine and some refreshments."

"We must return at once. It is a long ride. But I wanted you to know what your daughter's meddling had led to, and my unalterable determination. Come, Elizabeth," holding out his hand to his wife. "We shall be glad to see you and Mrs. Patricia, but for the present I insist there shall be no communication with the young people."

He glared at the group and turned away. Mr. Mason offered no further entreaty, but went around [115]
to his mother's side.

"Twice you have married the man of your choice," he said in a low tone. "I suppose you have been very happy. Try and deal gently with Marian and persuade rather than force."

"You will understand when your girls want to make unsuitable and willful marriages. You had better look sharply after Jaqueline. When Marian is left alone she will soon recover her tranquil frame of mind. Jane is interdicted as well. Jane has grown very frivolous since she has had so much Washington society. And Mrs. Madison is extremely worldly and vain, and not to be compared with Mrs. Adams or Mrs. Washington."

Mrs. Mason rose and bade her guests a formal adieu. Mr. Mason walked down the broad steps

and saw them seated in the coach. When it had turned into the winding part of the avenue Jaqueline made a rush and flung her arms around her father's neck.

"Oh, papa, dear!—I never supposed it would make any trouble. And I wasn't sure Mr. Ralston would come, or Marian either, for that matter, and I never said a word to Marian. Jane is so much interested in the matter, and both she and Mr. Jettson like Mr. Ralston so very much. But grandpapa grows more and more arbitrary—"

"Of course he was very much vexed. I am afraid I am a foolish fellow and let you children run over me. You don't even seem to stand in awe of your stepmother. I shall have to get my backbone stiffened by some process." [116]

CHAPTER IX.

THE WEAKER VESSEL.

They came up the steps with their arms about each other. Mrs. Mason stood there, Annis clinging to her skirt, Patricia and Varina looking on in curious expectancy. Louis ventured out of his retreat.

"We don't want papa changed any, do we?" placing her other arm over her mother's shoulder, and glancing fondly into her eyes.

"I wouldn't live with grandpapa for all the world!" began Patricia.

"There, children!" exclaimed their father; "we will not discuss the matter. Mr. Floyd feels sure he is right, and I am very sorry it should have happened, though I can't see that any of you were out of the way—"

"I knew Ralston cared a great deal for Marian," said Louis, "and I never imagined that old Mr. Greaves would stand in the way. Do you suppose he would if he knew it? And I admire Ralston bearding the lion in his den. It's a shame that poor Polly should have to suffer, but I hope she will be spunky and not give in."

"Do you mean to make us marry whoever you like?" Patty edged up to her father and raised a saucy face with laughing eyes.

"You will find me terrible when you reach that period," declared their father. "At present there are enough things for you to consider and learn about without taking up marriage."

"Do you suppose grandpapa is in real earnest? He looked very resolute, didn't he? I've seen him angry with the slaves, and I shouldn't like to belong to him, I really shouldn't. And do you think he [117] actually doesn't want any of us to come up—"

"Not at present. I trust the matter will blow over. Marian will give in after a while and, no doubt, be very comfortable. Ask your mother if she is sorry. I know little Annis wants to go back to Kentucky," and he pinched the child's cheek.

"You'll have to go alone," declared Louis.

"But I can't go alone; I should get lost. And I don't want to go away from you all."

Mrs. Mason flushed and smiled at the raillery.

"But, you see, we are old enough to appreciate mamma," began Jaqueline. "And those Greaves children are all little, and they are very plain too. One of the boys has a squint eye. It looks so queer, as if he always saw two ways. And poor Marian will have to settle to playing whist, and she does love so to dance. She had such a good time here, and in Washington with Jane."

Dixon, the overseer, came up the path. Mr. Mason was wanted to settle some matter. Patty and Jaqueline sat down on the step by their mother and Annis leaned against her knee, while Varina hung over Patty's shoulder, rather to her sister's discomfort. And, in spite of their father's request, they went on talking of Marian. Their mother said they were too young to know what was really best in such matters; but they thought they did, and she could not lead them to other subjects. They were very happy, and not difficult to get along with, if they were rather lawless. To be sure, Jaqueline did evince a tendency to admiration, and often gave dangerous glances out of eyes that could look languishing as well as laughing.

Louis did not hesitate to express his indignation to both of his sisters.

"Grandpapa is an old tyrant!" he declared; "and I dare say we'll never hear. It's like someone [118] taking off your book when you are at the most interesting part."

"Do you suppose we'll be asked to the wedding?" wondered Patty; "and what a farce congratulations would be? 'I hope you will be very happy.' 'I wish you much joy.'"

Patty pirouetted round, shaking an imaginary hand and using a most affected tone, at which they all laughed.

But Marian surprised them all with a letter, written the day her parents were away. How she sent it was a mystery. It excited them all beyond measure.

"It was dreadful," she wrote. "Oh, Jaqueline! if I could have known Lieutenant Ralston was there I should have rushed into the room and told him that I loved him, and that I should never, never marry anyone else, if father shut me up in a dungeon and kept me on bread and water! But I did not know until he was sent away, and I can't know all that father said to him, but I do know he was very fierce and unreasonable. And I was so frightened when father went at me that I had to confess about those two delicious days. He was sure it was a plot on your part, and he taxed me with having known all about it. I didn't dream of such a thing at first, but I am afraid it was so.

"I never saw anyone so angry. At first I was dreadfully frightened. But when he accused me of duplicity and forwardness, and said I had run after Mr. Ralston, it roused me, and I said I loved him and I never would marry anyone else. I know he would wait years for me. And when Mr. Greaves asks me I shall tell him plain out how I feel about it, and I am quite sure he will not want to marry me. I hate the prosy old fellow! I wish Mr. Ralston could know how much I care for him. I expect you are having a terrible time to-day with father. Oh, I wish he could be like brother Randolph! Oh, Jaqueline, do you know how delightful it is! And your mother is so sweet, just like another girl. Such old people as father and mother forget they ever were young." [119]

There was much more youthful and romantic protest and resolve.

"I really didn't think Marian had so much force of character," said Louis. "I do wonder if it would be wrong to give Ralston an inkling of how the case stands? It seems as if she almost expected us to do it."

"I think papa ought to see the letter," returned Jaqueline soberly. "And I almost know he will not want us to stir further in the matter. Marian must have someone she can trust, or she would not have dared to write the letter. Oh, I hope she will be true and brave, and some time it may come out right!"

"Mis' Jettson's come," said Julia. "And your pa and ma have gone over to Middle Creek."

"Oh, Jane!" They all made a rush to the great front piazza, Jaqueline with her letter in hand.

"Oh, girls!" cried Jane, "did you have a dreadful time when father was down here? He wrote me a letter. But Lieutenant Ralston had been in, and he told me of his call at the Pineries. You see, he thought they were as good as engaged; only he meant to begin honorably, and ask father's sanction to his addresses. But father was—yes, really outrageous—if he is my father! I've always felt he would be a gentleman under any circumstances, but this was insulting, abusive; and Lieutenant Ralston is well bred and well connected, and is in the way of getting a fine position. And, in any event, there was nothing derogatory to Marian in his falling in love with her. Why, he is invited almost everywhere, and the girls are pulling straws for him. Then father writes me a very cross and irritating note, and says for the present Marian is to hold no communication with me—my own sister, too!—and that I am not to mention nor in any way refer to Mr. Ralston, but that any letter of mine will be read by him first. Why, we might as well go back to the Dark Ages, or be Puritans at once! I believe those old Puritan fathers compelled their daughters to marry to their liking. If I *could* only know how Marian feels! Why do you all look so queer? Jaqueline, who is your letter from?" [120]

"From Marian," said the girl, with rising color.

"Oh, I *must* see it." She took it from Jaqueline's hand. "Oh, poor, dear Marian! If she loves him it will be all right. And she does. I think father won't have such an easy time persuading her to marry Mr. Greaves. Why, he could have been her father; he's old enough! And none of us can write to her. It is too cruel! Now tell me what was said the day they were down here."

The scene lost nothing by repetition. They all agreed about the injustice. Then Jane decided she would return at once. The baby was teething and rather fretful. They were to go to Bladensburg for a fortnight.

"And, Jaqueline, I wish you could come. It is really quite gay there, and the water is said to be so good. Arthur is too busy to leave, and often has to spend his evenings drafting and making plans. Patty might come too, if she liked."

So the word of encouragement went its way to the lover, and was a great comfort and delight.

"I hope you will all respect grandfather's wishes," said Mr. Mason, when he read his young sister's letter. "I shall trust you not to hold any communication with Marian."

"But if Jane does?" commented Louis.

"That is not strictly our affair. And, Louis, do not be too ready to give young Ralston the encouragement of this letter, even. Mr. Floyd is very tenacious and—" [121]

"Oh, you might as well call it obstinate," laughed Louis. "Perhaps Marian may inherit some of the same characteristics, when it comes to the point. And I fancy we are all on her side. It is as you once said, Jack, we *do* have to take sides!"

"And I'm going to be on Marian's side," said Varina proudly. "I don't like grandpapa very much. Annis, what will you do?"

"I like Marian," she replied a little timidly.

"Now we must go and see what side Charles will take. The old knights fought for the ladies."

"I see you are all arrayed in rebellion," and the squire shook his head. "I am afraid I have not brought you up properly."

Jaqueline and Patty went to Bladensburg, which was quite a resort. Louis joined a party who were going down the Chesapeake in a sailing vessel, and the three young ones played and disputed and made up friends. The elders essayed several duty visits to the Pineries, but they saw the girls only in the presence of their parents, so Marian had no opportunity of explaining how matters were going with her; but she was thinner and heavy-eyed, and had lost her spirits. Mr. and Mrs. Floyd held their heads high and were rather captious.

What had happened when Mr. Greaves' year of mourning had expired was that he went over to the Pineries one afternoon dressed in a new suit and gotten up quite in the style of the day. After Marian entered the room he made a formal proposal for her hand and asked her father's consent.

"You have mine, most cordially," said Mr. Floyd in his grandest manner. "It is my wish that my daughter should accept you as her future husband. It is natural and womanly that she should have some misgivings on the subject, as it is a grave one and full of responsibility. But we have [122] reared her to do her duty in that state of life to which it shall please God to call her. And her mother and I hope to see her fill this place in your home and your affections, and become a happy wife at the proper time. We are in no hurry to part with her, but until that time you will be a most welcome guest."

Marian shivered, but her tongue clung to the roof of her mouth when she would have spoken. It seemed to her as if she should scream if he touched her hand, but he contented himself with making a rather elaborate speech to her mother, and pressing the elder's hand to his lips. There was some wine and cake brought in, and healths were drunk. After some desultory conversation supper was announced, a very high tea befitting a festive occasion. There was the inevitable game of whist afterward. This was Thursday, and Sunday Mr. Greaves walked over to the Floyds' pew, and down the aisle with Miss Marian, Mrs. Floyd having taken Dolly under her wing. And the matter seemed to be settled without any voice from Marian either way.

"But it is dreadful! I never, never will marry him!" sobbed the girl on Dolly's neck in the quiet of their own chamber. "If I *could* run away! And if I only knew about Mr. Ralston!"

"If we could only hear from Jane! You will have to let things go on and hope for some way out of it. I wonder who will come along for me? And we might be having such a delightful time with Jane! I sometimes wish Mr. Ralston had not come to hand and spoiled it all."

"But you can't think, Dolly, how deliciously sweet those two days were! A whole lifetime of that!" sighingly.

"But men only love that way a little while. Then it gets to be an old story and is merely respect," returned the wise younger sister. [123]

"I am sure Arthur is fond of Jane and proud enough of her too, and look at brother Randolph! Oh, I just envy Jaqueline! What a nice time she will have!"

Dolly had said so many times, "It's just awful, Marian," that she had nothing more left to say. Then, it was hard to be watched and questioned and not allowed any liberty on Marian's account. She didn't see how Marian could run away, for she was never trusted to go anywhere alone. And no well-bred girl would throw herself at her lover without a very urgent invitation.

The clergyman and his wife came in to tea, and found Mr. Greaves there, and congratulated them both. Then the neighbors took it up as a settled thing, and poor Marian felt the net closing about her. There had been a vague half-expectation that Lieutenant Ralston would make some effort to assure her of his constancy. Or if some word could come from Jane!

Louis went back to Williamsburg, and Patricia was sent for some educational advantages. There was a new little girl at the Jettsons', and Jaqueline was to be one of the godmothers. Afterward Jane pleaded so hard for her to remain. She could go on with her French and her singing, as she had a very pretty voice and singing was one of the accomplishments of the day. Then, too, the Carringtons were very glad to have her. Indeed, Jaqueline was a great favorite for her vivacity and her charming manner, which was so pretty and deferential to her elders, so bright and winsome to her compeers.

Mrs. Mason took up the education of the two little girls with Charles' help. He went over to the house of the clergyman every morning, who was a graduate of Oxford and quite ready to piece out his salary with a class of five small boys in the neighborhood. Charles was a born student, delighted with all kinds of knowledge. Annis was always interested as well. [124]

"You will make the child a regular bookworm," declared the squire. And then he would take her and Varina off for a canter over the hills.

"I don't see why girls and women shouldn't love to learn," Charles said to his mother.

"But they can't be doctors, nor ministers, nor judges, nor politicians," smilingly.

"They could help their husbands if they knew how."

"But they help them by keeping the house in good order, and watching the servants, and sewing, and making their husbands comfortable and happy."

"I want Annis to learn a great many other things, for you know I am to marry her when we are grown up," said the little boy gravely.

Mrs. Mason smiled at his earnestness.

A messenger had been sent down from the Pineries early in December to invite all the family to a Christmas dinner. Mrs. Floyd had not been in her usual health for some weeks back, and now that the cause of disagreement had been removed she was anxious to receive all the family that could come together. She had hoped to have Mr. and Mrs. Conway, but he could not leave his parish at such an important time. So, if they would waive their own family gathering and join her she would be most grateful. She realized that she and Mr. Floyd were getting to be old people, and they could not tell how much longer they might be spared.

"Then it is all settled that Marian will marry Mr. Greaves," said Mr. Mason.

His wife gave a little sigh.

Jaqueline came home to hear the verdict and vent her indignation. Jane had received a letter from her father announcing that Marian had accepted the husband selected for her and given up her rebellious attitude. So the family, he hoped, would meet in amity once more. Mrs. Floyd had [125] not been well of late, and was desirous of seeing her new little granddaughter.

"Marian can't have given up so easily! And all this time Mr. Ralston has been so confident! What an awful disappointment it will be to him! He has gone up to Philadelphia to consult with some engineers. Oh, papa, can't something be done? Jane is almost wild about it."

"My dear girl, if Marian is satisfied—"

"But I cannot think she is. She did love Mr. Ralston so!"

"A girl's fancy. How many lovers have you had? See how indulgent I am to trust you to Jane, who really hasn't much more sense than you."

"Why, I haven't any real lover. And I do not want one for ever so long." Yet she flushed and dropped her eyes.

Perhaps he would not have trusted his daughter in the giddy whirl of society if he had not known of someone every way worthy and acceptable, who was watching her and waiting for the right moment to speak. When she had taken her fling of gayety, she would be the more ready to listen. And he would not mar what he really desired by seeming to bias her inclinations. She was not a girl to be forced into a step or have her patience worn out, as he suspected was the case with his young sister Marian.

"Of course Jane means to join the family party?"

"Oh, yes. Jane has been almost heartbroken over the matter. She is very fond of Marian and Dolly. Oh, papa, I hope you won't get cross and queer as you grow older!"

He laughed and patted her shoulder. "Grandfather thinks you will all come to grief from over-indulgence."

"We are all going to come out magnificently in the end, just to prove him a false prophet and you [126] the very dearest of fathers."

"You are a sad flatterer, Jack. I'm afraid you learn too much of it in the gay circles. But you must be on your best behavior at the Pineries, and not stir up any disaffection. Family differences are very disagreeable things; and, after all, age is entitled to a certain indulgence and respect. I shouldn't wonder if you were a queer, arbitrary old lady yourself."

"Oh, papa!" reproachfully.

Patricia thought it very hard that she could not come home for Christmas, which was the great holiday of all the year. But Louis was not coming; he had some arrears to make up, and was also very much interested in one of a certain household of girls, and was to attend their Christmas-Eve ball. Patty grumbled a good deal. Aunt Catharine treated her like one of the children. She was not allowed to go to parties, and she had to learn all kinds of fancywork and cooking, and making sauces and everything. "And I've made up my mind if keeping a house is so much work I shall never get married," declared the much-tried girl. "And I think aunt was much nicer as an old maid than a married woman. Though she's a great personage now, and everybody comes to her for advice and patterns and stitches in lace-making and recipes for everything. If I ever did marry, I wouldn't be a clergyman's wife."

Mrs. Conway wrote a rather stilted, but very affectionate, letter to her mother and Marian. She congratulated the latter warmly. Gray Court was certainly a fine old place. Four children were a great responsibility; she found her three a continual care, but Mr. Conway was so devoted to his study, his classes, and his sermons she could have no help from him. As they wanted certainly to come to the marriage in the spring, it was better to wait until then, as it was quite impossible to [127] get away now. She sent Marian a piece of fine old lace that she had bought from a parishioner in very reduced circumstances, and who was the last of her line.

The Pineries wore a welcome aspect for the guests. Great fires were kept blazing in the wide chimneys, and the Franklin stove in the hall sent out pleasant cheer. Brandon the son, his wife, and three children were among the first guests. The Masons added six, and Mrs. Jettson came with her three babies, but her husband was not to join them until Christmas morning, on account of some engagements.

There was staying at the house a young Mr. Floyd, a distant relative from South Carolina. It was plain to be seen that he was very sweet on Dolly, and grandfather was highly elated.

Mr. Greaves had certainly thawed a little. He was quite lover-like in a courtly and formal fashion, and made himself very much a son of the house. In arranging for the guests Mrs. Floyd had brought her two daughters next to her own room so there should be no chance for nightly gossips or confidences over dressing. Marian had begun to think a home of her own desirable. With the unreason of womankind she felt that Mr. Ralston ought to make some effort to learn her true sentiments. As he had not, as also her mother persisted that young society men of that class thought it entertainment to make love to every woman they met, she had yielded reluctantly.

Then, too, Gray Court was a fine old place. It had not suffered much during the Revolution, though the treasures of plate and fine china had been buried out of harm's way. Marian found that she was the envy of the elder spinsters, and even the younger girls thought her lucky. So she had given in on condition that the marriage should not take place until May. [128]

"Honey, dat's an awful onlucky month!" said her old nurse.

"Then it shall be June," returned the prospective bride.

"And suppose I should be married at the same time! This is Preston Floyd's second visit, and he and father hit off wonderfully well. They agree in politics, and I wonder why it is such a pleasure to have the country go to ruin. However, I don't think it will; it has stood many storms. And Charleston must be an agreeable city to live in, if all be true that is said about it. I would like Philadelphia or New York, but I see no prospect of getting there. So if Preston asks me to marry him I shall accept. I don't suppose father would ever trust us to visit Jane again. And when you are gone it will be dismal. Marriage seems the right and proper thing. I wonder if Jaqueline has a lover!"

A modern girl would have complained that Jaqueline made "big eyes" at Preston Floyd. Before she had been an hour in the house there was a different atmosphere. She was not aggressive, and her rather hoydenish ways were toned down to a certain fearless elegance. She was bright and vivacious and had bits of merry wit at her tongue's end, yet it was not so much what she said as her manner of saying it.

"I can't get a word alone with Marian," complained Jane to the young girl. "But I must say that Mr. Greaves acquitted himself wonderfully well last evening. Only Mr. Ralston is so sure Marian will be faithful through everything. He gave me so many messages for her, and mother makes a great point of not mentioning his name. What shall I do?"

"It's horrid! I do believe Marian has ceased to care for him. And now that everything is settled it would seem dreadful to stir it all up again. Papa insisted that I should let the matter entirely alone." [129]

"But Mr. Ralston will be so dreadfully disappointed. He was so proud of his new position for her sake. And Marian really puzzles me. She *seems* content. Oh, did you see that exquisite lace Aunt Catharine sent her? Of course it *is* all settled, and if Marian is satisfied—oh, Jaqueline, I hope you will really fall in love! I adore lovers, even if I am the mother of three children. I mean that my little girl shall have a delightful time when she is grown up."

The children were having a gay time. Varina was the leader, and Annis, with her soft ways, the peacemaker, when anything went wrong. The two Jettson boys adored her. Charles roamed over the old house, and pleased grandfather by his interest in family legends and the history of various articles of furniture and plate. It was grandfather's boast that there wasn't a stick of Yankee furniture in the house. Charles longed to have Annis with him, but though grandfather said "she was a nice little thing," he did not take very fervently to little girls, and had more than once regretted that Jane and Marian had not been boys.

"I don't see what you find interesting about those babies," Charles said rather disdainfully. "They're always wanting to tumble over you and make a noise, and they're never as funny as the little slave children, who *can* amuse you if you want that sort of fun. I wish you'd come and hear grandfather talk about the Indians and when the settlers first came to Virginia."

"I don't think he quite likes me," Annis said hesitatingly, with a nervous little laugh.

"As well as he likes any child girls. I think he likes them better when they are big enough to play whist. But you could listen, all the same."

"I get tired of just listening. I like the children because they are alive and can laugh and talk. The other people who have been dead so long—" [130]

"But you liked Captain John Smith, and the Froissart men who were so brave. And King Arthur—"

"But Grandfather Floyd said there never was any such King Arthur, nor Merlin, nor ever so many other people."

"Grandfather is wrong about some things. And it isn't polite to contradict him, because he is an old man. Oh, do come!"

"Annis! Annis!" called two or three eager baby voices.

"Oh, yes, I would rather be with them. And when we get home you may tell me all these things. They'll sound so much better than in grandpapa's voice. It sometimes gets shaky and seems cold, while yours is soft and sweet and fine when you come to the grand places."

That mollified the boy, who certainly had become grandfather's favorite, and was pronounced sensible.

CHAPTER X.

A CHRISTMAS AUGURY.

The slaves at the Pineries were kept with a rather strict hand. Very few were sold off the plantation, and then for the gravest misconduct, when whipping had ceased to be efficacious. But they had increased largely, and were often hired out, those for the year at Christmas or the beginning of the year. Christmas Eve there was a general gathering, and they were allowed a sort of ball in the great kitchen, where most of the rough work was done. There were music and song singing, charms were tried, and they ended with dancing. All the autumn it was looked forward to eagerly.

The supper in the main house was early, and the smaller children were put to bed. The three Masons and young Archibald Floyd, who had his grandfather's name, were to be allowed at the "grand occasion." There were a number of guests, and seats around the outside were prepared for them. [131]

"And we used to open the dancing," said Jane. "How proud they were about young missy! And we tried some of the charms. Looking for your future husband in a pail of water with a mirror at the bottom. And jumping over the candles—do you remember that, Polly? What fun we used to have with the girls! Why, it is three or four years since I have been here at Christmastide."

"Oh, will they jump over the candles?" cried Jaqueline. "They did it at the Fairfaxes' last year, and Betty put the very first one out."

"Why, Betty must be two and twenty," said Jane. "It would be queer if the sign came true."

"It doesn't really," laughed Jaqueline. "It is like tipping your chair over and tumbling up stairs."

"I want to try it," declared Dolly. "If you go over the whole seven you are going to be married soon. The others count for years. And if you put the first one out you will surely be an old maid."

Some of the songs were very pretty, some ridiculously funny, several embellished by pantomime. Then the charms began. The first few were rather simple, and caused an immense amount of giggling among the young Phillises. The shadow faces were pursued with a certain awe, as if they really were something uncanny.

Dolly, Jaqueline, and a young lady guest were the only ones of the "quality" who cared to look.

"It is as much your own shadow as anything," declared Jaqueline, "and it quivers so that you can hardly make it out."

The candles were lighted and placed in a row at even distances. The young lads tried them first. There were no skirts in the way, and they went over them triumphantly. [132]

"But men can get mah'ied when they like," said Rose, Marian's pretty young maid, in her soft half-lisping tone, "but girls can't always."

"Try, Rose!" exclaimed Jaqueline.

"I doan know anyone I want. An' I'm promised to go over to Gray Court with Miss Mayan."

"You'll find someone there, perhaps."

Bathsheba, tall and supple, with the figure of a Greek sculpture, went over the seven triumphantly. Sam caught her by the hand, and a shout went up, echoing in a laughing chorus.

Others tried it with varying luck, evident mortification, and disappointment. There were some who had been practicing in secret the whole week, and were well prepared.

"Now I am going to try," said Dolly; and there was a general applauding among the slaves. The space was made a little larger, though eyes were eager and necks were craned; and broad smiles illuminated black and brown faces.

"Way for Miss Dolly now. She goin' ober de whole row. Whoop, now!" and Jep gave his knee a resounding slap.

Dolly gathered up her skirts. The first jump was a success, the candle only flaring a little. The second—then some clapping began. The third dainty leap brought more applause, then on and on until she had cleared the mystical number. Shouts and laughter almost shook the roof.

"I knew you could do it, Miss Dolly," said Rose, in exultation. "And Miss Mayan can, too."

"Now you will see my luck," and Jaqueline stepped out on the floor. [133]

"One—two." Out went the third candle, but Jaqueline kept on and put out the fourth. She had half a mind to be angry.

"Well, two years isn't long to wait," remarked Dolly consolingly.

"It isn't the waiting. I don't see how I could have been so stupid, for I can jump almost anything."

Miss Marshall was a little timid, but went through the ordeal successfully, amid bravos.

"Marian, try your luck," said Dolly, as Preston Floyd squeezed her hand so hard it brought a flush to her cheek. "Ought she not, Cousin Preston? She's the only remaining single girl here."

"Yes, she must," insisted Jaqueline. "You'll all have time to get good and ready for my wedding."

Jaqueline had recovered her spirits, and caught Marian's arm, laughing gayly.

"Yes. Why it's rare fun! Come, Marian. Then I'll try. I shall go the whole seven," declared Preston.

Marian hung back, but they all persisted. If Mr. Greaves had been there, or her mother, but the elders had settled to whist, there being enough for two tables. Some sudden spirit roused her. She had done it times before. She would be young and gay just for five minutes.

"Come." Preston was leading her out, to Jane's utter surprise. Marian had been so dignified for the last twenty-four hours; ten years older, it seemed, than last winter. And how girlish then!

"Marian!"

Preston laughed. "Now, Cousin Marian. The whole seven, for the honor of the house of Floyd."

There were two graceful, successful leaps. Her hand trembled, half a yard of skirt dropped, and out went the third candle. There was a general cry of disappointment. [134]

"That was an accident," declared Preston. "Light the candle. Marian, you shall have another chance."

"No, no, no!" She caught Jane's arm. "It was very silly," but her voice had a strained, broken sound, and she looked frightened.

"Take your turn, Cousin Preston, then let them go to dancing. The fiddlers are tuning up."

Jane drew her sister a little aside, while Preston Floyd won the acclaim of the crowd.

"Are you happy and satisfied, Marian, or miserable?" she asked in a rapid tone, just under her breath. "You are so queer and changed."

"Don't," Marian entreated. "Of course I shall marry Mr. Greaves. That was girlish foolishness, you know. And the candles really didn't mean anything. Jaqueline," as the girl had come up to her, "we were both in the same boat for awkwardness. I think I must be growing old, but you did not have so good an excuse. Do you want to stay for the dancing? Had we not better all return to the drawing room?"

The younger group demurred.

"Then Jane will stay and play propriety."

Marian turned swiftly, and was gone before Jane could utter a word. But she paused in the hall and leaned up against the door jamb that was almost like a column. Her breath came quick and hard.

"It is too late," she said breathlessly, to herself. "And he doesn't care. I have passed my word, and to break it would call down a judgment upon myself. Then—I couldn't," and she shuddered. "I am not daring like Jaqueline, or even Dolly. But Dolly thinks it best."

When she entered the room her mother glanced up with sharp inquiry that softened as she motioned her to her side.

"Did you get tired of the nonsense?" she asked, in an approving tone. "My hand is most played out, and you shall take my place." [135]

Mr. Greaves sat over opposite. He raised his serious, self-complacent face. She could recall another,—eager, warm with rushing emotions,—and it stood back of this one like a shadow. But, somehow, it did not beckon her. She was only a commonplace girl, rather straitly and strictly reared, with obedience impressed upon her from babyhood. Her father and mother always kept their promises, and she must do the same.

The fun was fast and furious out in the great kitchen. But at ten the mistress appeared and made them a little speech. They were to go to their cabins in an orderly manner, and any disturbance

would be reported. To-morrow morning they would come for their gifts, and the week would be one of holidays.

"T'ankee, missus; t'ankee, missus!" came from voices still full of jollity; and woolly heads bobbed in a tumultuous manner.

Christmas Day was made festive by a grand dinner, to which all the gentry round were invited. The children had theirs in a smaller room, with quite ornate serving, and afterward there were games until dark, when the visitors were sent home in the different carriages. Everybody was tired from the festivities, and the day had certainly been a success.

"I suppose the lieutenant is quite crowded out of it all?" inquired Mr. Jettson of his wife. "Really, Mr. Greaves isn't so bad. But Ralston will take it mightily hard. He'd wait seven years for a woman. And Marian seems, somehow, years older, and is beginning to have some of your mother's dignity."

"It is all settled, certainly. As a topic it is interdicted, and one doesn't get a chance at Marian. Mother and father are elated, only that isn't quite the word to apply to them. And there is the [136] Floyd cousin, very much smitten with Dolly, and I suppose that will be a match. I feel as if I had lost both of the girls. I had planned to do so much for Marian, and keep her near to me."

Mrs. Jettson sighed plaintively.

"You poor girl! Then you will have to comfort yourself with Jaqueline."

"It's queer," continued Jane retrospectively, "but Randolph's family seem nearer to me since they are growing up than my own sisters and brother. Brandon is so bitter against the administration, and such a tremendous aristocrat, while Randolph is always jolly and good-humored, if he can't quite approve of what is done. And Jaqueline is so diverting and attractive, while Mrs. Patricia is charming. If Dolly should go away—"

"Preston Floyd is an agreeable young fellow. Of course the family is all right, and the money, I suppose. Your father will look out for that."

"I know Marian isn't happy—"

"It's a sad piece of business, but it is too late to move in it now."

Jane felt this was true. Could her father have made *her* give up her lover? Certainly he was not as arbitrary then. Or was it her salvation that no rich lover came to hand?

There was another day of festivity, and a dinner to some who could not come on Christmas Day. Miss Greaves was present with the two elder children, who were stiff and proper. She did not altogether approve of the young wife, when there were more suitable women ready to take her brother.

The Masons gathered up their flock and drove home immediately afterward, Mr. Jettson going with them, and the others were to follow the next day.

"There wasn't much fun at grandpapa's, except on Christmas Eve," declared Varina. "Archie [137] Floyd thinks he owns the whole world. If grandpapa should die they will come there to live, and Uncle Brandon own the slaves and everything."

"Children must not discuss such matters," said her father rather peremptorily.

"But Archie said—"

"No matter about Archie."

Varina frowned and twitched her shoulders.

"Papa," said Charles after a pause, "shall you leave the plantation and everything to Louis because he is the oldest?"

"My son, I warn you that I shall live a long, long while. You will all have a chance to make your own fortunes and marry and have homes of your own. So don't trouble about any such foolishness. And you are all too young to consider the point."

"But people do in England."

"We are not in England," commented his father dryly.

"What a mess of nonsense has been talked at the Pineries!" he said to his wife with some vexation afterward. "Mr. Floyd has grown very grasping, and thinks so much of money. And that boy puts on airs enough for three grown-up fellows. Let children be children, say I, and not bother their heads about the affairs of older people. I'm sorry for Marian. Anyone can see that her heart is not in this marriage. She's changed beyond everything. But it is set for the spring. Dolly will be more like to have her own way, as the Fates have sent her an acceptable lover."

Jaqueline was all in a flurry to go to Washington, and started at the first opportunity. The Carringtons had begged for a week, as some cousins were coming, and they were to give the young people a ball.

"You are a sad gadabout," sighed her father. "But you keep the house astir here with your coming [138]

and going. It is time you began to learn something useful. I shall look up a nice steady-going man of forty or thereabouts, and marry you out of hand some day."

"Let me see—is there anyone near here that answers the requirements?" and she laughed saucily as she put her soft arms around her father's neck. "He must have an estate, of course,—it will not do for me to fall behind-hand in family dignity,—and a long pedigree. Do you know whether the Masons, like the old Scotch woman's ancestors, had a boat of their own at the time of the flood?"

"I am pretty sure there must have been Masons," he replied gravely.

Mrs. Jettson received her with open arms. "Jaqueline, have you any idea of how fortunate you are? Congress is in session, and I have never known Washington so gay. And the White House is fine in its new array, while Mrs. Madison is as charming as ever. And Mrs. Van Ness is giving the most elegant entertainments. Roger Carrington was in here last evening to see if you really were coming."

"Mrs. Carrington gives a ball next Tuesday evening for some young visitors. And I am invited over to Georgetown for a week. So I just coaxed to come up here a few days, for you would know about suitable gowns. I don't suppose you have heard from Marian?"

"Not a word. But Arthur told Lieutenant Ralston. Really, my dear, he had half a mind to go up there and tear her out of the family bosom by main force. He couldn't believe it at first. He wrote a letter to Marian, but I am certain no one could get it to her, although he sent by a special messenger. I have given up. And Dolly's engagement is announced. Mr. Floyd spoke before he [139]
went away. I had such a complacent letter from mother. It made me angry, it really did. Well, her whole duty is done, unless she lives to marry off her granddaughters."

"I suppose Dolly is really in love?" Jaqueline had not considered her very enthusiastic. She had a girl's romantic ideal of love, fostered by the attention and affection her father gave her stepmother. Had he loved her own mother in that fashion?

"Dolly is a little ninny!" declared the elder sister in disdain. "They all thought she was going wild over that young Chase, but she seemed to drop him easy enough. He is going to the bad as fast as possible, though I don't believe in a woman wrecking her whole life to save a man, for, after all, she rarely does it. And I'm sorry to have Dolly go so far away. Oh, I *do* wonder if I shall ever be glad to have baby Jaqueline marry and go out of my sight! Yet I suppose having old maids on your hands is rather mortifying. There are some new shops on Pennsylvania Avenue, with such pretty things, although there is so much talk about the difficulty of getting goods from abroad. And everybody complains of money being scarce, but there seems a good deal to spend, some way."

Washington was certainly looking up. Handsome houses were being built, and famous men were to be seen in the streets and at the different entertainments. There were weekly dinner parties at the White House, managed with such tact that no one was affronted, those left out knowing their turn would come next.

Jane and Mr. Jettson had an engagement that evening—"a dinner where they are going to talk improvements and the best way of getting a grant from Congress; no dancing and no nice young men to flatter a lady," declared Mr. Jettson. "Jane thinks them tiresome, but she can put in a [140]
word now and then, since it is our bread and butter."

"Oh, I'd rather stay at home! There is that 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' to read. Who is this wonderful new poet? Aunt Catharine made me read 'The Course of Time' when I paid her my visit; aloud, too, so I couldn't skip much, but it was dreadfully tiresome. This goes along with a rush."

So Jaqueline settled herself in the easiest chair she could find, and put her feet on the rounds of another. The candles gave a softened light; but in spite of interest she was getting drowsy when there was a hasty knock and a discussion in the hall. Then Sam opened the door and ushered in Lieutenant Ralston.

"I hope you won't think me a nuisance," as Jaqueline was straightening herself up in some confusion, and feeling if the knot of abundant hair was on the top of her head or pushed over one side. "I'm sorry Mrs. Jettson is out, and I recall the fact now that she had an engagement. But I am very glad to see you, selfishly glad. Do I interrupt anything important?"

"Oh, no!" She held out her hand cordially.

"You were up to the Pineries," he began abruptly. "Did Marian seem—"

"We didn't think her real happy." Jaqueline hesitated. How much ought she to admit?

"I wrote her a letter. I wanted to know the truth. You see, I have been perfectly honorable. I told her I would wait seven years or twice seven years, and she promised to do the same. I couldn't believe she accepted this man of her own free will. And then I wrote, taking precautions to have it reach her. It has been opened and returned to me without a word. Here it is. That is not Miss Floyd's handwriting."

"It is grandpapa's." [141]

"Do you suppose she gave the letter to him?"

"I am afraid she must have. You see, the engagement has been announced everywhere, and they

sit together in church. The neighbors give little companies for them, and Mr. Greaves acts as if he had full right to her."

Ralston dashed the letter to the floor. "Then she is weak and false!" he cried in a passion. "I could wait with very little encouragement, so long as it *was* waiting. We are both young, and I have my fortune to make. But when she engages herself to another, when—Mrs. Jettson said there was talk of a marriage in the spring! Even if she had written to explain—I think I could have stood being given up by her if she had said it was a mistake, and she had found she was over-hasty. It was sudden—done in those two days; but then I had seen her frequently during her visit to Mrs. Jettson, and I was sure she cared for me. She had a kind of shy way—looking back and forth; do you remember it? But perhaps the glances are only meant for a lover's eyes," smiling faintly in spite of the anger. "Either she loved me or she was a coquette."

"She is not a coquette!" exclaimed Jaqueline decisively. "And she never had a real lover until—" Then the girl stopped and flushed.

"What I can't understand is her accepting this man if she loved me, taking his caresses and his plans for a life together—"

"Oh, he isn't the caressing sort!" interrupted Jaqueline. "And yet I don't see how she could, if she loved you. I wouldn't have been forced to accept him. I wouldn't have promised anybody. I would just have waited. But Grandfather Floyd is very arbitrary, and when he makes up his mind, there is no relenting. Oh, I am afraid you can't understand! You don't know him." [142]

"The time is past when a woman is compelled to marry a man she doesn't want," he said with an angry sneer. "I know the old adage says that a continual dropping will wear away a stone. But this has been such a little while. There may be shaly natures that the dropping disintegrates rapidly. And you girls never talked with her about it, which seems strange to me."

"We scarcely saw her alone. And we were strictly forbidden to speak of it."

"Then he must have felt afraid of your influence."

Ralston looked eagerly at the girl, as if he was searching for some ground of hope.

"It can't be changed any way, I think. Marian has accepted it, and the whole neighborhood has congratulated her. The wedding has been put down as a certainty."

"If I pity her I shall keep on loving her and thinking something *may* happen. And if I believe her weak and false I shall despise her and get over it. One couldn't respect such a weak woman!"

Jaqueline wanted to make a protest. It was very hard to be despised, and she thought Marian hardly deserved that.

"I suppose this wouldn't have happened if I had been the rich man," and there were lines of scorn about his mouth.

Jaqueline knew it wouldn't. Did not money measure most of the things in this life? And Lieutenant Ralston was young, energetic, very good-looking, and delightful; Mr. Greaves was thin, with a large nose, and high, narrow forehead, his hair sprinkled with gray at the temples. He was gentlemanly, but rather pompous; and there was nothing entertaining about him, unless it was to old Mr. Floyd. Marian had always seemed so young.

"If I knew who returned that letter! If I knew *she* had seen it!" He was walking back and forth, and just touched it with the toe of his boot. It would have a curious sacredness if it had been in her hands; her father's hands and eyes made it a thing to be despised. Had he sneered over it? [143]

"I am quite sure she never saw it," returned Jaqueline decisively.

He picked it up and threw it into the fire.

"You see," he began apologetically, "that I have come to you and Mrs. Jettson because you were near to her and knew her best. I dare say I have made myself quite ridiculous, prating of love—"

"Oh, no, not that!" she interrupted quickly. "And I am so sorry it has come out this way. I was so interested in it all, and even papa liked you so much."

That was comforting. He would be proud of the esteem of such a man as Randolph Mason. Other men had failed to win their first loves. Even Mr. Madison, as the story went, had been positively engaged to a charming young woman who had changed her mind and married another. And where would one find a more devoted couple than the President and his wife, who had had her youthful love and misfortunes and sorrows?

"When a man resolves to put a thing out of his mind he can do it if he has any force of character." Ralston held his head up very erect now, though he still kept pacing the floor.

"That would be best," advised Jaqueline.

"Oh, yes; there is no use going about the world crying for the moon, when the sun shines as much again, and there is a good deal to do. So I shall not be a lovelorn swain, but go on with an earnest effort, for I have some ambitions, and though the times may seem tame by contrast with the stirring events of our fathers', there are still grave questions to study. It is not all froth and amusement. I hope you are going to remain a while. You're like a sister to Mrs. Jettson." [144]

"I am invited to Georgetown for a week. And I think I shall stay quite a while. It's so delightful here, and rather dull at home. I do miss Patricia very much."

"And there is a ball at the Carringtons'. I am glad you are to be there. Roger and I are fast friends. And now have I not bored you enough? I will try to make amends in the future. Will you tell Mrs. Jettson the result of my letter? She warned me. Your father warned me; but I suppose willful youth will have its own way. Good-night. Let me see—there is a levee to-morrow evening, and you have not seen the new plenishings yet. We are very grand in yellow satin and damask. If Mrs. Jettson is not engaged you must go."

"Poor Marian!" Jaqueline sighed, in relating the interview to Jane and contrasting the lovers. "I don't believe grandpapa could compel me, and she is so much older, too. And when she sees Dolly's delight and happiness!"

"I have given her up," confessed Mrs. Jettson. "She may be comfortable, and perhaps happier than at home. Oh, Jaqueline, be thankful that your father doesn't belong to the Floyd branch! For Brandon will be his father right over again. There must be a sort of Puritan strand in them. When you find me so stiff and strenuous you had better banish me at once."

Jaqueline met some people at the levee who remembered her, which was quite flattering to the young girl. She hardly knew which of her cavaliers she admired most, the fine-looking lieutenant or Mr. Carrington. Both were made much of by the ladies, and cordially recognized by the men of the period who were to be the heroes of succeeding generations.

The ball was quite delightful. Though it was given for the young people, there were mothers and [145]
aunts, and not a few fathers who dropped in later in the evening. Young people were not left to themselves, and the elders enjoyed seeing the pretty triumphs of their daughters and telling little anecdotes of their own youth and their conquests.

It was true that Lieutenant Ralston did not wear the willow outwardly. Yet as time went on and his love for Marian having nothing to feed upon chilled the warm exultation of hope, he grew a trifle bitter at heart, and indulged in some cynical reflections that had stings of wit. Indeed, wit and repartee were largely cultivated then. There were few books to talk about, except among the learned men, who still affected classic lore. And it was not considered a womanly accomplishment for the fair sex to be versed in politics. It seems strange to us now that there should have been so much talk in letters and journals about finery and fashion, and who was paying his addresses to this or that young damsel, and the furnishing of someone's new house.

Perhaps the women of that time were more discreet. For Mrs. Madison must have been close in her husband's confidence all those trying years, and known how to leave a good deal unsaid. But general society then was for the entertainment of all, and each one was expected to do his or her share. Good-breeding was a virtue.

Jaqueline was gay enough. Virginian girls had a charm and attractiveness besides mere beauty of feature. So week by week her return home was put off, until a visit from Dolly Floyd was announced. Mr. Floyd was quite ailing, and his wife could not leave him. Mrs. Mason was asked to consult with Mrs. Jettson and see what was proper, and have the wedding trousseau prepared, since Dolly was to go away, and there was hardly time to send abroad. Mr. Floyd had insisted upon a wedding just after Easter, as he was to go to New York to attend to some business for his [146]
father, and he would be delighted to have Dolly bear him company.

"But Marian?" exclaimed Mrs. Mason, when Dolly had unfolded her budget.

"Marian insists that she won't be married until June. And mother has given her that beautiful pearl-satin gown in which she was married to papa, and after that she grew so stout she could never wear it. But mother prefers that she shall be married in white. Marian has grown to be quite an old woman already; you can't think how queer she is!"

Mrs. Mason's heart went out with sympathy to her young sister-in-law, who was trying in such a rigid fashion to fit herself for her new life. Mrs. Jettson felt rather hurt at first that the matter was not delegated wholly to her, since the shopping and the work must be done in Washington.

"But, you see, I am to get some things in New York afterward, and Mrs. Marshall brought over some patterns that her sister sent from Paris, and she is to send us her mantua-maker. You know she had Sarah trained, when they were over, to make frocks and caps and mantles. She is to sew for Marian."

"And is Marian as happy as you?" asked Mrs. Jettson, studying the young girl.

Dolly shrugged her shoulders. She was a flippant little thing, occupied mostly with herself. Her own pleasure came first.

"I don't see how she can be, with that stick of a lover. I'm sure you can't compare him with Preston. But if he suits her—and she's trying to take an interest in the children. I think they're hideous. Oh, Jane, it is a great shame the lieutenant hadn't been better off! He's such a delightful fellow. There was a dreadful time about him. But, good gracious! I was not to say a word," and [147]
Dolly turned pale.

"Do you know whether Marian had a letter from him soon after the holidays?"

"Did he write? Why, that was romantic! No—I do not believe it reached her. And if it had, it

couldn't have altered anything. Mr. Greaves is very much in earnest, and Marian will have one of the finest houses in the county. Then he talks of going to England and leaving the two older children for their education. Some cousin or uncle or relative died a while ago; and if someone else should die he would come in for a title and a fine estate. Father is quite elated over that. Father should have been born an English aristocrat," and Dolly laughed. "But if I wasn't so in love with Preston I might be captured by the young soldier or some of the beaus with which Washington abounds. Oh, dear! if we could have come to the inauguration! I'm glad to go away, for it's wretchedly dull all about the Pineries. And Charleston is quite gay, Preston writes."

The shopping was done, and the gowns and coats and pelisses left at Mrs. Sweeny's, who was quite celebrated for her taste.

Then Dolly was suddenly summoned home. Her father had a poorly spell, and Mr. Greaves had met with an accident. As he was going to mount his horse one morning to ride over to the Pineries, an owl that had been nesting in a tree near the house made a flight across the lawn, at which the horse shied and knocked down his master, whose head struck the stepping-stone, and he had lain unconscious ever since, but no bones were broken. They had a hope that it would not prove serious, since Mr. Greaves had an excellent constitution and had never been ill a day in his life. [148]

CHAPTER XI.

THE THORNS THAT BESET LOVE.

The spring was late this year, but when it came everything burst into bloom and beauty as if by magic. Even the marshy ends of the streets in Washington were covered with verdure and the curious delicate bloom of the different sedge growths. Congress kept on. There were many perplexing questions, and war loomed in the distance.

The festivities at the Pineries were quite interrupted. When Mr. Greaves recovered consciousness it was found that his right side had been partially paralyzed. His speech was affected, and the doctor spoke doubtfully of his mind.

Consequently all thoughts of Marian's marriage must be given up for the present. But Dolly's went on, and the last week in April the impatient lover presented himself, and the family relatives and friends were gathered to celebrate the occasion. It was considered most proper for Louis Mason to attend Marian, who was to be the first bridesmaid. Jaqueline was next in order, and there were three others. Weddings were quite sumptuous affairs in those days. There was a great supper and dancing; one of the bride-cakes held a ring, put in by the hand of the bride-elect, and great was the interest to see who would get it. This fell to Jaqueline. And when the bride was escorted upstairs by her bevy of maidens she paused on the landing and scattered her half-dozen roses which had been sent from Washington, and cost extravagantly. The first one did not go far, and caught in Jaqueline's shoulder-knot. There was a general laughing exclamation.

"And I haven't even a lover!" cried the girl with dainty mock regret. [149]

There was a grand breakfast the next morning—a real breakfast, not a noon luncheon. Many of the guests had remained all night. Mirth and jollity reigned, good-wishes were given, healths were drunk, and at noon the young couple started on their long stage-coach journey. Tours were hardly considered then, though the bride often journeyed to the house of her husband's nearest relatives. But to take in Baltimore and Philadelphia was enough to set one up for life, and Dolly was very much elated. The return trip would be made by water, so she would be quite a traveled bride.

Marian had been the sedate elder sister. She was not old, but she had grown much older and lost the aspect of girlhood that she had kept her three-and-twenty years. There was much kindly sympathy expressed for her. Mr. Greaves grew more helpless instead of improving, and his mind had never been quite clear.

But no one suggested an interrupted engagement except among the slaves, who recalled that she had put out her candle on Christmas Eve, and the ring in the cake had not come to her, nor a single rose.

"Looks laik she cut out fer 'n ole maid," declared a gray-haired mammy. "En she mought 'a' bin a gret lady, goin' ober to de ole country. But young missy goin' to be happy as de day is long. De house'll never seem de same."

"Grandfather Floyd has begun to break," said Mr. Mason when they had started on their homeward journey. "One can hardly decide whether to be glad or sorry about Marian. Anyway, it is hard on the poor girl."

"And you can't decide whether she is sorry or not. I never saw anyone change so. She has grown curiously close about herself," declared Jaqueline.

The interrupted intimacy between the two families was taken up again. Even Jane and her three

children were invited to the Pineries for a hot month in the summer. Grandfather was quite deaf, which made him more irritable, and Marian played piquet with him for hours together. Mrs. Floyd managed the plantation, though she had always taken her share of that. [150]

Patricia came home a slim, pretty, and piquant young woman, refined and finished, and Louis was an attractive young collegian. The house was filled with guests, and there was much merriment, until one day the word came that surprised them all. Grandfather had been found dead in his chair on the porch where he took his usual afternoon nap.

Family funerals were almost as grand occasions as marriages at this period. The great house was filled with guests, and there was no unseemly haste to bury the dead out of their sight. The funeral procession might have been that of a famous man. When they returned the relatives were gathered in the darkened parlor where the candles stood lighted on a table, and Archibald Floyd's will was read in a dry, decorous tone by the little old lawyer who had made wills for half a century.

As was expected, the Pineries and slaves and appurtenances of all kinds went to Brandon, who was the only son. The girls had an equal money portion. The widow was provided with a home; certain rooms were set apart for her, certain slaves were bequeathed to her with the bed and table linen and some of the furnishings that she had brought with her; and Brandon was to pay her a regular income out of the estate, which was to cease at her death. A very fair and just will, it was agreed on every side.

Meanwhile there had been no perceptible change in Mr. Greaves. He did not suffer much; he was fed and cared for like a child. Some days he brightened and talked with encouraging coherence, but it was mostly about his early life, and he now and then mistook his sister for his dead wife. [151] And though Marian had gone over several times, he had not seemed to recall her specially.

Miss Greaves was in her element. She had not taken kindly to the prospect of being deposed, though the training of women in her day led them to accept the inevitable without complaining. She was rather proud, too, that her brother had won a young woman; and Marian's sudden gravity after her engagement had given her considerable satisfaction.

"The doctor holds out very little hope of perfect recovery," she said to the younger woman at one call. "He thinks brother's mind will never be quite right again. He has a good appetite now and sleeps well, but it is very sad to be stricken down in the very prime of life. On our mother's side we are a long-lived race. I had an aunt who lay paralyzed for seven years, and was eighty when she died."

Marian shuddered. Her father's failing health had demanded most of her attention. Was she in any way relieved? She tried not to think of it. No one referred to the marriage, except now and then some of the slaves, who counted up all the bad signs in an awesome fashion.

Dolly had enjoyed everything to the uttermost, and was delighted with her new home and her new relatives. Communication between even the most important cities was tardy at that time, and often sent by private messenger. Yet the political interest of the States was kept up keenly, almost to rivalry. New England, whose commerce had been injured the most, complained loudly. The States were between two fires. England was bringing all her power to bear upon the Emperor Napoleon. Neither country paid any attention to the rights of neutrals. There was the old romantic remembrance of France coming to our assistance in our mighty struggle with the mother country; but there were a hundred relationships with England where there was one with [152] France, and Napoleon's ruthlessness had alienated the noblest sense of the community.

Yet living went on in the lavish, cordial Virginian fashion at the old plantation, if it was not quite so full of gayety. There were two attractive young women now, and the young men were haunting the house, planning riding parties and a day's outing to some grove or wood, a sail down or up the Potomac, and a three-days' visit to some neighbor who rather regretfully gave up dancing on account of the recent death. Louis had been putting in law with his other studies, and was not to graduate for another year.

Roger Carrington was now a steady visitor, and all the household knew he was young missy's lover. Her father's assent had been cordially given. Her own was still in abeyance. Jaqueline had a willful streak in her nature. If someone had opposed, she would have sided at once with her lover. But everybody agreed. Mrs. Carrington treated her as a daughter already, and longed to have the engagement announced. Roger pleaded.

"I want to be quite sure that I love you better than anybody," she would say with a kind of dainty sweetness. "If one *should* make a mistake!"

"But we are such friends already. We have been for a long time. Surely if you disliked me you would have found it out before this."

"But I don't dislike you. I like you very much. Only it seems that things which come so easy—"

She let her lovely eyes droop, and the color came and went in her face. How exquisite her rose-leaf cheeks were! He wished he had the right to kiss them fifty times an hour. A husband would have. But there was a fine courtesy between lovers of that day. And there was always some curling tendril of shadowy hair clustering about her fair temples. Her ear, too, was like a bit of [153] sculpture, and the lines that went down her neck and lost themselves in the roundness of her shoulders changed with every motion, each one prettier than the last, and were distractingly

tempting.

"I'm sure it doesn't come easy to me," he said in a rather curt tone.

"Oh, doesn't it? I thought there really was no mistaking the grand passion on a man's part—that he was convinced in the flash of an eye."

"It is when he wishes to convince that his doubt arises. If I could persuade you—" longingly.

"I am always afraid I shall be too easily persuaded," she returned plaintively. "I sometimes wonder if I really have a good strong mind of my own. Do you know, I should like to be one of the heroic women; then in case war should come—there are such talks about it, you know—and I *had* to send you away—"

She looked so utterly bewitching that he had much ado not to clasp her to his heart.

"You are heroic enough. And you are tormenting to the last degree. I wonder sometimes if you even like me!"

"Oh, you know I like you," carelessly.

"If you would once say 'I love you.' You like so many people—young men, I mean."

"Why, when you have been brought up with them, so to speak—" and she looked up out of large, innocent eyes. "There are the Bakers, you know. Georgie, Rob, Teddy, and I have played together always. Would you have me turn haughty now?"

"I don't mind the Bakers, and Teddy is as good as engaged to Hester Fairfax, who really does adore him."

"Yes, I think she does," gravely. "He is always describing her perfections and her sweetnesses, as if we hadn't quarreled and declared we wouldn't speak to each other and done little spiteful [154]
tricks that girls always do, and—and gotten over it, and know all about each other."

"I don't believe you were ever very spiteful. That takes a small nature."

She looked furtively from under her long lashes, as if considering.

"Well—Patty and I quarrel. You must know that I haven't the most amiable temper in the world when I am roused."

"Yes." She could be very tormenting.

"And I like to have my own way. Papa generally gives in. And sometimes I feel self-condemned that mamma is so good to me."

"Then you have a conscience?"

"I don't believe my own mother would have been so easy. And there's grandmamma—"

"Who would have led you to find out your mind in short order," he commented quickly.

"*Her* mind, you mean. And if she had resolved that I shouldn't marry you, you would have been sent to the right-about at once. And that reminds me—Lieutenant Ralston is coming down next week. But I suppose you are not afraid of him, since his heart is—oh, can you tell where it is? Sometimes I think he still cares for Marian, and then he is so bitter and sharp. She won't ever marry Mr. Greaves now."

She looked so eager and earnest, as if this was the main question of her life. He turned away with a pang at his heart. Was she anything but a volatile, teasing girl, with no deep feelings?

"You shan't! I say you shan't! Annis belongs to me. You shan't take her away. We're going to row round the pond—"

Louis laughed with a soft sound of triumph. [155]

"But you promised to ride with me, didn't you, Annis? And I don't see how Annis belongs to you especially. You're too old for that boyish foolishness. Why, you couldn't marry her in years and years, and then she'd be an old woman, queer and cross. Hillo!" in a surprised tone.

They faced Mr. Carrington and Jaqueline.

"Oh, Louis, why do you tease the children so?" exclaimed Jaqueline in disapprobation.

"I'm not teasing you, Annis, am I? We were to go for a ride, and her pony is all ready, when Charles flew into a passion."

"I told you Scipio was getting the boat ready—"

"But I didn't think you meant to-day. You said it leaked and had to be repaired, and this morning —"

She glanced up at Louis entreatingly.

"This morning I told her we would go down to the creek and see the great flock of ducks Julius has been raising. Annis belongs as much to me as to you. She belongs to us all. And how do you

know but that I'll marry her myself? I'm very fond of Annis. And I'm grown up. In a few years I may be a judge, or be sent abroad to smooth out some quarrel or make a treaty, while you will be in school studying your Cicero. Annis will be a big girl, old enough to marry. And you like me, don't you, Annis?"

He had his arm around the child. He had been very sweet to her of late, partly to tease Varina, and partly because she interested him curiously. She said such quaint things; she could seem to understand almost everything. And when he declaimed a fine Latin poem with vigor and loftiness, her eyes would follow him, her face would glow and change with emotion and appreciation. Then he had been teaching her some pretty songs.

"I like you both," she returned in a tender, entreating voice, as if begging each one to be content with the regard. Yet she made no motion to leave him, and both slim hands were clasped around the young man's arm. [156]

"But you must like me the best," and now he put his arm about her, drawing her closer to his side. "It's this way. First your mother—always; then father, who is very fond of you, little Annis; then me, then Jaqueline, and you see Charles stands way down at the bottom of the line. Of course you can't love him quite so much; it wouldn't be fair to the rest of us."

Annis looked perplexed with the reasoning. She glanced at Charles, then hid her face in the elder brother's coat. He made a rush at her, but Louis caught him and held him off at arm's length.

"You're a mean—mean skunk, that's what you are!" The boy's face was scarlet with passion, and his voice choked. "She won't love you best, will you, Annis? For he likes all the girls, the big ladies, and I don't care for anyone but just you."

"Louis, do stop! You ought to be ashamed. Charles—"

But Louis let go of his little brother's arm, who ran a few steps with the impetus and then tumbled over. Louis caught the little girl in both arms,—she was slim and light,—and ran swiftly with her. Jaqueline picked up Charles, who was crying now in a passion of anger, exclaiming between the sobs:

"I just hate him, I do! He shan't take away Annis. She belongs to me."

"Charles, don't be so foolish. You can't have Annis every hour in the day, and if you go on this way she'll just hate you. Why, I am ashamed of you! And here is Mr. Carrington."

"I don't care. I made Scip mend the boat, 'n' he said Dixon would be awful mad and maybe have him flogged. Where's father? I'll go and tell him how it was, and Scip may tear the old boat to pieces, but he shan't be flogged. Louis thinks he's great shakes because he's older and bigger—" [157]

"But he will be married before you and Annis are grown up, so don't worry. He loves to tease you. Now go and find father."

"He is taking love early and hard," said Mr. Carrington.

"It's such ridiculous nonsense! Mamma doesn't like it a bit, but father thinks it a good joke. It makes Charles appear silly. But he will go away to school and have new interests. And in a few years Annis won't want to be claimed in that masterful fashion."

They walked along silently. Mr. Mason sat out under a great tree, smoking his pipe and listening to Charles.

"Let them finish their confidence. I'll take the hammock, and you may read to me." She did not want to discuss love any more just now.

Annis was borne triumphantly to her pony. Louis placed her in the saddle.

"You do love me, little Annis, do you not?" and he kissed her tenderly. He had a very sweet way that you could not gainsay when it was turned upon you, and a child certainly could not resist. "Now we will have a nice gallop, and then a rest down by the creek where it is shady, ever so much nicer than the sunny pond and the old boat. You know I asked you first."

"I didn't think Charles meant this very afternoon," she said regretfully. "And I'm so sorry he—"

"Never mind about a boy's temper. Look at that fire bird—isn't he gorgeous? There's where the lightning struck that great pine tree the other night and split it in two."

"Oh, poor tree! Do you suppose it hurt very much! And the half stands up as if nothing could ever make it afraid. There are the branches all withering on the ground. Were you very much frightened? It kills people sometimes, doesn't it?" [158]

"Very seldom. And a great many things kill them. Accidents and falls, and sickness, so the few struck by lightning are hardly to be taken into account."

"Oh, look at the great field of corn! It is like a sea."

The tassels had turned yellow, and the wind stirred them, making golden waves.

"What do you know about the sea?"

"Why, when we went down the Potomac. You were not home."

"I've been down there though, and out on the ocean."

"Would you be afraid to go to England?"

"Not of the ocean, but I might be of the privateers. And I should not want to be caught and impressed, and made to fight. But I mustn't fill my little lady-love with frightful subjects."

The child's cheek warmed with a dainty color. Could anyone be a lady-love to two persons? That was what Charles called her.

Squirrels were scurrying here and there. The goldenrod was nodding on tall stalks, and some asters starred the wayside. Afar was a broad stretch of tobacco fields in their peculiar deep-green luxuriance. Birds were calling to each other, insects were droning, the monotony broken by a shrill chirr as a grasshopper leaped up from the path or a locust predicted a hot to-morrow from his leafy covert. They crossed broad sunny patches that looked like a dried-up sea, they lingered under fragrant pines and great oaks and maples that shaded the road, and Annis laughed at her companion's comments and the merry stories he told. She had been used to standing somewhat in awe of him, but this summer he had quite overcome her shyness. Sometimes she did get a little [159] tired of the knowledge Charles poured into her ears. Latin orations had not much charm for her, in their unknown tongue, and only the inflections of the boy's musical voice rendered them tolerable. She liked the deeds of heroes rather than what they said, and their loves rather than their fighting or their harangues.

At home Charles had thrown himself on the half-dried turf and given way to another burst of passion such as seldom moved him. That Louis should take Annis away from him, his chosen friend and companion, and that she should go without a protest! Was she really liking Louis, who was grown up and who could have his pick of the pretty young women always coming to the house. Why should he want Annis?

It was the boy's first experience with a rival, and as he had never dreamed of such an untoward event, he could not understand the pain. It was like a storm that had been threatening in the southeast while the west was still clear, and now had suddenly blown up and enveloped the whole sky. Though he was not much given to tears, or anger, for that matter, the tempest surged over him now, and as it was furious it was the shorter lived.

Presently a laugh stung him, and he raised his head, but he knew the sound of the voice.

"Do go away, Varina!" he exclaimed sharply.

"Can't I walk where I like? When you get a house and a plantation of your own, you may order me off. Or you may even set the dogs on me."

"Don't be so silly, so hateful." He was shocked at her last remark, and sprang up, brushing off the twigs and bits of dried grass.

"It is you who are silly, making a dunce of yourself over Annis. Of course she cares for you when there is no one else by. That's just the way with girls. Look at Jaqueline. When Mr. Tayloe or Mr. [160] Bedford are here she's sweet to them, then comes the lieutenant and she sends the others to the right-about-face, then he goes and it's all Mr. Carrington. When he is gone she will take up with Mr. Bedford. I like him. He's so funny and sings such splendid songs."

Charles was standing up very straight. Indeed, he seemed to stretch out his slim figure, and the gravity of his face had scarcely a boyish line in it.

"Do you mean that Jaqueline doesn't care for any of them? Patty said she was as good as engaged to Mr. Carrington, and that we could have a nicer wedding than Dolly Floyd's."

Varina shrugged her shoulders. There was always an eerie flavor about the child's strictures. "She cares for them all when they are here. Oh, gracious! Suppose they should all come together!" and she laughed. "But she'd rather take them one by one, and have a good time. That's the way I mean to do. You have more good times."

"Annis isn't a bit like you!" the boy flung out hotly. He could not understand; it had not come time for analysis or fine gradations; he only suffered, without the power of reasoning.

"Annis is a girl; and girls are all alike. And there's Mr. Carrington alone. I wonder if Jacky's been cross to him. I shall go and walk with him."

She ran down the little side path. Mr. Carrington had started with the intention of finding Charles and comforting him, for it had been with him as Varina surmised, but the talk between them had arrested him. Was it true that a girl found pleasure in variety rather than constancy? He was amused at Varina's wisdom, and yet it had in it a savor of sad truth. Annis' little winsome face as Louis caught her came back to him. [161]

"The Sabine women learned to love their husbands," he mused, when Varina called to him. He had to exercise some ingenuity to parry the child's curiosity, since he was by far too gentlemanly to take advantage of it.

Charles was a little sullen that evening, and took no notice of the timid little olive branch Annis held out. Presently, warm as the night was, he went off to his books.

"Louis, you tease him too much," said his father.

"It's high time someone took him in hand. He is getting to be a regular little prig! You ought to send him away to school."

"He doesn't seem quite the boy for that. We'll see as he gets older. But I won't have any quarreling about Annis. Annis belongs to me, don't you, little girl? And we'll marry off all the rest of them, and you and I and mother will live together the remainder of our lives," kissing her with tenderness.

When they all went away—and she loved them all—how lonesome it would be!

CHAPTER XII.

A TALK OF WEDDINGS.

"You must decide and answer me, Jaqueline. You know I love you. The marriage would be pleasing to both sides of the family. My holiday is over, and I must rejoin my chief. I want the matter settled. If you are not convinced that you can love me, I shall take it as a sign that there is very little hope for me—none at all, in fact—and go my way."

There was something rather stern in the tone, and the pretty girl's humor protested. She liked the tender wooing, the graceful compliments, the sort of uncertainty when she could salve her conscience by saying she was not really engaged and feel compelled to hold herself aloof from certain attentions. For whatever coquetries a Virginia girl might indulge in, an engagement was sacred. [162]

"I do wonder if you really love me?" She longed to temporize. There was always something happening, and now there was to be a week's party at Annapolis and a ball and several sailing excursions. Business would interfere with his going. If she could keep free until after that!

He looked at her steadily. "If you doubt it after my year of devotion, I hardly know how to convince you. Words will not do it. You *must* believe it."

"For it would be a sad thing for either of us to make a mistake," she returned plaintively.

"You asked for three months to consider. And yet you admitted that you cared for me even then. If your love has not increased any in that time it certainly argues ill for me. And now it must be a plain answer, yes or no. It is foolish to trifle this way. Which is it, Jaqueline?"

He took both her hands in his and impelled her to meet his eyes. Her face was scarlet, her eyes drooped, her expression was so beseeching that it almost conquered him as it had times before. But he was going away with Mr. Monroe, and it would be a month before he saw her again.

"Yes or no!"

"You are cruel." Her eyes filled with tears. She felt his hands tremble, strong as they were.

"Then it must be no, if you cannot say yes. Jaqueline, I am more than sorry. You are the first girl that ever roused in me the sweet desire to have her for my very own. I may never find another to whom I can give the same regard. But I want no unwilling bride." [163]

He dropped the hands reluctantly. He half turned, as if that was final.

"Roger—"

She so often evaded his name. What an entrancing sound it had! And it softened him.

"You are so masterful," and her voice had a little break in it. "I am afraid I could not be a meek, silly wife with no mind of her own, but a mocking-bird echo of her husband's. When I feel quite sure I love you—"

"Is there any such blessed moment?" He took her in his arms. "I have sometimes felt in my inmost soul there was, and this certainly pays for hours of doubt. I do not care to have you meek; and silly women I abhor. I only want this one point settled. After that you will find me devoted to your slightest whims."

"Then I suppose I must—" with a fascinating reluctance.

"There is no compulsion. You either give me your sweet, fresh girl's soul to bloom in the garden of manhood's unalterable love, freely and rejoicingly, or I go my solitary way."

"Do not go. I could not spare you. Are you quite sure you will not prove a tyrant?"

For answer he kissed her, then held her in a gentle yet strong embrace.

"And you love me?"

"Oh, how hard you are to satisfy!"

"Still, you will say it?"

"I love you. Will that satisfy your lordship? Now if I were a princess you could not be so hard to satisfy. A nod would answer."

"You are *my* princess. Now let us go and find your father. I am afraid he has had a rather low opinion of my powers of persuasion." [164]

They were under the great plane tree. Annis was taking a lesson in hemstitching at her mother's knee.

"We have come for your blessing," began the happy lover.

"Which I give gladly. I could not have chosen better for Jaqueline if I had gone half over the world, or at least a son-in-law more acceptable to myself. If I wish you as much happiness as I have had, your cup will be full."

Mrs. Mason rose and kissed the girl with fervent affection. "We all like him so," she whispered to Jaqueline. "Your father will be as happy as your lover."

"Come and give us joy, little Annis. I hope Charles won't protest at your having a new brother."

"But he likes you so," answered the child simply. "And you never tease him."

"Charles must learn not to be such a ninny," declared his father.

The supper was almost a betrothal feast. For a wonder, there were no guests. But before bedtime every slave on the plantation knew it, and great was the rejoicing. And the next morning numerous little gifts were brought for Jaqueline's acceptance. And now Roger hated to go away. How could he be content with this one brief sup of happiness?

"We must go up to the Pineries," Mr. Mason said. "Your grandmother would feel hurt if she were not informed at once. And—are you going next week?"

"Oh, of course. I even asked Mr. Carrington. Was not that dutiful?"

Her father laughed. "Jaqueline, you need a strong hand. You have had your way too much."

"I don't know why everyone thinks I ought to be ruled like a baby," she pouted. [165]

"Jack, you are going to have one of the best husbands. Remember that."

It was not until afternoon that they started, and were to remain all night. As there was room for one more, Annis went with them. It hardly seemed like the same place, Jaqueline thought, and she decided she liked grandpapa much better than Uncle Brandon. He insisted upon the relationship having the right name, and was quite as great a stickler for attention as his father had been; but where Mr. Floyd's was really a fine old-fashioned dignity, Brandon's seemed more pretentious.

His wife was one of the ordinary women of that day, whose duty under all circumstances was to her husband. Master Archie put on many consequential airs.

"I am glad you are going to do so well," said grandmother. "The Carringtons are a good family, and their father left a nice property, which must be very valuable. I must look among my treasures and see what I can spare for you. Dolly had my rubies—they were her choice; and my pearls were for Marian. That was a sad and sore disappointment to us all. There seems very little hope of amendment in the case."

Jaqueline and Marian walked up and down in the fragrant twilight.

"You don't mean that you still consider yourself engaged?" queried the young girl in surprise.

"But nothing has been said, and I don't know what can be said now. You see, papa made his will quite a long while ago, and when there was the talk about Lieutenant Ralston he said if I encouraged him—if I married against his wishes—he would not leave me anything, and everybody should know it was because I had been a disobedient, ungrateful child. Think of having it read out before all the relatives! And you know he did not alter the will. He gave Jane less because he had given her part of her portion on her wedding day. Jane had it very easy, I think, considering [166] that Mr. Jettson had no fortune to speak of except those Washington marshes. But Jane's had a nice time and plenty of friends. Only, you see, now I feel bound by the will. Papa trusted me. He had a feeling that Mr. Greaves might recover—he was so strong, and had always been well. But we never talked it over, for no one really was thinking of papa's death."

"Do you know, Marian, I consider you a very foolish girl—superstitious, as well? No one can expect you to marry Mr. Greaves," said Jaqueline emphatically.

"Of course not now. But if he should have his mind a little while and give me up, I should feel quite free, you know."

"And you mean to wait for that?" indignantly.

"I am not *waiting*. Papa has been dead such a little while that it would be indecent to traverse his wishes at once. And Mr. Greaves loved me, he really did; you need not look so incredulous! Not like—a younger man, perhaps," making a little halt. "He planned so many things for my pleasure. We were to go to England. He and papa agreed so well on politics."

"And you are an American girl! Please don't forget that grandmother's father was at the surrender of Cornwallis, and we are all proud of it! He is your ancestor, too. And the Masons were all on the side of liberty and a country for ourselves."

"I think women are not much concerned in politics," she replied evasively. "But it *is* pleasanter to have all your people of one belief. It does seem as if the Church should have something to do with the government. I don't understand it, but it appears Christian and proper."

"After all, it is the people who make the country, and the Church too. And it ought to be what the people want, the majority of them." [167]

Jaqueline's tone carried a penetrating conviction, yet Marian steeled her heart against it. The people certainly were an aggregate of individuals; and if everyone insisted upon having his own way, anarchy must ensue. But she could not reason on the subject, even in Jaqueline's girlish fashion. Argument was reprehensible in women.

"Then you just mean to wait!" There was an accent of disappointment in Jaqueline's tone.

"There is nothing else to do. I certainly must respect papa's wishes."

"You've changed so, Marian."

"Remember, Jaqueline, I am years older than you," she replied with dignity. "And now I have to be mother's companion. She misses father very much. I'm glad to have you happy, and everyone is pleased with your engagement. It is a very excellent one."

"The excellence wouldn't go very far if it did not please me," returned the younger girl. "My happiness and pleasure are a personal affair, not simply the satisfaction of others."

"I hope you will be very happy," reiterated Marian. "Dolly is. Mother thinks her letters are quite frivolous; they are all about dinners and visits and parties. She doesn't go to the very gay ones, but she writes about them. Charleston must be quite as fashionable as Washington, to judge from the gowns and entertainments. But Dolly is not keeping house, though she has her rooms and her maid."

Then the two girls lapsed into silence as they walked up and down. Jaqueline was thinking that next week Lieutenant Ralston would be her cavalier, and she had ardently wished to reawaken hope in his breast, in the place of the disesteem in which he held Marian—indeed, nearly all women; though he occasionally said: "I can't imagine you or Mrs. Jettson doing such a thing!" That was really flattering. Of course she should tell him of *her* engagement, and they would still be friends. [168]

Louis was to be of the party, and they started off in high spirits.

"Jaqueline ought to sober down a little," said her father. "And there is no need of a long engagement. The Carringtons will be anxious for the marriage—well," laughingly, "more anxious than we. But I think most men are pleased when their daughters marry well. And we have four."

"We need not think of the younger ones for several years," Mrs. Mason said with a smile.

"Varina ought to go to school somewhere, or to Aunt Catharine. Patty improved wonderfully. And Charles—"

"I think Charles is doing very well. Louis admits that he studies beyond his years. And he seems to me not over-robust. I would certainly wait another year."

Jaqueline begged her brother to say nothing about the engagement. It was so recent, and she would not be married in some time.

"You'll be flirting with everybody."

"Oh, don't grudge me a week's pleasure! After that I will be as staid as any grandmother."

"Carrington isn't the fellow to stand much nonsense when the rights are all on his side. I advise you to be careful."

"Why, I am going to be, even now. Of course Mr. Ralston is different from the others. We have been friends so long."

Ralston was safe enough, Louis thought. And one couldn't quite blame Jaqueline. She did not flirt openly like Betty Fairfax; and now Betty was devotion itself to her lover, and she was to be married in the early autumn. In fact, Louis had not felt satisfied to be so entirely crowded out when he had been one of Betty's favorites. [169]

Girls were queer, he mused. Then he threw himself into the round of pleasures, which in those days were really made for enjoyment. No one thought of being bored. The world was fresh and young, and had not been traversed by theories and sciences and experiences of tired generations. Everyone felt he or she had a right to at least one draught of the nectar of youth.

Lieutenant Ralston had come with the hope that Jaqueline would bring him some message to light the future. Of course if Marian had been married that would have been the end of all things. He had too fine a sense of honor to covet another man's wife. But it seemed as if Providence had intervened. Mr. Floyd was dead and Mr. Greaves out of the lists by a stroke of fate. And since

Marian was free, he was at liberty to give his fancy unlimited play once more.

Jaqueline was indignant that Marian had not gladly grasped her liberty, but still hugged the chain of another's selecting. Perhaps her feelings colored her words, although she strove to be fair and make allowance for the superstitious reverence in which the girl seemed to hold her father. Or was it really fear?

"I thought I had not hoped any, but circumstances coming out this way seemed an interposition in my behalf," admitted Mr. Ralston. "And I found it very easy to go back to that delightful experience. Even now that you have a lover, Miss Jaqueline, I think you hardly understand how a man loves and how willing he is to pick up the faintest shred of hope and dream that it may blossom anew, or rather that the bud, having been crushed by another's ruthlessness, has still in [170] it strength enough to unfold in fragrance when nursed carefully by the man who thinks no other bloom could ever be so sweet. Perhaps I was a fool for this second dream. I tried to shut it out, but it stole in unawares. She hasn't been worth it all, nor any of it, I see that plainly now."

"Poor Marian!" The love moved the girl with infinite pity for the woman who had lost it and was trying to feed on husks.

"No, don't pity her; she isn't worth it," and his tone was bitterly resentful. "I could have overlooked the weakness that made her yield to her tyrannical father; but now when she could be free, when she knows there awaits her the sacred welcome of love, it is plain that she does not care. Perhaps she is still counting on a fortune coming to her as if by a miracle, for she has no great deal of her own."

"No, no; it is not that," protestingly.

"It looks mightily like it."

"Marian has a queer conscience. You don't know—" Did she really know Marian herself?

"Well, we will dismiss her now. Perhaps she has a high order of constancy that will keep her faithful to someone who is helpless and cannot appreciate it. She may be a too superior person for me. That is the end of it. I shall never mention her again. You have been very good to find so many excuses for her, and to keep alive my regard. But I cannot afford to lose your friendship. Carrington won't grudge me that, I know."

Jaqueline smiled. She was rather proud that he asked her friendship.

There were belles who were eager to gain his attention. Jaqueline resolved to keep the best of her friend to herself, and smiled a little at the curiously obedient manner in which he returned to her when she had sent him to dance with someone. She liked the pretty ordering about of her [171] admirers, the sense of power at once fascinating and dangerous.

"I shall try to get off for a few days and pay you a visit," Ralston said. "Louis will be going back to college, and next year we shall have him in Washington. And you will be up often this winter? Mrs. Jettson seems deserted by both of her sisters. She is so fond of young people."

"Oh, yes; I shall be up a good deal."

"And the visit?" tentatively.

"We shall be delighted to see you. You will have an admiring audience from father down."

"Thank you. You can never know what a comfort you have been to me. And these few days have quite restored me to myself. Have I been a very foolish, love-stricken swain?"

"Oh, I do not think you have been foolish at all! I was afraid you would grow hard and cynical, and I don't like people who are classing everybody in the same category and looking on the worst side."

She was very young, but she had a charm that touched his heart. Did he half envy Roger Carrington? But, then, he would be madly jealous of anyone who lavished her smiles in that fashion. One or two choice friends might be admissible. He was safe, for he would never be so easily caught again by any woman. Friendship was all he desired, and in the years to come she would resemble Mrs. Jettson, no doubt, who was very proud of her husband, and fond of him too. He liked women who were proud of their husbands. For wifely devotion had not gone out of fashion.

There was a gay and busy autumn for Jaqueline. Betty Fairfax had a great wedding that befitted the old mansion where she had reigned a queen for more years than usually fell to the lot of a [172] handsome Virginian girl. She had seen two younger sisters married and made much merriment over it, and now she was going to be the wife of the newly elected Governor of one of the more southern States. Consequently there was a grand time all through the county, and there were six bridesmaids to wait upon my lady, one of them being Jaqueline.

So there was a week to be spent with Betty, Miss Elizabeth Fairfax, as she was called now.

"And what a shame your cousin's affairs should have come to naught!" Betty declared. "To give up a fine young soldier, and then to have her second lover come to grief. It is a case of the two stools, and one coming to the floor. If I had not heard of your engagement, Jaqueline, I should have asked him to stand with you. If I had known him better I should have invited him, anyhow.

There are several guests coming from Washington."

"If I had only known you cared!" cried Jaqueline.

"You see, I want to make as brave a show as possible," and Betty laughed. "I desire to let my liege-lord see that I have been accustomed to the best, and a good deal of it, so he won't consider me an ignoramus when he is inaugurated Governor later on."

"Then let us have Mr. Ralston!" Jaqueline's eyes were alight with eagerness and amusement. "I will write to Mr. Carrington, and you shall inclose an invitation. I'll send a few lines too, so that he can see it is really meant."

"That's quite delightful of you. Maybe he will find some balm to mend his broken heart among the pretty girls."

"He is not heartbroken now, although he took it very hard at first. Grandpapa was bitterly opposed to it, you know. And Marian is in mourning and goes nowhere, because grandmamma thinks she ought not to be left alone." [173]

"But Mr. Greaves will never recover. Doctor Leets said so."

"Oh, no! No one expects it, I think."

"Well, I suppose the devotion to a lost cause looks very pretty and constant. Only she will not be a widow, more's the pity, for widows soon pick up husbands. Now about the invitation."

It was so prettily worded that Lieutenant Ralston accepted it at the first reading; and the two journeyed together to the grand festivity. Old people and young attended, in fashions of various kinds, from the Continental to more modern date. The Governor of Virginia honored Betty's nuptials, and several of the Washington grandees. The *Gazette* had a brilliant account of it, and it was the boast of the county for many a year afterward.

The next morning the newly wedded pair started in a coach drawn by six white horses, ornamented with wedding favors. And there was, as usual, much merry-making afterwards, as there was still one daughter to lead in the gayety.

"And when are you coming up to Georgetown?" Carrington asked of his sweetheart.

"Oh, there is another wedding on the carpet! And then a birthday ball at the Lees'. Then Patty is to have a birthday celebration. She thinks thus far all the festivities have been for me, and this time the invitations are to go out in her name."

"And then Christmas, I suppose," in a rather disappointed tone. "To get my share of you I shall have to marry you, Jaqueline. Come, think about that. When is it to be?"

"In a year. That will give me time to fulfill my engagements and get ready." [174]

"A year!" in dismay.

"You ought not grudge me that when you think of the years and years we shall have to live together."

"Shall have to!" he re-echoed.

"That I believe is customary when one is married," she said with teasing archness. "Unless one happens to have the Emperor of the French for a brother."

"Wifehood is a woman's highest prerogative—"

"Not to be entered into hastily or unadvisedly," she interrupted with a mischievous smile.

She was a pretty, fascinating torment! His mother had said: "One wedding follows another among the bridesmaids. I hope you will come home with your day set."

"I am going to learn to cook and to keep house this winter," she began gravely. "And it takes a long time to make wedding clothes."

"Nonsense! There are cooks enough in the world. As for housekeeping, that is a woman's birthright. And at first you know we need not keep house. You will be in Washington with me, and then we can go over home—for I shall hardly let you out of my sight. Yes, let it be soon after Christmas."

"I can't be hurried in that fashion," she returned petulantly. "And I should get tired of you if you were such a jailer as never to let me out of your sight."

"You do not love me as I love you!"

"But you know I told you I was not quite sure I loved you enough. Love grows with some people, and with some it comes in a moment of time. Would you not rather have it grow year after year, and get richer and truer—"

Her voice fell to an exquisite softness, and touched him deeply.

"There can be only one truth to love," he said solemnly. Then he took her in his arms and pressed a kiss upon her forehead in a reverent manner. [175]

"I must go away and leave you here," he said presently. "I am always leaving you to some scene of gayety."

"But you take the two most tempting young men, the lieutenant and Dr. Collaston. Why, he will add quite a grace and interest to Washington. And the goodly company will be scattered, leaving behind the old people, who are always talking of their young days. I promised Betty I would stay a whole week with her sister. There—I think they are calling you."

"Carriage ready, sah. Jes' time to meet de stage," said the black servant, who still wore his wedding favor proudly.

Were most girls reluctant to marry? Roger Carrington wondered. Miss Fairfax had gone away joyfully.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOVERS AND LOVERS.

Jaqueline found herself very much engrossed.

There was another young lady to attract visitors, and Patricia soon became a favorite. She was vivacious and ready to take her part in any amusement, could dance like a fairy, and sing like a bird.

"You'll have to look to your laurels, Miss Jaqueline," said old Mr. Manners, their next neighbor. "Patty will carry off all the lovers in no time. I hope you have made sure of yours."

Jaqueline blushed and tossed her head.

"He would marry me to-morrow," she returned. "I'm in no haste to be married." [176]

At the next wedding she had another attendant, the brother of the bride. Roger was too busy to come for the mere pleasure. When the birthday ball was at the Lees' Mr. Monroe had sent him to Philadelphia on some important business. So Lieutenant Ralston was cavalier for both girls; and certainly Patty was one of the belles of the evening, and could have danced with two partners every time.

After that came Patty's birthday, and a grand affair it was. Mrs. Jettson ran down to look on and help a little, as she said, but not to take an active part. Ralston begged that Dr. Collaston might be invited. He had graduated from the Philadelphia school, but was a Marylander by birth; and, having a private fortune, had decided to spend the winter in Washington. A bright, fine-looking young fellow who played the flute delightfully and sang all the songs of the day, and, what was of still more importance to social life, could dance with zest and elegance.

Jaqueline was in some degree the hostess, and distributed her favors impartially, so Roger had very little of her. Varina and Annis felt as if they were in fairyland, and were entranced with delight.

Mrs. Jettson insisted that after Christmas she should have her turn with the girls.

"There are to be some famous visitors, I hear, and Washington is getting to be quite a notable place. Not quite St. James; but Mrs. Madison is our queen, and it is like a little court, as Philadelphia used to be in Mrs. Washington's time. The debates will be worth hearing, or rather seeing, for the famous speakers who will take part. Dolly writes about Mr. Calhoun, and there is a Mr. Henry Clay, who is very eloquent. I can't give regular parties, but you girls can go out, and Patty must attend a levee and be presented to Mrs. Madison." [177]

Patricia was very much elated.

"Why, it will be something like the English stories,"—there were a few novels even then that girls were allowed to read,—"going up to London or to Bath with a trunk full of finery. I don't suppose you ever will take us to London, papa?"

"I'm getting too old. You will have to get a husband to take you to London."

"'Where the streets were so wide and the lanes were so narrow?'" sang Patty. "But I won't have a wheelbarrow. I'll have a coach, or nothing."

"I wish you were not going away," Annis sighed. "It's so bright and merry when you are here, and so many ladies come in their pretty frocks, and they laugh and talk. I can hear you upstairs when I am in my bed. And the fiddles sound so gay, and then I know you are dancing. Oh, I wish Christmas and birthdays could come oftener!"

"The birthdays might do for little people who are anxious to grow old fast," said Jaqueline, patting the child's shoulder. "But the rest of us wouldn't want two or three in a year. And it won't be very long before you'll be going to Washington to see the queen, pussy cat."

"But I want you, not the queen. It will be so lonesome when you are gone!"

"You are a little sweet!" Jaqueline bent over and kissed her. "I hope you'll stay just sweet, nothing else. Everybody will love you."

"I'm afraid I don't want quite everybody," she returned in a hesitating tone.

"Yes, one can even have too much of love," laughed the elder sister. She thought she sometimes had too much of it. She was proud of Roger Carrington, and she was quite sure she did not care for anyone else in the way of wishing that some other person stood in his place. Why, then, was she not ready to step into his life and make it glad with a supreme touch of happiness? [178]

Annis glanced up wistfully to the beautiful face bent over her, which was more engrossed with its own perplexities than considering her little sister. Then suddenly she laughed, a low musical sound with much amusement in it, and Annis smiled too.

"You are having love troubles early, Annis dear," she said gayly. Charles' *penchant* increased rather than diminished, and Annis found it somewhat exacting and troublesome. When there were other young visitors Varina appropriated them, much to Charles' satisfaction, and he invariably turned the cold shoulder to other little girls.

"But Charles is going to school presently, and he will get interested in boys and plans for the future, so you may stand a chance of being forgotten; how will you like that?"

"Why, I shall have mamma always. Jaqueline," hesitatingly, "does anyone love you too much? Is it Mr. Ralston? And doesn't he love Marian any more?"

"My dear, when Marian was engaged Mr. Ralston gave her up, which was right and honorable. Little girls can't understand all about such matters."

"I like Mr. Ralston very much," Annis remarked gravely. "Varina thinks Patty will marry him."

"What nonsense! Varina is quite too ready with her tongue. Come, don't you want a little ride with me before I go to town?"

The child was delighted, and ran off for her hat and coat.

Her father had suggested a little caution in regard to Mr. Ralston. They were simply friends. He had never uttered a word that could be wrongly construed. She had a kind of safe feeling with him. Was there any real danger? But he was Roger's friend as well? [179]

There were already some invitations awaiting the two girls when they arrived at Mrs. Jettson's. Patricia was much elated with her first levee. Certainly there was a group of distinguished women entertaining—Mrs. Cutts and Mrs. Lucy Washington, now a charming young widow; Mrs Gallatin, and the still handsome Mrs. Monroe, who had been an acknowledged New York beauty; and among the men the very agreeable young Washington Irving, who was to leave a lasting mark on American literature.

"But you feel almost afraid of the wisdom and genius and power," said Patricia to Dr. Collaston. "Now, there is Mr. Clay, with his sharp eyes under the overhanging eyebrows that look as if they might dart out at you and somehow set you in a blaze. I am to go hear one of his speeches, my brother insists. And my cousin Dolly is wild about Mr. Calhoun. Don't you think they might both have been made handsomer without any great detriment to the world? And Mrs. Calhoun is charming. She knew some of the Floyds and heard about Dolly's marriage."

"Patrick Henry wasn't a handsome man, if accounts are reliable. Genius and good looks do not always go together," and Collaston smiled.

"There is Mr. Irving. He talks delightfully. And it is a pleasure to look at him."

"Call no man happy until he is dead. I mean it is not safe to predict how much fame one will win until—"

"Until he has won it. But it is a kind of cruel thing to wait until you are dead, when you can't know anything about it. I mean to take my delight as I go along. But, then, women are not expected to be addicted to longing for fame." [180]

"Still they may be famous for beauty. I think there have been a number of famous women. Queen Elizabeth—"

"Don't instance the Empress Catherine nor Catherine de Medicis. If you do, I shall never forgive you. Nor Joan of Arc—I can't remember any more."

"Nor the Pilgrim mothers! They deserved a good deal of credit to set up housekeeping on bleak Plymouth Rock. Why doesn't someone talk about them! Housekeeping is a womanly grace or virtue or acquirement—which do you call it?"

"I suppose it is an acquirement when you work hard to obtain it, a grace when it comes natural. Do you imagine they kindled the fire on the rocks and boiled the kettle as we do when we go off in the woods for a day's pleasure?"

"They wouldn't let you do it now. Plymouth Rock has become—"

"The palladium of liberty! Isn't that rather choice and fit and elegant? It is a pity that I can't take the credit of inventing it. And what a shame we haven't a few rocks about here! I have a dreadful

feeling that the Capital may sink down in the slough some day and disappear. Every street ends in a marsh."

"You see, this is rightly called the New World—it is not finished yet."

"Dr. Collaston, we can't allow you to monopolize the beauties of the evening. Here are some guests anxious to meet Miss Mason," and thereupon Patricia was turned slightly around to face a group of young people.

But it was not all gayety or compliments, though men were gallant enough then, and ready with florid encomiums. There was the dreaded topic of war, which was touched upon with bated [181] breath; there were muttered anathemas concerning the impressment of sailors; there were fears of France and a misgiving that we were not strong enough to cope with England while our resources were still slender. And already there were undercurrents forming for the Presidential election more than six months hence.

But the younger people chatted nonsense, laughed at trifles, and made engagements for pleasure as well as for life; or the more coquettish ones teased their lovers with vain pretenses. Mrs. Van Ness entertained with ease and brilliance, and was as fond of gathering the younger people about her as those more serious companies where the responsible party men met and in a veiled way touched upon the graver questions. At Mrs. Gallatin's one met the more intellectual or scientific people. There was a feeling in the air that the country ought to consider an advancement in literature. Boston was already pluming herself upon a certain intellectual standing. There were Harvard and a Law Club, and a kind of literary center that had issued a magazine, and there were several papers. New York had some poets, and there had been a few novels written. But what could anyone say about such a new country? There were no famous ruins, though there were battlefields that were to be historic ground when men could look at them from a distance. Many a brave story lurked in the fastnesses of Virginia, and old James River held a romance in almost every curve of its banks.

But people were busy about the currency and the debts, and the laws the young nation must have for her safety, and the respect she must demand from other nations. For this is one of the things nations give grudgingly; perhaps individuals do it, as well. Even now Mr. Adams' administration [182] was criticised, and Mr. Benjamin Franklin was accused of spending his time flirting with French women, who were great flatterers, all the world knew. And some people were still berating the Jefferson policy, and sneered at little Jemmy Madison. Washington had not really taken hold of the hearts of the people. Gouverneur Morris had said wittily that "it only lacked cellars and houses and decently paved streets and a steady population, and that it was a fine city for future residences."

Georgetown was more settled and prosperous, and there was much going back and forth, if coaches did now and then get stuck in the mud; and young gentlemen not infrequently adopted the Philadelphia custom of drawing on long leggings when they went on horseback to keep their handsome stockings and their velvet smallclothes from being injured.

The South was well represented in these early days. Newspaper letters found their way to other cities, with enthusiastic descriptions of the principal beauties, their charms and fascinations. Mrs. Madison and her two sisters perhaps set the pace for delightful hospitality, and that still more engaging and agreeable quality of giving guests a pleasant time and a lasting remembrance to take away with them.

But it was not all pleasure. There were housewifely duties; and more than one visitor saw the first lady of the land in her morning gown of gray stuff and a big white apron, for servants were not always equal to the state dinners. There were some charities too, when the younger people met to sew, and gossip about new fashions and new admirers. And the first real work of benevolence was undertaken about that time by some of the more notable women. This was the City Orphan Asylum, for already there were homeless waifs at the Capital. They met once a week [183] to cut out clothing, or cut over garments sent in. Mrs. Van Ness kept up her interest in it through a long life, after Mrs. Madison retired to her Virginian home to nurse her husband's invalid mother, and finally devote herself to the years of dependence that befell the husband of her love. Certainly the record of her later life reads like a charming romance. But the young people were not interested in policies, and could not believe in war, except Indian skirmishes and among the European nations hungering for power.

Patricia was eager for fun and delight, and dearly loved a dance. And, like more modern girls, she had a desire to be settled in life, to have a home of her own. To her that seemed the chief business to be undertaken through these early years. She liked Ralph Carrington very much. "But perhaps one in a family ought to suffice," she remarked to Jane. "Then he is so grave and bookish, and his wife will be expected to come home. I dare say Jack and I would always dispute about husbands. Ralph has the best temper. Roger is dreadfully jealous. I can't see how Jack dares to go on so."

"She'll go too far some day," and Jane gave her head a slow, ominous shake. "And she'll be very foolish! You mark my words, Roger Carrington will be sent abroad before he dies of old age. It's a great honor, I suppose, but I'd rather go on living here."

"I really don't think I'll take Ralph," after some consideration. "Do you suppose this gold-thread embroidery will look like that imported stuff?" holding up her work, as if that was more important.

"Well, it's pretty enough for a queen. There's that New York judge, Patty—"

"I'd rather have someone first-hand. I can't take another woman's children to my palpitating bosom and have it palpitate as sweetly as Marian's did. But, la! there's a talk that Mrs. Washington smiles on Judge Todd, who is her shadow! But he's in the Supreme Court." [184]

"And ever so much older."

"Well, so was Mr. Madison."

"I like young men best."

"Peyton Lee is over here half his time."

"But, then, I've known him always. And he is too easy. Why, I could run right over him! Because a man cares for a girl he shouldn't be wishy-washy," and Patty tossed her dainty head.

Jane laughed. "And the doctor?"

"Oh, I dare say he will want to go back to Philadelphia and turn Quaker. I couldn't wear those hideous straight gowns and horrid scoop hats without a bow!"

"He has been investing in Washington property. He talks of building several houses to rent for the winter. It would be quite a scheme, if they were furnished. Senator Macy would have brought his family if he could have found a comfortable place for them to live. There ought to be some decent hotels and boarding-houses. Men can manage to squeeze in, but it gives permanency to a city to have homes and wives and children. And Washington is kind of shifty. Look how prosperous Georgetown is!"

Patty nodded. The doctor had discussed this property scheme with her. She was seriously considering him in her own mind. He had not quite asked her to marry him, but he was keeping a very watchful eye over her.

They went up to Arlington for a three-days' visit and a dance. There was a week at Bladensburg and a sleigh-ride, a rather infrequent occurrence, which made no end of fun and frolic. By this time the doctor had laid his case before Mr. Mason. He had decided to cast in his lot with the new city, to set up a home, and desired permission to address charming Miss Patricia on the subject. He presented his worldly prospects to the elder gentleman in a very frank manner, and referred him to some well-known residents of the Quaker City. [185]

Patty had been engrossed a good deal with her own affairs, although she had laughed and danced with the gayest. Jane had been much interested in watching the outcome of the adventure. She had an elder-sisterly feeling for these girls, who had been so much nearer since Marian's defection. She should be rather proud of their both doing so well under her supervision.

So Jaqueline had been going her own gait pretty well, and developed an inordinate fondness for pleasure and flattery. She was too wise to believe all the pretty speeches, all the earnest speeches even. But they had a rosy fragrance, and perhaps the good thing about some of them was that they faded. She was not an inborn coquette, hungry for lasting power over men's hearts, but the present moment satisfied her. The variety fascinated her.

Roger Carrington, watching this, was at first rather amused, then a little hurt, and finally, when he began to ask himself seriously how much true regard Jaqueline had for him, grew passionately jealous. If she had said, "I have made a sad mistake; I find that I have a deeper regard for Lieutenant Ralston than I imagined; will you give me back my freedom?" he would have been manly to the heart's core, and released her, though it had wrenched away the beautiful dream of his life.

But she affected to treat this merely as a friendship. Could she not see?

When other attentions became troublesome she sheltered herself behind Ralston. He was engrossed in the affairs of the country. He had a feeling at times that he was only playing a part in life, that instead of being merely an ornamental soldier he should go out on the frontier and take an active part in the struggles. He was not meant for a statesman, though he listened, fascinated, to Marshall and Randolph and Clay and Calhoun, and envied them their power of moving the multitude. Then, it did not seem very heroic to be getting the level of a street and calculating the filling in, to consider Tiber Creek and Darby Marsh, to superintend rows of trees and dikes and blind ditches. But when he confessed his dissatisfactions to Jaqueline, she said with a wise, earnest, sisterly air: "Oh, do not go away! There will be an election in the coming autumn, and how do you know but we may be plunged into war and need you for our own defense? Arthur thinks so much of your advice and counsel." [186]

That was very true. The thing was to build up Washington. Other cities had grown by slow accretion, and been a hundred and more years about it. Congress had ordered a city on a slender purse. There had been magnificent plans and a half-finished Capitol, a Presidential residence that Mrs. Adams had not inaptly termed a "great castle"; there were scattered beautiful houses, and though more than a dozen years had passed it was not yet a city of homes; but there was a new *amour propre* awakening. The poverty of those days can scarcely be understood in these times of lavishness.

So energetic young men like Arthur Jettson and Dr. Collaston found scope for all their energies,

and were warmly welcomed.

The latter had hardly decided where to make his home until he met Patricia Mason. And now he adopted his nation's Capital at once.

His answer was favorable, and he hurried to his sweetheart with all impatience, though he had been cool enough before. And she accepted him, as any sensible girl with a strong liking for a young man every way worthy of her regard was likely to do. Jane was called in presently to [187] rejoice with them.

"Oh, Patty!" she exclaimed afterward, kissing her enthusiastically, "it's just a splendid marriage! I'm so glad to keep you in Washington! You and Jaqueline and I will have such good times—we think alike on so many subjects. I am happy for you, my dear. And I do wonder if you'll want to spin out your engagement—"

"He won't," returned Patty, her pretty face red as a rose, and her eyes suffused with a kind of prideful love. "Why, he spoke of it and thought a month would do! The idea! And all the wedding clothes to get and make! And he never once suggested that we should go to New York, as Preston Floyd did!"

Patty drew her face in comical lines, as if indicating disappointment; but the laugh spoiled it all, and the waves of joy dancing in the lines were fascinating.

"I do wonder what grandmamma will give me? The pearls and the rubies are bespoke, and she has a diamond cross that has been in the family—how long?"

"And the diamond ring father Mason gave her. You know Aunt Catharine claims that. I ought to have the cross, being the oldest girl, though it did come from the Verney side."

"Jaqueline is to have our own mother's pearls. There's a beautiful string of them, and eardrops. But I think the doctor has some diamonds belonging to his mother. Oh, I wish there were some brothers and sisters! I shall not gain any new relations! Father wrote him a delightful letter; I wish I had kept it to show you. And he says Jaqueline and I must come home soon. Perhaps he will be up next week."

So they chatted, and when Mr. Jettson came in to dinner it was all gone over again. If girls did not exactly "thank Heaven fasting" for a good husband, they were glad and proud of their great [188] success. They were not ashamed of loving and being loved; there was a kind of sacredness to most women about this best gift of life. For in those days it was for life. If it did not begin with the maddening fervor of some later loves, it kept gathering sweetness as the years went on.

Patty was still at her needlework when Mr. Carrington came in.

"Mother has just sent a servant over to say that I am to bring you and Jaqueline to tea and to spend the night. Some Baltimore relatives have come, and she is anxious you shall meet. They go to Alexandria to-morrow, and then to Stafford, which accounts for the short notice."

"Oh, Jaqueline went over to the Bradfords' this morning. They're going to have a little play, and want her to take part. She can do that so splendidly, you know. Lieutenant Ralston came for her, and said she was to stay to dinner."

Carrington frowned and bit his lip.

"I think I'll send over to the Bradfords'. I can't go myself," as if he were considering.

"I'm sorry, Roger, but perhaps *I* ought not go. And I hate to disappoint your mother when she has been so kind to us. But Dr. Collaston is coming in this evening—"

There was a flood of scarlet leaping to her face as she gave a half-embarrassed laugh.

"Oh, Patty! you don't mean—I mistrusted he was in love with you, but it doesn't always follow that a girl is in love. Shall I give you my best, my most heartfelt wishes? For I know your father will approve. He is a fine fellow, and a fortune is no detriment."

He took her hand in a tender clasp and then pressed it to his lips.

"Yes, the approval was sought beforehand. He heard from papa this morning, and came at once. [189] And I'm not good at secrets," with a joyous laugh.

"And you are very happy? I need not ask it of such eyes as those." Their great gladness gave him a pang.

"It was so sudden. You see, I wasn't quite sure," the color fluttering up and down her sweet face. "I kept saying to myself, 'There are plenty of others,' and now I know there was just one, and I could never be so glad about any other. I am a silly girl, am I not, but you are almost a brother—"

"I wish I were quite, in the way that marriage gives you a brother. I shall shake hands most cordially with the doctor. Perhaps we might go as a party—would you mind?"

"Oh, no! If you could find Jaqueline."

"I'll see at once, and send you word. And get word to the doctor also."

"Oh, thank you!"

Roger Carrington dispatched a messenger to the Bradfords. The party had just gone to Mount Pleasant on horseback. It was doubtful if they would be home before supper. They were not sure, and there was a beautiful full moon.

Then Carrington was angry. She thought nothing of going off with Ralston, and she might at least have consulted him about the play. That she had not known of it last evening did not at that moment occur to him. All the grievances and irritations of the past few weeks suddenly accumulated, accentuated by the joyous face he had left behind. Did Jaqueline really love him? Had she not put off the marriage on one pretext and another? She had taken admiration very freely, quite as if she were not an engaged girl. It had annoyed him, but he did not want to play the tyrant, and she had so many pretty excuses. How sweet and coaxing the tones of her voice were! Her smiling eyes had ever persuaded him; and when tears gathered in them they were [190] irresistible and swept away judgment. He had been too easy. After all, a man was to be the head.

He did not find the doctor either, but sent word to Patricia that he was most sorry to take such a disappointment to his mother. They would all go some other time. And he went home rather out of temper inwardly, but courteous to his mother's guests outwardly.

They were quite disappointed at not seeing Roger's betrothed.

All the next day and evening he was so closely engaged that he could not even run down to the Jettsons' until after nine; and then they were all out. That did not improve the white heat of his indignation, and convinced him that Jaqueline cared more for her own pleasure than for him. Then when he called the day following she was over at the Bradfords' practicing.

"It's too bad!" cried Patricia. "They never came home from their ride until after ten. Jaqueline looked for you yesterday. The play is to be on Monday night, and father is coming up on Wednesday, though now Jaqueline is in it she will have to stay. It is to be quite an event. And a dance afterward."

Occasionally a theatrical company strayed into Washington, but private plays were a treat to the actors as well as to the invited guests. The Bradfords' house was commodious, and the tickets were to be sold for the benefit of the orphan asylum, so there was no difficulty in disposing of them. [191]

CHAPTER XIV.

JAQUELINE.

"I thought I should never see you again."

It was almost dusk of the short day, as it had been cloudy and was threatening a storm. Roger had overtaken Jaqueline on her homeward way.

"How many days has it been?" turning a smiling face to him. "I have sold all my tickets, and I had meant to keep two for you. Come home to supper with me. Of course you know what has happened! Patty acts as if no girl ever had a lover before. It is amusing."

Her light tone angered him.

"Walk a little ways with me. I have something to say to you."

He drew her hand through his arm and strode on. She braced herself for a storm.

"What—down to the marsh? The frost is coming out of the ground, and we shall be swamped."

That was true enough. He turned suddenly.

"Let us go home. It looks like rain. I believe I felt a drop on my face," she began.

"Not until I have said my say," in a resolute tone of voice. "Jaqueline, I cannot have this manner of going on. It is very unjust to me, and you will not be the more respected by parading Lieutenant Ralston's devotion to you when you have an acknowledged lover."

"His devotion to me? Why, everybody knows—at least, we all know—"

"That figment is only a cover for flirting."

"But—he is your friend." Her tone was quite resentful, and her temper was rising.

"*Was!*" with emphasis. "But this shall no longer be a cover for you. You choose between us. If you [192] like him so much better—"

"Roger, he has never uttered a word of love to me." She stopped short in indignation.

"Oh, no! He has some lingering remnant of honor. But you will see how soon he will ask you to marry him when I have given you up."

Given her up! There was a white line about her mouth, and her eyes seemed to hold the depth of

midnight.

He had not meant to utter the words, though they had been in his mind for days. At the first inception of such a suspicion he had said he would never give her her liberty and see her married to another man, and then as he had seen her dispensing her smiles to a group of young men and bending her dainty head first to one and then to another, as if what the present speaker was saying was of the utmost moment, a curious revulsion of feeling swept over him. Yes, let Ralston take her, with all her love for the admiration of everybody! Perhaps he did not care for one supreme love.

She was silent from sheer amazement. That any man who was her real lover should talk of such a possibility stung her to the quick.

"Jaqueline, I cannot go on this way," and his voice dropped to a softer key. "I want all the tenderness of the woman I love, and some of the attention, I must confess. If she cares for me I do not see how she can be continually occupied with others. You give me just the fragments. You make engagements, you go out without the least thought that I might have something in view; you have put off our marriage from time to time, and now you must decide. If you love me well enough to marry me—"

"Out of hand!" She gave a scornful little laugh. "I thought it was a girl's prerogative to appoint her own wedding-day. I will not be hurried and ordered about as if I had no mind of my own. I will be no one's slave! I will not be watched and suspected and lectured, and shut up for fear someone will see me!" [193]

"Jaqueline!"

She was very angry now, and it seemed to her as if she had a curiously clear conscience. She had not expected to stay at the Bradfords' until just after dinner, but there were still some points to settle, then someone proposed the ride. Ralston had not remained to dinner, and had not gone out to Mount Pleasant with them, but a servant had been sent in with several invitations for gentlemen. Impromptu parties were of no infrequent occurrence among young people. Jaqueline did not know of the invitations until after the messenger had been sent; and from some oversight no one had mentioned Mr. Carrington.

She could have explained this. But when she glanced at the erect figure, the steady eyes, the set lip, he looked so masterful. She was used to her father's easy-going ways, and Ralston's persistence in the matter of Marian had a heroic aspect to her. If Roger was so arbitrary beforehand, what would he be as a husband! She forgot how many times she had persuaded him from the very desire of his heart.

"It is just this, Jaqueline—I am tired of trifling. If you do not care to marry me, say so. I sometimes think you do not, that you care for lovers only, admirers who hover about continually, glad of a crumb from a pretty girl. I am not one of them. You take me and let my attentions suffice, or you leave me—"

She had an ideal of what a lover should be, and he looked most unlike it in this determined mood. Why, he was almost as arbitrary as grandfather! [194]

"Suppose I do not care to be hurried by a fit of anger on your part? If you had asked an explanation like a gentleman—"

"I do not want explanations. You take me or leave me. I have danced attendance on you long enough to no purpose."

"I certainly shall not take you in this dreadful temper!"

"Very well." He turned slowly. If he really cared for her he would not go. She stood dignified and haughty. Of course he would come around, for if he truly loved her he could not face the future without her. But the door shut between them.

It was very ungenerous for him to be jealous of Ralston, and foolish of him not to like her part in the little play. She was not the heroine who had two lovers adoring her, but a pretty maid who had made her election and was pestered by someone she did not care for, and the story turned on her quick wit in extricating her mistress from a dilemma. Ralston was the lover to whom her sympathies went, and the one her mistress secretly favored.

Mrs. Carrington came over that day to take the girls out for a drive and to try to persuade them to come over for a Sunday visit. She congratulated Patricia warmly on her prospects.

"Perhaps we shall have a double wedding," with a soft, motherly smile.

"Oh, don't plan for that!" ejaculated the elder girl with a shiver. "Grandmamma did, you know, and such misfortunes happened."

"But it would be lovely!" Patricia exclaimed longingly, wondering at her sister's vehemence.

"And you think you cannot come?" Mrs. Carrington said as they drove back to Mrs. Jettson's. "It would be such a great pleasure to us all!" [195]

"We have a Saturday-night engagement at the Hamiltons'," Patricia replied. "And Sunday there are to be some guests to dinner."

"And the play Monday evening," added Jaqueline in a voice she tried to keep steady.

"I don't wonder you two girls have delightful times and are full of engagements," said the elder woman with a smile of admiration. "But my turn will come presently. Good-by, my dears."

Jaqueline felt confident she should meet her lover at the Hamiltons', but she did not. Sunday passed without him.

"Whatever is the matter?" inquired Patty.

"A little lovers' tiff," and Jaqueline gave an airy toss of the head, with a rather disdainful smile.

"You never do mean to quarrel with Roger Carrington!" exclaimed Patty in surprise.

"It was of his own making."

"Jack, now that I have a lover of my very own, I don't see how you can be so fond of—of other men. You haven't treated Roger at all well."

"I won't be called that detestable *Jack*! And I am not man-crazy!"

"No, they are crazy about you. I shouldn't think Roger would like it. No lover would stand it."

Jaqueline made no reply.

Monday there was a rehearsal, and Jaqueline remained to tea. There was a very enthusiastic audience, and the play was charmingly acted. Of course Roger was there, and chatted with Patricia and the doctor. Jaqueline in her heart acted for him alone. She was so eager and interested in furthering Margaret Bradford's love for Lieutenant Ralston that she thought he must see how frankly and freely she could relinquish him. But Roger, knowing that Margaret Bradford had a real lover, looked at it from a different point of view.

[196]

"Will you give my congratulations to your sister?" he said to Patricia, rising, as the curtain fell for the last time. "There is some important business at Mr. Monroe's, and I am to be there at ten."

"Are you not going to stay to the supper?" Patty cried in surprise. "I know Jaqueline expects you."

If she had sent ever such a little note to bid him come! But she had made no sign.

Then Jaqueline Mason was very angry. She would not believe any man actually in love could so hold aloof. It was an insult! And while her passion was at white heat the next morning she penned a sharp note of dismissal. He should not plume himself upon having given her up.

Mr. Mason came to Washington according to agreement, and was very well satisfied with his prospective son-in-law.

"But do not go on too fast," he advised. "Matters look squally ahead. And if we should have war —"

"It will hardly invade us, when there are more important cities open to attack. And I cannot really think it. As the capital of the nation we must plan and build for the future. L'Enfant planned magnificently; it is for us to carry it out. And we younger men, who have not had our tempers so tried with all the disputes, will continue it with greater enthusiasm. It must be the grandest place in the whole country."

Mr. Mason smiled thoughtfully.

"I hope it may be. We had a hard fight for it in the beginning. I want the wisdom of our choice apparent."

"It will be the city of my adoption, and I shall bend all my energies, and whatever money I can spare, to its advancement. Having won my wife here, it will always keep a charm for me. I should like to be married as soon as is convenient. Patricia will be very happy here, I am sure."

[197]

Patricia was a fortunate girl, her father thought. Fathers had their daughters' interests at heart in those days, when there was time to live.

"What is this?" he asked of Jaqueline on the morning of their departure, holding a brief note before her eyes. "You don't mean that you have dismissed Mr. Carrington?"

Jaqueline flushed deeply, then turned pale. For a moment it seemed as if her tongue was numb with terror. Had he really accepted her desire without a protest? Was it her desire?

"There was—oh, I cannot tell you now! Wait until we get home," she pleaded.

"But he says—it is your wish! Jaqueline, my child, you never could have been so foolish as to throw over a man like that!"

"Oh, papa—don't, don't! When you hear all—" and she clasped her arms about his neck.

"I can't imagine him doing an ungentlemanly act. And if you have learned anything to his detriment—there are malicious tongues, you know. Yet I cannot bear to think you were to blame."

The girl was silent, and swallowed hard over the lump of condemnation in her throat. For she had thought he would offer her some opportunity to rehabilitate herself. She could not believe she

had given such bitter offense. It seemed to her that she would have forgiven almost anything to Roger. Suppose he had wanted to take part in a play with a girl she had not liked? But, then, he and Ralston had been warm friends. Roger went to places where she was not acquainted, at the houses of some of the senators. The Monroes invited him. Yes, he met some very charming women at dinners. But she knew she held his inmost heart, as far as other women were concerned. And why could he not have the same trust in her? [198]

Dr. Collaston treated it as a mere lovers' tiff. "They will make up again," he said to Patricia. "And no doubt we'll be married at the same time. Carrington is a fine fellow."

For the first day Patricia's affairs occupied everybody, to the farthest slave cabin. Big and little wanted a peep at Miss Patty's lover. Comparisons were drawn between him and Mr. Carrington, and a doctor was looked upon as something rather uncanny. But he soon made himself a favorite.

Mrs. Mason was consulted about the wedding.

"What are Jaqueline's plans?" she asked.

"I must get to the bottom of that matter," the father remarked with a sigh. "Something has happened between them."

"And we all like Roger so much."

It was a fine day in early spring, with the breath of new growing things making the air fragrant. Jaqueline was walking with Annis and telling over the pretty ways and whims of the Jettson baby, and how fond the boys were of their little sister.

"Jaqueline!" called her father.

"No, don't come with me, dear. I'll be back in a few moments."

Annis sat down on a flat stone where a bit of trailing moss dropped from a tree, swinging to and fro. She amused herself trying to catch it. And then she heard a voice raised in tones that were not pleasant.

Without exactly meaning to make it harder for her sister, Patricia had admitted that Roger had some cause to find fault. Jacky had been very much admired, and she had not paid due attention to Roger. There had been something about the play, but she didn't think Jaqueline cared any more for Ralston than for half a dozen others. From it all Mr. Mason gathered that his daughter had not been blameless. [199]

To break an engagement without excellent reasons was considered very reprehensible. A girl might have lovers by the score; and though she might lay herself open to the accusation of flirting—this was easily forgiven. But when one's word had once been passed, it was the sacred honor of womanhood, and to break it left a stigma not easily overcome.

To Mr. Mason, with his strict sense of justice, this was a severe blow. He had been proud of Jaqueline going back into the Carrington family, and her warm welcome from both ladies. Dr. Collaston had a much larger fortune and was of good family, but the Carringtons had some of the proudest Maryland and Virginian blood in their veins, heroes who had made their mark, women both brave and beautiful. And there was no doubt but that Roger would make some sort of a high record and be called upon to fill an important position.

"You have been a foolish and wicked girl!" he said angrily to his daughter. "You have disgraced yourself and us, and broken up a lifelong friendship just to gratify a silly vanity and a spirit of contumacy that is despicable in a woman! I am sure Roger had some rights in the case. If he had come to me I should have appointed a wedding-day at once. And now you will be the laughing-stock of the county."

That was the mortifying point. Patricia would be married before her, with a great flourish of trumpets. She felt almost as if she would make some effort to recall Roger. But that brief note to her father, explaining that he had given her her liberty because she wished it, being quite convinced it was better for them to separate, seemed to cut off every avenue of promise. [200]

"Father is awful mad at Jaqueline," said Varina to Annis. "He's scolded her like fun! And she isn't going to marry Roger. The slaves say when the eldest lets her sister get married first that she will have to go and dance in the pigpen. Do you suppose she will?"

"No, she won't!" exclaimed Annis indignantly. "And I'm sorry. Poor Jaqueline!"

"Oh, you needn't be sorry! Jack can get ever so many lovers. But I'd like them both to be married. They're always saying, 'Run away, Rene,' or 'Go get this and that,' when they know you can't find it. And Patty is going to live in a beautiful big house in Washington, ever so much bigger than Aunt Jane's, and she will give balls and parties and go to Mrs. Madison's every day. I mean to coax papa to let me live with her."

That was all very grand. Annis liked Dr. Collaston, too. Patty had grown curiously sweet, and everybody was coming to wish her happiness.

Jaqueline was evidently in disgrace. Even grandmother, who came down to spend a few days and hear the plans, read her a severe lecture. Mrs. Mason was sorry, for she felt in her heart that Jaqueline cared more for Roger than she admitted.

But the sympathy from little Annis was the sweetest. She had a way of patting Jaqueline's hand and pressing it to her soft cheek, of glancing up with such tender eyes that it moved the elder's heart inexpressibly.

There was a world of excitement on the old plantation. Madam Floyd had been married there in grand state and dignity, but "Miss Cassy" had missed a wedding in her youth, and now that one of the household, born under the roof-tree and reared among them all, one of the true "chillen at de big house," was to be wedded with a gay bevy of bridesmaids and an evening of dancing to [201] bridal music, the whole place was astir. Dr. Collaston would wait no later than June.

"After all," declared Patty, "much of the work can be done afterward. The house will not be finished until August; meanwhile we shall stay wherever we can, and spend a month at Bladensburg. So there need be no hurry about anything but gowns." The doctor had ordered some things abroad, for, although duties were high and the risks great, vessels came and went in comparative safety.

Immediately upon the adjournment of Congress Mr. Monroe decided upon a visit to New York, ostensibly on his wife's account, who had been the famous Miss Kortwright of that city. Political matters were kept in the background. It was known that there was an undercurrent at work for De Witt Clinton as the next occupant of the Presidential chair. Mr. Monroe determined to visit several of the larger cities, and Roger Carrington was glad of the opportunity to go away. Ralston had been sent with a corps of engineers to examine the defenses of several important points.

Jaqueline was relieved, and yet strangely disappointed. Did Ralston know that he had been considered a sort of marplot? Yet when Carrington went carefully over the ground, he thought if there was any fault between them it really was Jaqueline's appropriation of the young man.

Mrs. Carrington had been deeply disappointed; but, mother-like, she blamed Jaqueline for the trouble. The answer to Patricia's wedding invitation had been a brief note in which Madam and Ralph joined her in congratulations. The elder lady was now quite an invalid, so it would not be possible for them to leave home.

Jaqueline felt curiously bewildered in those days. At times she decided that she really hated Roger for his jealous, overbearing disposition, and was thankful she was not to be his wife. Then [202] a wave of the old love and longing would sweep over her. Would a line from her bring him back? But he was quite wrong about Ralston.

So there was a grand wedding, and young and old were invited, with numerous guests from Washington. Annis and Varina brought up the rear of the bridesmaids, with Charles and a neighboring lad, dressed in the pretty French-court style.

"You are more beautiful than the bride," said Charles gallantly. "When you are married you must be dressed just that way."

It was a summer of gayety, and there were times when everyone allowed Jaqueline to forget her naughtiness, and she almost forgot it herself. Louis came home crowned with honors and very proud of his success, and pleased Patricia by his admiration of her husband.

"How tall and pretty Annis is growing!" he said to her mother. "But try to keep her a little girl, and let Rene have full swing first and marry off. Though I shall rather pity her husband, her temper is so capricious. Annis is sweetness itself. She seems to be the peacemaker always."

"Don't flatter her too extravagantly. I think you all torment Varina so much that it makes her irritable."

"Varina and Charles bicker constantly. Charles must go to school next year and get the nonsense shaken out of him. Varina ought to try it too. There is a very excellent girls' school at Williamsburg, and a little of Aunt Catharine's discipline would do her good. We are a rather lawless set, and you have been very kind to us."

"I have not found any of you troublesome," and the stepmother smiled upon her tall son. "Charles is anxious to go away now."

"He is a smart, queer chap, and will be a professor of some kind. At present he is simply [203] omnivorous; it makes little difference what, so long as he learns. And I really did not like to study."

"You have given your father a great deal of pleasure by your perseverance," she said sweetly.

Varina was jealous that both brothers should haunt Annis so continually and be so ready to plan pleasures for her. She quite decided now that Annis might marry Charles.

"And if no one marries me I shall go and keep house for Louis in Washington," she announced.

There was a houseful of grown people one afternoon, when Annis took her sewing and went down to the creek to a shady spot the children were very fond of. Louis had made a kind of swinging seat with a wild grapevine, and it was a favorite haunt of hers, though when she found Varina in it she never disturbed her or disputed her claim. Charles often sat and read to her.

"Do, Rene, go away or find something to do!" exclaimed Jaqueline presently, when the younger had been especially tormenting. "You are worse than a gadfly!"

"There's no one to amuse me. I don't care for those folks on the porch talking politics."

"Then go down to the quarters and set the darkies to dancing or order up Hornet."

"I don't want to ride alone. It was mean in Charles to go off without saying a word."

"Papa sent him over to the Crears' on an errand."

"I wouldn't have spoiled the errand."

"I am going down to listen to the politics, and learn who will be next President."

"Then I'll hunt up Annis."

Jaqueline hoped Annis had gone wandering in the woods. But Varina went straight to the retreat. Yes, there was Annis swinging in her shady nook with a very slow movement that did not hinder her from sewing on her strip of gay embroidery. And Charles sat on his horse in his delicate, high-bred manner. They all said he resembled the old courtier in the parlor. [204]

The little creek purled over the stones, crooning its way along. The air was sweet with innumerable fragrances, the sunshine veiled with a soft haze that deepened the shadows all about. Charles enjoyed the brooding atmosphere and the picture Annis made. His horse had taken a few steps in the creek and quenched his thirst, and now seemed enjoying the fine prospect.

Varina made her complaint at once.

"I didn't want you to go with me," he answered. "Papa had nothing to do with it."

"Oh, you might have made me Jack at a pinch, if Annis could not go."

"I didn't ask Annis. And I didn't want any pinches," laughingly.

Varina roamed up and down, interrupting the talk. Charles had stumbled over his brother's copy of Shakspere, that had opened a new world to him. Louis laughed a little at his enthusiasm, but Annis never laughed.

"I mean some day to go and see all these places," he was saying. "You know, they are real places, and some of the people were real people. Perhaps they all were. Varina, don't you splash the water over Annis."

Varina had picked up a slender dead branch, and was beating up waves in the little creek. The spray went quite a distance.

"No matter," said Annis. "A little water doesn't hurt. But tell me, did they really put out Prince Arthur's eyes? How could they be so cruel?"

"I don't see how you can take an interest in such people. You're always talking about wars and all manner of terrible things." [205]

Varina brought her stick down with emphasis. Sam had been stepping softly about the edge of the creek, the cool water laving his hoofs. He had not minded the sprinkling on his sides, but this gave him a drench in the face. He threw up his head and turned to walk out. Charles had dropped the bridle rein, but Sam was gentle enough. As he reached the edge he stepped on a rolling stone, stumbled, tried to regain his poise, but both horse and boy went over. Sam righted himself in a moment, but Charles lay quite still.

"Oh, if you have killed him!" cried Annis.

Varina was white with an awful fear, too much alarmed to make a sound. It was Annis who flew to his side. She bathed his face and head with her handkerchief. Sam came and looked on with a human expression in his eyes. Charles stirred and sighed.

"Oh, he isn't dead!" cried Annis joyfully.

"No, I'm not dead." Charles sat up, wincing a little. "What happened?"

Varina pushed Annis aside and knelt down with her arms around him. "I'm so sorry!" she began. "But that little douse didn't make Sam stumble. What can I do? Shall I run up to the house for anything?"

"Just help me up. No, I haven't any broken bones. Be thankful for that, Rene," and the boy tried every limb. There were twinges in his back and a queer, half-dizzy feeling in his head. "I'll be all right in a moment."

Sam seemed to feel reassured, and went to cropping the sedgy grass.

"There, don't cry, Rene. It wasn't all your fault. Sam trod on something that rolled—a stone, I think."

"And I do love you so—ever so much more than you love me! And it gives me a heartache to see you all take in Annis and crowd me out." [206]

Varina began to sob.

"I don't mean to crowd anyone out," declared Annis in a tone that sounded as if it came over tears. "And you all have a part of my own mamma."

"Annis is so good and sweet, and ready to give up any point, and you want always to take things whether or no. Perhaps you'll grow up like Jaqueline or Patty, and Patty's awful sweet to everybody since she's had a husband. There, don't cry any more; I'm not killed. I'll sit here and rest a little. And, Rene, if you would only give over tormenting people when they tell you to stop!"

Varina was still a good deal alarmed. She could see Charles' white face without a bit of color in the lips as he lay on the ground. He was pale still, as he leaned back in the swing.

"And, Rene, you will never, never get a husband unless you do change. You'll be a cross and queer old maid, and not one of us will be willing to have you about. And you can be real nice."

"Oh, don't scold her so!" Annis went and clasped her arms about Varina's neck. "She is going to be sweet and good because nothing dreadful did happen. God, you know, kept it from happening. And when one is very grateful one tries hard to do one's best. Sometimes I think you don't love Rene enough, and it makes her hurt and sore."

Then the children made resolves all around, and Charles walked between the girls up to the house. If the making up could only last!

"Don't say a word about it," he cautioned them. "Father would make a fuss." Then he turned and kissed Varina, a caress he seldom offered her. [207]

"I'm going to try, I really am. But it is so hard not to be loved."

"But we do love you," declared both in a breath.

The trouble was they loved each other as well. And she wanted to be loved best.

CHAPTER XV.

A SMALL HERO.

Dr. Collaston and his wife opened their new house early in September with quite a grand gathering of friends. It was really very handsome for the times, and the young wife was considered quite an acquisition to society, which was rather fluctuating. Louis Mason esteemed himself very fortunate to obtain a place in the office of Judge Todd of the Supreme Court. Charles and Varina went to Williamsburg to school, and Annis had her mother all to herself once more, for Jaqueline was in great demand at her sister's.

She was not long in meeting Roger Carrington, but they might have been the merest acquaintances. And as if to help the family get over the disappointment, Ralph married a daughter of one of the neighbors, an amiable, home-loving girl, an excellent housekeeper, and quite up in the demands of the society of the day. She came home to live, and Mrs. Carrington had her coveted daughter, who was entirely satisfied with her position.

"We were all very sorry when the difference happened between you and Roger," Mrs. Carrington said gently to Jaqueline the first time they met. "But it was better to learn then that you could not agree than to have to live unhappy afterward. Still, I hope we shall remain friends, and I want a visit from your parents very much." [208]

Jaqueline thanked her gracefully. Truly, it seemed to make little difference. Roger looked older and more dignified, and was in great demand with the inner circle of both men and women.

There were many pressing questions, both in the City and country. The Napoleonic conquests had shaken Europe to its very center, and the first disaster to the man regarded as invincible produced a thrilling sensation. Mr. Barlow, author of some quite important pamphlets, was sent to France to observe affairs, which were in a rather critical state. The party clamoring for war with England made itself heard more loudly. The right of search, the interference of trade, the insolent and overbearing manner of England roused the whole country.

Through all the turmoil Mrs. Madison moved serenely, and if her heart quaked with forebodings, it was not allowed to disturb her efforts at making Washington a social center. Then her pretty widowed sister, Mrs. Washington, married Judge Todd, and so became permanently settled in the City. Every year saw a little improvement made in the Capitol and the President's mansion. Streets began to have a more finished appearance.

Jaqueline was not less a belle than she had been the previous winter. Arthur Jettson was prospering, and Jane was bright and gay in spite of three babies; so between the two homes and the outside world she was kept full of engagements.

She was rather surprised when Lieutenant Ralston made her a proposal of marriage. The friendly feeling had been so strong, and on her part so unlike love, that there could be but one answer. He did not seem deeply disappointed, but begged that they might remain friends.

Only a few days after she received a note from her mother. They had been up to the Pineries, for grandmother was quite poorly and went downstairs only to her dinner. [209]

"She misses the stir and activity of being mistress of the house, and her son's ideas are different in many respects from hers. But there comes a time when the old must give way and step aside for the young. Marian is devoted to her. I do not know now what your grandmother would do without her. Did you hear that poor Mr. Greaves is dead at last? But it has been a living death for six months or more; indeed, he has never had his mind and memory clearly since the first stroke, and now for weeks he has been barely conscious. He must have had an iron constitution. I think your grandmother is very thankful that this happened before the marriage rather than afterward. Miss Greaves wants to close the house, dispose of the slaves by hire or leasing, and go to England to educate the children. Brandon is as bitterly opposed to war as ever his father could have been. Marian is sweet and kindly, but has fallen into an apathetic state. Dolly is prospering, and from all accounts very gay. She has written repeatedly to Marian. I wish the poor girl could make the visit. It is sad to see her youth fading away."

"Poor Marian! Oh, Patty, do you remember our first visit here? It seems ages ago, doesn't it? and so much has happened. What girls we were!"

"And Mr. Madison was inaugurated! You went to a levee. How I did envy you! Now I curtsey to Mrs. Madison every day or two, and gossip with Mrs. Cutts, and am asked to meet this one and that one. Well, we're the Virginian part of the Capital," laughing. "And how you schemed for Marian! Jaqueline, you don't mean to marry Lieutenant Ralston yourself, after all? Jane was so afraid you might attract him."

"Oh, no! He seems just like a brother." But she did not confess she had answered the momentous question. She gave a great throb of thankfulness. True, he insisted that Marian had never really loved him, and a man would be foolish enough to go mooning about such a woman. [210]

It was June of that year, after a stormy session of Congress, that the word spread like wildfire through every State, first announced in the *National Intelligencer*, that war had been declared against Great Britain. And on June 21 the strongest naval force the country could muster, a squadron of four warships, was fitting out at Norfolk. Charleston was astir; New York, Boston, and Salem were busy transforming merchant vessels that had lain idly at the wharves into fighting ships. Young men hurried to Annapolis and placed themselves in training, for the war must be largely fought out on the seas.

The efforts of England to harass and break up the commerce between the United States and other countries, notably France, had exasperated the pride and sense of justice of the country. The war-cry was taken up: "Free trade and the rights of sailors. America must protect her own." And although times had been hard and trade poor, out of it had grown a knowledge of the young country's power and possibilities. Now the nation was compact and had a centralized government. There had been many improvements since old Revolutionary times, and the population had nearly doubled.

Not that the country was a unit on this subject. The Federalists were extremely bitter, and denounced the war as unnecessary and suicidal. England, out of one war, was ready with her ripened experience to sweep us from the seas. And what then?

On the frontier the campaign opened badly. At the disgraceful surrender of Hull at Detroit not only was the commander blamed for treachery and cowardice, but the Cabinet and the President held up to execration. [211]

As an offset, naval victories suddenly roused the waning enthusiasm: the *Wasp* and the *Frolic*, the *Hornet* and the *Peacock*, and the *Constitution's* splendid escape from the *Guerrière*, that was to drive the "insolent rag of bunting" from the seas, the chase from New York to Boston, the brief fight of an hour and a half, when the bunting was left to wave over the wreck, and Captain Dacres and the part of his crew not in a watery grave made prisoners. No wonder Boston had a day of rejoicing!

This was followed by other victories. The country began to draw a free breath, and the conquest on the lakes crowned it with new courage and rejoicing.

But in the Capital a fierce battle was raging. Whether Madison should again be the candidate and succeed himself was a hotly disputed question. But if the President came in for so much animadversion, it was admitted that Mrs. Madison bore herself with steady courage and cheerfulness. There was no distinction made between parties at her receptions. No one was treated with coolness because he had reviled the administration. Perhaps it was the charming courtesy that upheld Mr. Madison through the stress of the times.

Then Jaqueline and Dr. Collaston were summoned suddenly to Cedar Grove. Charles had been brought home in a rather alarming condition. There had been spells of fainting and headaches that were thought to come from overstudy, and at last Uncle Conway was seriously alarmed, and sent the boy home in the care of a trusty slave and an old mammy. He was very much exhausted by the journey, and Dr. Collaston saw at once that it was something more serious than overwork.

"But I'll be sure to get well, won't I?" he asked wistfully. "There is so much going on, and so much to do and to learn in this big world. How grand it is! And if we should beat England again, wouldn't it be magnificent? Do you feel sure that we will?" [212]

"Never mind the war. Tell me when the headaches began. And the pain in your back. You used to be such a bright, healthy little lad. Did you take enough exercise?"

There was a faint flush creeping over the pale face, and the eyes looked out on the distance as if taxing his memory, but instead he was trying to elude a curious consciousness.

"The headaches? Oh, I used to have them sometimes at home. They're girlish things, and it doesn't seem as if boys ought to fret over them," with a touch of disdain.

"And you haven't been trying your strength leaping over five-barred gates or jumping ditches, or perhaps riding too much?"

"I had my pony, you know, but I didn't ride very much. And latterly it seemed to take away my strength. Aunt Catharine was sure it hurt me, and then I didn't ride at all. So I left it for the children and Varina. Aunt Catharine was wonderfully kind, but she isn't quite like mamma, and father is so good and strong. I'm going to get well now. I think I was homesick too, and that's babyish for a great boy. How Louis would laugh at me!"

But no one laughed. Everybody spoke hopefully, to be sure, and treated the matter lightly. Annis read to him, but he sometimes stopped her and said: "Tell me about your visit to Patty. Doesn't it seem funny to have Patty among the big people and going to the White House to dinner? Why do you suppose Jacky didn't marry Mr. Carrington? I like him so much." [213]

Then it was the old Froissart, with the queer pictures, or the war news. The young people around came in, the boys ruddy, laughing, and sunburned. The little darkies did their funniest tricks and sang songs for young mas'r; but though he seemed a little stronger, he did not get well. It had not been altogether the hard study.

"You are quite sure you can't remember any fall down there at Williamsburg?" the doctor queried.

"Oh, I might have had little tumbles; boys often do," he said with an air of indifference. "But nothing to hurt."

He caught a look on the face of Annis, who was standing by the window idly drumming with her fingers on the sill, and frowned.

"What was that for?" The doctor intercepted the glance, and looked from one to the other.

"Please don't drum, Annis," he said gently. "Did I frown?" to the doctor.

Dr. Collaston studied him sharply.

"If you young people have any secret that bears on the case, you'd better reveal it. Working in the dark isn't always advisable. Annis, why do you change color?"

Annis flushed deeply now, and her eyelids quivered as if tears were not far away.

"Let Annis alone," said the boy in as gruff a tone as so gentle a voice could assume. "I suppose we *did* both think of one thing when you so insisted upon a fall. It was a long while ago, before I went to school. We were down by the creek. I was on Sam, who had been drinking and wading in the stream. He turned to step out, and a stone rolled and he stumbled. I went over his head, as I didn't have the rein in my hand. It knocked the breath out of me for a moment. But I had been tumbled off before, when I was learning to ride, and that really didn't—wasn't of much account, [214] only Annis was so frightened. Now shall I go further back and tell you of all the downfalls I have had? I wasn't very daring—Annis, wasn't I something of a babyish boy?"

"No, you were not." Annis smiled a little then.

"How did he fall?"

Annis could not recall that.

"After a little I walked home. No, I wasn't much hurt. I had a lame thumb, I remember; but afterward there used to come what Phillis calls a 'misery' in my back. The headaches did not come until in the winter."

The doctor nodded.

"But I'm bound to get well," added the boy. "I don't want to die. I should have to be dead such a long, long while."

The doctor laughed. "No, we're not going to have you die. That is the least of the trouble. But you may be an invalid quite a while."

"I shouldn't even mind that, if I could study some. I hate to fall behind. And, you see, father is so proud of Louis that I couldn't bear people saying about me 'Poor Charles!' in a pitying way."

"We won't even have them saying that," was the confident answer, as he went out to add a note to the memoranda he had made of the case.

Charles held out his hand to Annis, who came over and gave it a little convulsive clasp.

"Girls are queer," he said in a soft, slow tone that had no reproach in it. "And Dr. Collaston

turned you inside out. I do suppose doctors know pretty generally what is going on inside of your body, and sometimes they guess what is in your brain, or your mind, or whatever thinks. I was so afraid he'd get it all out of you!" [215]

"Oh, do you think it was *that*?" Annis' eyes overflowed, and he could feel the quiver of her fingers.

"There—don't cry. It wasn't your fault. It wasn't even Varina's fault. Sam would have turned and gone out, anyhow. And you can't think how nice Varina is growing—pretty, too. I am sure it vexed her a good deal to think she was not as pretty as the older girls, or even you. You're so fair and sweet, with your clouds of light hair and your skin that looks like transparent pearl. You know she was very sorry."

"Oh, we both thought you were dead!" Annis tried hard not to sob.

"Boys take a good deal of killing. You see, I wasn't anywhere near dead. But I did give my back a hard wrench, and I felt it for a week or two, then it all went away; and it was somewhere about the holidays—we were getting greens for the church, and I fainted dead away. After that the ache came back. It's dull and aggravating, not a sharp pain that makes you feel as if you could get up and fight, but sometimes you are wild to run away, to the very ends of the earth! Then it would creep up to my head like some stealthy thing you couldn't put your finger on. Aunt Catharine was good, but she fussed so much, and she's always saying, 'Now, don't you think you ought to do this, or give up doing that? I'm sure it hurts you.' And wanting to find out the cause of everything and settle it on some particular point. It's queer that Rene should get along so well; you know she has a fractious temper! But the little girls just adore her, and at home she was teased a good deal."

He leaned back on the pillow, and his face was very white.

"Oh, you are so tired!" cried Annis.

"Yes. I have just a little bit to say, then you may read to me. I don't want anything said about Varina. She would be almost killed if she thought she was to blame for it. And she wasn't, you know. That little splash in Sam's face wasn't anything. He enjoyed having a bucket of water thrown over him. He's almost a water dog," laughing. [216]

Annis tried to be convinced. If Varina had not persisted when Charles asked her to stop! But, then, Sam *had* stepped on a rolling stone.

"That's just a little bit between ourselves, not to be talked about, for it can't do any good, and would make Rene so very unhappy, now when she's growing sweeter. I've thought I ought to tell the doctor, but I didn't want to believe the fall had anything to do with it. Whatever happens, you will always love me, Annis?"

"Yes," bending over to kiss the white forehead, her heart full of sympathy and dread for an unknown future.

"And Jack's so lovely! Only I'm awful sorry she didn't marry Mr. Carrington. Patty and her husband are so happy, so are mother and father. There, I am tired. Get a book and read. That about Uncle Toby, who had such a big, sweet, foolish heart."

The children had a great way of picking out parts they liked and skipping the rest.

Then Dr. Collaston had to go up to Washington for a week or two, and sent for Jaqueline also. For Patty had a little baby girl, and they all laughed merrily about being uncles and aunts. What was happening to the country was a minor consideration.

When the doctor came down again he had a well-digested plan.

"If it wasn't for running the risk on the ocean I should say take the boy over to London at once and have the best medical skill there. But there are some excellent physicians in Philadelphia and New York. Old Dr. Rush does little in practicing now, but he is still ready and generous with advice. You know, I am young in the profession, and as yet we cannot boast much medical talent in our young city. Let Mrs. Mason stay with him three months or so, and have the best treatment. I think it quite a serious matter." [217]

Mr. Mason was aghast at first.

"He is so young now, and the injury may not be as bad as I anticipated; but it will need excellent skill to take him through without leaving permanent marks and much suffering. So it had better be attended to at once."

Jaqueline was alarmed at the seriousness of the case. If she could go—

"No; it must be some person of experience, and one whom Charles loves and trusts and would obey. He will make a good patient, for he is anxious to get well; and though he does not whisper such a thing, he has an awful fear of deformity—"

"Oh, you do not think—" in a tremulous tone.

"Hush! I have mentioned it to no one but your parents. It is not to be discussed. It is a spinal trouble, and that covers the ground. And he must have immediate care. You and Annis will come with us, for it would be too lonely to have you here on the plantation, even if your father is back

and forth."

Mrs. Mason discussed the plans with Jaqueline at once, and the girl was full of the warmest sympathy.

"If we could take Annis! but the doctor thinks it would be bad for the child, and an added care."

"Oh, mamma, you may trust her with me! I am not as gay and volatile as I was a year ago, nor so frivolous."

"She ought to go to school! Perhaps in the fall—"

"Mamma, that suggests something. A Madame Badeau, a very charming French refugee, has started a school for children and young ladies just a short distance from the doctor's. She is trying to get scholars enough to insure her support. And she teaches the pianoforte. It is quite [218] coming into vogue since Mrs. Madison makes so much of the grand one at the White House, where ladies are often asked to play. Annis is such a little home girl that she would be very unhappy away. We all love her so dearly. And I will look after her clothes, and the doctor after her health, and Patty and the baby will be so much entertainment. Patty is making a very charming woman, and much admired," said the elder sister heartily.

"That is an admirable plan, and you are kind to take so much interest in the child. It relieves me of considerable anxiety, and she has run wild long enough, though she has picked up an odd conglomeration of knowledge from Charles. I know your father will be glad and thankful."

"To let you go quite away—to stay!" ejaculated Annis, when she heard of the plan. "Mamma, I have given up part of you a good many times, but I can't give up all," and the soft lips quivered. "Why can I not go? I will be very good, and not make any trouble. And I could help you with Charles, and read to him. He is so fond of me."

"It would not be possible to take you, dear," she replied tenderly. "You would add to my care. The doctor thinks this plan the best, the only one."

Annis clung to her mother. "Philadelphia is ever so much farther than Baltimore!" she cried despairingly. "And—you are *my* mother!"

"But, if Charles should be ill a long while! And think how lonesome he would be with just a nurse! You can write quite well, and you can send me letters about everything. Jaqueline knows of a delightful school you can go to. It is time you were learning something, as well as Varina. There, dear, don't make it harder for me." [219]

Annis was crying on her mother's shoulder. She had thought a three- or four-days' separation very hard—how would she stand weeks and months? To be sure, they all loved her mother, and Charles was especially fond of her; but, after all, she was *her* mother.

Then Mr. Mason came in, but for once she would not sit on his knee nor listen to his bright predictions.

At first Charles refused utterly to go without Annis. He was sure she couldn't be in the way. He loved mamma very much, but he had found it lonely at school without Annis to tell things over to. She was different from the other girls—and, then, they were grown women, except Varina; and he could not stand it without her.

"I want to get well and grow up to manhood, and then none of you shall take her away from me!" he cried.

Mrs. Mason gave a soft sigh, hoping he would have no greater heartache in the days to come.

Dr. Collaston finally persuaded him that this would be the best arrangement, as quiet and a darkened room might be necessary. "And it would be like keeping her a prisoner," he said. "Her mother could not take her out, and she could not go about a strange city alone, so it would be rather selfish to ask so much of her."

"And I don't mean to be selfish. If you all think so, it must be right; but I am sorry, all the same."

"You may get home by Christmas," the doctor said hopefully.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN OLD WASHINGTON.

There were many arrangements to make. Only Mr. and Mrs. Mason knew how really serious the case might be, and Mrs. Mason felt that she could not accept the responsibility alone. Dixon, the [220] overseer, was a good manager and a trusty man, and his wife a very efficient woman. Indeed, the older house slaves could have run the place without supervision, but it was well to have a responsible head. Louis would come down now and then and inspect the financial affairs, and bring Jaqueline occasionally. It would not be quite like going to London, and Mr. Mason might return if really needed.

So they packed up and put things in order, and went up to Washington to settle Annis. Charles seemed really stronger, but the doctor knew it was only excitement. Patty's house was so pretty and the office so handy, the boy did not see why he could not remain with her.

The house was quite fine for the times. Land was abundant, and houses did not have to crowd. There were spacious rooms, for people were hospitably inclined. Southern women made charming hostesses. In an ell part the doctor had an office, for he was quite ambitious in his profession, if he had one eye on the advancement of the City. He had rented one of his houses, and another was likely to be sold.

There were people who shook their heads dubiously and feared an invasion; others reasoned there was so little prospect of booty in Washington compared to the commercial cities, there could be no possible danger.

Jaqueline had a pretty corner room. Opening into it was a smaller one devoted to Annis, with its dainty bed curtained with white muslin and fringe that nodded in the slightest breeze. The floor was painted, and a rug made by the slaves at home lay at the bedside. Grandmother had sent Patty the mahogany furnishing of one room that she had brought from the Mason house when she was married, and it was quite an heirloom. This was in Jaqueline's room.

The baby went far toward reconciling Annis. A pretty, plump little thing, with great dark eyes and a fringe of dark hair over a white forehead, she looked like a picture. Judy, one of the slaves from home, was her nurse. [221]

Yet the parting was very hard for Annis. The doctor had taken Charles in his own carriage. They were to go to Baltimore and rest a day or two and visit some of the connections.

Annis felt at first as if she must be visiting.

"And do you remember we came up to Mr. Madison's inauguration and went to the Capitol? It seems as if it must have been years and years ago, so many things have happened since then. And everybody seems grown up except Charles and I."

"You were a tiny little girl then. I hope you will not be very homesick; there are so many things to see. And when the horses are sent up we can take beautiful rides."

Annis swallowed over a lump in her throat.

"The baby will grow and be very cunning. And every week you are to write to mamma."

"And to Charles. I am not to mind not getting answers from him; it makes his head ache to write."

"And, then, there are the children at Aunt Jane's. Her baby talks everything in the funniest crooked fashion. To-morrow we will call on Madame Badeau. I hope you will like school. It is only in the morning."

"I am fond of learning things if they are not too hard."

"Some of us have to learn quite hard lessons," and Jaqueline sighed.

Madame Badeau lived in a rather shabby-looking rough stone house, quite small in the front, but plenty large enough for her and a serving-man and maid, and running back to a pretty garden, where she cultivated all manner of beautiful flowers, and such roses that lovers of them were always begging a slip or piece of root. There was a parlor in the front filled with the relics of better days, and draped with faded Oriental fabrics that were the envy of some richer people. There was always a curiously fragrant perfume in it. Next was the schoolroom, entered by a side door, where there were small tables in lieu of desks, wooden chairs, and a painted floor that the maid mopped up freshly every afternoon when the children were gone. Back of this were the living room and a very tiny kitchen, while upstairs were two rooms under the peaked roof, where Madame and Bathsheba slept. [222]

Madame was small, with a fair skin full of fine wrinkles. She wore a row of curls across her forehead, a loosely wound, soft white turban that gave her a curious dignity, and very high heels that made a little click as she went around. She was quite delicate, and had exquisite hands, and wore several curious rings. Her voice was so finely modulated that it was like a strain of music, and she still used a good many French words. She had been at the French court and seen the great Franklin and many other notables, and had to fly in the Reign of Terror, with the loss of friends and most of her fortune.

Bathsheba, the maid, was nearly six feet tall, and proud of some Indian blood that gave her straight hair and an almost Grecian nose. She was proud of her mistress too, and was in herself a bodyguard when Madame went out. The old man who kept the garden clean and did outside work was a slave too old for severe labor, and was hired out for a trifle. At night he went home to sleep at the cabin of a grandchild.

Annis was attracted at once by the soft voice that ended a sentence with a sort of caressing cadence. And when Jaqueline wrote her name in full Madame said: [223]

"Bouvier. That is French. Your mamma's maiden name, perhaps?"

"No," returned Annis, with a little color. "It was my own papa, who is dead. And he could read and talk French. I knew a little, but I was so young when he died."

"And our father married Mrs. Bouvier some years ago," said Jaqueline, "so Annis and five of us Mason children constitute the family. Mrs. Bouvier was cousin to our own mother."

"I shall take great pleasure in teaching you French. Poor France has had much to suffer. And now that detestable Corsican is on the throne, with no drop of royal blood in his veins! but you can tell what he thinks of it when he divorces a good and honorable woman that his son may inherit his rank. But my nation did not take kindly to a republic. They are not like you," shaking her turbaned head.

The distance to school was not great, so in fair weather it was a nice walk. Now the place is all squares and circles and rows of beautiful houses, but then people almost wondered at the venturesomeness of Dr. Collaston and Mr. Jettson building houses in country ways; for although streets were laid out and named, there was little paving. The Mason tract was on Virginia Avenue, but the others had gone back of the Executive Mansion, on high ground, and had a fine view of the whole country; and Georgetown being already attractive, it seemed possible the space between would soon be in great demand.

Out beyond them were some fine old mansions belonging to the time of plantations and country settlements. The very last of the preceding century the Convent of the Visitation had been erected, for so many of the Maryland gentry were Roman Catholics. There was a school for girls here, mostly boarding scholars. [224]

Then Rock Creek stretched way up on the heights, threading its path in and out of plantations where fields were dotted with slaves at their work, often singing songs with the soft monotonous refrain that suggested the rhythm of the distant ocean. Occasionally you met a silvery lake that bosomed waving shadows; then stretches of gigantic oaks, somber pines, and hemlocks; and now and then a little nest of Indian wigwams whose inhabitants preferred quasi-civilization.

To the southeast, on the Anacostia River, was the navy yard, active enough now. And there was Duddington Manor, with its high wall and stately trees overtopping it, built by Charles Carroll, to be for a long while a famous landmark in solitary grandeur. But the Van Ness mansion, nearer the Potomac, was always alight, and often strains of music floated out on the night air to the enjoyment of the passer-by.

Annis had been living in a kind of old world, peopled with the heroes of Homer, the knights of Arthur, and the pilgrims of Chaucer, as well as Spenser's "Faërie Queene." She had a confused idea that Pope's garden was in some of these enchanted countries, and that Ben Jonson and Shakspere were among the pilgrims who sang songs and told tales as they traveled on, or stopped at the roadside and acted a play. Charles had learned where to place his heroes and who of them all were real.

Annis left the realm of imagination and fancy and came down to actual study. At first she did not like it.

"But you must know something about modern events," declared Jaqueline, "to read well and write a nice letter; and to understand the history of our own country, which is all real. And to keep accounts—every housekeeper ought to be able to do that. Grandmamma had to look after the big plantation until papa came of age; and women have to do a good many different things." [225]

"I think I shall like learning them, or most of them," and Annis' eyes shone.

"There is dancing, too; you must go in a class next winter. You can embroider nicely, so you needn't bother about that. And I have been in a painting class where there were some quite small girls. Some ladies paint fans and flower pieces beautifully. And Patty thinks she will have a pianoforte, which would be delightful. Singing classes are in vogue, too."

"Oh, dear, can one learn so much?" and the child looked perplexed.

"You do not have to learn it all at once," returned the elder with a smile.

Very few people had any thought of vacations then. True, Washington had a dull spell when Congress was not in session, and some of the people retired to country places or went to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, or to Bladensburg to drink medicated waters. But Madame Badeau kept her school going from eight to twelve for the children's classes. They were all composed of girls, for while Madame admired well-bred young men very much, she could not tolerate growing boys. The afternoons were devoted to what were called fancy branches. Young women came to learn embroidery and lace-making, the duties on foreign goods were so high, and now the risk of importing was so great.

There began to be a different feeling about education. Intelligent women were coming to the fore. To be sure, science was considered unwomanly, but handsome and well-bred Mrs. Gallatin knew enough on many subjects to entertain her husband's guests charmingly. Everybody would have been horrified at the thought of a woman's college, and if a woman's convention had been announced it would have created more indignation than the war was raising. [226]

Yet women with but few early advantages went to Madame Badeau to be trained in conversation and the art of writing polite notes, and some who had a facility for verse-making to learn how an acrostic was put together, or an anagram, and the proper fashion for congratulatory verses. A few women poets had appeared, but the French "blue stockings" were quoted in derision. Still, it had occurred to other women beside Mrs. Adams that the mothers of sons trained for perilous

times needed to be intelligent, at least.

For the first time Annis was thrown with a variety of girls near her own age. None of them were like Varina—but, then, they were not like each other. How strange there should be so many different kinds of people in the world! It amazed her.

Jaqueline was much interested in her unfolding. There was a delicious quaintness about her that contact with Madame Badeau brought out. She had some very clear ideas too, and there was so much to write about.

"I shall have to send a letter to mamma one week and to Charles the next," she said sagely. "Then I shall not tell the same things over."

"That is an excellent idea. You are a bright little girl," returned Jaqueline with a smile.

"And it will save my own time. Jaqueline, can't we go to Washington some time and really see it? One of the girls called me a country lass because I did not know about the streets and the way everything ran. And how queer they should be named after the letters and numbers! What will they do when the letters are exhausted?—and there are but twenty-six."

"There are the numbers, you know."

"But the numbers run criss-cross. Do you suppose they will go on as we work a sampler, make little letters and then Old-English text? One girl has the most beautiful Old-English alphabet worked in red silk, but it is very hard to tell the letters." [227]

Jaqueline laughed. "No! I think they will take names then."

"They make up parties and go to Analostan Island. And, do you know, there are beautiful falls up the Potomac, ever so far!"

"Yes; they are beautiful, indeed; and we will get the doctor to take us up some time."

"Everything is so"—glancing around for a word—"so interesting. And there are so many people. I like it very much. Only if we could have mamma and Charles and papa! Then, it would be mean to crowd out Varina."

"We'll have the whole household at Christmas."

Louis was very much interested in the surprise and pleasure over everything, and he found Annis quite a delightful companion for walks. She was so eager to hear about the founding of the City.

"It has only come of age," said Louis. "For the cornerstone was laid in 1793."

"And there are cities in Europe over a thousand years old! Oh, what an old world it must be!"

"But we are a new country altogether. Then, we have much older cities."

"After all," she said reflectively, "the ground was here. And some of the houses and the people."

They were still working on the Capitol. Stonecutters and marble-dressers in their little sheds were a common sight.

A great many people went to Christ Church, which had been erected soon after the laying out of the City. Then there was old St. Paul's, that had stood nearly a century, built, as many other places were, of brick brought from England. Since that day many a secret had been learned, and during the last three years the United States had manufactured largely, though many people sighed for foreign goods. [228]

There were two weeks in August when Madame Badeau went away for a little rest and change of air. Mrs. Collaston decided to spend a fortnight at Bladensburg, and though Aunt Jane cheerfully offered to keep Annis, Jaqueline insisted upon adding her to the party. Little Elizabeth Patricia, commonly called Bessie, and by her father Queen Bess, was thriving wonderfully.

Jaqueline had changed a good deal, but she was a greater favorite than ever, it seemed, and had no end of admirers. One of them, a very popular and well-to-do gentleman, made her an offer of marriage.

"Are you really going to stay single forever?" exclaimed her sister. "I wouldn't take Roger Carrington now if he asked me again. A man who cannot overlook a little tiff—though you did flirt shamefully, Jaqueline! But it doesn't much matter. I observe the men are just as ready to be flirted with again. Only don't wait too long, and don't pass by the good chances."

Having made an excellent marriage herself, she considered that her counsel and advice were worth a good deal to her unmarried friends.

Roger Carrington seemed to have passed out of Jaqueline's radius, whether purposely or not. Ralston spent much of his time out of Washington, inspecting and planning fortifications. Jaqueline kept up a friendly, occasional correspondence with him, and he had been strongly interested about Charles' mishap.

She was much too proud to allow herself to think she still cared for Roger, yet she admitted in her secret heart she had seen no one to put in his place, though there might be men quite as worthy.

Dr. Collaston went up to Philadelphia for a few days, and learned that his worst fears in regard to Charles had been realized. The most celebrated surgeon at that time, who bade fair to do quite as much for the advancement of medicine as Dr. Benjamin Rush had done in his day, a Dr. Physic, had been noting the case carefully, and decided that only an operation could prevent a settled deformity. Charles was growing stronger in some respects, and when the weather became cooler this would be undertaken. [229]

He told the elders, but they kept Annis in ignorance. She went back to school; and, though she had been small for her age, seemed suddenly to shoot up and outgrow everything.

"And I shall not be little Annis any longer. I suppose everybody does grow taller and older. And now I am past thirteen. When shall I be old enough to curtsey to Mrs. Madison?"

"Oh, you can do that at any time. And since Varina has gone to Charleston to visit Dolly Floyd, you ought to have some indulgence. She has been to a reception at the Governor's."

The election of Madison for a second term had been largely the result of the victories that had thrilled the nation. The navy was springing into existence as if by magic. Some fine English ships had been captured and graced by the Stars and Stripes, and were doing brilliant work under their new colors.

The *Constellation* came up the Potomac, gayly decorated with flags and bunting, and Captain Stewart gave a grand dinner, at which the President and his wife and Mrs. Madison's son, then a handsome and elegantly bred young man, were among the most distinguished guests. Louis had obtained cards for himself and lady through Judge Todd.

"You look pretty enough to be married," said Annis when she saw Jaqueline in her pretty pink gauze gown, the lace on it run with silver threads, and her dainty slippers with silver buckles set with brilliants that certainly did twinkle. The dinner was spread with every luxury the season afforded, and enhanced by the brilliant lights and profusion of cut-glass with its sparkling points. While the elders sat on the quarterdeck surrounded by some of the chief men of the nation, beneath an awning of red, white, and blue danced the belles and beaus. [230]

Lieutenant Ralston had come late, but he was in time for the dancing. When he caught sight of Jaqueline he made his way over to her.

"It has been so long since I have seen you!" he exclaimed. "And I really had not thought of meeting you to-night, but I shall be in Washington for a fortnight or more. And gay, pretty Patty has settled into a pattern wife and mother! Does she read you lectures?"

"Sometimes," returned Jaqueline, smiling.

"Tell me about all the others. It seems an age since I have heard of any of you."

"Then if you make such a little account of my letters I shall not write you any more."

"Nay, do not be so cruel. You can hardly call them letters, they are so brief. Still, I am glad to get them, and feel anxious about the poor little boy. You think he will recover?"

"Dr. Physic holds out hopes of a successful termination. But it will be very slow."

"And that dainty little Annis? You are mothering her? Do you know, your charming solicitude made me smile. Was she much homesick after her mother?"

"Only a little at first. She goes to school and is wonderfully interested."

"And Varina? Our little wasp?" laughingly. [231]

"Varina is spending the winter with Dolly. You know she married a Floyd connection. He has been elected a member of the State legislature this winter. Varina is quite a young lady. We Masons have a trick of growing up soon."

"And your grandmother? How fares it with her?"

Jaqueline smiled inwardly at this mark of respect, and retailed the little happenings at the Pineries. He listened attentively when Marian's name was mentioned, and made no bitter comment. Was it utter indifference?

"This is our dance," he said, offering his hand; and they glided down the polished deck. Then someone else came for her, and she saw very little more of him until he marched up to bid her good-by and assure her he should call speedily.

"What a fine fellow Ralston has made!" Louis said as they were returning home. "He has half a mind to go in the navy, he tells me. They are winning all the glory. But he is very eager about the defenses of Washington. I do wonder if there is any real danger?"

"Oh, I hope not!" anxiously.

"No; we do not want the war brought to our door."

"New York or Boston will offer greater attractions. The enemy is raging over the loss of the *Guerrière*, and threatens desperate revenge. Oh, we are safe enough!"

Annis was eager to hear all about the ball. Was it prettier because it was on a ship? And wasn't

Jaqueline glad to see Lieutenant Ralston again? Did anyone have a more beautiful frock?

"Oh, yes!" laughed Jaqueline.

"But no one was any prettier, I am sure," she said confidently.

The enthusiasm over the victories was running high. The news came of Commodore Decatur's famous victory off the Canary Islands, when he captured the *Macedonian* after an hour and a half of terrific fighting, with the loss of only five men killed and seven wounded. The *United States* brought her prize into New York amid great rejoicing. [232]

The news was hailed in Washington with the utmost enthusiasm. It so happened that the evening had been selected for a brilliant naval ball, to celebrate the two other victories, and as a compliment to Captain Stewart. Ralston had been in a few days before with invitations for the Collaston household.

"I almost wish I was grown up," said Annis wistfully. "Can't little girls ever see anything?"

"Why, she ought to go," declared Ralston. "There may not be such another event until peace is declared, and if we go on this way, it must be, ere long. But it will be a great thing to remember in years to come. Think of the old ladies who saw our beloved Washington and the heroes of the Revolution, how glad they are to talk it all over! Oh, Annis must go, by all means!"

"But such a mere child!" said Patty.

"Well, she has eyes and ears. I will take her myself. Mistress Annis Mason, may I have the pleasure of escorting you to the grand naval ball? It will give me a great deal of pleasure, I assure you. I am a bachelor, fancy free, so no one's heart will be broken."

He rose as he said this, and crossed the room to where Annis was sitting, leaning her arm on Jaqueline's knee.

The child colored and glanced up in a puzzled manner.

"Well—why do you not answer?" said Patty in amusement. "Madame Badeau ought to train you in polite deportment."

"Can I say just what I should like?" a little timidly, glancing from one sister to the other.

"Yes," answered Patty laughingly. "Yes," said Jaqueline a little more gravely. [233]

Annis rose and made a formal little courtesy, holding the side of her skirt with charming grace.

"It will afford me the greatest pleasure to accept your invitation, Lieutenant Ralston," she said in a stately and dignified manner.

"Thank you! That is very handsomely done. After this show of proper and ceremonious behavior you cannot refuse her permission?" turning to the elders.

"We are vanquished, certainly," admitted Patty. "Now you may be good enough, perhaps, to tell us what she must wear."

He glanced her over. "Some simple white frock," he said. "Then you might tie a red ribbon in her hair, and put on her a blue sash, and she will be the national colors."

"Luckily her hair isn't golden or red or black, so we shall not startle anyone."

"Now, remember there is no white feather to be shown," said the lieutenant. "You may be a soldier's wife some day."

Annis blushed.

Later, when she was alone with Jaqueline, she put her arms about the elder's neck.

"Dear Jaqueline," she said with a tender accent, "do you think you will like my going to the ball? If it isn't quite right I will stay at home. And are you sure the lieutenant was in earnest?"

"There is no reason why you should not go, except that children are not generally taken to balls. And it will be a grand thing for you to remember."

Annis kissed her, much relieved.

"I do so want to go," she returned after a little pause.

And that morning the news was announced by an extra from the office of the *National Intelligencer*. People went about in high spirits. As soon as the twilight appeared illuminations sprang up at many important points. Private houses were aglow from every window, and more than one flag waved. Washington was full of gayety and rejoicing. And some who did not go to the ball had strains of patriotic music to cheer the passer-by. [234]

Entertainments began early. Tomlinson's Hotel was soon filled with guests, the beauty and fashion of the city. The captured flags of the *Alert* and *Guerrière* were arranged over a sort of dais where Mrs. Madison and the Cabinet ladies sat, while the secretaries stood about them. There was a host of military and naval men. Gold lace and epaulettes and swords gleamed with every movement, while women were lovely in satins and velvets and laces. Mrs. Madison wore a

handsome gray velvet, trimmed with yellow satin and lace, and on her head a filmy sort of turban with some short white plumes. A neckerchief of fine soft lace rested lightly on her shoulders, but displayed the still beautiful throat and neck. The little curls across her forehead were still jet-black, and though women powdered and rouged, she was one of the few who "wore a natural complexion," said a newspaper correspondent.

One and another made a bow to her and passed on. Dr. Collaston and his wife, Jaqueline and a handsome young naval officer, and then Lieutenant Ralston and his young charge. Annis was a little bewildered. She had seen Mrs. Madison in the carriage, and at times walking about the grounds at the White House; but this really awed her, and a rush of color came to her fair face. Mrs. Madison held out her hand, and gave her a kindly greeting.

"What a pretty child!" she said to one of the ladies. "The American colors, too. How proud the lieutenant was of her! I remember now that Miss Jaqueline Mason is quite a belle. Perhaps it is her sister." [235]

"That was beautifully done, Annis," whispered the lieutenant. "Now there is a friend of mine, a young midshipman, that you must meet. Will it be out of order for you to dance, I wonder? And there is Captain Hull. You must see all the heroes, so you can tell the story over your grandchildren."

It seemed to Annis that everyone must be a hero. There was the young middy, a Mr. Yardley, who did not look over sixteen, and who was going out on his first cruise next week.

"Has Miss Mason any relatives in the war?"

How queer "Miss Mason" sounded! She looked about to see who was meant. The young man complimented her on her colors. He had a brother, a lieutenant on the *Constitution*, and two cousins in the army on the frontier. We should gain the victory again, as we did in the Revolution. As a boy he used to be sorry he had not lived then, but this made amends. Only, nothing could compensate for not having seen Washington, the hero of them all.

Presently the dancing began. Mrs. Collaston and Jaqueline were both engaged, but Jaqueline put Annis in charge of a charming middle-aged woman whose daughters were dancing, and who, being a Virginian and residing at Yorktown, could recall all the particulars of the surrender of Lord Cornwallis.

Then Annis had her promised dance with the lieutenant. It was like a bit of fairyland. She thought Cinderella could not have been any happier with the prince. Afterward Mr. Yardley came, though by this time the floor was pretty well crowded. He was about to lead her back to Jaqueline, who was talking with Mrs. Todd, when she stopped suddenly and put out her hand.

"Oh!" she cried, then turned rosy-red.

"Is it—why, it is little Annis Bouvier! Child, how you have grown! Do they let you go to balls as young as this?" [236]

"I wanted to so much. And it is beautiful! They are all here—"

There was a sudden commotion. Half a dozen gentlemen cut off their retreat. Then a whisper went round the room, growing louder and louder, and cheers sounded in the hallway.

"Ensign Hamilton with the captured flag!"

Secretary Hamilton rose, and the throng made way for him. Just at the doorway they met, the son with dispatches from Commodore Decatur and the captured colors of the *Macedonian*. A cheer almost rent the room. And as he advanced his mother met him with a clasp of wordless joy.

The President had been detained on some important business. But the procession made its way to the dais where the ladies were sitting, and the trophy of victory was unfurled amid loud acclamations. The band played "Hail, Columbia!" and when it ceased the young man modestly made a brief speech. The dispatches were for the President; the flag he laid at Mrs. Madison's feet—the flag that was next of kin to that of the *Guerrière*.

The enthusiasm was so great that the dancing stopped. The flag was raised to a place beside that of the other two trophies. Old veterans wiped their eyes, the ladies waved their handkerchiefs, and more than one voice had a break in it.

Annis stood breathless. Mr. Carrington towered above her, and he could barely see; but he had heard the story in the hall, and was repeating it. The clasp of her soft hand touched him.

"If you want to go nearer," he said to Mr. Yardley, "I will take care of Miss Annis. I am an old friend of the family." [237]

"It would be hopeless to think of getting her to her sister's just now. Yes—I should like to see young Hamilton."

"That is excuse enough for anyone," and Carrington smiled, bowing a polite dismissal.

"I am so glad to find you!" Annis said with childlike simplicity. "We have missed you so much. Where have you been all this long time?"

"We? Who?" He bowed his head a little.

"Charles and I. And do you know Charles is ill and in the doctor's hands at Philadelphia?"

"No; I have been away three months—up on the northern frontier and in Boston. Poor Charles! Is he likely to recover?"

"He was to come home at Christmas, but he can't now," and she sighed a little. "And papa too," irrelevantly thinking of his earlier question. "We were all sorry."

"I don't think everybody could have been," after a little pause.

She raised her soft, beseeching eyes. "Are you still angry with Jaqueline?" she asked. "I am sure she is sorry. Patty teases her and says she will be an old maid because—"

Then Annis hung her pretty head.

"What makes you think she was sorry?"

He looked down into the eyes with an infinite persuasion, and his voice had an accent hard to resist.

"Oh!—because—she was sometimes so sad and sweet, and used to go walking by herself in the twilight. Occasionally she would let me come. I can't quite tell—there are some things you feel. And it isn't right to keep angry forever."

The child's tone was more assured. She was on firmer moral ground. [238]

"Then you think I have been angry long enough?" It had seemed years to him.

"Papa was very angry and scolded Jaqueline, but didn't keep angry. Charles and I have been so sorry! Oh, you will make up friends?"

"You love Charles as much as ever, then? Happy Charles! When you have love you have all the best of life."

"Then why don't you ask Jaqueline to love you again? Oh, I am sure she would!"

There was a sweet seriousness in the face and the tone, the innocence of the child.

"And why didn't you go to Philadelphia?" he asked presently.

"I wanted to. Don't you think it hard for a little girl to be giving up her mother continually? But if it is best—They could not take me, and Jaqueline said she would be like mamma, and love me and care for me. She is ever so sweet. And Patty and the baby are delightful. I like Dr. Collaston too. And I am going to school to a queer, delightful little French woman, Madame Badeau. And the French I used to know out in Kentucky all comes back to me."

"Yes," smilingly. "I have seen Madame Badeau." The throng was beginning to move. "Suppose we go up and have a look at this wonderful flag? I think war terrible; but it is good to be on the winning side, and certainly our poor sailors have suffered long enough. When we are a terror to our enemies they will learn to respect us. But, thank Heaven, you know nothing about the terrible side here! May God keep you safely!"

She raised her eyes with a grave half-smile as if to thank him for his benison.

The President had come in now. The band was playing patriotic tunes, several inspiriting Scotch pieces, for just now no one seemed anxious to dance. Ensign Hamilton was one of the heroes of [239] the occasion, and the pretty women were saying all manner of complimentary things to him. There in the throng stood Lieutenant Ralston and Midshipman Yardley, and, yes, there were Dr. and Mrs. Collaston.

Jaqueline was out of the group, listening to a vivid account of the taking of the *Guerrière* and the gala time there had been in old Boston Town.

Patricia turned and espied Annis, who held her head up proudly and looked as if she were used to going to balls every week of her life.

"Oh, Mr. Carrington!" reaching over a cordial hand. "What a stranger you are! I felt I ought to go in search of Annis, but I knew she was in good hands. Thank you for your care of her. Wasn't it all grand? Are you not proud of your country?"

"We have worked wonders on the sea, considering how unprepared we were and the strength of the enemy. I am no croaker, but we are not through yet. Heaven grant that we may be successful to the end! After all, we are a young nation; and we have fought in almost a new cause, the enlightenment of the people, not the glory or gain of kings."

"Annis, come and curtsey to some of these heroes. She is over-young for such a place as this, but it will be a proud thing to remember."

The throng shifted again. Ralston stepped aside and encountered Mr. Carrington.

"Roger, old fellow,"—and though his tone was low it had a cordial heartiness,—"in this time of gratulation private feuds ought to be buried. You were wrong in your surmise, as I told you then. Between myself and Miss Mason there has never been anything but the sincerest friendliness. Still, I asked her to marry me and she declined. Hearts are not so easily caught in the rebound, [240]

after all. And though she has many admirers she has not been won. Let us be friends again in her honor, for her sake."

"For our own sake, Ralston. If we are ever to make a grand country we must be united man to man. There is need enough of it. A scene like this will go far toward healing many dissensions, public and private. And I beg you to pardon what I said out of a sore and desperate heart."

"Friends!" repeated Ralston joyously.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FLAG OF VICTORY.

It was true that the victories did go far toward healing dissensions. While the indignation against England had run high, there was a bitter opposition in some quarters to every act of the administration. There was jarring in the Cabinet as well as outside. The larger cities had never cordially approved of the Capital at Washington. They had had rejoicing over successes, and now it was the turn of the newer city.

Mrs. Madison's drawing room always presented a gay and beautiful aspect. Many strangers came to the city. Washington Irving paid a second visit, and was most graciously received and became a great favorite. Society took on a finer aspect. Poets appeared, mostly patriotic ones; and though to-day we may smile over them, their sincerity moved the hearts of their readers and won applause, inspired enthusiasm.

Jaqueline Mason had taken another ramble around the room when she saw Roger Carrington talking to her sister. The band played a grand march, and everybody fell into line, as this seemed to befit the occasion. Then some of the guests began to disperse, as the President, who looked very weary, and his smiling, affable wife, with so many more years of youth on her side, set the example. [241]

Carrington loitered with the Collaston party, debating whether he should meet Jaqueline. It would break the ice, perhaps. Patty had been so cordial. She had taken on so many pretty married airs that were charming. She talked about her house and her lovely baby, how Annis had grown, and how sweet it was of her to be content without her mother, and how sad it was about Charles. Louis joined them, full of enthusiasm. And at last Jaqueline and her escort came up.

"We thought we should have to go home without you," Patty said gayly. "Come; it is late. The carriage has been here waiting ever so long."

Jaqueline bowed to her old lover. Major Day, in his military trappings, was quite an imposing figure, and how beautiful she was! She had been a pretty young girl when he first met her; she was young still, in that early dawn of womanhood before the bud had quite unfolded. Had he expected to see her faded and worn in this brief period?

They all wished each other good-night.

Why did he not "ask Jaqueline to love him again"? He was not as sure as Annis had been. And now everything was different. Patty was already quite a figure in society, and Jaqueline could have her choice of lovers, husbands.

Annis longed to tell over her little episode of the meeting, but there seemed no time. Jaqueline was always going out and having company. Louis teased Annis when he saw her.

"Two conquests in one night for a little girl!" he exclaimed. "Oh, I saw you dancing with the young midshipman, and then on high parade with Mr. Carrington, who looked grave and grand, as if he was escorting about a lady of high degree. I am afraid Madame Badeau will make a woman of you too fast. Do you not think it would be better to send her over to the convent to steady her, Patty?" [242]

"Oh, I don't want to be shut up! I should run away. And I like the girls so much. The convent looks dreary. And they can walk only in that high-walled garden. I want the whole big outside world."

Louis laughed and pinched her cheek.

If Mr. Carrington wouldn't come and ask Jaqueline again, no one could do anything. Annis sighed in her tender heart, and felt that it was better not to retail the confidence.

Mrs. Madison's dinners were quite the events of the winter, and her levees were delightful entertainments. All parties began to harmonize more warmly; perhaps it was the gracious tact and affability of the hostess. The *National Intelligencer* espoused the cause of the Madisons enthusiastically, and congratulated the nation on his re-election. Roger Carrington began to haunt the entertainments he had so long shunned, or at the utmost merely devoted a few moments to them. Of course he met Jaqueline, who was simply indifferent, a much harder condition to overcome than if she had shown hauteur or resentment. And, then—in a worldly point of view she could do better.

For Washington, in a certain way, was prospering in spite of the war and privations. There was a feeling of permanence, as if the Capital really would be great some day. Houses were springing up, streets lengthening out, mudholes being filled up, pavements placed, and every year a little was added to the home of the nation. [243]

The time ran gayly around. The winter had seemed unusually brief. March came in again, and with it the second inauguration of James Madison, when the Capitol grounds were thronged as never before. The President was paler and thinner, and though it had been a triumph for his party, he sighed often for the quiet and rest of Montpellier.

Mrs. Madison, in rose-colored satin and ermine, looked "every inch a queen," said the papers of the day. And happier than some of the queens off or on European thrones, even if she had carried a great burden the last two years. And the ladies of the republican court certainly were not lacking in beauty or grace. The foreign ministers and their wives, in all their brave array, hardly excelled them; and the army and navy were in force.

Annis went to the levee. It was quite a crush, but a pleasure to the child to see the brilliant throng. Louis was her escort, and he was proud of her refined and lady-like manners. The French grace in her nature had been assiduously cultivated by the woman who still thought there was no place like France.

"We will go home early," Patty said. "Jaqueline is to stay and help entertain. She's getting to be such a grand lady that I suppose she will be marrying a senator or a secretary next, and perhaps be Mrs. President herself. She and Mrs. Seaton are hand and glove." Mrs. Seaton was the pretty wife of the editor of the *National Intelligencer*. "But I am tired, and the doctor will be out all night, so we will get some beauty sleep."

She sent the servant for the carriage. One of the guests escorted them through the spacious hall and out on the portico. A merry party were coming up, and Annis, turning aside for them, slipped, landing in a little heap on the stone pavement. Patty uttered a cry. [244]

A gentleman at the foot of the steps picked her up before Patty or Mr. Fenton could reach her.

"Oh, Mr. Carrington!" cried Patty; and now the other guests ran down to see what injury they had done, quite alarmed at the incident.

Annis drew a long sigh and flung her arms about her rescuer's neck, quite ignorant who it might be, but still frightened.

"No, I do not think I am hurt," in a shaken voice.

"Take her to the carriage, please," entreated Patty. "And, Mr. Fenton, do not mention it to my sister nor my brother, if you see them. Good-night, and thanks."

Mr. Carrington carried her to the edge of the walk and then put her down.

"I feel shaky," she began, with a tremulous laugh. "But I am quite sure I have not broken any bones."

Patty stepped in first. Mr. Carrington assisted Annis, and then studied the pale face.

"Do you not think I had better accompany you?" he asked solicitously.

"But you were just going in to pay your respects to Mrs. Madison—" declared Patty.

"I shall have four years more to do it in," he returned. "Where is the doctor? Yes, I had better be sure of your safety."

"He is out on business. Really, he is getting to be quite hard-worked. And if you would not mind. I should take it as a favor. Then we can see if Annis is really injured."

He sprang in, and the coachman closed the door.

"It was very funny to take that flying leap, as if I were a bird," and Annis could not forbear laughing. "What did I look like, dropping at your feet? I was so bundled up that I couldn't save myself. There is a bump swelling up on my forehead." [245]

"Lucky if there is nothing worse," responded Patty.

Annis was carried up the steps and deposited on the drawing-room sofa. Patty took off her wraps, and made her stand up and try all her limbs. She began to feel quite natural and over her fright. There was a lump on her forehead, but her hood had protected the skin.

"I am delighted to think it is no worse," the gentleman said.

"And it is a pity to have disturbed you. But the doctor being out, I felt nervous; and a friend is so good at such a time. I am sure we are much indebted for your kindness."

Annis put out her hand and clasped his. "I am glad it was you," she said with simple thankfulness.

Then they talked of Charles. He had been put in a plaster jacket. Dr. Collaston was quite sure the best was being done, but it would be spring before he could be brought home.

Patty was very cordial at the parting, and invited him to call.

"And see what happens to me next," said Annis.

"You may be sure I shall want to know."

He did not go back to the levee. Jaqueline was there, being admired and flattered. Now and then he heard complimentary things said about her, and young men sent her verses, quite an ordinary event at that time. She had forgotten, and he remembered only too well. Annis must have been wrong, yet he had hugged the child's innocent prattle to his heart. He knew now he had not ceased to love her, yet he had thought in his pride that if she could love Ralston he would not stand in the way. His jealousy had been of the larger, finer type.

With all these opportunities she had accepted no lover. Her attractions were of a more refined kind than when she had made her first plunge into gayety. Was there something—No, he hardly [246] dared believe it. He had been imperious and arbitrary.

He had not the courage to go the next day and inquire after Annis. He knew it was a polite duty. He walked down past Madame Badeau's little gray house when school was being dismissed. There was no Annis among the girls. What if she had been injured more than they thought! He would stop and inquire at the office. There were several men talking eagerly with the doctor, so he strolled around the corner. Yes, that was Jaqueline sitting with her face turned from the window, chatting to someone. The proud poise of the head, the shining dark curls just shadowing her white neck, the pink ear like a pearly sea shell, and then her slim white hand held up in some gesticulation, and the smile that made a dainty dimple. No, he would not interrupt her; so he walked on. If she had turned her head—but she did not.

He was very busy the next day. When he left the office a carriage full of young girls passed him. Some of them nodded; he was not quite sure whether *she* did or not. Now was his opportunity.

The day had been rather raw, with a fitful sunshine, but now it was clouding over. He walked briskly, and held his head erect, although he felt rather cowardly at heart. Why should he not put his fate to the touch, like a man, or dismiss her from his mind? He sauntered up the stoop and touched the knocker lightly—so lightly, indeed, that Julius, amid the clatter of Dinah's pots and pans, did not hear it.

The carriage stopped. It was rather dusky now, and a tree hid the figure at the door until Jaqueline was coming up the steps. His heart beat furiously. He turned, and they faced each other. [247]

Her hat, with the great bow on the top, was tied under her chin with rose-colored ribbons. A satin collar edged with swan's down stood up around her throat and almost touched the pink cheeks. The great soft, dark eyes glanced out in surprise—they could flame in anger too, he knew that.

He had thought more than once how gradually he would lead up to that old time, and learn if she still loved him. And she had resolved upon a becoming humility on his part. He should admit that he had misjudged her, that he had been selfish, arbitrary, suspicious, jealous, and—oh, how many faults she had counted upon her white fingers!

"Jaqueline," he said almost under his breath—"Jaqueline!"—and it seemed as if his voice had never been so sweet, a fragrant shower falling on a long-parched heart. He was trying to find her hand; did it come out of the great muff quite as broad as her slim figure, all soft and warm, to be pressed to his lips?

"Are you very angry still?" she inquired in the dearest, most beseeching tone.

"Angry?" He had forgotten all about it. He had been fatuous, senseless, to think of such a thing!

"Because—" in a fascinating cadence of pardon.

"I have not had a happy moment." His voice was husky with emotion, with the love that he had told himself a hundred times was dead, and a hundred times had disbelieved.

"I had given you up. Not that I had ceased—to care. And that night of the ball, when the flags came, I was quite sure you loved me no longer."

"I shall love you always. I was mad, foolish, jealous—"

"And I did flirt. Oh, I was such a vain little thing then! I am better now. I do not think it so fine to have a host of men making love to you. Only you were wrong about—" [248]

"Ralston? Yes."

"But you must know, he *did* ask me to marry him. I do not think it was for love."

"I am glad it was not. I told him he owed you an offer of marriage."

"But he did not. There had never been any foolish softness between us. A Virginian girl may flirt, but she doesn't give away the sweetness that only a lover is entitled to. And what if I *had* loved him?"

"If you had loved him I should have wished you Godspeed, after a while."

"But you couldn't have done it at first?"

"No, I couldn't." The hearty tone was convincing.

It was quite dark now. He put his arm about her and drew her nearer, nearer, and ceased to kiss her hand.

"Oh, my darling; here I am keeping you out in the cold! Are you almost frozen? And I came to hear about Annis. I have been wondering if I should ever meet you where I could say a word—"

"Annis is your very good friend. So was Charles. And papa was fearfully angry at my folly. They were all on your side."

"And now you are on my side?"

"Yes," with a soft, happy little laugh.

Then he knocked again. This time Julius heard, and answered.

Annis was sitting on the floor, playing with the baby, who was laughing and cooing.

"I thought you wouldn't come—ever!" she said vehemently. "I had a headache yesterday, and Patty wouldn't let me go to school, but the doctor said it didn't amount to anything. It was funny, though. Jaqueline, where did you find him?" [249]

"On the stoop," and Jaqueline gave a queer little laugh. How soft and shining her eyes were, and her cheeks were like pink roses just in bloom. Annis felt something mysterious stirring in the air. Then Jaqueline ran away.

"Did you ask her?" Annis raised her clear eyes with a sweet, solemn light.

"Yes. Annis, you are to be my little sister."

"I shall grow big, more's the pity," she said sententiously. "And I hate to be big!"

He laughed at that.

The doctor had taken his wife over to Arlington, for he disliked to ride alone except when he was in great haste; and just as Dinah had begun to fume about supper they came in. Mr. Carrington had a warm welcome from them, and they all laughed over Annis' mishap. But when Jaqueline entered the story was told, as love stories always are; and they kept Roger to tea. No one came, for a cold, drizzling rain set in, and he had Jaqueline to himself.

"Still, she might have done a great deal better," said Dr. Collaston. "Jaqueline ought to go to some foreign court as the wife of a minister, she is so elegant. Or the wife of a secretary of state."

He had his desire years afterward, when Jaqueline and her husband went to the French court. Napoleon had been swept away by the hand of fate, and royalty sat on the throne.

Roger said they must go over and tell his mother the joyful news. Ralph's wife was a sweet home body, and she had a thriving son that was his great-grandmother's pride. But the mother's heart was strongly centered in her firstborn, and she had suffered keenly in his sorrows, though they had never talked them over. They had been too deep, too sacred.

"Only love him, my dear," she said to Jaqueline. "There are some people who think you can love a person too much; but when they have gone beyond your ken you are most glad of the times you gave them overflowing measure." The young girl knew then she was forgiven. [250]

Jaqueline was not less a favorite in society because she was an engaged young lady, but she was more circumspect; and certainly now Roger had nothing to complain of. Only life seemed too short ever to make up the lost months.

Annis was as happy as the lovers themselves. She was very companionable and never in the way. There was a curious ingrained delicacy about her. Dr. Collaston declared he was jealous. He and little Bessy ought to outweigh the regard for Mr. Carrington.

"But I knew him first. It's the longest friendship," glancing up archly.

"I have taken you to my heart and home—doesn't that count? And Mr. Carrington has no home."

Annis was not prepared for that argument. She could not seem ungrateful.

Spring came on apace. What a lovely season it was! Beautiful wild flowers sprang up at the roadsides, the trees and shrubbery put on infinite tints of green. The river, really majestic then, making a broad lake after its confluence with the eastern branch; the marshy shores, dotted with curious aquatic plants that had leave to grow undisturbed and bloom in countless varieties, if not so beautiful; the heights of Arlington, with the massive pines, hemlocks, and oaks, and flowering trees that shook great branches of bloom out on the air like flocks of flying birds, and filled every nook and corner with fragrance. And as the season advanced the apricot, pear, and peach came out, some of them still in a comparatively wild state, finer as to bloom than fruit.

There lay pretty Alexandria, with the leisurely aspect all towns wore at that day. Great cultivated fields stretched out as far as the eye could see. Diversified reaches in hill and woodland broke the surface into a series of beguiling pictures, as if one could wander on for ever and ever. [251]

And then, at the bend of the river, Mount Vernon in its peaceful silence; a place for pilgrimages

even at that time, and destined, like Arlington, to become more famous as the years rolled on. But while the former was shrouded in reverent quiet, Arlington was the scene of many a gay gathering. If Mrs. Madison sometimes wearied of the whirl of pleasure so different from her Quaker girlhood and early married life, the ease with which she laid down the trappings and ceremonies of state and adapted herself to the retirement of Montpellier showed that she had not been wedded to the glitter and adulation, and that the ease and comfort of country life were not distasteful to her. While not a strongly intellectual woman, nor the mother of heroes, there is something exquisitely touching in her devotion to her husband's mother in her old age, and then to her husband through the years of invalidism. It seems a fitting end to a well-used life that in her last years she should come back to the dear friends of middle-life, still ready to pay her homage, and to the new city that had run through one brief career, to be as great a favorite as ever.

And now, when balls and assemblies began to pall on the pleasure-seekers,—and one wonders, in the stress of the war, how so much money could have been spent on pleasure and fine-dressing,—excursions up the Potomac to the falls, so beautiful at that time, were greatly in vogue. Carriages and equestrians thronged the road, followed by great clumsy covered wagons and a regiment of slaves, who built fires and cooked viands that were best hot, or made delicious drinks, hot and cold. [252]

About fifteen miles above were the Great Falls. In the early season, when spring freshets gathered strength and power in the mountain range of the Alleghanies, the river swelled by the affluents in its course, and bursting through the Blue Mountains at Harper's Ferry, swept onward with resistless force until it came to this natural gorge, where it fell over a declivity of some thirty to forty feet. Indeed, this was one of the great natural curiosities of the time, and foreigners made the pilgrimage with perhaps as much admiration as Niagara elicits from more jaded senses.

Nearer the City, and convenient for an afternoon drive, were the Cascades, some five or six miles above Georgetown—a series of rushing streams divided by rocks, tumbling, leaping, quivering in the sunshine, and sending out showers of spray full of iridescent gleams and bits of rainbows that danced around like fays in gorgeous robes. Here merry parties laughed and chatted, ate, and drank each other's healths, and tripped lightly to the inspiriting music of black fiddlers, who threw their very souls as well as their swaying bodies into the gay tunes.

Others, lovers most frequently, rambled about in the shady dells and exchanged vows—gave promises that were much oftener kept than broken, to their credit be it said. Though at that time there was much merry badinage and keen encounters of wits. Reading was not so greatly in vogue; women spent no time at clubs or over learned essays. "A new-fashioned skirt of emerald-green sarcenet faced with flutings of white satin with pipings of green, and a fine white mull tunic trimmed with fringes of British silk, with green satin half-boots and long white gloves stitched with green," filled many souls with envy at one of the assemblies, says an old journal.

Patterns were borrowed, and poor maids sometimes were at their wits' ends to copy them. Most households had two or three women who were deft with the needle, and who were kept pretty busy attending to their mistresses' wardrobes. Occasionally a happy blunder brought in a new style. Privateers sometimes captured cargoes of finery and smuggled them into some unguarded port, and already manufacturers were beginning to copy foreign goods with tolerable success. [253]

As for the living, there was an abundance of everything in the more southern provinces. Fruits of all kinds seemed to grow spontaneously, crops were simply magnificent, poultry, game, fish, and oysters were used without stint. They were wise, these people who had not drifted to the bleak New England shores, where the living was wrested from the soil and consciences were not yet sufficiently free to unite happiness with goodness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OF MANY THINGS.

"Oh, where is mamma?" cried Annis, as she was clasped in Mr. Mason's arms one morning.

"Can't you give me mamma's welcome also?" inquired the kindly voice. "Why, Annis, what a large girl you are! It seems as if we must have been away an age for you to change so."

"Am I changed?" She laughed cheerfully. "Isn't it time I grew? Varina said in her last letter that she was five feet four inches. And I am not five feet yet. And Rene has been to assemblies, in long gowns. I went to two balls, and that of the flags was—magnificent."

"I shall have to look after my flock more sharply. You will all run wild."

"But mamma?"

Then he told her that although the operations had been a success, and there was now no danger of Charles growing crooked, he was still in a very delicate state of health, and the doctor had ordered him a cool climate for the summer. They were to go farther north and travel about a bit. [254]

A sea voyage was supposed to be the best, but that was quite impossible in the present state of affairs and the dangers of the ocean.

"Oh, I thought you were sure to come home!" she exclaimed disappointedly.

"We are sure of nothing, it seems. Are you very homesick?"

A quick rift of color flashed up in her face. "I'm not homesick at all. I like Washington so much. There are so many beautiful places, and the sails on the rivers and queer nooks where the Indians used to live, and the Capitol and the Senate where the great men talk, and so many lovely people in fine clothes, and the officers, and the French minister's carriage that spins along like a great butterfly, and handsome Mrs. Madison and the grand ladies—"

"You will hardly want to go back to the plantation."

"Jaqueline is going to live in Washington," she said, evading the question.

"I am afraid you are getting off with the old love," half reproachfully.

"Not mamma, not—oh, I love you all just the same!" clasping his arm vehemently.

Her cheeks were very bright. She experienced a curious feeling about Charles. Perhaps it was because she had seen these grown lovers so much, and she herself was growing out of childish things.

Mr. Mason was on his way to the plantation, and then to the Pineries. His mother had missed his visits very much through the winter, and she was becoming more feeble. [255]

They all felt disappointed that Charles was not really well.

"It is probably the best thing you can do," said Dr. Collaston. "He needs bracing up after this trying ordeal. I was afraid he would sink under it."

"The doctors consider it quite wonderful. When I think how narrow his escape has been from lifelong deformity—"

The father's voice broke a little. Not an hour ago he had been talking to Louis, straight, tall, vigorous, with clear eyes and skin pink with the rich blood coursing through his veins; and the contrast between him and the poor pale lad had been great indeed.

"It will be all right. Surgery is making rapid strides. So is everything. I am glad not to be any older, and I hope to live to see a great and grand country. Why, I may reasonably count on fifty years!" laughing light-heartedly.

Yet he would have been shocked if he could have looked at Washington fifty years from then—with a gift of prescience.

Mr. Mason was gratified to meet Roger Carrington again in the relationship to which he had once so cordially welcomed him. Jaqueline was sweet and tender and very happy. But what a fine young woman she had become! And Patty was as matronly and motherly as if she had been married half a century. But Randolph Mason gave a little sigh as he thought how children grow up and out of the old home nest.

The plantation was in good shape. There had been some unimportant deaths, a number of marriages, and many births. Virginia slaves were a prolific race, and added to the wealth of the master. They were all overjoyed to see him, and full of regret that "missus" wasn't with him. [256]

"'Pears laik everybody been daid and buried but Mas'r Louis," said old Chloe.

At the Pineries nothing seemed changed. Brandon Floyd was beginning to look like his father, and was taking on the same important airs. He was very bitter about "Madison's war, that no doubt would last as long as the other war, by the looks of things, and leave us in the same plight."

When Mr. Mason thought of his own blooming girls his heart really ached for Marian. After all, there was nothing like a home of her own and a love of her own for a woman. He was glad Jaqueline had come back to hers.

But it brought about a rather perplexing point, not so easily settled, it would seem. Mr. Carrington importuned for an early marriage. Jaqueline had bidden him wait until her father came.

The lover pleaded his cause so well that the father could hardly say him nay.

"What do you most desire?" to Jaqueline. "We may not be back until quite in the autumn. I have been seized with a strong inclination to see a little of our own big land," laughingly. "We are proud of our share in the old war, but other States had a hand in it as well. It makes a man feel more a citizen of the whole country—and a grand place it is. So we shall not hurry."

He gave her a wistful glance, as if to read her wish in the matter.

"I would quite as lief wait. Everything would have to be so different. But," blushing, "it was the rock on which we went to pieces before."

Her father nodded.

"There would be great disappointment on the old place. But you might go down and stay a week or so. Varina is so in love with Dolly and Charleston that we settled she should remain until autumn, when Dolly and her husband are coming up for a visit. That young Floyd seems to be [257] quite somebody. I always thought Dolly flighty, but she appears to have some common sense, after all."

"And Varina is quite a woman. I hope she won't be utterly spoiled. Of course," tentatively, "it would be a quiet wedding. I think I would like it in church."

Then, she had really considered it.

"Why not?" said Patty. "So many of the girls around home are married and gone, and unless you could have a crowd it would be dismal. Then, you have so many friends in Washington. To be sure, it would be queer for a girl to be married without all her family about her. Mamma and Charles and Varina! Well, we've one more than half of them. Jaqueline, if you hadn't made that fuss before—"

"Yes," returned Jaqueline meekly.

Mrs. Jettson added her voice in favor of the marriage. It had to be so speedily arranged. There were friends ready enough to be bridesmaids; indeed, the subject was taken up in such earnest that Jaqueline was likely to be married out of hand. All that was really needed was a wedding gown and an appearing-out dress; all the rest could be done afterward, and there was her mother's bridal gown waiting for her.

When it came to the point, instead of a simple wedding it was a very grand one. One of the Cabinet ladies sent her a veil to wear because it was luck to be married in something borrowed, and the veil had been worn at the coronation of King George. Mrs. Sweeny worked night and day altering over the wedding gown, which was a mass of satin, sheer gauze, and lace, with a train carried by a daintily attired page. Annis held her prayer book and her glove when the ring was put on her finger. Christ Church was crowded with the *élite* of Washington, said a journal of the [258] day. Mrs. Madison graced the scene, and Mrs. Cutts, with whom Jaqueline was a great favorite, while Judge and Mrs. Todd were warm in congratulations. It was really quite an event, and Roger felt almost as if he had married a princess of the blood royal. Such parties and dinners as were showered upon the young couple, and such compliments as the handsome bride received, were almost enough to turn one's head.

Annis was kept busy writing journal-like letters to mamma and Charles. And what treasures the old journals and letters are to-day! How Mrs. Carrington went to Christ Church Sunday morning in "a violet satin gown trimmed with fine silk ruffles edged with lace, and a white satin petticoat with embroideries in violet silk and gold thread. A fine-wrought lace scarf that her own mother had brought from Paris, white satin boots with gold lacings, long white silk gloves embroidered in lavender, and a white Neapolitan hat with a wide fluted rim, trimmed with a drawn silk lining and rows of piping, and a great cluster of lilies and violets and ostrich plumes."

The wedding veil was returned. Annis was to wear the wedding gown later on, and at a very modern entertainment quite late in the century Jaqueline's grand-daughter won no end of admiration in it.

So when Randolph Mason had given his eldest daughter away, and kissed her good-by with a thousand tender wishes, he went back to the pale little son and his dear nurse, as if he had had some sort of a gala dream mixed up with a whirlwind.

"I wish Jacky had waited," said Charles with a sigh. "I should like to have seen it."

"It wouldn't have been half so grand at home. Washington is a fine place for such a thing."

"Finer than Philadelphia?" [259]

"Oh, no!" Mr. Mason smiled, remembering the simple church. There were grander ones here. And, except the Capitol, the White House, and parts of several public buildings, there was nothing so very grand. But the concourse of people could hardly have been matched.

"Didn't Annis want to come with you?"

"She did at first. Then the wedding drove all other desires out of her mind. I was afraid she would make a time when I started. But everything was in such a bustle!"

"Couldn't she have come here for a week or two, before we start?"

"How would we have sent her back?"

"We wouldn't have sent her back then," said the boy triumphantly.

His father smiled. "She has grown so, and changed some way. Her hair is not quite so light. And she can chatter in French like a native. Patty thinks her very smart."

"And I have not grown any!" he subjoined in a disconsolate tone. "I am not allowed to study. She will get way ahead of me. But she doesn't know Latin, and she can't go to college."

And perhaps he could marry her. He was not so sure of that now. Perhaps he would never marry anyone. But he was glad Roger Carrington had Jaqueline.

Annis tried very hard to be sorry at not seeing her mother. She was frightened because she did not want to cry over it as she had at first. She had given up mamma to Charles, and to be sorry and want her back was selfish. Then there were so many things to do, and so many pleasures. There was not time enough to run over to Aunt Jane's every day, yet the children were so fond of her. She knew some girls, too, who were asking her to supper every few days, or to join some party to the woods, or to sail up or down the river. It was such a lovely thing to be alive and well! [260] When that came into her mind her very heart melted in pity for Charles.

Then, it was queer, but Louis had taken to calling her his little girl. He teased her sometimes, but he came to take her riding when she had any spare hours. She could hardly decide which was the handsomer, Louis or Mr. Carrington, and she thought it rather disloyal. Jaqueline said Roger was, by far.

And then came the plans for housekeeping. Roger and she inspected some houses. It would be more convenient in Washington, but Georgetown was much prettier. And there were suburban districts.

"But think of the winter nights in the rain and the mud, and sometimes sleet, and the time wasted going back and forth. Isn't it a bit of patriotism to want to build up one's own city? We are a small people as yet, compared to some other places. If we don't increase and multiply and spread out, and fill up our vacant squares, our honor may be taken from us."

"After so noble an argument I shall have to agree with you that it is our bounden duty to remain," replied Jaqueline with an arch smile.

"Mother would like us at Georgetown, but she has Ralph and his wife."

"Oh, do stay!" cried Annis. "I like Washington so much!"

"The casting vote. We remain. Annis, you are to come with us. We couldn't give you up now."

"Until mamma comes home. Of course I belong to her."

They went down to the old plantation, and the house slaves made a big feast; the field hands had an illumination of lanterns and big pine knots. But Annis thought the great house lonely. Then she recalled what her father once said—when all the children were married she would stay there [261] with her mother and him. Jaqueline and Patty and Varina would have husbands and children, and Annis shivered at a strange consciousness of solitude.

Jaqueline had been instructed to take her outfit, and anything she wanted, her father said. Chloe knew all about the bed and table linen: didn't she bleach it up every spring in May dew? Such a packing, such a rejoicing time over missy's husband "that she got at last," which meant nothing derogatory nor that she had made a great effort; only most of the slaves had great faith in first loves for white folks, and a happy ending to an engagement.

There was the house to put in order and the "house-warming" to give, a grand dinner for married friends and a dance for the young people, when Louis was master of ceremonies, and bright eyes grew still brighter with pleasure at his notice.

Almost before one had noted, there were cool nights and ripening foliage, house-cleaning, and preparation for winter. Ah, how lovely the banks of the Potomac were, and Rock Creek! Jaqueline begged that they should take their first ride over again. There were various first things to do. The mother over at Georgetown claimed them frequently. Ralph's wife was very nice and sweet, but Jaqueline brought a curious stir and dazzle in the house, and an atmosphere as of a spring morning.

Charles had improved wonderfully. There were some remarkable springs up the Hudson that had wonderful health-giving properties. And when they came back to New York he was so taken with the advantages that he begged to remain. The doctor in whose charge he had been, promised to watch over him and not allow him to study too severely, and a nice boarding place had been found for him with a charming motherly woman. [262]

"Oh, Annis!" cried her mother, holding her off after the first fond embrace, "let me look at you. I have lost my little girl!"

"Mamma, I couldn't stay little always. But the part that loves and thinks doesn't change, and I have tried very hard sometimes not to want you when I knew Charles needed you. I am so glad to get you back! Oh, you *do* believe that? But there is a queer thing I don't understand. When we first came to Virginia it was very hard to try to love the others when they took so much attention."

She was studying her mother with large, earnest, lustrous eyes.

"Yes," said Mrs. Mason, with a fond embrace.

"And now I love them all so much. I'm not quite sure about Varina—I have not seen her in so long. But I love you the best."

The mother kissed her fondly. No one, not even her husband, who was so grateful for the sacrifice she had made, knew how hard a trial it had been to her.

Just as they were considering whether they could leave Annis at school and do without her, word

came from the Pineries. Mrs. Floyd had a sudden stroke, not so very severe, but at her time of life a serious matter.

Young Mrs. Floyd and her husband and Varina came North a few days after this. There was a month of slow wasting away. Mrs. Brandon Floyd had a new baby, Marian was almost worn out, and Mrs. Mason found herself the comforter again, and much needed. Then grandmamma slipped out of life, and was laid by the side of Mr. Floyd; and Mr. Mason, seconded warmly by his wife, insisted that Marian should spend the winter with them and rest, perhaps make it her future home.

Varina was a tall, rather distinguished-looking girl who had blossomed somewhat prematurely into womanhood. Annis was still a little girl beside her. She was gay and bright, and full of her [263]
own good times. Jaqueline's marriage was delightful; they had enjoyed the account in the paper. Charles was well again, but what a sad time it had been for him! As for herself, she and Dolly were the dearest of sisters, and had had the best of times. She should coax papa to let her return to Charleston. She knew so many people there, and it would be just horrid to go back to the old plantation. There were all the others, and surely papa could spare her.

Dolly was very exigent as well. Mr. Mason realized that it would be dull for a young girl, with the household in mourning, and Marian half an invalid and dispirited. But he insisted upon a family gathering at Christmas, as Charles was to come home.

Mrs. Carrington would fain have had Roger and his wife, and Mr. Brandon Floyd sent a formal invitation for Jane and her family at the Pineries, but she chose the Masons instead. Marian was pale and grave, but improving under the fostering care of Mrs. Mason, who was the kindest of sisters. Bessy Collaston had a new little brother; and, with Dolly's one and Mrs. Jettson's four, there was quite an array of children.

But the most joyous of all was the welcome to Charles. Now he showed his real improvement. He had some color in his cheeks and his eyes were bright and lustrous; his voice rang with a clear sound.

Curiously enough, he seemed almost a stranger to Annis, and not the little boy with whom she had poured over Froissart. She had outgrown him; and as for Varina, she patronized him in a most uncomfortable fashion. They were all so glad to see him well once more that no one thought of teasing him, even when he aired his new-found knowledge unduly. Perhaps he was most flattered by the friendliness of his big brother-in-law Roger. [264]

Then followed the dispersion. It was best that Annis should stay at school the coming year, and Jaqueline declared she could not do without her. Truth to tell, what with her school friends and her various amusements, Annis began to feel as if Washington was her real home, and the plantation a place to visit. Her mother had so many long-neglected duties to take up, and Marian to nurse back to health and better spirits. She had done without her little girl so long, and clearly this was to the child's advantage.

Meanwhile the war had gone on with varying fortunes, but the navy of the country had gained various accessions by capture from the British and alterations from the merchant vessels. None of the coast cities had been attacked. Boston, New York, and Philadelphia had been making their defenses more secure. There was a fine fort at Baltimore. But Washington made no advances. Congress wrangled over a hundred points. The country at large was losing faith in the administration. There was a growing party in favor of suing for peace on the best terms we could get; another clique were quite certain we would wear out England, as, after all, she had made no real gains, and we had become quite formidable on the high seas.

General Armstrong, secretary of war, was confident Washington would not be attacked; and though he admitted that defenses should be strengthened, very little was done.

The downfall of Napoleon and his abdication, and the peace with France, had released the flower of the British army, and many warships. It was supposed Bermuda was their objective point, but they were ready to harass the coast line from Florida to Maine, and filled many of the towns with apprehension. [265]

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE MIDST OF WAR.

The summer of 1813 was destined to rouse the legislators at Washington from their supineness. Some fishermen discovered a large fleet of sail sweeping in between the royal capes and settling at anchor, as if undetermined what course to pursue. They gave the alarm; and as the ships sailed up the Chesapeake, Baltimore was believed to be the objective point.

Commodore Barney's little fleet was chased up the Patuxent. General Armstrong's orders were to burn it if there was danger of its falling into the hands of the enemy. Then with his men he was to join General Winder for the defense of Washington. The vessels were fired without a single blow, and the men made a forced march across the peninsula.

There were no forts for protection, and only a few hundred regulars and several militia companies. With fatuous obstinacy it was still believed Baltimore would take the brunt of the attack, giving time to rally the troops to the defense of Bladensburg if there should be an inland march. All the adverse opinions and counsel delayed what might have been done for the protection of the City.

But that August night, when the intentions of the enemy were beyond all doubt, a courier spurred post-haste over the heavy, sandy roads and through long stretches of somber pines and giant oaks, a very prophet of evil. At the little post-towns of Nottingham and Marlborough the stentorian tones roused the people from their sleep. "The British have landed at Benedict and are marching inland. To arms! to arms!"

At Bladensburg he stopped at the ancient tavern, and the quiet town was thrown into a panic. [266] Everybody was called out for defense. Then on to Washington, and the startled rulers looked into each other's faces in dismay. And then Colonel Monroe admitted that though there were no great treasures in Washington, the moral effect of capturing the enemy's capital would be equivalent to a greater victory. There were state papers that must be at once sent to a place of safety, and those who had valuables had better fly with them.

General Armstrong still believed no large army would march forty miles from its base of supplies and run the risk of being cut off, since Admiral Cockburn could not know how well able the City was to defend itself.

All was wildest panic. Everything in the shape of cart or wagon was loaded with cherished possessions, and the road to Georgetown looked like a universal moving day.

It was decided to meet the enemy at Bladensburg and oppose the march into Washington, if that was their object. Everybody—a motley throng, indeed—was hurried to the front, the women and children left to the care of servants.

The Carrington household had for days been in the deepest anxiety. A fortnight before Jaqueline's little son had been born, to the great joy of them all. Mrs. Mason and Marian had come up to the City—the first time Marian had visited the place since her joyous girlish winter and its ill-fated consequences.

All had gone on well, when a sudden and utterly unexpected turn had filled them with alarm. A fever had set in, and for several days it had been a fierce fight between disease and skill, but there had grown up a faint hope in the night, to be met with tidings of such terrible import.

Mrs. Jettson had come, wild with affright.

"We are going at once," she said. "What can the wretched little army do against four thousand [267] trained British soldiers? And Admiral Cockburn, it is said, has sworn to be revenged for the treatment of the English minister, and that he will compel Mrs. Madison to entertain him and his staff at the White House. Can Jaqueline be moved?"

"Only at the risk of her life," said Dr. Collaston. "All the news has been kept from her, though she could not have taken it in. I have sent Patty and the children and some valuables over to Arlington. We must stay here."

"But Marian and—Annis—can they not join us?" entreated Jane.

"Annis will not leave her mother. Marian may be of great service. She is a most excellent nurse. Even the servants are panic-stricken, and cannot be depended on."

"Where is Roger?"

"At the capital. We men may be needed to defend our homes. Admiral Cockburn is said to be ruthless. General Winder has started for Bladensburg. Heaven grant the battle may be decided there! But you had better go at once, for the children's sake."

"Oh, poor dear Jaqueline!"

"We can only trust the very slender reed," and the doctor's voice was husky with emotion.

"If I could do anything—"

"No, you cannot. Thank you for all your kindness in the past."

Mrs. Madison has been handed down by history as the one serene figure in the turmoil and danger. She moved quietly to and fro, securing valuables and state papers and sending them away by trusty servants. The President and several members of the Cabinet had started for the scene of action.

Mrs. Mason and Marian watched by the bedside with minutest instructions, while the doctor [268] went out on some pressing business.

"A soger gemmen say he must see Miss Annis," announced the new butler, who had been but a month in his place. "I jus' done fergit de name. Dar's flustration in de berry air."

"To see me?" asked the child in surprise.

"He want de doctor awful much. Den he say send Miss Annis."

Annis held out her hand to Marian. "Come with me!" she exclaimed. "We will not disturb mamma."

They went down together. The man in the hall was covered with dust and grime, and purple-red with the heat. A soldier, sure enough; but the first moment Annis drew back.

"Oh, little Annis, don't be afraid!" and she knew the voice. "Marian—"

And so the two met who had just touched their lips to the cup of joy in the spring of youth. A grave woman half a dozen years older, a man whose life might be ended this very day. All these years he had been bitter and resentful, but if he were dying—

"Can you not fly at once? The battle has been disgraceful, but what could such an army do against overwhelming odds. The whole thing has been a piece of shameful imbecility in our rulers. The British are marching into Washington."

"Then you have not heard—"

Something in Marian's tremulous voice awed him. He wiped the sweat and grime from his face.

"I have not been in Washington for three months."

"Mrs. Carrington is lying at the point of death."

Annis began to cry, and caught his hand.

"Then Heaven help you! No one can tell what the end will be. Now I must away to warn all who can fly, and then do the best we can to protect those who remain. If possible, I will send a guard. [269] Little Annis, good-by, if I should never see you again."

She threw her arms about his neck with a convulsive sob. He held out his hand to Marian, but neither spoke. Then he rushed away. There was not a moment to lose. He strode over to the White House, where all was still uncertain, and Mrs. Madison had given orders for the dinner. To procure wagons was a labor of love and infinite persuasion, to say nothing of money.

Then the messenger came shouting that General Armstrong had ordered a retreat. Daniel Carroll had sent his carriage, but Mrs. Madison refused to go until the President arrived.

"It will not do for you to fall into the hands of the British," declared an officer. "That would crown the triumph."

Pale and weary from his fruitless journey, the President and his wife stepped into the carriage to be driven across to Georgetown, where further difficulties awaited them. The opposition journals made merry over the undignified flight, yet there is no doubt but that it was the aim of both the Admiral and General Ross to crown their victory by the capture of the most conspicuous figures of the Capital.

The British marched steadily on the heels of the flying foe, leaving their dead and wounded exposed to the pitiless sun, and proceeded at once to the Capitol, which they ransacked and then set on fire, striking down anyone who dared to raise a voice in its behalf. Then they marched along Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House, chagrined to discover only a few servants left, but gratified to find a banquet awaiting them. There had been covers laid for forty guests. Dishes of all kinds were ready in the kitchen to be served. Wines were in the cooler, handsome cut-glass [270] and silver trays of delicious fruit stood on the sideboard. The hungry officers and men, scorning ceremony, feasted until the place became the scene of the wildest orgie. The wine cellar was broken open and its contents passed around, rooms were ransacked and combustibles piled up; and as they found little worth carrying off, the match was applied, and the house that had been the scene of so many joyous occasions was soon in flames.

From thence to the Treasury Department, and then to the office of the *National Intelligencer*, whose editor had denounced Cockburn unsparingly for his acts of vandalism on the coast and among defenseless towns; and the houses of some of the more noted citizens were added to the conflagration. Women flying for refuge were insulted, wagons stopped and despoiled of their goods. The few regiments could make no stand against the wanton destruction.

Suddenly there came a strange darkness over the city. From the far-off hills the wind began to roar like another ravening army. There were sullen mutterings of thunder. The order was given to retreat, and by the lurid light the ranks re-formed, though many, wearied out, straggled behind. The red blaze was made visible a moment by the lightning, when the town seemed in a molten glow, and then dense smoky blackness.

As if this was not enough, a frightful tornado seemed hurled from the hills on the doomed City.

The roar of the elements was terrific. Trees were uprooted and houses blown from their foundations, crashing down in the general ruin.

All day they had watched between hope and fear. Jaqueline's fever had abated, and she lay half unconscious. After the soldiers marched into the City, and he had seen Mrs. Madison started on her perilous journey, Roger felt he could be of no farther service. The enemy would wreak his [271] vengeance unopposed. He found there was a guard in citizens' clothes keeping watch over his house in an inconspicuous manner. But when the flames started at the Capitol his anxiety was harrowing. What if they should continue their work of devastation in this direction?

"Oh, do you think we shall all be burned up?" cried Annis in terror, dreading the sight and yet running from window to window.

No one could guess the power or purpose of the enemy. And no one could measure nature's devastation.

Dr. Collaston was in and out. Jaqueline lay, unheeding the tumult and danger.

"She does not really lose," he said. "Ross has gone over to the White House. Oh, the poor doomed City! And relief is needed for the wounded at Bladensburg. Half the women are crazy at their husbands being sent to the front. And all this might have been avoided!"

Indeed, it transpired afterward that Mrs. Madison had been refused shelter by a shrieking virago because her husband had been enrolled for the defense of the City.

"They are going to the White House. Perhaps they may not molest us, after all."

This proved true. The ravages were continued over eastward. They watched one building after another. The public rope-walk was devoted to the flames. The dockyards and arsenal and naval stores, powder magazine, and a fine frigate just ready to be launched were fed to the devouring element that roared in devastating hunger.

But that seemed nothing to the tornado. Annis flew to her mother's arms, and could not be pacified. Marian and Mrs. Mason would not go to bed, and Annis drowsed with her head on her [272] mother's shoulder, asking now and then if morning had come.

It dawned presently over the ruined City. Rock Creek was a rushing torrent. The Potomac had overflowed its banks. Tiber Creek was swollen out of bounds. Cellars were submerged, boxes and bales and furniture floated out.

The British left their wounded behind, and when they reached Bladensburg there were more than could be cared for. Heartlessly trusting them to the mercy of the beaten enemy, they marched on, striking terror to the smaller towns through which they passed, and then attacking Baltimore, the heroic defense of which is a matter of history. General Ross was killed in the first skirmish, and Admiral Cockburn forced to withdraw, and was condemned even by his own government for his ruthless vandalism, which had won nothing.

But the attack on Fort McHenry gave us one of our most beautiful and deathless songs, and indeed seemed the turning-point of misfortunes in a campaign that had been conducted with so little foresight and sagacity. But even this disaster may have been needed to bring the warring factions together, and convince them that to keep a country intact the strength of all is the salvation of each one, of every home.

Dr. Collaston could hardly call it hope in the morning, but Jaqueline had not lost anything through the terrible night. Roger was nearly worn out with anxiety and the work that had devolved upon him. Wounded men were lying in the streets, and had been brought in from Bladensburg.

"I must get a message over to Patty," the doctor said. "The end of the bridge is burned, but there are some boats. Something must be done for the relief of our poor men who turned out so bravely [273] for the defense of our homes."

Certainly it was a ruined city. Twenty years of labor and interest and expenditure laid waste, many of the inhabitants homeless, some lying wounded, not a few dead. A deserted place, indeed; and it was not until the British were before Baltimore that the panic really subsided.

The President and Mrs. Madison were among the earliest to return. Mrs. Cutts opened her house, for the White House was a charred and blackened ruin. Everybody vied with attentions. The Tayloe mansion, called The Octagon, on New York Avenue, and built in the latter part of the preceding century, by a wealthy planter of Mount Airy, was chosen for the present home. Indeed, Mrs. Madison was never to go back to the White House as its mistress, but she made a not less notable center elsewhere.

Slowly people returned with their goods and stores. The inhabitants of the adjacent towns were generous with assistance. For a month or more Washington had a continual moving-day.

Meanwhile the victories at Plattsburg and the surrender of the fleet on Lake Champlain, as well as the signal victory at Fort Bowyer, put heart into the Americans, and England seemed not indisposed to discuss terms of peace, convinced perhaps a second time that here was an indomitable people, whose friendship was possible, but whose conquest could never be achieved.

Slowly Jaqueline Carrington came back to life. The intense heat had given way to cooling breezes, the sun was often veiled by drifting clouds. For a week there were alternations, then a steady improvement.

Temporary hospitals had been secured. Some of the wounded had found shelter within their own homes or those of friends. [274]

Louis came in one morning. He had been among the volunteers so hastily enrolled, taken prisoner, and then allowed to go, as General Ross did not want to be hampered.

"Collaston, has anything been heard of Ralston? He came into Washington the morning of the

battle. Now that things are cleared up a little, he is reported missing. The British did not stop to bury their dead, and he certainly would have been noted."

"I thought it strange we did not hear. We must make inquiries at once. We have been most fortunate, except for pecuniary losses, and since Jaqueline is likely to be restored to us we have no right to complain. I must set out to find Ralston, though. The country has need of such men."

It was true that Arthur Jettson and the doctor were likely to be considerable losers by the misfortunes that had overtaken Washington. But they were young, and could recover. Patty and the two babies returned, and she declared the losses were really not worth thinking of, since everybody had been spared.

When Jaqueline was well enough to sit up a little, she insisted on being taken to her favorite window, which commanded a fine view of the City.

"While you have had one trouble, you have escaped another," said her husband gravely. "Our beautiful Washington—for it had grown beautiful to us, partly by the eye of faith, I suppose—is no more. We have had war and devastation of the elements, and must begin over again. We can tell our children about Old Washington, if she was not ancient in years; but a new one must arise on its ruins."

"War!" Jaqueline cried in amazement. And then she glanced at the destruction, bursting into tears.

"Never mind, my darling wife. We have you and the boy, thanks to your mother and Marian and [275]
Dr. Collaston's skill. He was faithfulness itself through all that trying time. When you are stronger you shall hear the whole story."

"And Louis—is everybody safe?"

"Louis shouldered a musket and marched like a trained soldier. Oh, we have some brave men left, I assure you! The enemy came; and what we were unable to do the storm did—forced them to retreat before we had been laid quite in ruins."

"It is terrible!" said Annis. "I have been driving about with the doctor. The beautiful White House is gone, and ever so many places. And the storm was terrific. Oh, dear! what a horrible time it was! I sat up all night long with mamma and Marian."

"Dear Marian! How good you have been to me! You and mother have taken such excellent care of my baby."

Marian glanced up with a grave smile.

"And no dear ones are lost? I suppose Lieutenant Ralston was in the thick of the fight?"

"Yes," answered her husband, "like many another brave man. I think we owe him something also."

Everything was so changed. Marian often mused over it. She felt like quite an old woman. She was hardly likely to marry now. She had put her candle out, she remembered. But her heart gave a quick gasp when she thought of Ralston. "Evangeline" had not yet been written, but daily she felt moved to enact the romance, to go in search of him. Somehow she felt sure she could find him. And if he was among the dead she would have a right to cherish his memory, and that happy episode, the one brief romance of her life.

Dr. Collaston came in. Yes, his patient was doing nicely. When she could be moved with safety, [276]
the air of the old plantation, with its rich autumnal fragrance and ripeness, would do her good. Patty should go with her for a holiday.

Annis was hanging to the doctor's arm.

"Won't you take me out with you?" she said coaxingly. "I like so to go with you, there are so many things to see."

"I am going to take Roger out on a little business, if everybody can spare him. Your turn may come to-morrow."

She nodded good-humoredly.

Carrington followed his friend downstairs. "We have news about Ralston," the doctor said. "There is a messenger here with tidings. There is no time to lose. You can hear the story as we go along."

A pale, large-eyed young fellow with an anxious face was awaiting them; and as they were driving over the old road that had been traversed many a time in pleasure, and was to be historic, Carrington listened to the young man's tale. A British soldier, he had been wounded and left on the field, and someone had paused to give him a drink of water, when the stranger had been struck by a stray shot and wounded in the leg. They had made their way slowly to a deserted negro hut, where he had fainted. His new friend had dressed his wound, which was more painful than serious, but both were weak from exhaustion and loss of blood. The storm coming on, they had been glad of shelter. The next day his new-found friend could not walk, and his leg was terribly swollen. They waited in the hope that someone would find them out. But on the third day the American was ill and delirious. A negro woman had discovered them, and visited them daily

with food, and had attended to both their wounds as well as she knew how. Now his companion had come to his right mind, and he was a Lieutenant Ralston. He had begged him, Eustace Stafford, to find his way into the City and hunt up a certain Dr. Collaston and tell him the story. [277]

"He is still very ill," declared Stafford. "And he must be taken out of that wretched hole at once. Still, we have been very glad of the shelter."

"You look ill yourself—"

"You should have seen this young fellow half an hour ago," declared the doctor. "You would have thought him a ghost. He has a bad wound in his shoulder that has not been properly treated, and healed up on the outside too soon. I have a carriage here at the door. When Patty heard the story she insisted that I should bring Ralston home at once. We have plenty of room, and, after all, have not been so hard hit."

Young Stafford, they found, had a cousin who was a major in the English army. He had been quite enamored of a soldier's life, had been attached to the staff, and was a sort of private secretary to his cousin. But the romance of war had been driven from his youthful brain by his first battle, that of Bladensburg.

"But you must have better soldiers than those raw recruits," he exclaimed, "when you have done such wonderful things! Still, everything is so strange—"

He glanced furtively at the two men, not knowing how far it was safe to confess one's feelings. The ruin at Washington had filled him with shame and dismay, and he did not wonder that people on every hand were execrating the British. Even the old negro woman had denounced them bitterly.

"Most of our real soldiers were elsewhere. There is a great stretch of country to protect. We have the Indians for enemies, the French occasionally, but we shall come out victorious in the end," said the doctor confidently. [278]

"Where are the Admiral and General Ross?" asked Stafford.

"At Baltimore now, where there is a prospect of their being defeated. We were not prepared as we should have been, to our shame be it said."

Then they lapsed into silence.

"I am afraid I have forgotten my way," the youth admitted as they passed a partly overgrown branch road, used mostly for the convenience of farmers. "I tried to mark it by some sign. There was a tree that had been struck by lightning. And a clump of oaks."

"There is a clump of oaks farther on."

"You see, that day—it was horrible with the groans of the wounded and dying. And the awful heat! I tried to crawl to a little stream, but fainted. And this soldier came along presently, when I begged him for a drink."

"These are the oaks, I think," said the doctor, who knew the road well.

"Then it is a little further on."

They turned into a cart-path. In a sort of opening stood a blackened pine that had been grand in its day. After several curves they left this road and soon found the hut.

Lieutenant Ralston was in a bad condition, indeed—emaciated to a degree, his eyes sunken, his voice tremulous, his whole physique so reduced that he could not stand up. Stafford had made a bed of fir and hemlock branches, and the little place was fragrant, if otherwise dreary.

"We will not stop for explanations!" exclaimed the doctor briskly. "The best thing is to get you to some civilized place and attend to you."

"And the lad, too. I should have died without him and poor old Judy. She will think the wolves have eaten us, only she won't find any bones." [279]

He was lifted carefully into the carriage, and they journeyed homeward as rapidly as circumstances would permit. Patty had cleared the sitting room on the lower floor, and a cot had been spread for Ralston. They laid the fainting man upon it, and the doctor proceeded to examine his injuries.

The bone in the leg had been splintered, and a jagged wound made. Judy's simples had kept it from becoming necessarily fatal, but the fever and the days that had elapsed rendered it very critical.

"I only hope he won't have to lose his leg," said Roger. "That would be terrible to him."

"We will try our utmost."

It was a painful operation, but at last it was over. Then Stafford's shoulder was looked after, and had to be probed. Roger proved an invaluable assistant.

"We may as well have a hospital ward, and let the enemy and the patriot lie side by side. They can't fight, and I do not believe either of them has the vigor for a quarrel." So another cot was

brought in. Patty was quite important, and full of sympathy for Ralston.

It was mid-afternoon when Carrington returned, and they were all anxious to hear the story. For Jaqueline's sake he made as light of it as possible, dwelling considerably upon the heroism of both men, "although the English lad is a mere boy, not twenty yet. What distorted ideas they get over the water!" nodding his head. "As if we had not been of one race in the beginning, equally courageous, equally proud and resolute, and animated by the same love of liberty. Think how they have waged war with tyrants and wrested rights from kings!"

Marian waylaid him in the hall.

"I was listening inwardly to what you did not say," she began tremulously. "Does the doctor think he *will* recover?" [280]

"He is in a bad way, of course. But the leg is the worst feature. Oh, let us all hope! Things have gone so well with us that I am filled with gratitude, and cannot despair."

Marian's eyes were downcast, her face pink to the very roots of her hair; and her lips quivered.

That evening Roger was sitting beside his wife alone, caressing the thin hand that returned the fond pressure.

"Marian is in love with Philip Ralston," he began abruptly. "Jaqueline, can't you think of the magic touch that will bring these two together? You found it easy enough before."

"And bungled and made no end of trouble," she returned with a sad smile.

"It was old Mr. Floyd who made the trouble. Why couldn't he have given his daughter to the young fellow who loved her? What I am afraid of now is that he has ceased to care. Still, he has been a favorite with women, and no one has captured him. An attractive man has to quite run the gauntlet. And when he thinks a woman's love has failed—"

"Do you speak from experience?" inquired Jaqueline archly, her eyes in a tender glow.

"Yes." There was a rising color and a half-smile hovering over his face. "It *is* true that hearts are caught in the rebound."

"But no one caught you."

"Because, month after month, I waited. I said at first, 'She will marry Ralston.' Then there were other admirers—you know there were a host of them more attractive than I, but I could have forgiven you for marrying Ralston. If it had been someone else I should have turned bitter, and that would have been the danger-point. I might have wanted to convince you [281]

"That, Miss Jacky Mason,
I care as little as ye care for me,"

paraphrasing an old ballad and substituting her own name, while she glanced up laughingly.

"Since we found the making-up process so delightful," returned Jaqueline, "we are anxious to pass it around. You see, now, Marian has no interest in life but to play the part of maiden aunt. Jane will absorb a good deal of her with the most generous intentions. She is a lovely nurse, and I think grandpa's and Mr. Greaves' influence has mostly died out. They were both so narrow and dogmatic about women that they reduced her to a sort of slavery. Mamma has brought her out to a sense of freedom. Single women may be heroic, yet, as I remember, the Revolutionary heroines were married and mothers, most of them, and it is the wife and mother who has the most exquisite happiness."

"What a long speech! We will try and get Ralston well, and then trust good-fortune. There will be no one to interfere this time."

While Ralston lay tossing on a bed of pain, his leg in splints and bandages, events moved on rapidly. The bold exploits and undying courage that had won such brilliant successes on the seas had settled the question of sailors' rights. England virtually admitted this while still haggling with commissioners. And from having no position among nations, from being considered feeble and disunited, and possessing no innate right to establish a commerce of her own, the United States had won the respect of the countries abroad, and to a great degree harmonized the jarring factions at home.

The crowning battle of the war was that of New Orleans, with Jackson's brilliant victory, though some of the preliminaries had been settled before this.

And one day a messenger came rushing into town, swinging his three-cornered hat in one hand and holding the bridle-rein in the other, and cried out in stentorian tones, "Peace! peace! Peace has been declared! Mr. Carroll, American messenger, has arrived with the Treaty of Peace!" [282]

In spite of blackened ruins and heaps of débris, there was a great time in Old Washington. For, indeed, it seemed old now, since it could boast of ruins. Flags were hung out. Neighbors called to one another. Then a coach came thundering along the avenue, another and yet another, and stopped at the Octagon House. Congress presented themselves, at least all who could be

gathered on a short notice, to take the news to the President, who had suffered considerably from the exposure and fatigue, and perhaps from the mortification of having been a fugitive flying from the enemy.

The circular vestibule, the white winding stairway that was open to the top, and the drawing room to the right were crowded with guests, felicitating their chief and one another. Animosity, coldness, and blame were forgotten. Peace! peace! like the refrain of some sweet music, went floating around all the space, and Mrs. Madison was much moved with emotion. Strong men thanked God with softened hearts. The conflict was over, and now they knew the bitterness of war.

For this year young Daniel Webster was in the House, and Clay and Calhoun and men who were to have much to do with the nation's destinies later on.

Houses were illuminated, tar barrels were burned, and the streets seemed fairly alive with people. Voices rang with joy.

True, the Treaty was to be discussed and signed, the British troops were to go home, the news to be carried about on the high seas. Ports were to be opened, and "Madison's nightcaps"—barrels that had been hung to protect the rigging of ships—were removed with shouts of joy. [283]

There was a lull in Europe. Prussia drew a long breath. Russia plumed herself on giving the famous Corsican his first blow, while the Battle of Waterloo was the last. France had a king of royal blood again. Spain was repairing her fortunes; while England was counting up her losses and gains, and preparing to shake hands in amity with the young country across the ocean and grow into friendship with it.

CHAPTER XX.

THE OLD STORY EVER NEW.

Jaqueline Carrington's heart ached the first time she was taken out to drive, when destruction met her on every side. There was another sorrowful aspect. Men were getting about on crutches, sitting on the Capitol steps sunning themselves. There was an empty coat-sleeve, some scarred faces, others pale and wan. Yes, they had all escaped marvelously.

She thought herself the happiest woman in the world. No one, she was quite sure, had such a tender and devoted husband or splendid baby. Mother Carrington found her affections quite divided, and the days when Jaqueline came over to Georgetown were gala days.

True, Preston Floyd had been already talked of as a member of the House of Representatives. Roger Carrington had been appointed to an excellent position in the Treasury Department, though he was still a great favorite with Mr. Monroe, and Jaqueline was not jealous. Arthur Jettson had come to be consulting architect, and had still greater plans for the new city. Annis had resumed her school, but she was quite an important little body, and sometimes her mother felt almost as if she had lost her. [284]

Lieutenant Ralston found himself an admired hero. He had been cool and level-headed through those days of the panic; and it was admitted that many of his plans for the defense of the City would have been excellent. A new commission was made out, bearing the name of Captain Ralston; and a position was ready for him, when he could fill it, where his genius would have full scope.

There were many anxious days over his leg. One of the doctors said the wound would never heal, and that presently it would be amputation or his life, and considered the delay a great risk.

"Oh, Collaston," he begged, "don't have me going around on a wooden stump! If I was an admiral, now, I shouldn't mind it, as it would add to the glory. But a poor fellow who can't retire on his fortune—"

"We'll fight to the very last, Phil. If you could have been found sooner!"

"And some poor fellows were found altogether too late. Well, the country has learned a lesson, and perhaps with Paul Jones we have taught other nations a lesson, not to tread on us! Do your very best."

The doctor did it in fear and trembling. For if he cost his patient his life, he knew it would be a great blow to his reputation.

As for the young lad, he soon began to improve. He seemed quite stranded, for his cousin's regiment had re-embarked and was coasting southward. No inquiries had been made about him—indeed, he knew afterward that the cousin had written home that he had been killed at the Battle of Bladensburg and buried on the field. He was a stranger in a strange land.

Ralston had grown very fond of him, and he proved himself an excellent companion. He was one of quite a large household, and his father was a baronet, Sir Morton Stafford. One brother was in [285]

the army at home, one in the Church, two sisters were married, and there were four younger than himself to provide for. As soon as he could use his arm he wrote to his father, and Dr. Collaston said cordially, "Consider my house your home until you hear."

"You are very good to take in a stranger this way," he returned with emotion.

Marian remained with Jaqueline when Mrs. Mason went home.

"I have been such a gadabout of late years," Mrs. Mason said, "that father hardly knows whether he has a wife and a home. I must think a little of him."

"I wish you *could* stay, mamma!" pleaded Annis. "Why can't you move up to Washington? I like it ever so much better. There is so much to see and to do, and we are all together here."

"There is Charles. And Varina."

"But Patty and Jaqueline and the babies seem like a great many more. And the rides and drives—"

"But you have your pony. And papa would take you any time with him."

"I like the crowds of people, and the pretty ladies in their carriages, and the foreign ministers are so fine, and to hear the men when they talk in the House, and the girls give little parties. Oh, mamma, I love you, and I want you here, but—"

Her mother smiled. Yes, life on the plantation was dull. And the jealous little girl was being weaned away.

"We are losing our children fast," she said to her husband.

Marian and Jaqueline by slow degrees slipped into the interchange of thought that real friendship uses. It had not the girlish giddiness of youth; both had learned more of the realities of life. [286]

"But did you ever love Mr. Greaves, Marian?" Jaqueline ventured one afternoon, as she sat with her baby on her lap. He was so lovely that she envied the cradle when she put him in it, and liked to feel his soft warm body on her knees.

"I didn't at first. Oh, Jaqueline, brother Randolph is so different from father! We never begged or teased or coaxed things out of him as you children used to. And mother expected us to obey the instant we were spoken to. Then—I did not know that Lieutenant Ralston had been up until some time afterward. Dolly found out that he had been insultingly dismissed. Papa questioned me about the acquaintance and my visit to brother's, and was awfully angry. Jack, *did* you plan it?"

"I put things in train, simply. I did not know how they would come out."

"Papa accepted Mr. Greaves for me. I meant to tell him the story and decline his hand. But it was quite impossible. I could never talk freely to him. He did not ask me if I loved him. He had certain ideas about wives. But he was gentlemanly and kind, and I had no liberty at home. I began to think it would be nice to be free, to go out without watching, to write a letter, to have some time of my very own. I had said to papa that I would never marry him, and he replied that I should never marry anybody, then. Suddenly I gave in. I begged papa's pardon for all the dreadful things I had said, and accepted Mr. Greaves as my future husband. But I felt as if I had been turned into stone, as if it was not really my own self. That self seemed dead. I went round as usual, and tried to take an interest in everything, but nothing really mattered. Did you think me queer and strange that Christmas?" [287]

"You certainly were cold, apathetical."

"That is just the word. Papa was formal and dogmatic and arbitrary,—poor papa! it is unfilial to say these things about him,—but mamma always seemed to get along. Mr. Greaves was more gentle, and used to ask what I would like; and I do believe he loved me; pitied me; and I couldn't help feeling grateful. Then when he had the first stroke papa said it would be dishonorable to withdraw, and he should be very angry if I contemplated such a thing. Dolly's marriage was on the carpet. She seemed so young, so—yes, silly," and Marian half hid her blushing face. "Could I ever have been so silly, Jaqueline?"

"We all go through the rose-path of sweetness when we are in love," returned Jaqueline. "I'm silly myself at times. Marian, did you know that Mr. Ralston wrote again?"

"Wrote again—then he did not forget?" She raised her soft eyes, suffused with exquisite surprise.

"He wrote when he thought you were free again. I always felt sure you did not get the letter. He took some precautions, and was confident you must have had it, though grandpa returned it without a word!"

"I never heard from him. Jane said when your engagement was broken—" Marian paused and flushed.

"That he would marry *me*."

Marian nodded. It had given her a heartache, she remembered. So long as he married no one he did not seem so completely cut off that she must cast him utterly out of her life.

"Well, you see he did not. I think now I could not have married anyone but Roger, if I had waited

ten years."

"Then, you know, came Mr. Greaves' death and father's, and mother's failing health. I feel quite like an old woman." [288]

"At five-and-twenty! Nonsense! See how young mamma is!"

"She is lovely, Jaqueline!" with enthusiasm.

"I don't know what papa would do without her."

What a beautiful thing it was to be so dear to anyone that he or she could not do without you!

"You saw Ralston that dreadful morning?"

"Yes." Marian buried her face in her hands. Some feeling of unknown power connected with her youth shook her, thrilled her; yet she strove to put it aside. "I prayed I might not go back to that time," and her voice was tremulous; "then when we all thought him dead I—I let myself go. It is shameful for a woman when a man has forgotten her."

"He has made tremendous efforts to forget—I know that," and the sound like a smile in her voice made Marian's face crimson again. "But I am sure he has not succeeded any better than Roger did. And if he should be unfortunate for life—"

"Then I should want to go to him. No one has any right to order my life now. Would it be very unwomanly?"

"No. And you must go to Patty's. She thinks it so queer, but I said you hated to leave me. Marian, if it comes a second time you will not refuse?"

"I think I hadn't the courage to really refuse the first time," and she smiled.

Jaqueline had more delicacy than to repeat what Annis had said, and had forbidden her to carry anything like gossip, "for a little girl who gossips will surely be an old maid. And you will want a nice husband, I am certain."

"Oh, yes!" cried Annis. "And a lot of pretty babies."

"Then never carry tales." [289]

"But he is always asking me about Marian, and why she doesn't come?"

So they sent word they might be expected on a certain day, and baby and nurse and Annis, as soon as school closed.

How many times, lying here, Philip Ralston had lived over that sweet, foolish, incomprehensible love episode—the obstinate regard, the indignation that had followed it, the hard thrusts with which he had pushed her out of his memory. She had gone only momentarily. Her sweet youth had been spent in devotion to her self-indulgent, inexorable father,—he knew how acrimonious Mr. Floyd could be,—and, then, her stern, rigid mother. Had they taken all her sweetness? He had half looked for some sign when she had finished all her duties. Mrs. Jettson had outlived the romance of it, and lost patience with Marian. Besides, she was absorbed with her own family. There were so many pretty girls, and Marian was getting to be quite an old maid, in the days when girls married so young.

And when he had met her that eventful morning he had probable death before him, and was tongue-tied. Did she think he had forgotten all?

They trooped in together, Patty leading the procession; Jaqueline, still a little pale, but lovelier than ever, with her boy in her arms, and Marian with the lost youth back of her. She was too sincere to affect astonishment; and he had improved—was neither so gaunt nor so ghastly as when he first came. She took his hand—did she make a confession in the pressure? He felt suddenly self-condemned, as if he had misjudged her some way, and humble, as if he had nothing good enough to offer her. But he glanced up in the soft eyes—her life had not been very joyous, she was by no means a rich woman, and if she cared most for home and happiness— [290]

She did not hear what they were saying at first. There was a sound as of rushing water in her ears.

"Oh, yes!" he answered, with an hysterical laugh, "I am to keep my own two legs to go upon. I owe it all to Collaston, who stood between me and surgeons' knives, and brandished his war club until they retreated. I shall lie here in supreme content until he bids me arise and walk."

What was it went over Marian's face. Not disappointment, but an inexplicable tenderness, as if she could have taken up the burden cheerfully, as if she were almost casting about for some other burden.

"Poor girl!" he said to himself; "she has devoted her sweetest years to others, and someone ought to pay her back in love's own coin."

Stafford had improved greatly and gained flesh. He had a fair, rather ruddy English complexion and light hair, with the unusual accompaniment of dark-brown eyes; and, though rather unformed, had a fine physique, which was as yet largely in the bone, but would some day have

muscle and flesh.

The loss and ruin of Washington had been news to Ralston, though he had known the march of the vandals was inevitable. Annis interested and amused him in her talk. She was a very pronounced patriot in these days.

Eustace Stafford seemed quite bewitched with her. He came over every afternoon to bring word of Ralston, and perhaps to have an encounter of words with Annis. This day, while there were so many to entertain his friend, he stole off to school to walk home with her, though there was not a cloud in the sky that could give him a shadow of excuse.

She was going to walk some distance with one of her mates. "Perhaps it would tire you," she said mischievously. [291]

"I have been in the house all the morning," was the reply.

"Did they bring the baby? It's the most beautiful baby in the world, isn't it?"

"I haven't seen all the babies in the world—" a little awkwardly.

"But he ought to be able to tell whether one is pretty or not, oughtn't he, Eliza?"

Eliza, thus appealed to, hung her head and said, "Perhaps—" frightened and yet delighted to comment on a young man's taste.

"Perhaps British babies are different," was Annis' rather teasing comment.

"I think babies are a good deal alike—"

"No, they are not," and she put on a pretty show of indignation. "I think you are not capable of judging."

"I am sure I am not," he said with alacrity. "They're kept in a nursery at home, you know, and have a playground out of the way somewheres."

"I am very glad I am not an English child, aren't you, Eliza? Poor things! to be stuck out in a back yard!"

"My aunt and cousin are going to England as soon as traveling is safe," said Eliza, with a benevolent intention of pouring oil upon the troubled waters. "He is going to some college."

"There are fine colleges in England. There are very few here."

"We haven't so many people. Charles—that's my brother—went through Harvard, which is splendid, when he was spending some time in Boston. And he may go to Columbia. That's in New York, where he is at school."

"New York is a large city. The English held it in the Revolutionary War." [292]

"But they had to march out of it," said the patriot. "And they had to march away from Baltimore. And now they will have to march away from the whole United States, after they have done all the harm they could and killed off the people and almost murdered poor Lieutenant Ralston."

"But that is war. I'm sorry there should ever be war. I wouldn't have it if I was a king. But your people declared war," remembering that.

"How could we help it, when our poor sailors were snatched from their own vessels and made to fight against us or be beaten to death? Do you suppose we can stand *everything*? We were altogether in the right, weren't we, Eliza?"

Eliza glanced furtively at the very good-looking face, scarlet with anger and mortification, and wondered how Annis could get in such a temper with him.

"I don't know about the causes of war," she said hesitatingly. "Some people blame Mr. Madison —"

"There are Tories always. I've heard papa tell how many there were in the Revolutionary War. But, you see, we wouldn't have won if we had not had right on our side," she added triumphantly.

"But Napoleon won in a great many battles," Stafford ventured.

"Perhaps he was right *then*," with emphasis.

This casuistry nonplussed the English boy. If Annis wasn't so sweet and pretty—

Eliza had to say good-by reluctantly.

"Let us go this way," proposed Annis.

"This way" brought them to the defaced and injured Capitol. Annis' scarlet lip curled.

"It is a shame," he acknowledged. "And—if it will do you any good, I'm awfully sorry that I came over to fight. But, you see, we don't understand. So many people think that after all England did for the Colonies, they had no right to rebel, and that she still has some claims—" [293]

"All she did!" exclaimed the fiery censor. "She persecuted the Puritans, and they came over to a

horrid wilderness. She took New York away from the Dutch. And she sent shiploads of convicts over to Virginia to be a great trouble to the nice people who had grants of land. And she said we shouldn't trade anywhere—"

"If the heads of government could understand; or if the people could see how fine and heroic and noble the Americans are, I think they would refuse to come over and fight them. I am glad they are going away. And when I get home I shall tell everybody how brave they are, and of the splendid homes they have made. And perhaps if Captain Ralston hadn't stopped to give me a drink and bandage my wound he might have found a better place of refuge. I know *my* father will be grateful, for I think he saved my life, and came mighty near losing his own. I shall always be glad I didn't really fight. I was struck before I fired my musket. And Dr. Collaston is just like a brother. I like you all so. I shall hate to go away." The words poured out with confused rapidity.

"I hope you will have the courage to tell the truth," she replied severely. "I have heard that some of the English think we are black, like the slaves they brought over to us. And, do you know, they have been stealing them again and carrying them off to the Bermudas. Or they believe we have turned into wild Indians."

"They don't know," he said again weakly.

"Wasn't Mr. Adams over there a long while—and the great Mr. Benjamin Franklin, and Mr. Jay, and ever so many others? We send a minister to them—not a real preacher," in a gracious, explanatory way that made her more fascinating than ever, "but to discuss affairs; so they ought to know whether we are black or white." [294]

"Oh, they do at court! If I could make you understand—" his boyish face full of perplexity.

"I think I *do* understand when I see Washington in ruins. And I shall be glad when every Englishman goes back. We don't go over to England and burn and destroy."

He had a vague idea there was something to be said for his side, but he did not just know what. It seemed rather ungrateful, too, as he was a pensioner on the hospitality of her brother-in-law. It was extremely mortifying, since his cousin had been intrusted with money for him. So he was silent, but that did not suit the little lady, who enjoyed the warfare like a born soldier.

She was always "saving up" disgraceful incidents she heard, to tell him.

"You are pretty hard on the young fellow," Roger said to her one day. "We must forgive him a good deal for his devotion to Ralston."

"But think how you and doctor brother went out and gathered up the wounded, and there were some British among them as well. *He* ought to be very grateful."

"I think he is. And he is a nice lad."

Their skirmishes were very amusing to the family. Patty really admired the young fellow, he seemed such a big, innocent-hearted boy; but she enjoyed posting Annis as to her side of the argument.

"Are you going?" Captain Ralston said to Marian as they were making preparations for departure.

"You—you do not need me," she murmured as, holding her hand, he drew her down nearer the pillow.

"I suppose everybody else does," he declared pettishly. "You never considered me. You did not really care—" [295]

There were tears in her eyes as she tried to turn away.

"Perhaps when the others are all dead and gone, and I am an old man, you may remember what you confessed those two blessed days. Or you may recall it over my grave."

"I deserve it all," she returned meekly. "I tried—oh, yes, I did; but I *was* weak—"

"Is it too late to go back?"

"Come, Polly!" cried Jaqueline. Sukey, the general factotum at the Carringtons', called Marian "Miss Polly." "Can't be boddered wid no sech outlandish name as Miss Ma'yan—dat kinks my tongue up like a bit a 'yalum,'" she declared.

"Polly—you will come to-morrow?"

"Yes—yes," with a scarlet face. "If you want me."

"I want you. I have a great deal to say to you."

But it took many to-morrows to get it all said. There were rough places and doubts, intensified by the experiences Ralston had gone through, and the nervous strain of not only the long illness, but the almost certainty there had been at one time of his losing his leg. That danger was really over, but a great deal of carefulness had to be observed. And few indeed can bring back the sparkle to the cup of youth, when the freshness is no longer there.

Marian grew more girlish, as if the hands of time were running the other way. The force that had impelled her to middle life was removed. She had gained a certain experience, quite different

from the man who had been mixing with the world. But what mattered when they came back to the level of love?

Congress held its session at Blodgett's Hotel. It is true there were heated discussions on the terms of peace, contradictions, and dogmatic assertions. Perhaps the meetings at the Octagon House, and the sweet, affable mistress had much to do with softening asperities. Everybody, it [296] seemed, came, and it was conceded that we had gained a good deal in the respect of foreign nations. Commerce took on a brisk aspect. War vessels came into port, and though they did not lay aside all their defenses,—for the high seas were still infested with privateers,—they took on the cargoes of industry instead of munitions of war. It was found now that we had made strides in manufacturing ordinary goods, though women were delighted with the thought of once more procuring silks, satins, velvets, and lace without extraordinary risks.

Eustace Stafford spent much of his time exploring Washington, taking long walks and numerous drives with the doctor. The beautiful Potomac, the towns along its edge, the falls that in a cold spell had just enough ice to make them wonderful and fairy-like, Port Tobacco that had once been a thriving place, the inlets and creeks and the fine and varied Virginia shore, and the magnificent Chesapeake dotted with islands. And there was Annapolis, destined to grow more famous as years went on.

He had not half explored the country when word came from his father, inclosing a draft to bring him home and reimburse the friends who had sheltered him with such cordiality.

"I am sorry enough to leave you," he said with deep emotion. "I feel like becoming an out-and-out American, but I shall never be a soldier."

"Not in case of necessity?" said Patty with charming archness.

"Of course if I had a home here I should defend it to the last drop of blood in my veins—yes, even against my own kindred," and he blushed with a feeling akin to ardent patriotism that surprised himself. "I think we only need to understand each other's governments better to be good friends. There is something grand here. It may be the largeness of everything, and the aspirations, the sense of freedom, and—well, that certain equality. You are not bound about by rigid limits." [297]

Mr. Carrington said Stafford must go to one levee, though that there were such throngs now that it was hardly comfortable. Ralston insisted that he also must pay his respects to Mrs. Madison, for now he could get about on crutches, but it was not considered safe to bear any great weight upon his injured limb as yet.

It was quite a fine scene, Stafford admitted. There was a great variety in dress, the older men keeping to the Continental style largely, with flowing frills to their shirt fronts and lace ruffles at their wrists, velvet smallclothes and silk stockings, and hair tied with a black ribbon or fastened in a small silk bag.

Some of the younger men wore their hair curling over their shoulders. There were gorgeous waistcoats, the upper part flowered satin, and then a finishing of scarlet that came halfway to the knee, the coats turned back and faced with bright colors. Mrs. Madison was resplendent in her red turban, with nodding ostrich plumes, and the row of short black curls across her white forehead, and her gown of cream satin, of so deep a tint as to be almost yellow, with its abundant trimming of scarlet velvet.

Ralston was quite a hero for his misfortunes and his counsels, which had averted some disaster and would have saved much more if they had been followed. Everybody could see the blunders and the supineness that had really invited such a catastrophe. But peace had softened many of the animadversions, and the charming sweetness of the first lady of the land healed many differences. It was true that the two later years of the administration went far toward redeeming the mistakes of the earlier part.

Annis had plead hard to go, but Jaqueline had not thought it best. [298]

"You and Mr. Stafford will be sure to get in a quarrel," she said laughingly. "There will be plenty of levees for you to attend when you are older. And the Octagon House has not the room of the poor burned mansion. It is always crowded."

Then Eustace Stafford said good-by with great grief to the people he had come to fight, and found among them the warmest of friends. He had not been alone in his experience.

Before Congress adjourned a bomb was thrown into the camp. Since Washington was a heap of ruins and would have to be rebuilt, why not remove it to some more advantageous location?

CHAPTER XXI.

ANNIS.

How near the Capital City came to be handed down in history as Old Washington its denizens of to-day will never know. There were many cogent reasons for changing it. It had grown so slowly;

it would require an immense amount of money to rebuild it; the place had never taken root in the affections of the whole country.

But, then, it was the city of Washington and the old worthies who had made the country. There was Florida for the southern point, as well as Maine for the north-eastern; there were the great Mississippi and Louisiana, as well as the lake countries. Was it not nearly the center?

Men like Arthur Jettson set about retrieving their fortunes and showing their faith in the place. Mrs. Madison made it as agreeable as possible to foreign ministers and their wives, and guests from the more important cities. Colonel and Mrs. Monroe added to the attractions. The Capitol [299] was repaired slowly, but it was two years before the White House was undertaken.

The scars were all healed long ago. The broad avenues stretch out with handsome residences, and the streets that little Annis thought so funny because they were "like the A B C of the spelling book one way, and the first lesson in the arithmetic the other way," have filled up the vacant spaces with rows of houses. Tiber Creek is no more, and Rock Creek, which rushed and brawled and overflowed its banks in a freshet, is a dull little meandering stream. Where the Lees and Custises held sway and entertained in a princely manner there is a grave, decorous silence and a City of Heroes, who, having done their duty for liberty and country, sleep well under the green turf. Georgetown has enlarged her borders, and is beautiful. Mount Vernon, with its two hundred years of history, is the nation's heritage. Old Washington is almost forgotten, with here and there a relic and a few old maps one can pore over in the grand Congressional Library. And now it is indeed the City of the Nation, with its many treasures, even if they are modern, its handsome legations, its beautiful circles to commemorate the heroes of later times. And Dolly Madison lived to see many of the improvements, and to be the historic link between the old and the new.

As for Annis Mason, she found it undeniably dull when Eustace Stafford had gone. Even knowledge seemed to lose its charm, and the babies grew commonplace. But, then, in the spring Miss Polly and her lover were married and set up a cozy little home of their own, and really wanted Annis in it.

Then Varina came home—a tall, slim girl, quite vivacious and ever so much better tempered than in her youth; and really rather patronized Annis, who was not a year younger, but quite a little [300] girl, not come to trains nor a great pile of hair on the top of her head, and a cascade of puffs in front, and a comb so big it had to be carried in a bag when you went out of an evening.

Then she had a lover, too—a fine young South Carolinian, who had an immense plantation and no end of slaves, and was going into the new industry of raising cotton.

There was a very general demur. Varina was so young, if she was tall. But, then, Southern girls grew up soon, and many of them were wives at fifteen.

"There must be a year's engagement," her father said. Varina must learn how to manage a household; and girls had a good deal of instruction in housewifely arts in those days, even if there was a regiment of slaves to do everything.

"I'll coax off six months," Varina declared to her lover, and he went away with that comfort.

She was surprised and amused at Annis' book-learning, and teased her considerably. Did she mean to be a schoolmistress?

Charles returned in capital health and spirits and full of ambitious plans. He had not *quite* decided what he would be, either a chief justice or a minister abroad. He was not sure now that he wanted to be President.

"For people do say such dreadful things about you. And you don't seem to suit anyone. I don't wonder Mr. Madison looks old and thin and careworn."

"Do you remember," said Varina laughingly, "that I used to oppose a marriage between you and Annis? I wasn't going to let her have everything. I used to consider that you belonged to me."

"You had a great way of appropriating everybody."

"What a ridiculous thing I was! And now I have made up my mind that you are just suited to each other. You can still sit on the window ledge and pore over the same book." [301]

"Annis is well enough, but I am sure she wouldn't find Latin and Greek interesting. And by the time I want to marry, Annis will be—well, quite an old woman."

"If you don't marry until you are forty-nine she will have turned the half-century. That would be rather old. I shall be a grandmother before that time."

"All you girls think about is getting married," returned the youth disdainfully.

"We think to some purpose, too, don't we? I wouldn't be an old maid for a fortune!"

Annis was not sure she liked the defection on Charles' part. He assumed a rather lofty air. Louis said he was still a prig, that all the nonsense had not been knocked out of him. But he was a very nice boy, for all that—gentlemanly, refined, and extravagantly fond of his stepmother. There were times when Annis felt inclined to jealousy.

He was going to enter college at Williamsburg.

"It ought to make me proud of my own State, as well as the whole country," he explained impressively to Annis. "And then I shall go to Oxford maybe, or some of the old English places that have the years of antiquity back of them, and stand for all that is highest in knowledge, that have romance and story and grandeur woven into their very stones. Cloistered shades! Think how beautiful they must be. And all the riches of Europe at one's command!"

"If you like that kind of riches," disdainfully. "Wars and bloodshed, rapine and cruelty, grasping and persecution—" Annis paused, out of breath from indignation.

"That's like a girl! You can't distinguish between physical and intellectual progress. All nations have begun on the low round. It is the capability of ascending in the scale that gives them the real grandeur." [302]

"I think they have not ascended very much in the scale," returned Annis rather haughtily, the blackened ruins of the beloved Washington and the day and night of terror before her eyes.

"You are not capable of judging. It is what nations have done in the aggregate. A thousand years have witnessed marvels."

"Still, we haven't gone back to 'Solomon in all his glory.' And Job, you know, had the names of the stars, and understood almost everything."

She had been reading the book of Job aloud to her stepfather, who was always interested in the historical parts of the Bible.

"No one has really settled as to who Job was," said the youth with calm superiority.

"Well, the knowledge is all there," returned Annis. "Some day, thousands of years hence, someone may express doubts about Columbus and John Smith and Washington, but the country will be here."

Girls were not made for argument, and if you went on forever they would have the last word, no matter how inane it might be. Charles thought Annis much changed for the worse, just like other girls, because she no longer hung on his words and paid him a loving deference. Her worship had been something new to the boy, for Varina claimed by force, and was the superior power herself. The others simply petted him. Annis understood and appreciated. But he had outgrown the boyish fervor, and she no longer paid homage to him.

He was too young to know that it was simply lack of admiration, and vanity crying out with the wound.

Annis had quaffed the sweets of admiration herself. A nature less fine and wholesome would have been spoiled by the warm and fond approval of her brothers-in-law, and the preference of others she had met. She was coming to have the dawning self-appropriation of womanhood, and no longer offered her choicest gifts, but felt they must be sought with a certain humility. And there was no humility at all about Charles at that period. They were both too near parallel lines. [303]

Yet it was a busy, happy, engrossing time. Varina took possession of Louis, who was developing much of his father's easy-going nature, but with the ambitions of the new generation and the times; then, his associations had been cast on different lines. It was whispered, too, that a friend of Patty's with whom Annis was a great favorite had cast a glamour over the young lawyer.

Annis solaced herself with the thought that Varina would marry and go away, but all the others would be left, and her dearly beloved Washington. Roger said she would do for an archæologist, she was so fond of exploring ruins. She insisted that Marian and Captain Ralston should make pilgrimages to the little old hut where he had so nearly died, and they found many marks of the battle, that if it had been an ignominious rout, still had in it the better part of valor, when the enemy were overwhelming. Baltimore was glorying in her splendid defense of Fort McHenry, and a girl who could not sing "The Star-spangled Banner" was considered half a Tory.

Though Annis was so young, hardly fifteen, she and Varina had so many invitations to Washington that Mr. Mason suggested they should engage board by the month. Varina was making the best of her time, for she had "coaxed off" six months of the engagement, and her lover was to come soon after Christmas. In the spring Louis was to set up a home of his own. [304]

Varina's marriage was in the old home, which was crowded with relatives and guests. Her mother's wedding gown did duty again, and then it went to Jaqueline as an heirloom. Mr. Woodford was tall and really fine-looking, with a good deal of character in his face, and of good family, ten years older than Varina, which brought him to the prime of young manhood.

"Really!" exclaimed Patty, "I do not see what remarkable grace or virtue in Varina captured so substantial and devoted a lover—though she *has* improved in temper, and is better-looking; but she will never have the Verney beauty—hardly the Mason. Well, one can't explain half the queer happenings in this world."

Besides the cotton, Mr. Woodford had extensive rice fields. Long ago rice had been brought from Madagascar. In both the Carolinas many industries had been established. Seventy years before, General Oglethorpe had carried to England from Georgia eight pounds of silk to be made into a dress for the queen. It was no wonder England hated to lose her promising colonies.

Varina's marriage was extremely satisfactory. Patricia's had been just a little shadowed by

Jaqueline's broken engagement, and the half-superstitious feeling that it brought the best luck to the house for the eldest girl to be married first. But Miss Jaqueline had her own true lover after all, and was happy as a queen.

So Varina took her portion and the family blessing, even that of Aunt Catharine, who was growing stout and felt that she had the burden of half the world on her shoulders, and William and Mary College thrown in. She didn't see how anything could go on without her.

Perhaps to feel of use is one of the great incentives to earnest living.

"And you are to come and make me a long visit, Annis," Varina said cordially. "I shall be sorry for you, left all alone here; and I'll write and tell you everything. And there's Dolly, too, who has the gayest of gay times! They are quite certain to nominate Cousin Preston for representative next year. You see we are getting to be rather famous people." [305]

It was very lonely when they all went away. And now Annis had her mother all to herself. No, *not* all—that could never be again. For now that there were no children whose future must be considered, and Charles had planned out his own, Randolph Mason, who had always been easy-going, dropped into the softened and indolent ways of prosperous elderly life, and became his wife's shadow.

True, his heart was large enough to take in Annis at every step. But he had grown stout, and was not such an enthusiastic horseman, though the yearly races inspired all Virginians to keep some fine horses. He liked the carriage better, with his wife beside him; and then Annis was alone on the back seat. Of course he had the best right, Annis recognized that.

She sewed and did drawn work and made lace, worked embroidery in gold and silver thread, and helped with her "fitting out."

"But if I should never marry?" she said to her mother.

"Girls do, mostly," was the mother's quiet reply. "And your father insists you shall have as much as the other girls."

So there was spinning, and weaving in the loom room, and bleaching to be considered in the spring, as May dew was esteemed a wonderful whitener of linens and cottons, though they were mostly woven in the Eastern towns. Now and then came gossipy notes from Varina. Charles wrote dutiful letters to his mother, and sent love to Annis. But the Washington households were begging for Annis continually. [306]

"Yes, I would go," said her mother. "It is dull for one girl alone here on the plantation."

"Mamma—don't *you* want me?" There was a lustrousness like tears in her eyes.

"My dear!" Her mother kissed her fondly. "Of course I want you. But I have so many cares and occupations, and father takes a good deal of my time, and you have so few amusements. It is the difference, dear, between young people and old people. I want your young life to be pleasant."

"I wish we lived in Washington. Why can't papa build on Virginia Avenue, and have a nice garden, and keep horses, and—" What else was there for him to do?

"He has become settled in this life. He was born and reared here, and has his friends and neighbors about him. It would make him unhappy to go away. The slaves are all fond of him, and it is his pride to be a good master. No; he couldn't leave everything. It is the young people who go out and settle in new homes. And that is the way the Lord has ordered it. 'For this cause'—that is, love—'shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave unto his wife.' And the wife does the same thing."

"Mamma," with a faint tint of color, "I do not think I shall ever be married."

Her mother gave a soft little smile.

"You know Varina was always planning, and Patty used to say 'When I am married,' but I feel curious, and—alone. Perhaps I shall stay with you and father always," and she gave a tender little sigh. "Would you want an old maid?"

"Perhaps I shall need you to take care of me, as grandma did Marian." [307]

"But I don't want you to die." She clasped her arms about her mother's neck convulsively.

"Dear, that would give us thirty-odd years. And grandmother was not a very old woman. A great many things may happen in that time. I think you are a little out of spirits and lonesome. You had better go up to Jaqueline's to-morrow. Cato and Jim are going up with a load. Cato can escort you, and they can take a portmanteau in the wagon. Captain Ralston complains that you have quite deserted him."

"And desert you!" half reproachfully.

"I shall have papa. Yes, little girlie, you must go and have a nice time. I shall think of all the pleasure you are enjoying. And we may come up for a few days."

"Oh, mamma—if you will! It would be strange to love anyone better than one's own mother."

But such things had been heard of in the history of womankind.

Annis went up to her beloved Washington. Three homes opened their hospitable doors, and Louis took her to see his new house, just above the ruined pile that was full of storied incident already.

"They are sure to rebuild it," he said. "There is a grant being considered. We have had to fight against considerable odds, but we shall keep our own Washington. Forty or fifty years from this I shall be telling my grandchildren how men flew to arms in her defense, whether they were soldiers or not. And though the treaty has omitted some things, we shall take them and keep them. France is our good ally again. And John Quincy Adams has gone to St. Petersburg to make friends of the Russians."

"Oh, that's the man Charles talks about, who went abroad with his father when he was such a little lad, and had such a hard time, and studied and studied, and went to Holland and everywhere." [308]

"And is a fine diplomat. For a young country we have raised a magnificent crop of men! I hope to be chief justice myself some day."

"And not President?"

"I'll leave that for Charles. A chief justice is appointed for life, and stands on his good behavior. Do you think they will be likely to discharge me, Annis?"

"Oh, I know they won't!" laughingly.

The house was being built only to half of the plan. The rest of the ground was to remain a garden until Louis had increased in wealth. But it was very nice, with spacious rooms. Miss Marcia Ellicot was something of an heiress.

Annis found a difficulty in dividing herself around.

"There ought to be two or three of me," she said.

"And you are not to give me the cold shoulder," declared Mrs. Jettson. "I do believe I was the first one to take a real fancy to you; and do you remember how Rene quarreled with you about the babies? Arthur and Floyd are such big boys now."

A new boy had been added to the household. Babies were warmly welcomed in those days.

She liked Marian's quiet home. Captain Ralston was very fond of her. He had discarded his crutches, but still used a cane.

"And what do you think, Annis?" he said, his eyes alight with amusement. "I've had a letter from someone—just guess!"

"You know so many people," returned Annis with a curious heat in her cheeks.

"Someone you know, too. Your old enemy. My good nurse and friend."

"Oh, that—young Englishman who came over here to fight us," she answered with an indifferent air, though she had been certain in her mind when he first told her to guess. [309]

"Yes; Stafford. He is coming over here to settle. He was converted at the Battle of Bladensburg, and is a ranting, tearing, out-and-out American. Why, you never knew a more ardent patriot! He is going to take the oath of allegiance at once, and find something to do, and do it bravely, earnestly. That is the kind of citizens we want. I think he has had something of a time to convince his people, but his father has given him a small sum of money to start him in life—nothing to what it would cost his father if he stayed at home, he says. Strange how these men keep their sons at home, thinking trade disgraceful, when England would swoop up all the commerce of the earth, forgetting what manner of men make commerce possible."

Annis was silent, yet there was a little heart-beat of exultation. Why she could not have told.

"Well—will you bid him welcome and Godspeed?"

"Why, it is nothing to me," with a pretty air of indifference.

She did not see the dainty flush on Marian's cheek, that came in moments of embarrassment, as if she were still sixteen.

"But, then, you have your country's good at heart?"

"I wish the country well," and she made a pretentious courtesy, drawing up her brows.

Marian had read all the letter. It was proud and manly, but a pretty girl had inspired a part of the resolve.

"I shall take him in hand. He is ready for work—if he has a long line of ancestors with titles."

"Yes." Annis gave a provoking laugh. "You know he does not like fighting." [310]

There was pleasure enough to make her forget all about him, but now and then she caught herself wondering.

Jaqueline was quite restored to health and beauty, and was a favorite with society. Roger was certainly a rising man. The undercurrent of political feeling was that Mr. Monroe would succeed his chief, who would be quite as glad to resign his honors and the flood of criticisms as Mr. Jefferson had been. And though the conduct of the war was caviled at, it was admitted on all sides that it had raised the country in the rank of nations.

So Annis flitted back and forth like a dainty bird, that did not forget the home nest. She did her hair high on her head and had a fringe of fascinating little curls; she wore French heels to her slippers, and a train on grand occasions. She was not handsome, as the elder Mason girls had been, not tall or stately, but sweet and pretty, with just enough of the coquette to make her arch and winsome.

One night at an assembly, where naval men were out in force, someone caught her hand in the change of partners. A young officer, a first lieutenant, she saw by his insignia of rank.

"Oh!" he cried, "you have forgotten me, but I remember you. I saw you across the room, but I was engaged for this dance. I was coming immediately after. It was at the naval ball when Ensign Hamilton came in with the flag. What a night it was! And I was Midshipman Yardley, going out on my first cruise. There—the next figure is waiting."

He handed her gallantly to her new partner.

She went back to Jaqueline. "Oh, Roger!" she cried, "do you remember the young midshipman at the naval ball when there was such an excitement? He is here to-night. I have just been dancing with him. There he is, coming hither." [311]

The smiling young fellow was glad to see Mr. and Mrs. Carrington. Annis excused herself from her next partner, she was so eager to hear him talk. Perhaps he would not have lent dignity to the position of an admiral, for he was not tall nor imposing, but bright and eager and full of spirit and ambition. "After all, it has been a glorious war," he declared. He had been in a number of victories, and quite distinguished himself, they heard afterward; and one sad defeat, when he had been taken prisoner with some other men and made a daring escape, landing on the coast of France, and worked and begged his way home. Now he was stationed at Annapolis for some time.

Annis had to go and dance in the middle of the story, and then he begged the honor. Was she staying with her sister? He should be in town a few days. Could he not call on her?

Jaqueline gave him the invitation.

Captain Ralston was eager to see him, as well. There were so many things to talk over. Such wonderful victories, some such sad defeats, many brave men who had given their lives and left imperishable names behind them. How proud the young fellow was of his country!

And they had to tell the story of Washington with the *verve* that people do who have lived through an event.

They looked at the ruins, they rode up the Potomac, they went again to Bladensburg. Everything was so near, so vivid.

Lieutenant Yardley decided that Annis was the most charming young girl he had ever met.

"I am a little afraid of most women," he admitted. "You can't always tell just what to say, and sometimes when they praise you you feel silly all over. And some women never rouse to patriotism. But *we* find so much to say to each other. Oh, I wish I were going to stay in [312] Washington a month! Won't you make some of your relatives bring you over to Annapolis? You have such a splendid lot. Only, do you know, I like your own name, Annis Bouvier, better than I do Annis Mason. It just suits you."

She blushed a little. What a pretty way he had of saying Annis!

But alas! the delight came to an end, and for several days Annis thought Washington as dull as the plantation.

"I am afraid my poor fellow won't stand any chance," said Ralston, with a slow shake of the head. "The lieutenant is delightful, certainly quite dangerous enough to turn any girl's brain."

The "poor fellow" reached Washington one morning, having landed at New York, and spent half a lifetime on the post-roads, he declared. They were all a little startled. It seemed as if he must have grown, he was so tall and manly and fine-looking, and so overjoyed to see them again, so happy at the thought of being an American citizen.

"It is as I said when I was here before—the people do not understand each other. When they come to a time that they can work side by side in anything, you will see something grand accomplished. There is a fine, free air over here that inspirits one. You can begin without being hampered by a thousand petty restrictions. And I am going to prove myself a man."

Dr. Collaston and Patty gave him the warmest welcome, quite as cordial as that of Ralston. But it was queer that when he went there Annis had gone to Jaqueline's; and finally Ralston asked her boldly to come to tea and give Eustace Stafford a word of welcome.

"There isn't anything left for me to say," and the rosy lips pouted as if offended. "You have all been so—so extravagant—or is it exuberant?—in your demonstrations, that I shall seem tame. [313]

And why should I be so desperately glad? He would have killed you, Philip, or anyone else, if he hadn't been wounded at once. I'd like you to go and thank the soldier who did it."

"You are a briery little body where he is concerned, Annis. Why, peace would never have been signed if both parties had held out as you do! I think it fine in him to come out so frankly and own he was on the wrong side. Even if you have no Indian blood in your veins, you might come and smoke a figurative pipe of peace—that is, drink a cup of tea and wish him well."

"You know I don't like tea. I should think they would have wanted to throw it overboard. Another of England's tyrannies!"

"I thought you had a tender place in your heart for Marian and me."

"Oh, I can come!" she said pettishly. "I am not afraid of your Englishman."

"I began to think you were," teasingly.

And so she came. But when she greeted Mr. Stafford, who had nothing of the boy left about him, but who met her eyes steadily until hers fell, and whose voice had lost the old deprecating, beseeching tone, a sudden half-terror took possession of her, an indefinable fear that made her angry and yet disarmed her. Oh, she was sure she liked Lieutenant Yardley a hundred times better!

Afterward she said she was tired of all the gayeties, and wanted to go home. The plantation was at its loveliest, and there would be such rides with papa, and she was sure her mother was longing to see her.

But when bees once get a taste for the sweetest honey flowers, they haunt the spot. And Annis Bouvier was no longer a little girl. She felt the strange solemn capabilities within her. Sometimes she clung to her mother, as if not daring to meet them. The mother knew what it meant, and gave [314]
her the wordless comfort mothers can give, in a kiss or a clasp of the hand, as one crosses the bridge to womanhood.

Neighboring young men began to haunt the house. The Mason girls had always been favorites. And then down came the young Englishman, who resolved not to lose the prize if earnest wooing could avail. They were both so young. True, he had his fortune to make, but some of the noblest Virginian families had sprung from penniless young sons who had come to the new countries and won not only wealth, but fame. Captain Ralston had found a place for him, and he should live in fair sight of everybody. If he did not make the sort of man they could approve, he should never blame them for refusing him their treasure. All he asked for was time and a fair field.

"He has the making of a man in him," the father conceded to himself, but aloud he said—a little weakly: "Annis is too young to decide. In the end it will be as she desires."

"And I can come now and then as a friend?"

"It may make trouble for Annis later on, but I could not refuse," he said to his wife afterward.

Annis came and sat on his knee in the soft Virginian twilight, dusky sooner than that farther north. The whip-poor-wills called to each other, the mocking bird flung out a note now and then as if he said saucily, "*Did* you think I was asleep?" and the frogs in the marsh were far enough off to send a strain of quivering music. She put her arms about his neck, and her soft warm cheek touched his.

"Were you very cross and stern, papa?" in the most coaxing of tones.

"No, dear. He is a fine fellow." [315]

"But he came to fight against us."

"Yes. It was a great crime."

"He was sent, and he didn't know any better. Some day we shall know a good deal more about each other."

"Annis, do you love him? Child, don't make a mistake! And don't trifle with him."

"No, I don't *love* him. We quarreled dreadfully at first. I can't help liking and admiring him. He is so strong and earnest. There are a good many grand men in the world, are there not? And some of them have been poor and have had hard times. I didn't want him to think it was because he was poor."

"No, dear," as she waited for some reply.

"And you know I can't help meeting him at Marian's, and Patty likes him so much, too. It would be very disagreeable to be bad friends?"

"Yes," assented the elder.

"So we are going to be *just* friends until—well, until I am twenty, perhaps."

"Yes—if you will wait until then."

Annis kissed him.

But that was not the end of love affairs. Lieutenant Yardley insisted upon telling his story. He had carried about with him a child's sweet face, and resolved that if he should survive the deadly strife he would come home and find her. He thought his claim far the best. Had he not fought for the country, *her* country?

She liked him too. It was hard to decide. And then the lieutenant, being rather fiery, went at his rival in a fierce manner. Dueling was still in vogue.

Annis was alarmed. She sent for the big Englishman. It was curious, but she knew she could make him obey her slightest behest, big and strong as he was.

"You are not to quarrel about me," she began with wonderful dignity. "I do not think I shall marry either of you, or anybody. But if there *was* a dispute, and you did anything reprehensible, I should [316] never, *never* see you or speak to you again. Lieutenant Yardley is one of the country's heroes, and you—" How should she put it?

"I am here on sufferance, until I earn the right. Yes, I understand."

She flushed scarlet.

"You are bound over to keep the peace."

"Here is my hand in token of it. I shall never do anything to make you sorry or ashamed of me."

"Papa," she said in a plaintive tone a day or two after Stafford's visit, "should you be very sorry if I—were to—stay single—always?"

"Why, no, dear," and he smiled. "Don't you remember, when Louis and Charles used to dispute about you, I said we would marry off the others, and you should stay here with mother and me?"

"I must be very naughty, to have people disputing about me," and she sighed in a delicious sort of manner. "But I have quite resolved that I will not marry anybody."

They all went up to Washington to attend the wedding of the eldest son. There was only one lover present, and Annis was sincerely glad.

There was much going back and forth, as there always is when families branch out and set up new homes. And presently Charles came home, quite a tall boy, but still delicate-looking, and so much improved that Annis insensibly went back to her old regard for him. He was broader-minded, and took a livelier interest in everything.

He soon found that Annis was a great favorite with all the young people. She wasn't as handsome as Jaqueline, nor as bright and overflowing with fun as Patty; indeed, he could not decide what the charm was. He heard about the two real lovers, and met them both. Secretly he favored [317] Stafford and felt sorry for the lieutenant.

One day they were lounging in the old nook by the creek. He was telling over his plans. He was not anxious now to be President, or even a minister abroad, but he was eager for all the knowledge he could grasp, for all the discoveries that were looming up on the horizon. Uncle Conway had advised him to enter an English university after the coming year.

She was in the low swing, which was a tangle of vines now, and he was curled up in the grass at her feet, as they talked over the past and the future. Then there was a long, sweet silence, such as comes nowhere but in country nooks.

"Annis," he exclaimed regretfully, resignedly, "I do not suppose you ever could marry me?"

She started in surprise. "Oh, Charles!" she cried in pain, "I thought that foolishness was at an end."

"Has it been foolishness? Annis, I don't believe you could understand that boyish passion. I don't understand it myself. You fitted into my life. You liked my old heroes. You never laughed or teased me about them. They were my life then. That was the country I always lived in. And it was very sweet to have you. How jealous I was of Louis! Some of the great intellectual heroes have had just such a love. Last summer I was half ashamed of it; I was growing out of childhood. And now I have gone back to it again."

"Oh, Charles, I am so sorry!" There was anguish in her tone. "You see, I am older, and you will have four or five years abroad, and grow and develop as men do—"

"Yes. I couldn't ask so much of you. And maybe, then, we wouldn't suit. Don't you know how the old slave women put pieces of gowns in their best quilts and cherish them because this was [318] young missy's, and this someone else's? And I'd like to be the piece that you'd go back to in memory, and think how sweet the old times were, even when you have a husband, proud and strong, and that you loved devotedly. And how you bade me hope through all that trying time, and gave me your mother when you loved her so, and kept my little secret, for we never can think it was Varina's fault."

She bent over. Their arms were about each other's necks, and both were crying—tender, loving tears.

The ensuing winter in Washington was one long talked about. The President removed to a place forming part of the notable "Seven Buildings," which had been fitted up for its greater

spaciousness. It was the last winter of Mrs. Madison's reign, as in March Colonel Monroe was to be inaugurated. There was a great stir and intellectual activity, a broadening of political life; and as we look back it seems as if there were giants in those days. Thither came the hero of the Battle of New Orleans, General Jackson, with his wife, and many another worthy; even curious visitors from abroad, who acknowledged the grace of Mrs. Madison's brilliant hospitality.

Thenceforward it was to be a new Washington, more truly American perhaps, crystallizing around the points that gave strength and dignity, and proving false many an evil prophecy.

A few, very few, of the old places are left. But the Capitol is the nucleus of a great nation, and the White House reared on the old superstructure holds many memories the country will always cherish.

I suppose I hardly need tell you that after a while Annis broke her resolve and married the man of her choice, living a long and happy life in the newer Washington. That when her sons were grown there was nothing they enjoyed more than visiting the commander at Fortress Monroe and [319] listening to the stirring events of 1812. He thought there never could be such battles and victories again. But the girls were most fond of their delightful bachelor uncle Charles, whose pen was making a name and fame in the intellectual world.

THE END.

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