Douglas Amanda M.

A Little Girl in Old Washington

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Содержание

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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.

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.

"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 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.

"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."

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.

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."

"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 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.

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 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 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 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!

"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.

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.

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 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 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?"

"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.

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.

"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.

"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.

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.

"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 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.

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 – "

"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."

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."

"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.

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 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 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?"

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.

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.

"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.

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."

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 – "

"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 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.

"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.

"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.

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.

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.

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 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 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."

"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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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.

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.

"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."

"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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

"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."

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.

"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."

"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.

"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 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 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.

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.

"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."

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 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 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 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 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."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.