

RED ROCK

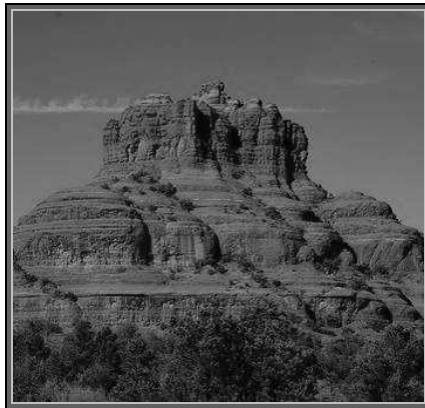
“A Chronicle of Reconstruction”

RED ROCK

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[Illustrated]

By

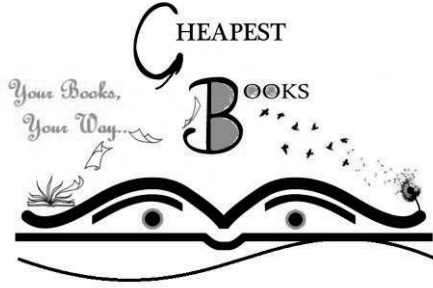


Thomas Nelson Page

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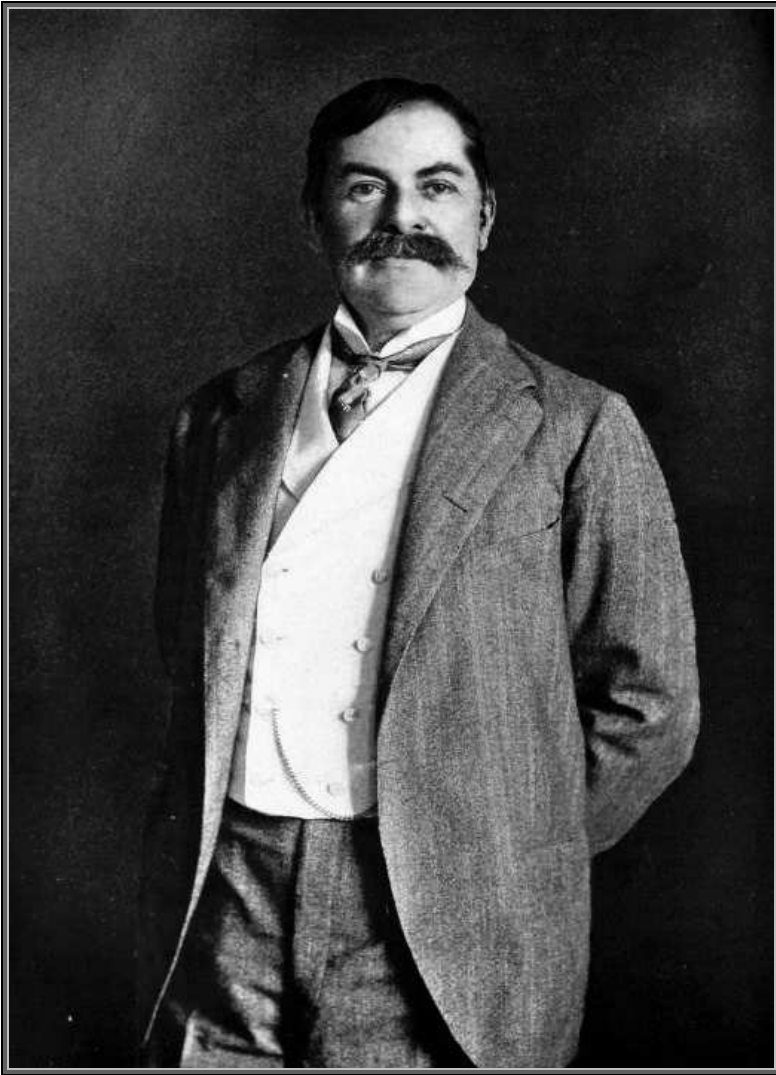
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THOMAS NELSON PAGE



Thomas Nelson Page (1853 –1922) was a lawyer and American wri-

ter. He also served as the U.S. ambassador to Italy under the administration of President Woodrow Wilson during World War I.

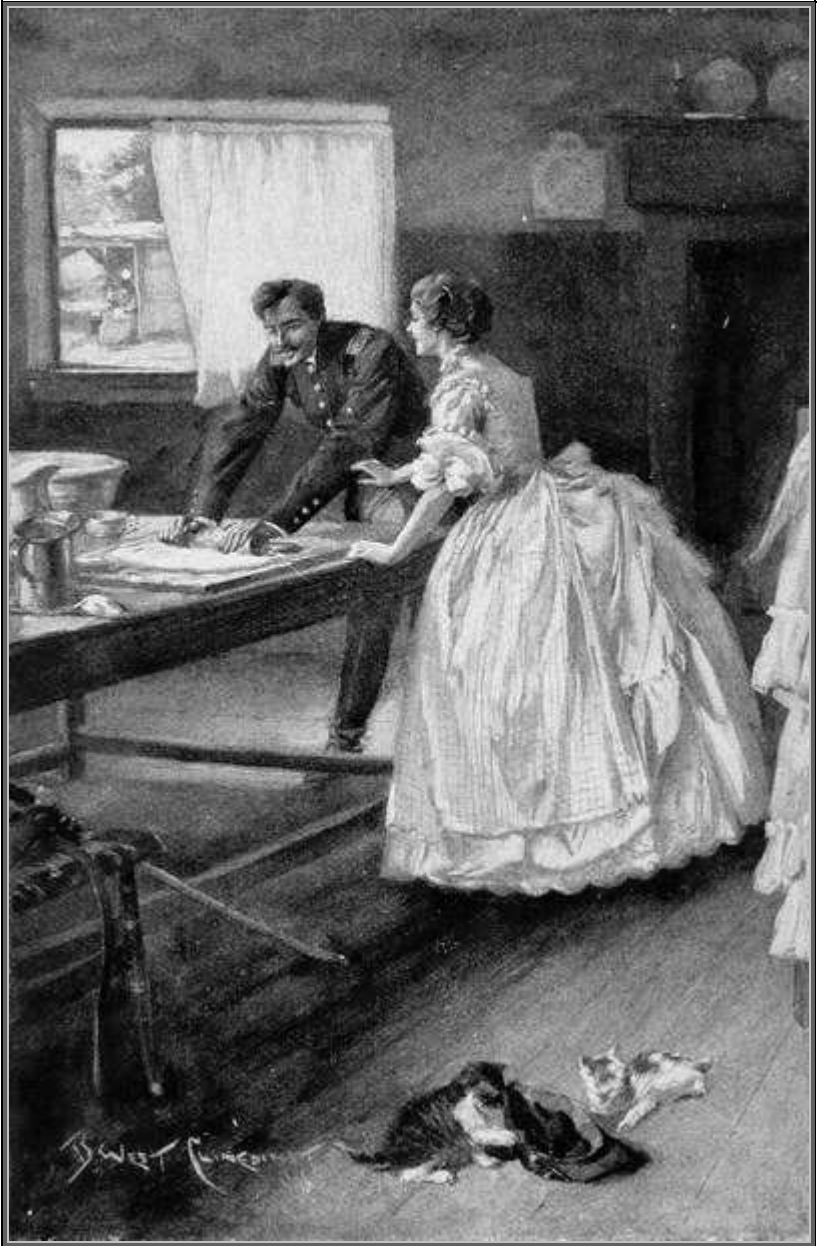
Biography:

Born at Oakland, one of the Nelson family plantations, in the village of Beaverdam in Hanover County, Virginia to John Page and Elizabeth Burwell (Nelson). He was a scion of the prominent Nelson and Page families, each First Families of Virginia. Although he was from once-wealthy lineage, after the American Civil War, which began when he was only 8 years old, his parents and their relatives were largely impoverished during Reconstruction and his teenage years. In 1869, he entered Washington College, known now as Washington and Lee University, in Lexington, Virginia when Robert E. Lee was president of the college. In Page's later literary works, Robert E. Lee would come to serve as the model figure of Southern Heroism. Page left Washington College before graduation for financial reasons after three years, but continued to desire an education specifically in law. To earn money to pay for his degree, Page tutored the children of his cousins in Kentucky. From 1873 to 1874, he was enrolled in the law school of the University of Virginia. At Washington College and thereafter at UVA, Nelson was a member of the prestigious fraternity Delta Psi, AKA St. Anthony Hall.

Admitted to the Virginia Bar Association, he practiced as a lawyer in Richmond between 1876 and 1893, and also began his writing career. He was married to Anne Seddon Bruce on July 28, 1886. She died on December 21, 1888 of a throat hemorrhage.

RED ROCK

“A CHRONICLE OF RECONSTRUCTION”



SHE GAVE HIM A ROLLING-PIN AND HE SET TO WORK.

PREFACE

The Region where the Grays and Carys lived lies too far from the centres of modern progress to be laid down on any map that will be accessible. And, as "he who maps an undiscovered country may place what boundaries he will," it need only be said, that it lies in the South, somewhere in that vague region partly in one of the old Southern States and partly in the yet vaguer land of Memory. It will be spoken of in this story, as Dr. Cary, General Legaie, and the other people who used to live there in old times, spoke of it, in warm affection, as, "the old County," or, "the Red Rock section," or just, "My country, sir."

It was a goodly land in those old times—a rolling country, lying at the foot of the blue mountain-spurs, with forests and fields; rich meadows filled with fat cattle; watered by streams, sparkling and bubbling over rocks, or winding under willows and sycamores, to where the hills melted away in the low, alluvial lands, where the sea once washed and still left its memory and its name.

The people of that section were the product of a system of which it is the fashion nowadays to have only words of condemnation. Every ass that passes by kicks at the dead lion. It was an Oligarchy, they say, which ruled and lorded it over all but those favored ones who belonged to it. But has one ever known the members of a Democracy to rule so justly? If they shone in prosperity, much more they shone in adversity; if they bore themselves haughtily in their day of triumph, they have borne defeat with splendid fortitude. Their old family seats, with everything else in the world, were lost

to them—their dignity became grandeur. Their entire system crumbled and fell about them in ruins—they remained unmoved. They were subjected to the greatest humiliation of modern times: their slaves were put over them—they reconquered their section and preserved the civilization of the Anglo-Saxon.

No doubt the phrase “Before the war” is at times somewhat abused. It is just possible that there is a certain Caleb Osbaldistonism in the speech at times. But for those who knew the old County as it was then, and can contrast it with what it has become since, no wonder it seems that even the moonlight was richer and mellower “before the war” than it is now. For one thing, the moonlight as well as the sunlight shines brighter in our youth than in maturer age; and gold and gossamer amid the rose-bowers reflect it better than serge and crêpe amid myrtles and bays. The great thing is not to despond even though the brilliancy be dimmed: in the new glitter one need not necessarily forget the old radiance. Happily, when one of the wise men insists that it shall be forgotten, and that we shall be wise also, like him, it works automatically, and we know that he is one of those who, as has been said, avoiding the land of romance, “have missed the title of fool at the cost of a celestial crown.”

Why should not Miss Thomasia in her faded dress, whom you shall meet, tell us, if she pleases, of her “dear father,” and of all her “dear cousins” to the remotest generation; and Dr. Cary and General Legaie quote their grandfathers as oracles, alongside the sages of Plutarch, and say “Sir” and “Madam” at the end of their sentences? Antiquated, you say? Provincial? Do you, young lady, observe Miss Thomasia the next time she enters a room, or addresses a servant; and do you, good sir, polished by travel and contact with the most fashionable—second-class—society of two continents,

watch General Legaie and Dr. Cary when they meet Miss Thomasia, or greet the apple-woman on the corner, or the wagoner on the road. What an air suddenly comes in with them of old Courts and polished halls when all gentlemen bowed low before all ladies, and wore swords to defend their honor. What an odor, as it were, of those gardens which Watteau painted, floats in as they enter! Do not you attempt it. You cannot do it. You are thinking of yourself, they of others and the devoirs they owe them. You are republican and brought up to consider yourself "as good as any, and better than most." Sound doctrine for the citizen, no doubt; but it spoils the bow. Even you, Miss or Madam, for all your silks and satins, cannot do it like Miss Thomasia. You are imitating the duchess you saw once, perhaps, in Hyde Park. The duchess would have imitated Miss Thomasia. You are at best an imitation; Miss Thomasia is the reality. Do not laugh at her, or call her provincial. She belongs to the realm where sincerity dwells and the heart still rules—the realm of old-time courtesy and high breeding, and you are the real provincial. It is a wide realm, though; and some day, if Heaven be good to you, you may reach it. But it must be by the highway of Sincerity and Truth. No other road leads there.

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH THERE ARE SEVERAL INTRODUCTIONS

*T*he old Gray plantation, "Red Rock," lay at the highest part of the rich rolling country, before it rose too abruptly in the wooded foothills of the blue mountains away to the westward. As everybody in the country knew, who knew anything, it took its name from the great red stain, as big as a blanket, which appeared on the huge boulder in the grove, beside the family grave-yard, at the far end of the Red Rock gardens. And as was equally well known, or equally well believed, which amounted almost to the same thing, that stain was the blood of the Indian chief who had slain the wife of the first Jacquelin Gray who came to this part of the world: the Jacquelin who had built the first house at Red Rock, around the fireplace of which the present mansion was erected, and whose portrait, with its piercing eyes and fierce look, hung in a black frame over the mantel, and used to come down as a warning when any peril impended above the house.

The bereft husband had exacted swift retribution of the murderer, on that very rock, and the Indian's heart blood had left that deep stain in the darker granite as a perpetual memorial of the swift vengeance of the Jacquelin Grays.

This, at least, was what was asserted and believed by the old negroes (and, perhaps, by some of the whites, too, a little). And if the negroes did not know, who did? So Jacquelin often pondered.

Steve Allen, who was always a reckless talker, however, used to say that the stain was nothing but a bit of red sandstone which had outcropped at the point where that huge fragment was broken off, and rolled along by a glacier thousands of years ago, far to the northward; but this view was to the other children's minds clearly untenable; for there never could have been any glacier there—glaciers, as they knew from their geographies, being confined to Switzerland, and the world having been created only six thousand years ago. The children were well grounded by their mothers and Miss Thomasia in Bible history. Besides, there was the picture of the "Indian-killer," in the black frame nailed in the wall over the fireplace in the great hall, and one could not go anywhere in the hall without his fierce eyes following you with a look so intent and piercing that Mammy Celia was wont to use it half jestingly as a threat effectual with little Jacquelin when he was refractory—that if he did not mind, the "Indian-killer" would see him and come after him. How often Mammy Celia employed it with Jacquelin, and how severe she used to be with tall, reckless Steve, because he scoffed at the story, and to tease her, threatened, with appropriate gesture, to knock the picture out of the frame, and see what was in the secret cabinet behind it! What would have happened had Steve carried out his threat, Jacquelin, as a boy, quite trembled to think; for though he admired Steve, his cousin, above all other mortals, as any small boy admires one several years his senior, who can ride wild horses and do things he cannot do, this would have been to engage in a contest with something supernatural and not mortal. Still he used to urge Steve to do it, with a certain fascinating apprehensiveness that made the chills creep up and down his back. Besides, it would have been very interesting to know whether the Indian's scalp was still in the hollow space

behind the picture, and if so, whether it was still bleeding, and that red stain on the bottom of the frame was really blood.

Jacquelin Gray—the one who figures in these pages—was born while his father, and his father's cousin, Dr. Cary, of Birdwood, and Mr. Legaie were in Mexico, winning renown in those battles which helped to establish the security of the United States. He grew up to be just what most other boys of his station, stature, and blood, living on a plantation, under similar conditions, would have been. He was a hale, hearty boy, who adored his cousin, Steve Allen, because Steve was older and stronger than he; despised Blair Cary because she was a girl; disliked Wash Still, the overseer's son, partly because Steve sneered at him, and partly because the negro boys disliked him, and envied every cart-driver and stable-boy on the place. He used to drive with string "lines" two or four or six of his black boon companions, giving them the names of his father's horses in the stable; or sometimes, even the names of those steeds of which his Aunt Thomasia, a famous story-teller, told him in the hour before the candles were lighted. But if he drove the black boys in harness, it was because they let him do it, and not because he was their master. If he possessed any privileges or power, he did not know it. If anything, he thought the advantage rather on their side than on his, as they could play all the time, while he had to go to school to his Aunt Thomasia, whose bell he thought worse than any curfew; for that rang only at night, while Miss Thomasia's bell was sure to tinkle just at the moment when he was having the most beautiful time in the world. How gladly would he have exchanged places to mind the cows and ride the horses to the stable, and be free all day long; and whenever he could slip off he was with the boys, emulating them and being adored by them.

Once, indeed, his mastership appeared. Wash Still, the overseer's son, who was about Steve's age, used to bully the smaller boys, and one day when Jacquelin was playing about the blacksmith's shop, Wash, who was waiting for a horse to be shod, twisted the arm of Doan, one of Jacquelin's sable team, until the boy whimpered. Jacquelin never knew just how it happened, but a sudden fulness came over him; he seized a hatchet lying by, and made an onslaught on Wash, which came near performing on that youngster the same operation that Wash's august namesake performed on the celebrated cherry-tree. Jacquelin received a tremendous whipping from his father for his vicious attack; but his defence saved his sable companions from any further imposition than his own, and Wash was shortly sent off by his father to school.

As to learning, Jacquelin was not very apt. It was only when Blair Cary came over one winter and went to school to Miss Thomasia—and he was laughed at by everyone, particularly by Steve, because Blair, a girl several years younger than he, could read Latin better—that Jacquelin really tried to study. Though no one knew it, many of the things that Jacquelin did were done in the hope that Steve might think well of him; and whether it was riding wild colts, with the certainty of being thrown and possibly hurt; diving into deep pools with the prospect of being drowned, or doing anything else that he was afraid to do, it was almost sure that it was done because of Steve.

With some natures the mere performance of an action is sufficient reward: that man suffers martyrdom; this one does a great act; another lives a devoted, saint's life, impelled solely from within, and with no other idea than to perform nobly. But these are rare natures: the Christophers, à Kempises and Therasas of the world. The common herd

must have some more material motive: "wine, or sleep, or praise." That charge was led because a dark—or blonde-haired girl was waiting somewhere; that gate was blown up because an army was standing by, and a small cross might be worn on the breast for it; that poem was written for Lalage, or Laura, Stella, or Saccharissa. Even the saint was crowned, because somewhere, in retired monasteries or in distant cities, deeds were sure to be known at last. So, now it is a big boy's praise, and later on a fair girl's favor; now the plaudits of the playground, and a few years hence salvos of artillery and the thanks of the people. And who shall say they are not worthy motives? We are but men, and only the highest win even these rewards.

Steve Allen had come to Red Rock before Jacquelin could remember—the year after Steve's father was killed in Mexico, leading his company up the heights of Cerro Gordo, and his mother died of fever far down South. Mr. Gray had brought the boy home on his mother's death; so Steve was part of Red Rock. Everybody spoiled him, particularly Miss Thomasia, who made him her especial charge and was notoriously partial to him, and old Peggy, Steve's "Momma," as she was called, who had come from the far South with him, and with her sharp eyes and sharper tongue was ready to fight the world for him.

Steve was a tall, brown-haired young fellow, as straight as a sapling, and with broad shoulders; gray eyes that could smile or flash; teeth as white as snow, and a chin that Dr. Cary used to say he must have got from his mother. He was as supple as an eel. He could turn back-somersaults like a circus man, and as he was without fear, so he was without reverence. He would tease Miss Thomasia, and play practical jokes on Mr. Gray and Dr. Cary. To show his contempt for the "Indi-

an-Killer," he went alone and spent the night on the bloody rock, and when the other boys crept in a body to see if he were really there, he was found by the little party of scared searchers to be tranquilly asleep on the "Indian-Killer's" very grave. This and similar acts gained Steve Allen, with some, the credit of being in a sort of compact with the spirit of darkness, and several of the old negroes on the plantation began to tell of his wonderful powers, a reputation which Steve was not slow to improve; and afterward, many a strange, unearthly sound, that scared the negroes, and ghostly manifestations which went the rounds of the plantation might possibly have been traced to Steve's fertile brain.

The only persons on the place who did not get on well with Steve were Hiram Still, the manager, and his son, Wash. Between them and Steve there was declared enmity, if not open war. Steve treated Hiram with superciliousness, and Wash with open contempt. The old negroes—who remembered Steve's father, Captain Allen, Mr. Gray's cousin, and the dislike between him and Hiram—said it was "bred in the bone."

At length Steve went off to school to Dr. Maule, at "The Academy," as it was called, no further designation being needed to distinguish it, as no other academies could for a moment have entered into competition with it, and there was a temporary suspension of the supernatural manifestations on the plantation. Jacquelin missed him sorely and tried to imitate him in many things; but he knew it was a poor imitation, for often he could not help being afraid, whilst Steve did not know what fear was. Jacquelin's knees would shake, and his teeth sometimes chatter, whilst Steve performed his most dangerous feats with mantling cheeks and dancing eyes. However, the boy kept on, and began to do

things simply because he was afraid. One day he read how a great general, named Marshal Turenne, on being laughed at because his knees were shaking as he mounted his horse to go into battle, replied that if his knees knew where he was going to take them that day they would shake still more. This incident helped Jacquelin mightily, and he took his knees into many dangerous places. In time this had its effect, and as his knees began to shake less he began to grow more self-confident and conceited. He began to be very proud of himself, and to take opportunities to show his superiority over others, which developed with some rapidity the character existent somewhere in most persons: the prig.

Blair Cary gave the first, if not the final, shock to this development.

She was the daughter of Dr. Cary, Mr. Gray's cousin, who lived a few miles off across the river, at "Birdwood," perhaps the next most considerable place to Red Rock in that section. She was a slim little girl with a rather pale face, large brown eyes, and hair that was always blowing into them.

She would have given her eyes, no doubt, to have been accepted as companion by Jacquelin, who was several years her senior; but as that young man was now aspiring to be comrade to Steve and to Blair's brother, Morris, he relegated Blair to the companionship of his small brother, Rupert, who was as much younger than Blair as she was younger than himself, and treated her with sovereign disdain. The first shock he received was when he found how much better Blair could read Latin than he could, and how much Steve thought of her on that account. After that, he actually condescended to play with her occasionally, and, sometimes, even to let her follow him about the plantation to

admire his feats, whilst he tried to revenge himself on her for her superior scholastic attainments by showing her how much more a boy could do than a girl. It was all in vain. For, with this taunt for a spur, she would follow him even to the tops of trees, or the bottoms of ponds: so he determined to show his superiority by one final and supreme act. This was to climb to the roof of the "high barn," as it was called, and spring off into the top of a tree which spread its branches below. He had seen Steve do it, but had never ventured to try it himself. He had often climbed to the roof, and had fancied himself performing this feat to escape from pursuing Indians, but had never really contemplated doing it in fact, until Blair's persistent emulation, daunted by nothing that he attempted, spurred him to undertake it. So one day, after some boasting, he climbed to the peak of the roof. His heart beat so as he gazed down into the green mass far below him and saw the patches of brown earth through the leaves, that he wished he had not been so boastful; but there was Blair behind him, astride of the roof, her eyes fastened on him with a somewhat defiant gaze. He thought how Steve would jeer if he knew he had turned back. So, with a call of derision to Blair to see what "a man could do," he set his teeth, shut his eyes, and took the jump, and landed safely below, among the boughs, his outstretched arms gathering them in as he sank amidst them, until they stopped his descent and he found a limb and climbed down, his heart bumping with excitement and pride. Blair, he felt sure, was at last "stumped." As he sprang to the ground and looked up he saw a sight which made his heart give a bigger bound than it had ever done in all his life. There was little Blair on the very peak of the roof, the very point of the gable, getting ready to follow him. Her face was white, her lips were compressed, and her eyes were opened so wide that he could

see them even from where he was. She was poised like a bird ready to fly.

“Blair! Blair!” he cried, waving her back. “Don’t! don’t!” But Blair took no heed. She only settled herself for a firmer foothold, and the next second, with outstretched arms, she sprang into space. Whether it was that his cry distracted her, or whether her hair blew into her eyes and made her miss her step, or whether she would have misjudged her distance anyhow, instead of reaching the thickly leaved part where Jacquelin had landed, she struck where the boughs were much less thick, and came crashing through: down, down, from bough to bough, until she landed on the lowest limb, where she stopped for a second, and then rolled over and fell in a limp little bundle on the ground, where she lay quite still. Jacquelin never forgot the feeling he had at that moment. He was sure she was dead, and that he was a murderer. In a second he was down on his knees, bending over her.

“Blair, Blair,” he cried. “Dear Blair, are you hurt?” But there was no answer. And he began to whimper in a very unmanly fashion for one who had been so boastful a moment before, and to pray, too, which is not so unmanly; but his wits were about him, and it came to him quite clearly that, if she were not dead, the best thing to do was to unfasten her neck-band and bathe her face. So off to the nearest water he put as hard as his legs could take him, and dipped his handkerchief in the horse-trough, and then, grabbing up a bucket near by, filled it and ran back with it. Blair was still motionless and white, but he wiped her little, scratched face and bathed it again and again, and, presently, to his inexpressible joy, she sighed and half opened her eyes and sighed again, and then, as he was still asking her how she felt, said, faintly:

“I’m all right—I did it.”

In his joy Jacquelin actually kissed her. It seemed to him afterward to mark an epoch.

The next quarter of an hour was passed in getting Blair’s breath back. Fortunately for her, if not for her dress, her clothes had caught here and there as she came crashing through the branches, and though the breath was knocked out of her, and she was shaken and scratched and stunned, no bones were broken, and she was not seriously hurt after all. She proposed that they should say nothing about it to anyone: she could get his Mammy to mend her clothes. But this magnanimous offer Jacquelin firmly declined. He was afraid that Blair might be hurt some way that she did not know, and he declared that he should go straight and tell it at the house.

“But I did it myself,” persisted little Blair; “you were not to blame. You called to me not to do it.”

“Did you hear me call? Then why did you do it?”

“Because you had done it and said I could not.”

“But didn’t you know you would get hurt?”

She nodded.

“I thought so.”

Jacquelin looked at her long and seriously, and that moment a new idea seemed to him to enter his mind: that, after all, it might be as

brave to do a dangerous thing which you are afraid to do, as if you are not at all afraid.

“Blair, you are a brick,” he said; “you are braver than any boy I know—as brave as Steve. As brave as Marshal Turenne.” Which was sweet enough to Blair to make amends for all her bruises and scratches.

From that time Jacquelin made up his mind that he would never try to stump her again, but would guard her, and this sweetened to him the bitterness of having to confess when he got to the house. He did it like a man, going to his father, of whom, at heart, he was mightily afraid, and telling him the whole story alone without the least reference to Blair’s part in it, taking the entire blame on himself; and it was only after he had received the punishment which was deemed due him that Blair’s joint responsibility was known from her own lips.

This escapade, however, proved a little too much for the elders, and Jacquelin was sent off to school, to the Academy at Brutusville, under the learned Doctor Maule, where, still emulating Steve, who was the leader in most of the mischief that went on at that famous institution of learning, he made more reputation by the way he constructed a trap to catch one of the masters, Mr. Eliphalet Bush, than in construing the ancient language which was that gentleman’s particular department.

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH TWO STRANGERS VISIT RED ROCK AND ARE INVITED TO COME AGAIN

Everyone knows what a seething ferment there was for some time before the great explosion in the beginning of the Sixties—that strange decade that changed the civilization of the country. Red Rock, like the rest of the land, was turned from a haunt of peace into a forum. Politics were rampant; every meeting was a lyceum; boys became orators; young girls wore partisan badges; children used party-catchwords, which they did not understand—except one thing: that they represented “their side.” There existed an irreconcilable difference between the two sections of the country. It could not be crushed. Hydra-headed, it appeared after every extirpation.

One side held slavery right under the double title of the Bible and of the Constitution. The leader of the other side said, “If it was not wrong, then nothing was wrong”; but declared that he would not interfere with it.

“Bosh!” said Major Legaie. “That is not a man to condone what he thinks wrong. If he is elected, it means the end of slavery.” And so said many others. Most of them, rather than yield, were for War. To them War was only an episode: a pageant: a threshold to glory. Dr. Cary, who was a Whig, was opposed to it; he had seen it, and he took the stump in opposition to Major Legaie.

“We could whip them with pop-guns,” said the fire-eaters. Fordyce Lambly and Hurlbut Bail were two of them.

“But will they fight with that weapon?” asked Dr. Cary, scornfully. He never liked Lambly and Bail; he said they had no convictions. “A man with convictions may be wrong; but you know where to meet him, sir. You never know where to find these men.”

“Do you know what War is?” he said in a speech, in reply to a secession-speech by Major Legaie. “War is the most terrible of all disasters, except Dishonor. I do not speak of the dangers. For every brave man must face danger as it comes, and should court glory; and death for one’s Country is glorious. I speak merely of the change that War inevitably brings. War is the destruction of everything that exists. You may fail or you may win, but what exists passes, and something different takes its place. The plough-share becomes a spear, and the pruning-hook a sword; the poor may become richer, but the rich must become poorer. You are the wealthiest people in the world to-day—not in mere riches, but in wealth. You may become the poorest. No people who enter a war wealthy and content ever come out of war so. I do not say that this is an unanswerable reason for not going to war. For war may be right at any cost. But it is not to be entered on unadvisedly or lightly; but in the fear of God. It should not be undertaken from mere enthusiasm; but deliberately, with a full recognition of its cost, and resolution to support its possible and direst consequences.”

When he had ended, Mr. Hurlbut Bail, a speaker from the city, who had come to the county to stir up the people, said:

“Oh! Dr. Cary is nothing but a Cassandra.”

“Did Troy fall or not?” asked Dr. Cary, calmly.

This, of course, changed no one. In times of high feeling debate only fuses opinions into convictions; only fans the flames and makes the fire a conflagration.

When the war came the old Doctor flung in his lot with his friends, and his gravity, that had grown on him of late, was lighted up by the old fire; he took his place and performed his part with kindling eyes and an erecter mien. Hurlbut Bail became an editor. This, however, was later on.

The constantly increasing public ferment and the ever-enlarging and deepening cloud did not prevent the ordinary course of life from flowing in its accustomed channels: men planned and performed; sowed and reaped; bought and sold, as in ordinary times. And as in the period before that other flood, there was marrying and giving in marriage; so now, with the cloud ever mounting up the sky, men loved and married, and made their homes as the birds paired and built their nests.

Among those who builded in that period in the Red Rock district were a young couple, both of them cousins in some degree of nearly every gentle family in the county, including the Grays and Carys. And after the blessing by old Mr. Langstaff, at St. Ann's, amid the roses and smiles of the whole neighborhood, they spent their honeymoon, as the custom was then, in being entertained from house to house, through the neighborhood. In this round of gayety they came in due order to Red Rock, where the entertainment was perhaps to be the greatest of all. The amount of preparation was almost unprecedented, and the gentry of the whole county were invited and expected. As it was a nota-

ble occasion and near the holidays, Jacquelin was permitted to come home from Dr. Maule's on the joint application of his mother, his Aunt Thomasia, and Blair Cary; and Blair was allowed to come over with her mother and father and spend the night, and was promised to be allowed to sit up as late as she pleased—a privilege not to be lightly esteemed.

Steve Allen, with a faint mustache curled above his smiling mouth, was home from the University, and so were Morris Cary and the other young fellows; and the office in the yard, blue with tobacco-smoke, was as full of young men and pipes and dogs, as the upstairs chambers in the mansion were of young girls and ribbons and muslin.

What a heaven that outer office was to Jacquelin, and what an angel Steve was to call him "Kid" and let him adore him!

Among the company that night there were two guests who "happened in" quite unexpectedly, but who were "all the more welcome on that account," the host said graciously in greeting them. They were two gentlemen from quite another part of the country, or, perhaps, those resident there would have said, of the world; as they came from the North. They had come South on business connected with a sort of traditionary claim to mineral lands lying somewhere in the range of mountains which could be seen from the Red Rock plantation. At least, Mr. Welch, the elder of the two, came on that errand. The younger, Mr. Lawrence Middleton, came simply for pleasure, and because Mr. Welch, his cousin, had invited him. He had just spoiled his career at college by engaging, with his chum and crony, Aurelius Thurston, in the awful crime of painting the President's gray horse a brilliant red,

and being caught at it. He was suspended for this prank, and now was spending his time, literally rustivating, seeing a little of the world, while he made up his mind whether he should study Law and accept his cousin's offer to go into his office, or whether he should engage in a manufacturing business which his family owned. His preference was rather for the latter, which was now being managed by a man named Bolter, who had made it very successful; but Reely Thurston intended to be a lawyer, and wanted Lawrence to go in with him; so he was taking time to consider. This visit South had inclined him to the law.

Mr. Welch and Middleton had concluded their business in the mountains: finding the lands they were seeking to lie partly in the clouds and partly in the possession of those whom they had always heard spoken of as "squatters;" but now found to be a population who had been there since before the Revolution, and had built villages and towns. They were now returning home and were making their way back toward the railroad, half a day's journey farther on. They had expected to reach Brutusville, the county seat, that night; but a rain the day before had washed away the bridges, and compelled them to take a circuitous route by a ford higher up the river. There, not knowing the ford, they had almost been swept away, and would certainly have lost their vehicle but for the timely appearance of a young countryman, who happened to come along on his way home from a political gathering somewhere.



AMONG THE COMPANY THAT NIGHT THERE WERE TWO GUESTS WHO “HAPPENED IN” QUITE UNEXPECTEDLY.

Their deliverer: a certain Mr. Andy Stamper, was so small that at a distance he looked like a boy, but on nearer view he might have been anywhere from twenty or twenty-five to thirty, and he proved extraordinarily active and efficient. He swam in and helped Middleton get their buggy out of the river, and then amused Mr. Welch very much and incensed Middleton by his comments. He had just been to a political meeting at the Court House, he said, where he had heard “the finest speech that ever was made,” from Major Legaie. “He gave the Yankees sut,” and he “just wished he could get every Yankee in that river and drown ’em—every dog-goned one!” This as he was working up to his neck in water.

Mr. Welch could not help laughing at the look on Middleton’s ruddy face.

“Now, where’d you find a Yankee’d go in that river like me an’ you—or could do it, for that matter?” the little fellow asked of Middleton, confidentially.

“We are Yankees,” blurted out Middleton, hotly. “And a plenty of them would.” His eye flashed as he turned to his rescuer.

The little countryman’s eyes opened wide, and his jaw fell.

“Well, I’m durned!” he said, slowly, staring in open astonishment, and Middleton began to look gratified at the impression he had made.

“You know, you’re the first I ever seen as wan’t ashamed to own it. Why, you looks most like we all!”

Middleton flushed; but little Stamper looked so sincerely ingenuous that he suddenly burst out laughing.

After that they became very friendly, and the travellers learned much of the glories of the Grays and Carys, and of the charms of a certain Miss Delia Dove, who, Stamper declared, was as pretty as any young lady that went to the Brick Church. Stamper offered to guide them, but as he refused to take any money for what he had done, and as he said he was going to see Miss Delia Dove and could take a nearer cut through the woods to his home, Mr. Welch declined to accept his offer, and contented himself with getting him to draw a map of the roads from that point to the county seat.

“All you’ve got to do is to follow that map: keep the main plain road and you can’t get out; but I advise you to turn in at the first plantation you come to. If you go to Red Rock you’ll have a good time. They’re givin’ a party thar to-night. Major Legaie, he left the meetin’ to go thar.”

He disappeared at a gallop down a bridle-path through the woods.

Notwithstanding the young countryman’s assurances and map, the two strangers had gotten “out.” The plantations were large in that section and the roads leading off to them from the highway, in the dark were all alike, so that when night fell the two travellers were in a serious dilemma. They at length came to a gate and were just considering turning in at it when a carriage drove up in front of them. A horseman who had been riding behind the vehicle came forward at a trot, calling out that he would open the gate.

"I thought you fellows would have been there hours ago," he said familiarly to the two strangers as he passed, evidently mistaking them in the dusk for some of his friends. "A laggard in love is a dastard in war."

The rest of his speech was lost in the click of the gate-latch and his apostrophe to his horse. When he found that Mr. Welch was a stranger, he changed instantly. His tone became graver and more gracious.

"I beg your pardon, sir. I thought from your vehicle that you were some of these effeminate youngsters who have given up the saddle for that new four-wheeled contrivance, and are ruining both our strains of horses and of men."

Mr. Welch asked if he knew where they could find a night's lodging.

"Why, at every house in the State, sir, I hope," said Dr. Cary; for it was he. "Certainly, at the nearest one. Drive right in. We are going to our cousins', and they will be delighted to have you. You are just in good time; for there is to be quite a company there to-night." And refusing to listen for a moment to Mr. Welch's suggestion that it might not be convenient to have strangers, Dr. Cary held the gate open for them to pass through.

"Drive in, sir," he said, in a tone of gracious command. "I never heard of its being inconvenient to have a guest," and in they drove.

"A gentleman by his voice," the travellers heard him explaining a little later into the window of the carriage behind them. And then he added, "My only doubt was his vehicle."

After a half-mile drive through the woods they entered the open fields, and from a hill afar off, on top of which shone a house lit till it gleamed like a cluster of brilliants, a chorus of dogs sent them an inquiring greeting.

They passed through a wide gate, and ascended a steep hill through a grove, and Middleton's heart sank at the idea of facing an invited company, with a wardrobe that had been under water within the last two hours. Instantly they were in a group of welcomers, gentlemen, servants, and dogs; negro boys running; dogs frisking and yelping and young men laughing about the door of the newly arrived carriage. While through it all sounded the placid voice of Dr. Cary reassuring the visitors and inviting them in. He brought the host to them, and presented them:

"My friends, Mr. Welch and young Mr. Middleton—my cousin and friend, Mr. Gray." It was his customary formula in introducing. All men were his friends. And Mr. Welch shortly observed how his manner changed whenever he addressed a lady or a stranger: to one he was always a courtier, to the other always a host.

As they were ushered into the hall, Middleton's blue eyes glistened and opened wide at the scene before him. He found himself facing several score of people clustered about in one of the handsomest halls he ever saw, some of whom he took in at the first glance to be remarkably pretty girls in white and pink, and all with their eyes, filled with curiosity, bent on the new comers. If Middleton's ruddiness increased tenfold under these glances, it was only what any other young man's would have done under similar circumstances, and it was not until he had

been led off under convoy of a tall and very solemn old servant in a blue coat with brass buttons, and shown into a large room with mahogany furniture and a bed so high that it had a set of steps beside it, that he was able to collect his ideas, and recall some of those to whom he had been introduced. What a terrible fix it was for a fellow to be in! He opened his portmanteau and turned to his cousin in despair.

“Isn’t this a mess?”

“What?”

“This! I can never go out there. All those girls! Just look at these clothes! Everything dripping!—some of them awfully pretty, too. That one with the dark eyes!” He was down on his knees, raking in his portmanteau, and dragging the soaking garments out one by one. “Now, look at that.”

“You need not go out. I’ll make your excuses.”

“What! Of course I’m go——”

Just then there was a knock at the door.

“Come in.” Middleton finished his sentence.

The door opened slowly and the old servant entered, bearing with a solemnity that amounted almost to reverence, a waiter with decanters and an array of glasses and bowls. He was followed by the young boy who had been introduced as their host’s son.

“My father understood that you had a little accident at the river, and he wishes to know if he cannot lend you something,” said Jacquelin.

Mr. Welch spoke first, his eyes twinkling as he glanced at his cousin, who stood a picture of indecision and bewilderment.

“Why yes, my cousin, Mr. Middleton here, would be greatly obliged, I think. He is a little particular about first impressions, and the presence of so many charming——”

Middleton protested.

“Why, certainly, sir,” Jacquelin began, then turned to Middleton—“Steve’s would fit you—Steve’s my cousin—he’s at the University—he’s just six feet. Wait, sir——” And before they could stop him, he was gone, and a few minutes later tapped on the door, with his arms full of clothes.

“Uncle Daniel’s as slow as a steer, so I fetched ’em myself,” he panted, with boyish impatience, as he dropped the clothes partly on a sofa and partly on the floor. “Aunt Thomasia was afraid you’d catch cold, so she made me bring these flannels. She always is afraid you’ll catch cold. Steve told her if you’d take a good swig out of a bottle ’twould be worth all the flannel in the State—Steve’s always teasing her.” With a boy’s friendliness he had established himself now as the visitors’ ally.

“I’m glad you came to-night. We’re going to have lots of fun. Were you at the speaking to-day? They say the Major made the finest speech ever was heard. Some say he’s better than Calhoun ever was; just gave the Yankees the mischief! I wish they’d come down here and try us once, don’t you?”

Mr. Welch glanced amusedly at Middleton, whose face changed; but fortunately the boy was too much interested in the suit Middleton had just put on to notice the effect.

“I thought Steve’s would fit you,” he said, with that proud satisfaction in his judgment being verified which characterizes the age of thirteen, and some other ages as well.

“Steve’s nineteen, and he’s six feet!—You are six feet too? I thought you were about that. I hope I’ll be six feet. I like that height, don’t you? Steve’s at the University, but he don’t study much, I reckon. Are you at college?—Where? Oh! I know. I had a cousin who went there. He and two or three other Southern fellows laid outside of the hall for one of those abolition chaps who was making a speech, to cut his ears off when he came out, and they’d have done it if he had come out that way. I reckon it’s a good college, but I’m going to the University when I’m sixteen. I’m thirteen now—You thought I was older? I wanted to go to West Point, but my father won’t let me. Maybe, Rupert will go there. I go to school at the Academy—Doctor Maule’s—everybody knows about him. I tell you, he knows a lot.—You have left college? Was it too hot for you? Were you after somebody’s ears too? What! painted the President’s horse red! Oh! wasn’t that a good one! I wish I’d been there. I’ll tell Steve and Blair about that. Steve put a cow up in the Rotunda once. The worst thing I ever did was making Blair jump off the high barn. I don’t count flinging old Eliphalet Bush in the creek, because I believe his teeth were false anyhow! But I’ll remember painting that horse. I reckon he was an abolitionist too?”

So the boy rattled on, his guests drawing him out for the pleasure of seeing him.

“What State are you from? Maybe, we are cousins?” he said presently, giving the best evidence of his friendliness.

“What! Mass—a—! I beg your pardon.”

He looked so confused that both Mr. Welch and Middleton took some pains to sooth him.

“Yes, of course I was not talking about you; but I wouldn’t have said anything about Massachusetts if I had known you came from there. I wouldn’t like anybody to say anything about *my* State. You won’t mind what I said, will you? I think Massachusetts the best of the Northern States—anyhow——” And he left them, his cheeks still glowing from embarrassment.

This apology, sincerely given, with a certain stress on the word Northern, amused Mr. Welch, and even Middleton, to whom it presented, however, an entirely new view.

“Aren’t they funny?” asked Middleton of his cousin, after their young host had left them. “You know I believe they really think it.”

“Larry, you have understated it. They think they know it.”

Jacquelin employed the few moments, in which he preceded the visitors to the hall, in telling all he had learned, and when Mr. Welch and Middleton appeared they found themselves in the position of the most distinguished guests. The fact that they came from the North, and Jacquelin’s account of his mistake, had increased the desire to show

them honor. "The hospitality of the South knows no latitude," said Dr. Cary, in concluding a gracious half apology to Mr. Welch for Jacquelin's error; and he proceeded deftly to name over a list of great men from Massachusetts, and to link their names with those of the men of the South whom she most delighted to honor. His dearest friend at college, he said, was from New England, and unless he was mistaken, Anson Rockfield would one day be heard of. Nothing could have been more gracious or more delicately done; and when supper was announced, Mr. Welch was taken to the table by the hostess herself, and his health was drunk before the groom's. Middleton meanwhile found himself no less honored. The artistic feat performed on the President's horse had made him a noted personage, and in consequence of this and of the freemasonry which exists among young college-men, he was soon surrounded by all the younger portion of the company, and was exchanging views with Steve Allen and the other young fellows with that exaggerated man-of-the-world air which characterizes the age and occupation of collegians.

"Where is Blair?" he asked Jacquelin, presently, who was standing by Steve, open-eyed, drinking in their wisdom as only a boy of thirteen can drink in the sapience of men of nineteen or twenty.

"Over there." Jacquelin nodded toward another part of the hall. Middleton looked, but all he saw was a little girl sitting behind a big chair, evidently trying to conceal herself, and shaking her head violently at Jacquelin, who was beckoning to her. Jacquelin ran over to her and caught her by the hand, whereupon there was a little scuffle between them behind the chair, and as Middleton watched it he caught her eye. The next second she rose, smoothed her little white frock with quite an

air, and came straight across with Jacquelin to where they stood. "This is Blair, Mr. Middleton," the boy said to the astonished guest. And Miss Blair held out her hand to him with an odd mixture of the child and the lady.

"How do you do, sir?" She evidently considered him one of the ancients.

"She jump off a high barn!" Middleton's eyes opened wide.

"Blair is the champion jumper of the family," said Steve, tall and condescending, catching hold of her half-teasingly, and drawing her up close to him.

"And she is a brick," added Master Jacquelin, with mingled condescension and admiration, which brought the blushes back to the little girl's cheeks and made her look very charming. The next moment she was talking to Middleton about the episode of the painted horse; exchanging adventures with him, and asking him questions about his chum, Reely Thurston and his cousin, Ruth Welch, whom he had mentioned, as if she had known him always.

It was a night that Middleton never forgot. So completely was he adopted by his hosts that he could scarcely believe that he had not been one of them all his life. As Mr. Welch said truly: they had the gift of hospitality. Jacquelin and Blair constituted themselves young Middleton's especial hosts, and he made an engagement to visit with them all the points which they wished to show him, provided his cousin could accept their invitation to spend several days there.

In the midst of their talk an old mammy in a white apron, with a tall bandanna turban around her head, suddenly appeared in a doorway, and dropping a curtsy made her way over to Blair, like a ship bearing down under full sail. There was a colloquy between the two, inaudible, but none the less animated and interesting, the old woman urging something and the little girl arguing against it. Then Blair went across and appealed to her mother, who, after a little demurring, came over and spoke to the mammy, and thereon began further argument. She was evidently taking Blair's side; but she was not commanding, she was rather pleading. Middleton, new to the customs, was equally surprised and amused to hear the tones of the old colored woman's voice:

"Well, jist a little while." Then as she turned on her way out, she said, half audibly:

"You all gwine ruin my chile' looks, meckin' her set up so late. How she gwine have any complexion, settin' up all times o' night?" As she passed out, however, many of the ladies spoke to her, and they must have said pleasant things; for before she reached the door she was smiling and curtseying right and left, and carried her head as high as a princess. As for Blair, her eyes were dancing with joy at her victory, and when the plump figure of the mammy disappeared she gave a little frisk of delight.

There were no more speeches that could wound the sensibilities of the guests; but there was plenty of discussion. All the young men were ardent politicians, and Middleton, who was nothing himself, was partly amused and partly horrified at the violence of some of their sentiments. Personally, he agreed with them in the main about Slavery or, at least,

about Abolitionism. He thought Slavery rather a fine thing, and recalled that his grandfather or his great-grandfather, he couldn't be certain which, had owned a number of slaves. He was conscious of some pride in this—though his cousin, Patience Welch, who was an extreme abolitionist, was always bemoaning the fact.

But he was thunderstruck to hear a young orator of sixteen or seventeen declaim about breaking up the Union, under certain circumstances, as if it were a worthless old hulk, stuck in the mud. It had never occurred to Middleton that it was possible, and he had always understood that it was not. However, he was reassured by the warmth with which others defended the Union, and the ardor with which toasts were drunk to it. Jacquelin himself was a stanch Democrat, like his father. He confided to Middleton that Blair was a Whig, because her father was one; but that a girl did not know any better, and that she really did not know the difference between them.

The entertainment consisted of dancing—quadrilles and “the Lancers,” and after awhile, the old Virginia reel. In the first, all the young people joined, and in the last, some of the old ones as well. Middleton heard Steve urging their host's sister, Miss Gray—“Cousin Thomasia” as Steve called her—a sweet patrician-faced lady, to come and dance with him, and when she smilingly refused, teasing her about Major Legaie. She gave him a little tap with her fan and sent him off with smiling eyes, which, after following the handsome boy across the hall, saddened a second later as she lifted the fan close to her face to arrange the feathers. Steve mischievously whisked Blair off from under Jacquelin's nose and took her to the far end of the line of laughing girls ranged across the hall, responding to Jacquelin's earnest protest that he was just

going to dance with her himself, with a push—that unanswerable logic of a bigger boy.

“But you did not ask me!” said Miss Blair to Jacquelin, readily taking the stronger side against her sworn friend.

“Never mind, I’m not going to dance with you any more,” pouted Jacquelin as he turned off, his head higher than usual, to which Miss Blair promptly replied: “I don’t care if you don’t.” And she held her head higher than his, dancing through her reel apparently with double enjoyment because of his discomfiture. Then when the reel had been danced again and again, with double couples and fours, to ever-quickenening music and ever-increasing mirth, until it was a maze of muslin and radiance and laughter, there was a pause for rest. And someone near the piano struck up a song, and this drew the crowd. Many of the girls, and some of the young men, had pleasant voices, which made up by their natural sweetness and simplicity for want of training, and the choruses drew all the young people, except a few who seemed to find it necessary to seek something—fans or glasses of water, in the most secluded and unlikely corners, and always in couples.

There was one song—a new one which had just been picked up somewhere by someone and brought there, and they were all trying to recall it—about “Dixie-land.” It seemed that Blair sang it, and there was a universal request for her to sing it; but the little girl was shy and wanted to run away. Finally, however, she was brought back and, under coaxing from Steve and Jacquelin, was persuaded; and she stood up by the piano and with her cheeks glowing and her child’s-voice quavering at first at the prominence given her, sang it through. Middleton had

heard the song once at a minstrel-show not long before, and had thought it rather a “catchy” thing; but now, when the child sang it, he found its melody. But when the chorus came, he was astonished at the feeling it evoked. It ran:

“Away down south in Dixie, away, away—
In Dixie land, I’ll take my stand,
To live and die for Dixie land—
Away, away, away down south in Dixie.”

It was a burst of genuine feeling, universal, enthusiastic, that made the old walls resound. Even the young couples came from their secluded coverts to join in. It was so tremendous that Dr. Cary, who was standing near Mr. Welch, said to him, gravely:

“A gleam of the current that is dammed up?”

“If the bank ever breaks what will happen?” asked Mr. Welch.

“A flood.”

“Then the right will survive.”

“The strongest,” said Dr. Cary.

The guest saw that there was deep feeling whenever any political subject was touched on, and he turned to a less dangerous theme. The walls of the hall and drawing-room were covered with pictures; scenes from the Mythology; battle-pieces; old portraits: all hung together in a sort of friendly confusion. The portraits were nearly all in rich-colored dresses: men in velvets or uniforms, ladies in satins and crinolines, representing the fashions and faces of many generations of Jacquelin-

Grays. But one, the most striking figure of them all, stood alone to itself in a space just over the great fireplace. He was a man still young, clad in a hunter's garb. A dark rock loomed behind him. His rifle lay at his feet, apparently broken, and his face wore an expression of such determination that one knew at once that, whatever he had been, he had been a master. The other paintings were portraits; this was the man. To add to its distinction, while the other pictures were in frames richly gilded and carved, this was in straight black boards apparently built into the wall, as if it had been meant to stand him there and cut him off from all the rest of the world. Wherever one turned in the hall those piercing eyes followed him. Mr. Welch had been for some time observing the picture.

"An extraordinary picture. It has a singular fascination for me," he said, as his host turned to him. "One might almost fancy it allegorical, and yet, it is intensely human. An indubitable portrait? I never saw a stronger face."

His host smiled.

"Yes. It has a somewhat curious history, though whether it is exactly a portrait or not we do not know. It is, or is supposed to be, the portrait of an ancestor of mine, the first of my name who came to this country. He had been unfortunate on the other side—so the story goes—was a scholar, and had been a soldier under Cromwell and lost all his property. He fell in love with a young lady whose father was on the King's side, and married her against her parents' wishes and came over here. He built a house on this very spot when it was the frontier, and his wife was afterward murdered by the Indians, leaving him one

child. It is said that he killed the Indian with his naked hands just beside a great rock that stands in the grave-yard beyond the garden, a short distance from the house. He afterward had that picture painted and placed there. It is reported to be a Lely. It has always been recognized as a fine picture, and in all the successive changes it has been left there. This present house was built around the fireplace of the old one. In this way a story has grown up about the picture, that it is connected with the fortunes of the house. You know how superstitious the negroes are?”

“I am not surprised,” said Mr. Welch, examining the picture more closely. “I never saw a lonelier man. That black frame shutting it in seems to have something to do with the effect.”

“The tradition has possibly had a good effect. There used to be a recess behind it that was used as a cupboard, perhaps a secret cabinet, because of this very superstition. The picture fell down once a few years ago and I found a number of old papers in there, and put some more in myself.

“Here, you can see the paint on the frame, where it fell. It was in the early summer, and one of the servants was just painting the hearth red, and a sudden gust of wind slammed a door and jarred the picture down, and it fell, getting that paint on it. You never saw anyone so frightened as that boy was. And I think my overseer was also,” he laughed. “He happened to be present, settling up some matters with which I had entrusted him in the South, and although he is a remarkably sensible man—so sensible that I had given him my bonds for a very considerable amount—one for a very large amount, indeed, in case he

should need them in the matter I refer to, and he had managed the affair with the greatest shrewdness, bringing my bonds back—he was as much frightened almost as the boy. You’d have thought that the fall of the picture portended my immediate death. I took advantage of the circumstance to put the papers in the cupboard, and, to ease his mind, made Still nail the picture up, so that it will never come down again, at least, in my lifetime.”

“I had no idea the whites were so superstitious,” said Major Welch.

“Well, I do not suppose he really believed it. But, do you know, after that they began to say that stain on it was blood? And here again.”

He pointed to where three or four little foot-tracks, as of a child’s bare foot, were dimly seen on the hard white floor near the hearth.

“My little boy, Rupert, was playing in the hall at the time I mention, dabbling his feet in the paint, and the same wind that blew down the picture scattered my papers, and he ran across the floor and finally stepped on one. There, you can see just where he caught it: the little heel is there, and the print of the toes is on the bond behind the picture. His mother would never allow the prints to be scoured out, and so they have remained. And now, I understand, they say the tracks are blood.”

“On such slim evidence, perhaps other and weightier superstitions have been built,” said Mr. Welch, smiling.

Next morning, as Mr. Welch wished to see a Southern plantation, he deferred his departure until the afternoon, and rode over the place with Mr. Gray. Middleton was taken by his young hosts to see all the

things of interest about the plantation: the high barn from which Blair had jumped into the tree, the bloody rock beside which the “Indian-Killer” had been buried, and the very spot where Steve had slept that night; together with many other points, whilst Mr. Welch was taken to see the servants’ quarters, the hands working and singing in the fields, and such things as interested him. The plantation surpassed any he had yet seen. It was a little world in itself—a sort of feudal domain: the great house on its lofty hill, surrounded by gardens; the broad fields stretching away in every direction, with waving grain or green pastures dotted with sheep and cattle, and all shut in and bounded by the distant woods.

During this tour Mr. Langstaff, the rector, made to Mr. Welch an observation that he thought there were evidences that the Garden of Eden was situated not far from that spot, and certainly within the limits of the State. Major Welch smiled at the old clergyman’s ingenuousness, but was graver when, as they strolled through the negro quarters, he began to speak earnestly of the blessings of Slavery. He pointed out the clean cabins, each surrounded by its little yard and with its garden; the laughing children and smiling mothers curtsying from their doors. The guest remained silent, and the old gentleman took it for assent.

“Why, sir, I have just prepared a paper which my friends think establishes incontrovertibly that Slavery is based on the Scriptures, and is, as it were, a divine institution.” Mr. Welch looked up to see how the other gentlemen took this. They were all grave, except Dr. Cary, usually the gravest, around whose mouth a slight smile flickered, and in whose eyes, as they met Major Welch’s, there was a little gleam of amusement.

"It is written, 'A servant of servants shall he be.' You will not deny that?" asked the old preacher, a little of the smouldering fire of the controversialist sparkling for a moment in his face.

"Well, no, I don't think I will."

"Then that settles it."

"Well, perhaps not altogether," said Mr. Welch. "There may be an economical sin. But I do not wish to engage in a polemical controversy. I will only say that down here you do not seem to me to appreciate fully how strong the feeling of the world at present is against Slavery. It seems to me, that Slavery is doomed as much as the Stage-coach, and the Sailing vessel."

"My dear sir," declared Mr. Gray, "I cannot agree with you. We interfere with nobody; all we demand is that they shall not interfere with us."

"It is precisely that which you cannot enforce," said Mr. Welch. "I do not wish to engage in a discussion in which neither of us could convince the other; but I think I have not defined my position intelligibly. You interfere with everyone—with every nation—and you are only tenants at will of your system—only tenants by sufferance of the world."

"Oh! my dear sir!" exclaimed his host, his face slightly flushed; and then the subject was politely changed, and Mr. Welch was conscious that it was not to be opened again.

The only additional observation made was by a gentleman who had been introduced to Mr. Welch as the leading lawyer of the county, a portly man with a round face and keen eyes. "Well, as George IV. remarked, it will last my time," he said.

Before the young people had seen half the interesting places of which Jacquelin had told Middleton, they were recalled to the house. Jacquelin's face fell.

"School!" he said in disgust.

As they returned on a road leading up to a farm-house on a hill, they passed a somewhat rickety buggy containing a plain-looking young girl, a little older than Blair, driven by a thin-shouldered youngster of eighteen or nineteen, who returned Jacquelin's and Blair's greeting, with a surly air. Middleton thought he checked the girl for her pleasant bow. At any rate, he heard his voice in a cross tone, scolding her after they had passed.

"That's Washy Still and Virgy, the overseer's children," explained someone.

"And he's just as mean to her as he can be. She's afraid of him. I'll be bound I wouldn't be afraid of him!" broke out Blair, her eyes growing suddenly sparkling at the idea of wrong to one of her sex. Middleton looked down at her glowing face and thought it unlikely.

On arrival at the house it proved that Jacquelin's fears were well-founded. It had been decided that he must go back to school. Jacquelin appealed to his Aunt Thomasia to intercede for him, and she did so, as

she always interceded for everyone, but it was in vain. It was an age of law, and the law had to be obeyed.

As Middleton was passing from the room he occupied, to the hall, he came on Blair. She was seated in a window, almost behind the curtain and he would have passed by without seeing her but for a movement she made to screen herself entirely. Curiosity and mischief prompted the young man to go up and peep at her. She had a book in her hand, which she held down as if to keep out of sight, and as he looked at her he thought she had been crying. A glance at the book showed it was “Virgil,” and Middleton supposed, from some personal experience, that the tears were connected with the book. So he offered to construe her lesson for her. She let him do it, and he was just congratulating himself that he was doing it tolerably well when she corrected him. At the same moment Jacquelin came in. He too looked unusually downcast, and Blair turned away her face, and then suddenly sprang up and ran away.

“What’s the matter?” asked Middleton. “Can’t she read her lesson?”

“No: she can read that well enough. You just ought to hear her read Latin. I wish I could do it as well as she does, that’s all! I’d make old Eliphalet open his eyes. She’s crying because I’ve got to go back to school—I wish I were grown up, I bet I wouldn’t go to school any more! I hate school, and I hate old Eliphalet, and I hate old Maule—no, I don’t quite hate him; but I hate school and I’m going to paint his horse blue, if he licks the life out of me.” After which explosion the youngster appeared relieved, and went off to prepare for the inevitable.

When he rode away with Doan behind him, his last call back was to Middleton, to be sure and remember his promise to come back again, and to bring Reely Thurston with him.

CHAPTER III

THE VISITORS START SOUTH AGAIN; AND THEIR FORMER HOSTS GO TO MEET THEM

Both Larry Middleton and Mr. Welch were to visit Red Rock again; but under circumstances little anticipated by anyone at the time the invitation to return was given.

When Middleton came of age he turned over the manufacturing business he had inherited, to the family's agent, Mr. Bolter, and, on leaving college, accepted the invitation of his cousin, Mr. Welch, to go in his law-office. He made only one condition: that the same invitation should be extended to his college chum, Reely Thurston, whom Middleton described to Mr. Welch as "at once the roundest and squarest fellow" in his class. This was enough for Mr. Welch, and within a few months the two young men were at adjoining desks, professing to practise law and really practising whatever other young gentlemen of their age and kind are given to doing: a combination of loafing, working, and airing themselves for the benefit of the rest of mankind, particularly of that portion that wears bonnets and petticoats.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Welch were glad to have Middleton with them; for Mrs. Welch was fond of him as a near relation, and one who in personal appearance and address was a worthy representative of the old stock from which they had both come. And she had this further reason for wishing to have Middleton near her: that she had long observed his

tendency to be affected unduly, as she termed it, by his surroundings, and she meant to counteract this defect of character by her personal influence.

It was enough for Mrs. Welch to see a defect of any kind to wish to correct it, and her wish was usually but a step in advance of her action. One might see this in the broad brow above which the hair was brushed so very smoothly; in the deep gray eyes; in the firm mouth with its fine, even teeth; in the strong chin, almost too strong for a woman; and especially, in the set of her head, and the absolute straightness of her back. She was at heart a missionary: one of those intrepid and unbending spirits who have carried their principles through the world by the sheer energy of their belief. She would no more have bowed in the house of Rimmon than she would have committed theft. If she had lived in Rome, she would have died before taking a pinch of incense for Diana, unless, indeed, she had been on the other side, when she would have fed the lions with fervor. If she had been in Spain on Torquemada's side, she could have sung *Te Deums* at an *auto-da-fé*. As someone said of her, she would have burned like a candle. The only difficulty was that she wanted others to burn too—which they were not always so ready to do. As a girl, she had been on the eve of going out as missionary to the Sandwich Islands, when she heard the splendid oratory of one of the new apostles of abolitionism, one evening in company with Mr. Welch, then a young engineer, when her philanthropical direction changed from West to South, and she devoted herself thenceforth to the cause of the negroes—and of the young engineer.

She had great hopes of Lawrence Middleton and deplored the influence on him of the young man whom he had chosen at college as his especial friend; and she grieved over the effect that his visit South, already described, had on him. He had come home much impressed by the charm of the life there. Indeed, he had become actually an apologist for Slavery. But Mrs. Welch did not despair. She never despaired. It implied weakness, and so, sin. She was urgent to have Larry Middleton accept her husband's proposal to take a place in his office, and though she would have preferred to separate him from young Thurston, as to whom she had misgivings, yet when he made this condition she yielded; for it brought Middleton where she could influence him, and had, at least, this advantage: that it gave her two persons to work on instead of one.

When her daughter, Ruth Welch, a young Miss with sparkling eyes, came home in her vacations, it was natural that she should be thrown a great deal with her cousin, and the only singular thing was that Mrs. Welch appeared inclined to minimize the importance of the relationship. This, however, made little difference to the gay, fun-loving girl, who, enjoying her emancipation from school, tyrannized over the two young sprigs of the Law to her heart's content. She soon reduced Thurston to a condition of abject slavery which might well have called forth the intervention of so ardent an emancipator as her mother, and did, indeed, excite some solicitude in her maternal bosom. Mrs. Welch was beginning to be very anxious about him when events, suddenly crowding on each other, gave her something widely different to think of, and unexpectedly relieved her from this cause of care to give her others far weightier.

Both the young men had become politicians. Middleton was a Whig, though he admitted he did not see how Slavery could be interfered with; while Thurston announced tenets of the opposite party, particularly when Mrs. Welch was present.

The cloud which had been gathering so long above the Country suddenly burst.

Middleton and Thurston were sitting in their office one afternoon when there was a scamper outside; the door was flung open, and a paper thrown in—an extra still wet from the press. Thurston seized it, his seat being nearest the door, and gave a long whistle as his eye fell on the black headlines:

The Flag Fired on: Open Rebellion. The Union Must Be Saved At Any Cost. Etc., etc.

He sank into his seat and read rapidly the whole account, ending with the call for troops to put down the Rebellion; while Middleton listened with a set face. When Thurston was through, he flung the paper down and sat back in his chair, thinking intently. The next moment he hammered his fist on his desk and sprang to his feet, his face white with resolve.

“By God! I’ll go.”

With a single inquiring look at Middleton, he turned to the door and walked out. A moment later Middleton locked his desk and fol-

lowed him. The street was already filling with people, crowding to hear the details, and the buzz of voices was growing louder.

Within a few hours the two young men were both enrolled in a company of volunteers which was being gotten up—Middleton, in right of his stature and family connections, as a Sergeant, and little Thurston as a Corporal, and were at work getting others enrolled.

As they were so engaged, Thurston's attention was arrested by a man in the crowd who was especially violent in his denunciations, and was urging everybody to enlist. His voice had a peculiar, penetrating whine. As Thurston could not remember the man among those who had signed the roll, he asked him his name.

"Leech, Jonadab Leech," he said.

When Thurston looked at the roster, the name was not on it, and the next time Leech came up in the crowd, the little Corporal called him:

"Here; you have forgotten to put your name down."

To his surprise, Leech drew back and actually turned pale.

"What's the matter?" asked Thurston.

"I have a wife."

The little volunteer gave a sniff.

"All right—send her in your place. I guess she'd do as well."

"If he has, he's trying to get rid of her," said someone standing by, in an undertone.

"Why—ah!—my eyes are bad; I'm too near-sighted."

"Your eyes be hanged! You can see well enough to read this paper."

"I—ah!—I cannot see in the dark at all," stammered Leech as a number of the new volunteers crowded around them.

"Neither can I—neither can anybody but a cat," declared the little Corporal, and the crowd around cheered him. Leech vanished.

"Who is he?" asked Thurston, as Leech disappeared.

"He is a clerk in old Bolter's commissary."

The crowd was patriotic.

There was great excitement in the town all night: bells rang; crowds marched up and down the streets singing; stopping at the houses of those who had been opposed to ultra measures, and calling on them to put up flags to show their loyalty. The name of Jonadab Leech appeared in the papers next morning as one of the street-orators who made the most blood-thirsty speech.

Next day was Sunday. Sober second thought had succeeded the excitement of the previous day, the faces of the people showed it. The churches were overflowing. The preachers all alluded to the crisis that had come, and the tears of the congregations testified how deeply they were moved. After church, by a common impulse, everyone went to the public square to learn the news. The square was packed. Suddenly on

the pole that stood above the old court-house, someone ran up the flag. At the instant that it broke forth the breeze caught it, and it fluttered out full and straight, pointing to the southward. The effect was electric. A great cheer burst from the crowd below. As it died down, a young man's clear voice struck up "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," and the next moment the whole crowd was singing and weeping.

That flag and that song made more soldiers from the old town than all the newspapers and all the speeches, and Larry Middleton, for having struck up the song, found himself suddenly of more note in his own home than he could have been later if he had stormed a battery.

Loudest among the shouters was the street-orator of the evening before, Jonadab Leech, the clerk in Bolter's commissary.

Within a week the two young men were on their way South.

A little later, Mr. Welch, having taken time to settle up his affairs, and also those of his cousin, Larry Middleton, went off to join the first corps of engineers from his State, with abundance of tears from Ruth and a blessing from his wife, whose mouth was never firmer, or her eye clearer, than when she kissed him, and bade him God-speed.

She replied to the astonished query of Mrs. Bolter, "You did not cry?" with another question:

"Why should I cry, when I knew it was his duty? If I had wept it would have been because I could not go myself to strike a blow for the freedom of the poor African!"

"You are an unusually strong woman," said Mrs. Bolter, with a shake of her head, and, indeed, Mrs. Welch looked it; for though Bolter had gone to Washington, he had not gone to war, but to see about contracts.

Just at the time that the two young students from Mr. Welch's office were in the street of their town enrolling their names as soldiers to fight for the flag of the Union, the young men, and the elders as well, whom Middleton had met at Red Rock a thousand miles to the southward, were engaged in similar work—enlisting to fight against Invasion, to fight for their State.

There had been much discussion—much dissension in the old country, and all others like it, during the interim since the night when Middleton and Mr. Welch had appeared unexpectedly at Red Rock among the wedding guests. Some were for radical measures, for Secession, for War; others were conservative. Many were for the Union. Matters more than once had reached a white heat in that section, and it had looked for a long time as though an explosion must come. Yet the cooler heads had controlled, and when the final elections for the body that was to settle the momentous questions at issue at last came on, the most conservative men in the country had been selected. In our county, Dr. Cary and Mr. Bagby, both strong Union men, had been chosen over Major Legaie and Mr. Gray, both ardent Democrats; and one, the former, a hot Secessionist.

When they arrived at the capital to attend the session of the Convention they found, perhaps, the most distinguished body that had sat in the State in fifty years. In this great crisis both sides had put forward

their best men, and in face of the nearing peril the wildest grew conservative. The body declared for Peace.

Affairs moved rapidly, however; excitement grew; feeling changed. Yet the more conservative prevailed.

One morning Dr. Cary received a report of a great public meeting held at the county seat, instructing him to vote for Secession. Many of his old supporters had signed it. He presented the resolutions at the desk, and stated their purport fully and strongly, amid cheers from the other side.

“Now you will vote with us?” said one of the leaders on that side.

“Not if every man in my county instructed me.”

“Then you must resign?”

“Not if every man in my county demanded it.”

“Are you the only wise man in the county?”

The voice trembled. Feeling was rising.

The Doctor was looking his questioner full in the eyes.

“If they signed such a paper, I should think so.” And there were cheers from his side, and the vote was stayed for that day at least. Dr. Cary made an appeal for the Union that men remembered all their lives. However they disagreed with him, they were moved by him. But the magazine was being stored fuller every moment.

Then the spark fell and the explosion came.

A week after this the call for troops by the President to put down Rebellion appeared in an extra in the city where the Convention sat.

Invasion!

The whole people rose. From the time of Varrus down they had done so. The defences that conservatives like Dr. Cary had laboriously built up were swept away in an instant. The State went out with a rush.

At the announcement the population poured into the streets and public squares in a great demonstration. It was tremendous—a maelstrom—a tornado—a conflagration. Men were caught up and tossed on platforms, that appeared as if by magic from nowhere, to make speeches; bonfires were lighted and bells were rung; but the crowd shouted louder than the ringing of the bells, for it meant War: none could now withstand it. Suddenly from some public place a gun, which had been found and run out, boomed through the dusk, and the crowd roared louder than before, and made a rush in that direction, cheering as if for a great victory.

Dr. Cary, stalking through the throng, silent and white, was recognized and lifted unresisting to a platform. After a great roar, the tumult hushed down for a moment; for he was waiting with close-shut mouth and blazing eye, and he had the reputation of being, when he chose to exert himself, an orator. Besides, it was not yet known what he would do, and he was a power in his section.

He broke the silence with a calm voice that went everywhere. Without appearing to be strong, his voice was one of those strange instruments that filled every building with its finest tone and reached over

every crowd to its farthest limit. With a gesture that, as men said afterward, seemed to sweep the horizon, he began:

“The time has passed for talking. Go home and prepare for War. For it is on us.”

“Oh! there is not going to be any war,” cried someone, and a part of the crowd cheered. Dr. Cary turned on them.

“No war? We are at war now—with the greatest power on earth: the power of universal progress. It is not the North that we shall have to fight, but the world. Go home and make ready. If we have talked like fools, we shall at least fight like men.”

That night Dr. Cary walked into his lodgings alone and seated himself in the dusk. His old body-servant, Tarquin, silent and dark, brought a light and set it conveniently for him. He did not speak a word; but his ministrations were unusually attentive and every movement expressed adherence and sympathy. Suddenly his master broke the silence:

“Tarquin, do you want to be free?”

“Lawd Gawd!” exclaimed Tarquin, stopping quite still and gazing in amazement. “Me! Free?”

“If you do I will set you free, and give you money enough to live in Philadelphia.”

“No, suh; Marster, you know I don’ wan’ be free,” said Tarquin.

“Pack my trunk. I am going home.”

“When, suh?”

“I do not know exactly; but shortly.”

Within a week Dr. Cary was back at home, working, along with Major Legaie and the other secessionists, making preparation for equipping the companies that the county was going to send to the war.

What a revolution that week had made in the old county! In the face of the menace of invasion, after but ten days one would scarcely have known it. All division was ended: all parties were one. It was as if the county had declared war by itself and felt the whole burden of the struggle on its shoulders. From having been one of the most quiet, peaceful and conservative corners of the universe, where a fox-hunt or an evening-party was the chief excitement of the year, and where the advent of a stranger was enough to convulse the entire community, it became suddenly a training ground and a camp, filled with bustle and preparation and the sound of arms. The haze of dust from men galloping by, hung over the highways all day long, and the cross-roads and the county seat, where the musters used to meet quarterly and where the Fourth of July celebrations were held, became scenes of almost metropolitan activity.

Men appeared to spring from the ground as in the days of Cadmus, ready for war. Red Rock and Birdwood became recruiting-stations and depots of supply. From the big estates men came; from the small homesteads amid their orchards, and from the cabins back among the pines—all eager for war and with a new light in their eyes. Everyone was in the movement. Major Legaie was a colonel and Mr. Gray was a captain; Dr. Cary was surgeon, and even old Mr. Langstaff, under that

fire of enthusiasm, doffed his cassock for a uniform, merged his ecclesiastical title of rector in the military one of chaplain, and made amends for the pacific nature of his prescribed prayers in church, by praying before his company outside, prayers as diverse from the benignity of his nature, as the curses of Ezekiel or Jeremiah from the benediction of St. John the Aged.

Miss Thomasia, who was always trying to meet some wants which only the sensitiveness of her own spirit apprehended, enlarged her little academy in the office at Red Rock, so as to take in all the children of the men around who had enlisted; made them between their lessons pick lint, and opened her exercises daily with the most martial hymns she could find in the prayer-book, feeling in her simple heart that she could do God no better service than to inculcate an undying patriotism along with undying piety. As for Blair, she had long deserted the anti-war side, horse, foot, and dragoons, and sewed on uniforms and picked lint; wore badges of palmetto, and single stars on little blue flags sewed somewhat crookedly in the front of her frocks, and sang "Dixie," "Maryland," and "The Bonny Blue Flag" all the time.

Steve Allen and Morris Cary, on an hour's notice, had left the University where all the students were flocking into companies, and with pistols and sabres strapped about their slender waists galloped up to the county seat together one afternoon, in a cloud of dust, having outsped their telegrams, and, amid huzzas and the waving of handkerchiefs from the carriages lining the roadside, spurred their sweating horses straight to the end of the line that was drilling under Colonel Legaie in the field beside the court-house. And so, with radiant faces and bounding hearts were enlisted for the war. Little Andy Stamper, the rescuer of

the two visitors at the ford, was already there in line at the far end on one of his father's two farmhorses; and Jacquelin, on a blooded colt, was trying to keep as near in line with him as his excited four-year-old would permit. Even the servants, for whom some on the other side were pledging their blood, were warmly interested, and were acting more like clansmen than slaves.

Hiram Still, Mr. Gray's tall manager, had a sudden return of his old enemy, rheumatism, and was so drawn up that he had to go on crutches; but was as enthusiastic as anyone, and lent money to help equip the companies—lent it not to the county, it is true, but to Mr. Gray and Dr. Cary on their joint security. He and Andy Stamper were not on good terms, yet he even offered to lend money to Andy Stamper to buy a horse with. Jacquelin, however, spared Andy this mortification.

The boy, emancipated from school, partly because his father was going off so shortly to the war, and partly because Dr. Maule himself had enlisted and Mr. Eliphalet Bush, his successor, was not considered altogether sound politically, spent his time breaking his colt to stand the excitement of cavalry drill. Jacquelin and Andy were sworn friends, and hearing that Andy had applied to Hiram Still to borrow money to buy a horse with, Jacquelin asked his father's consent to give him his colt, and was rewarded by the pick of the horses on the place, after the carriage horses, his father's own riding horse and Steve's. It was a proud moment for the boy when he rode the high-mettled bay he chose, over to the old Stamper place.

Andy, in a new gray jacket, was sitting on the front steps, polishing his scabbard and accoutrements, old Mrs. Stamper was in her low,

split-bottomed chair behind him, knitting a yarn sock for her soldier, and Delia Dove, with her plump cheeks glowing under her calico sun-bonnet, which she had pushed back from her round face, was seated on the bench in the little porch, toying with the wisteria-vine above her, and looking down on Andy with her black eyes softer than usual.

Andy rose to greet Jacquelin as the boy galloped up to the gate.

“Come in, Jack. What’s up? Look out or he’ll git you off him. That’s the way to set him! Ah!” as Jacquelin swung himself down.

“Here’s a present for you,” said Jacquelin.

“What?”

“This horse!”

“What!”

“Yes: he’s mine: papa gave him to me this morning and said I might give him to you. I took the pick——”

“Well, by——” Andy was too much dazed to swear.

“Jack——” This also ended. “Now let that Hiram Still ask for s’curity. Delia, I’ll lick a regiment.” He faced his sweetheart, who suddenly turned and caught Jacquelin and kissed him violently, bringing the red blood to the boy’s fresh face.

“If you’ll do that to me I’ll give him to you right now. D——d ’f I don’t!” And the little recruit looked Miss Delia Dove in the eyes and gave a shake of his head for emphasis. The girl looked for one moment as if she were going to accept his offer. Then as Andy squared himself

and opened his arms wide she considered, and, with a toss of her head and a sparkle in her eyes, turned away.

That moment the latch clicked and Hiram Still's daughter, Virgy, stood beside them, shy and silent, veiled within her sun-bonnet.

"Mr. Stamper, pappy says if you'll come over to see him about that business o' yourn, maybe he can make out to help you out."

She delivered the message automatically, and, with a shy glance at Jacquelin, and another, somewhat different, at Delia Dove, retired once more within the deep recesses of her sun-bonnet.

"Well, you tell your pappy that I say I'm much obliged to him; but I ain't got any business with him that I knows on; 't somebody else's done helped me out." The voice was kind, though the words were sarcastic.

"Yes, sir. Good-even'." And with another shy glance and nod to each one in turn, the girl turned and went off as noiselessly as a hare.

"That girl always gives me the creeps," said Delia, when Virgy had reached a safe distance.

"How about Washy?" asked Andy, at which Delia only sniffed disdainfully.

Jacquelin Gray was not the only one of the youngsters whose patriotic fervor was rewarded. The ladies of the neighborhood made a banner for each of the companies that went forth, and Blair Cary was selected to present the banner to the Red Rock company, which she did from the court-house balcony, with her laughing eyes sobered by ex-

citement, her glowing face growing white and pink by turns, and her little tremulous speech, written by her father and carefully conned by heart for days, much swallowed and almost inaudible in face of the large crowd filling all the space around, and of the brave company drawn up in the road below her. But she got through it—that part about “emulating the Spartan youth who came back with his shield or on it,” and all; and at the close she carried everyone away by a natural clasp of her little brown hands over her heart, as she said, “And don’t you let them take it away from you, not ever,” outstretching her arms to her father, who sat with moist eyes at one end of the line a little below her, with Jacquelin close beside him, his eyes like saucers for interest in, and admiration of, Blair.

“Blair, that’s the best speech that ever was made,” cried the boy, enthusiastically, when he saw her; “and Steve says so, too. Don’t you wish I was old enough to go?” The little girl’s cheeks glowed with pleasure.

The evening before Jacquelin’s father went off, he called Jacquelin into his office, and rising, shut the door himself. They were alone, and Jacquelin was mystified. He had never before been summoned for an interview with his father unless it were for a lecture, or worse. He hastily ran over in his mind his recent acts, but he could recall nothing that merited even censure, and curiosity took the place of wonderment. Wonder came back, however, when his father, motioning him to a seat, stood before him and began to address him in an entirely new and unknown tone. He talked to him as if he were a man. Jacquelin suddenly felt all his old timidity of his father vanish, and a new spirit, as it were, rise up in his heart. His father told him that now that he was going away to the war, he might never come back; but he left, he said, with

the assurance that whatever happened, he would be worthily succeeded; and he said that he was proud of him, and had the fullest confidence in him. He had never said anything like this to Jacquelin before, in all his life, and the boy felt a new sensation. He had no idea that his father had ever been satisfied with him, much less been proud of him. It was like opening the skies and giving him a glimpse beyond them into a new heaven. The boy suddenly rose, and flung his arms about his father's neck, and clung there, pouring out his heart to him. Then he sat down again, feeling like a shriven soul, and the father and son understood each other like two school-fellows.

Mr. Gray told Jacquelin of his will. He had left his mother everything; but it would be the same thing as if he had left it to him and Rupert. He, as the oldest, was to have Red Rock, and Rupert the estate in the South. "I leave it to her, and I leave her to you," he said, putting his hand on the boy's shoulder. Jacquelin listened, his mind suddenly sobered and expanded to a man's measure.

"And, Jacquelin," he said, "keep the old place. Make any sacrifice to do that. Landholding is one of the safeguards of a gentry. Our people, for six generations, have never sold an acre, and I never knew a man who sold land that thrived."

"I will keep it, father," said the boy, earnestly.

There were some debts, but not enough to amount to anything, his father told him; the principal one was to Hiram Still. Still had wanted him to keep his money, and he had done so. It could be paid any time, if necessary. Still was a better man than he was given credit for. A bad manner made those who did not know him well, suspicious of him.

But he was the best business man he had ever known, and he believed devoted to his interest. His father, old Mr. Still, had been overseer for Jacquelin's grandfather when Mr. Gray was a boy, and he could not forget him, and though Still was at present in poor health, he had contracted the disease while in their service at the South, and he would be glad to have him kept in his position as long as he treated the negroes well, and cared to remain.

"And, Jacquelin, one other thing: be a father to Rupert. See that he gets an education. It is the one patrimony that no accident—not even war—can take away."

Jacquelin promised his father that he would remember his injunctions, and try faithfully to keep them, every one; and when the two walked out, it was arm in arm like two brothers, and the old servants, looking at them, nodded their heads, and talked with pride of Jacquelin's growing resemblance to his grandfather.

Next day the companies raised in the county started off to the war, taking almost every man of serviceable age and strength, and many who were not.

When they marched away it was like a triumphal procession. The blue haze of spring lay over the woods, softening the landscape, and filling it with peace. Tears were on some cheeks, no doubt; and many eyes were dimmed; but kerchiefs and scarfs were waved by many who could not see, and fervent prayers went up from many hearts when the lips were too tremulous to speak.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH A LONG JUMP IS TAKEN

*I*t is not proposed to attempt any relation of that part of the lives of the people in this record which was covered by the four years of war. That period was too tremendous to be made a mere fragment of any history. "After that the deluge."

What pen could properly tell the story of those four years; what fittingly record the glory of that struggle, hopeless from the beginning, yet ever appearing to pluck success from the very abyss of impossibility, and by the sheer power of unconquerable valor to reverse the laws of nature and create the consummation it desired, in the face of insuperable force?

It was a great formative force in every life that participated in it. It stamped itself on every face. The whole country emptied itself into it. They went into it boys, and came out of it men—striplings, and came out of it heroes. But the eye once fastened on that flaming fire would be blinded for any lesser light.

It is what took place after the war rather than what occurred during the struggle that this chronicle is concerned with.

If the part that the men played in the war must be passed over in silence as too large for this history, how much more impossible would it be to describe fitly the part that the women performed. It was a harder

part to fill, yet they filled it to the brim, good measure, overflowing. It is no disparagement to the men to say that whatever courage they displayed, it was less than that which the women showed. Wherever a Southern woman stood during those four years, there in her small person was a garrison of the South, impregnable.

Year after year the mills of war ground steadily array after array, and crushed province after province, and still the ranks filled and poured with intrepid daring into the abyss of destruction, to be ground like their predecessors to dust; until at the end there was nothing left to grind. Some day the historian, annalist or novelist, may arise to tell the mighty story, but meantime this pen must pass it by as too great a theme, and deal with the times that come after.

One or two incidents, however, must be mentioned to fill the break and explain what came afterward.

Colonel Gray, who had been early promoted, fell at the head of his regiment on one of those great days which are the milestones of history.

His body was brought home and buried in the old grave-yard at Red Rock among generations of Grays, of whom, as old Mr. Langstaff, who had been bodily haled back to his parish by his congregation, said to the neighbors and servants about the grave, not one was a better or a braver man, or a truer gentleman. Colonel Gray's burial marked one of the steps of the war in that retired neighborhood.

When it was all over, and the neighbors had gone home, and the servants had retired to their quarters, hushed to that vague quietude that follows the last putting away in the earth of those who have been

near to us, Jacquelin came out of the office where he had held that last interview with his father, and walked into his mother's room. His shoulders were square and his figure erect. Mrs. Gray rose from her knees as he entered, and stood before him in her black dress, her face deadly white; her eyes, full of fear, fastened on his face.

"Mamma—." He stopped as if that were all he had to say, and, perhaps, it was; for Mrs. Gray seated herself calmly.

"Yes, my son." The fine, sad eyes grew wistful. How like he was to his father!

—"Because, you know, there ought to be one of us in the old company, mamma," he said, quite as though he had spoken the other sentence.

"Yes, my son, I know." And the mother sighed, her heart breaking in spite of her resolve to be brave.

"—And I am the only man of the name now—and I am fifteen and a whole head taller than Andy Stamper."

"Yes, I know, my son." She had noticed it that day, and had known this would come.

"And he is one of the best soldiers in the army—*He* said so. And if—if anything happens, you have Rupert." He went on arguing, as though his mother had not agreed with him.

"Yes, my son, I know." And Mrs. Gray rose suddenly and flung herself into his arms and hugged him and clung to him, and wept on his shoulder, as though he were his father.