REVEILLE
in
WASHINGTON
1860-1865

By

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I. *The General Is Older Than the Capital*

THAT winter, the old General moved from the rooms he had rented from the free mulatto, Wormley, in I Street to Cruchet's at Sixth and D Streets. His new quarters, situated on the ground floor—a spacious bedroom, with a private dining-room adjoining—were convenient for a man who walked slowly and with pain; and Cruchet, a French caterer, was one of the best cooks in Washington.

In spite of his nearly seventy-five years and his increasing infirmities, the General was addicted to the pleasures of the table. Before his six o'clock dinner, his black body servant brought out the wines and the liqueurs, setting the bottles of claret to warm before the fire. The old man had refined his palate in the best restaurants in Paris; and woodcock, English snipe, poulard, capon, and *tête de veau en tortue* were among the dishes he fancied. He liked, too, canvasback duck, and the hams of his native Virginia. Yet nothing, to his taste, equaled the delicacy he called "tarrapin." He would hold forth on the correct method of preparing it: "No flour, sir—not a grain." His military secretary could saturninely foresee that moment, when, leaning his left elbow on the table and holding six inches above his plate a fork laden with the succulent tortoise, he would announce, "The best food vouchsafed by Providence to man," before hurrying the fork to his lips.

From his splendid prime, the General had retained, not only a discriminating palate, but the defects suitable to a proud and ambitious nature. He had always been vain, pompous, exacting, jealous and high-tempered. Now that his sick old body could no longer support the racking of its wounds, his irascibility had dwindled to irritation, and his imperiousness to petulance. His love of flattery had grown, and he often declared that at his age compliments had become a necessity. While taking a footbath, he would call on his military secretary to remark the fairness of his limbs. In company, he spoke of the great commanders of history, and matched with theirs his own exploits at Chippewa and Lundy's Lane, at Cerro Gordo and Chapultepec. Near his desk stood his bust in marble, with shoulders bared; classical, serene and idealized. The walls were brilliant with his portraits at various ages, from the young General Winfield Scott who had been victorious over the British in 1814 to the already aging General-in-Chief who had defeated the Mexicans in 1848. They were arresting figures, those generals on the walls; handsome, slender, heroic, with haughty eye and small, imperious mouth. Gold gleamed in spurs, in buttons and embroidery and huge epau-

lettes, in the handle of the sword which had been the gift of Virginia; and one portrait showed the superb cocked hat, profusely plumed, that had earned for Scott the sobriquet of "Fuss and Feathers." He stood six feet, four and a quarter inches in height, and had been wont to insist on the fraction. But, swollen and dropsical, he spoke no longer of his size. He pointed instead to the bust, to the portraits, to show what he had been.

Such was the commanding general of the Army of the United States in December of 1860, but not so did his compatriots see him. His eye had lost its fire and he could no longer sit a horse, but in huge epaulettes and yellow sash he was still his country's hero. Europe might celebrate the genius of Napoleon; the New World had its Winfield Scott. For nearly half a century the republic had taken pride in his achievements as soldier and pacificator; and, if he now lived in a glorious military past, so did his fellow-countrymen. He was the very figure to satisfy a peaceful people, fond of bragging of its bygone belligerence. The General was as magnificent as a monument, and no one was troubled by the circumstance that he was nearly as useless.

Smugly aloof from the dissensions of Europe, the young nation scorned the large standing armies of the Old World. It was wary of the political danger of a large military class; and, regarding high rank as perilous to democratic liberties, looked uneasily on West Point as a breeding ground for aristocrats. Save for George Washington, Winfield Scott alone had held the rank of lieutenant-general, and in his case Congress had conferred it only by brevet. To guard its far-flung borders and fight its Indian wars, the United States maintained an army of sixteen thousand soldiers, scattered for the most part over the Pacific coast, Utah and the Southwest.

This small establishment offered a limited opportunity for military preferment, and in the twenty years of Scott's command he had shown a marked partiality for advancing Southern officers. To favor gentlemen from the slave States, with their martial spirit and their "habit of command," had been as natural to the old Virginian as a daily perusal of the Richmond *Enquirer*. Of the six Army departments, only the Department of the East was commanded by a Northerner, General John E. Wool. The five Western departments, in which the mass of the Army was stationed, were all headed by officers of Southern birth. Scott found the "Southern rascals" not only meritorious, but congenial. The only Northern aide on his staff was his military secretary, Lieutenant-Colonel E. D. Keyes, and the appointment had first been offered to a Virginian, Colonel Robert E. Lee. Since the nation's political destinies had long been controlled by the statesmen of the slave States, there had been no interference with the General's predilections. For twelve years, the War Department patronage had been in Southern hands. A Southern clique ruled the Army, and many ambitious Northerners who had shown promise at West Point—Halleck, McClellan, Hooker, Burnside, Sherman, Rosecrans—had felt sufficiently discouraged to resign their commissions and return to civil life.

In spite of his sentiment for the South, General Scott was no believer in State sovereignty; he was strongly attached to the Union. In the Presidential election of 1852, he had been the last standard-bearer of the dying Whig party, overwhelmingly defeated by the Democratic candidate, Franklin Pierce, a New Englander of Southern sympathies. Scott had spent much time in the North, and, when Pierce took office, he moved his headquarters from Washington to New York. There, growing old and feeble, he had remained, while North and South, with increasing bitterness, disputed the question of the extension of slavery to the territories, and abolitionists vied with fire-eaters in a chorus of recrimination and hatred. In 1856, the anti-slavery Republican party entered the national lists, captained by the gallant adventurer, Frémont. Again a Democrat, James Buchanan, was elected President; but the North's growing antipathy to slavery was written in the large Republican vote. The canvass of 1860 revealed a disastrous sectional division. The Democratic party split into two factions, each of which nominated a candidate, and the success of the Republicans in November appeared to be assured. After the October elections, the cotton States began to agitate for disunion. South Carolina threatened immediate secession, if the Republican candidate, Abraham Lincoln, should be elected. In late October, General Scott wrote the President a letter containing his views. He advised Buchanan that the Southern forts should be strongly garrisoned to prevent a surprise attack. It was the advice that the General had given President Jackson during the nullification troubles in South Carolina, when Scott himself had gone to Charleston and executed his mission with firmness and diplomacy.

Scott was no longer the man he had been in 1832. His letter maundered off into arguments for peaceable disunion, and he presented the suggestion that the nation might solve its problems, not simply by splitting in half, but by dividing into four confederacies. A week after he had sent his letter, Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States. Four days later, South Carolina called a convention with the view of seceding from the Union. There were wild political demonstrations in the cotton States; and, as Southern trade with the North fell off and markets fell and banks called in their loans, the free States, forgetful of their recent enthusiasm for the limitation of slavery, grew despondent. Northern merchants and manufacturers, chilled by the prospect of bankruptcy, were eager to make concessions. Some people thought that the only course was to permit the separation of the sections; but the great majority still refused to take the threats of disunion seriously. At every election for the past twenty years, the Southerners had been gasconading about secession. Few Northerners had any comprehension of the crisis, and almost none faced the possibility that it might end in civil war.

In December, the General was boosted into a railway car, and started on his journey to Washington. It was a hardship for him to travel, he had been ill in bed; but the President had sent for him, and like a good soldier

he was ready to do his duty. The dirty, rattling cars wound slowly down through Maryland, and, leaning on the arm of his military secretary, the General entered the nation's capital, a town of sedition and dismay.

The North might worry over tumbling markets; in Washington there was revolution, and men feared for democratic government. A very young man of the Adams family, who was attempting that winter what he called an education in treason, observed "the singular spectacle of a government trying to destroy itself." The conspiracy for disunion was not confined to the States, but permeated the highest councils of the nation. It was unique among revolutions only in its impunity. Southern senators and representatives made no secret of their disloyalty to the Union. Three members of the President's Cabinet had been deeply implicated: Howell Cobb of Georgia, Secretary of the Treasury; John B. Floyd of Virginia, Secretary of War; and Jacob Thompson of Mississippi, Secretary of the Interior. Clerks in the Government departments sported secession cockades on their coats, and loudly over their whisky at Willard's bar vowed that Lincoln should never be inaugurated.

Uneasily in the Presidential chair sat James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, like a nervous gentleman on a runaway horse, longing for the ride to be over. A commonplace politician of nearly seventy, he was conscientious, evasive and irresolute. He was a staunch Democrat; Southerners were his friends and closest political associates. He had belatedly become aware that his allegiance might carry him into presiding over the disruption of his country. General Scott's repeated advice to strengthen the Southern forts had no more effect on him than on his secessionist War Secretary, Mr. Floyd. Mr. Buchanan was not oblivious of the problem of the forts. In conference with his divided Cabinet, he was considering little else than the question of the policy to be pursued in Charleston harbor. Major Robert Anderson, stationed with a small garrison at Fort Moultrie, was appealing to the Government to take a stand; if it was intended to hold the forts, Anderson begged for reinforcements. Dreading a collision, the President felt obliged to follow a policy so noncommittal that it produced the impression of being no policy at all. However dull ears might be at the North, Mr. Buchanan had heard the roar of the deluge, and to the induction into office of his successor, Mr. Lincoln, he was looking forward with the keenest anticipation.

Washington was in a turmoil. Its very existence as the Federal City seemed threatened. Geographically the situation of the District of Columbia was precarious. If the slave States of Virginia and Maryland were both to secede, they would carry Washington with them. Sympathy with secession was strong in a large group of the city's residents, and it was feared that they would participate in any seditious enterprise. Men in public life found their mail heavy with threats and warnings, and General Scott's ears were soon ringing with stories of conspiracy.

The General had made the journey to Washington for a consultation with

the President. It was evident that he would be obliged to remain. Scott was no Republican, but, baffled by Mr. Buchanan, and cold-shouldered by Mr. Floyd, he wished to God that Mr. Lincoln were in office. For Army headquarters, space was presently found in Winder's Building in Seventeenth Street, opposite the small brick structure of the War Department, and the General-in-Chief took up his duties at the divided and jeopardized seat of Federal Government.

It was as a symbol that the capital was valued; it had no other importance. Built to order at the dawn of the century, it gave after sixty years the impression of having been just begun. "As in 1800 and 1850, so in 1860," wrote Henry Adams, "the same rude colony was camped in the same forest, with the same unfinished Greek temples for workrooms, and sloughs for roads." European travelers, doing their tour of the United States, looked superciliously on Washington. They were accustomed to capitals which were the rooted centers of the cultural and commercial life of their nations. Washington was merely a place for the Government. It was an idea set in a wilderness.

All too typical of the young republic, the town was pretentious and unfulfilled. It had been ambitiously laid out over an area extending from the Potomac and the Eastern Branch or Anacostia River as far as Rock Creek on the west and Boundary Street—later to be known as Florida Avenue—on the north. Vast sums, by the standards of the day, had been spent on the public buildings, but they were widely spaced, unrelated and, for the most part, incomplete. In sixty years, men may construct a compact city; not Rome. The very grandioseness of the capital's conception called forth ridicule, and the often-quoted tribute, "a city of magnificent distances," had become a favorite jibe.

The vaunted buildings of Washington were the Capitol, the General Post-Office, the Patent Office, the Treasury, the Executive Mansion and the Smithsonian Institution; and, despite the distances, the tour could be made in a forenoon. First in importance was the classic Capitol, with its historical paintings and statuary and its Library of Congress; above all, with its great marble Extension, progressing toward completion after nearly ten years of work. In the two new wings, only recently occupied by the legislators, visitors now might gaze on the splendid Senate Chamber and the ornate red and gold Hall of Representatives. There was no doubt that the interior decorations were gorgeous, though Americans thought them gaudy and foreign: but on the outside imagination was needed to envision an imposing architectural effect. The original dome had been removed, and only the base of the new cast-iron dome, topped by scaffolding and a towering crane, surmounted the old sandstone building in the center. At either end, the glittering marble wings stretched bare and unfinished, devoid even of steps. Of the hundred Corinthian columns needed for the completion of the porticoes, only three had been crowned by their capitals and set in place. Columns and

capitals, blocks of marble, keystones, carvings, lumber and iron plates lay strewn about the grounds, which were further defaced by workmen's sheds and depots for coal and wood. Visitors lingered on the east portico to admire the colossal statues, especially Persico's Columbus, with his ball; and all paused to stare at the Greenough statue of Washington which sat, godlike amid the litter, in the eastern park. Modeled on the Roman conception of Jupiter Tonans, the figure of the Father of his Country was naked to the waist, with his limbs swathed in draperies; and even Philp's guidebook was constrained to remark that Washington was "scarcely recognizable, in this garb, to his countrymen."

Diagonally across from each other, at Seventh and F Streets, were the marble palaces of the Post-Office and the Patent Office. The latter, which was not quite finished, contained a display of models and curiosities, and provided space for the entire business of the Department of the Interior. On Fifteenth Street, the Treasury Department occupied an immense edifice, the Extension of which was still under construction. Next door, on the future site of the north end of the Treasury, was the little brick State Department. It attracted no more attention than did the Army and Navy Departments, which were installed in similar old-fashioned houses on the western side of the Executive Mansion, whose wooded lawn extended, without intervening streets, to the four department buildings.

By travelers from overseas, the mansion itself was dismissed as an ordinary country house, wanting in either taste or splendor; but it was an object of deep interest to Americans, who roved through the spacious public rooms, admiring the large mirrors, the flowered carpets and the sparkling chandeliers. At either end, the mansion straggled out into low sheds, which were used for household purposes, and the extension on the west was surmounted by a conservatory which communicated with the first floor. With its outbuildings, greenhouses, fruit trees, and flower and kitchen gardens, the place had an appearance of prosperous untidiness, like that of a Southern plantation house. In front of the mansion, there was an iron fence with large gateways, and another fence enclosed the grounds on the south; but the lawns were traversed by interior paths between the departments, and that which crossed the north side of the house was freely used by the public. In the circle before the north portico stood a statue of Thomas Jefferson in bronze, a material which was thought to have imparted a negroid appearance to the statesman's features. On the other side of Pennsylvania Avenue, the bronze equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson embellished Lafayette Square. It was the work of Clark Mills, a talented young plasterer from South Carolina. There had been many criticisms of the prancing horse, with its lifted forefeet. Charles Sumner, the cultured senator from Massachusetts, found the Jackson statue grotesque, and was humiliated at having to conduct British visitors past it.

The great disadvantage of the President's House was its unhealthy situa-

tion near the Potomac flats, which were held responsible for the prevalence of malaria in Washington during the summer and autumn months. At the foot of the President's Park, as the unkempt tract south of the mansion was called, there was an unsavory marsh which had formerly been an outlet for sewage. This bordered on the opening of the town's great nuisance, the old city canal, formerly an inland waterway between the Potomac and the Eastern Branch, but now fallen into disuse, save as a receptacle for sewage and offal. To reach the Mall and the southwest section of Washington, it was necessary to cross this unsightly and odorous channel, which was spanned at intervals by high iron bridges.

In the half-developed park of the Mall arose the red, fantastic towers of the Smithsonian Institution, surrounded by prettily planted grounds which, like those of the Capitol and the White House, had been planned by the famous horticulturist, Andrew J. Downing. Its large library and museum of natural history were considered well worth visiting. West of Fifteenth Street and directly south of the Executive Mansion, though separated from it by the wide mouth of the canal, stood a truncated shaft, intended to commemorate the Father of his Country. Here sentimental patriots might wander among the stone carvings which lay piled on the ground, and meditate on the ingratitude which had suffered the subscriptions to lapse. Another memorial of Washington, a rigid equestrian statue by Clark Mills, was solitarily situated in Washington Circle, at the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and Twenty-third Street.

These were the sights of the Federal Metropolis—six scattered buildings, a few dubious statues and one-third of an obelisk—and, barring an inspection of the Government greenhouses, or a drive to the Navy Yard, the Arsenal or the Observatory, there was nothing more to be seen within the city limits.

Northwest from Capitol Hill ran the city's main thoroughfare, Pennsylvania Avenue—"the" Avenue. It had been conceived as a broad and imposing boulevard, along which the Capitol should confront the Executive Mansion, but the great bulk of the Treasury had necessitated a bend in the Avenue, and from the Capitol the vista now terminated, not in the White House, but in the red-brick barn which President Buchanan had erected in the grounds. Devoid of fine buildings, the wide, neglected street wore an air of desolation. Its thin cobble pavement had been broken up by faulty drainage and the traffic of the heavy omnibuses which plied between the Capitol and Georgetown. In dry weather, the ruts and hollows were iron traps, covered with thick dust. Rain turned the roadbed into a channel of mud, underlaid by areas of treacherous gravel. The south or "wrong" side of the Avenue was lined with dingy buildings, and its only place of popular resort was the Center Market, an agglomeration of sheds and shacks which backed on the open sewer of the canal. The restaurants and the shops and the big

hotels were all on the north side, where the brick sidewalk constituted the town's promenade.

The hotels were a recent development in a capital whose politicians had emerged only in mid-century from a background of small taverns and boardinghouses. The large, ugly buildings were the chief attractions of the Avenue, enlivening its dullness with their uniformed attendants, their ranks of hacks and the bustle of arriving and departing guests. When Congress was in session, their halls and parlors, dining-rooms and bars were crowded. The din was frightful, the prices were high, and the clerks were haughty and disobliging; but, to see and to be seen, to establish contact with the political personages of the day and feel the pulse of Government, it was necessary to go to the hotels.

Two of them were situated on opposite sides of Sixth Street: the National, a huge caravansary, and the marble-fronted pile of Brown's, later known as the Metropolitan. Because of their convenience to the Capitol, these houses were much patronized by members of Congress, especially by Southerners. The slaves of the planter-politicians loitered on the sidewalk of the Avenue, while their masters, in broad-brimmed hats, conferred in the corridors, or called for bourbon and juleps in the bars. At the time of Mr. Buchanan's inauguration, the National had suffered an eclipse, because of an outbreak of an intestinal malady among its guests. The new President was one of the many who became ill, and his nephew died of the National Hotel disease. In extreme pro-Southern circles, the epidemic was declared to have been the result of a Republican plot to poison the leaders of the Democratic party; but most people accepted the explanation that it had been caused by sewer gas, and after a brief closure for repairs the National had regained its former popularity.

The Kirkwood, on the corner of Twelfth Street, had its devoted clientele, as did two or three smaller houses on the Avenue. The most famous of all the hotels, however, was Willard's at Fourteenth Street. Formerly a small and unsuccessful hostelry, its failure had been ascribed to the fact that it was too far uptown. Its reputation had been made under the efficient management of the Willard brothers, who hailed from Vermont; and, enlarged and redecorated, Willard's had become the great meeting place of Washington. Much of the business of Government was said to be done in its passages and its bar. From eight to eleven in the morning—for Washingtonians were not early risers—a procession of celebrities might be observed passing to the breakfast table. The huge breakfast, which included such items as fried oysters, steak and onions, blanc mange and *pâté de foie gras*, was succeeded by a gargantuan midday dinner; by another dinner at five o'clock; by a robust tea at seven-thirty; and finally by supper at nine. Englishmen, themselves no inconsiderable feeders, were appalled by the meals that the American guests, ladies as well as gentlemen, were able to consume.

The British visitors hated Willard's. Its very architecture offended them.

Accustomed to snug inns with private parlors, they could find no decent seclusion in this rambling, uncomfortable barracks. American hotel life was gregarious, and a peaceful withdrawal from an atmosphere of "heat, noise, dust, smoke, expectoration" was the last thing that the natives appeared to be seeking. After breakfast, as after dinner, the guests hastened to mingle in the public rooms. At Willard's, the parlor furniture was occupied by the same sallow, determined men, the same dressy ladies and the same screaming, precocious children that travelers observed elsewhere in the United States.

Yet, when the secretaries at the British legation had finished their work, it was to Willard's bar that they ran. There was life in the masculine voices that clamored in the blue cigar smoke; and the youngsters had formed "the pernicious local habit of swallowing cocktails." Lord Lyons, the red-faced British minister, wrote that Washington was a dreadful place for young men; it had no clubs and no good restaurants, no permanent theatre or opera. There were, however, saloons in profusion, and a suitable complement of brothels; while, behind discreetly curtained windows on the Avenue, gentlemen were able to wile away an evening at faro, without any serious interference from the Washington police.

The area immediately north of the Avenue, between the Capitol and the Executive Mansion, was the only part of Washington which was sufficiently built up to warrant the description of a city. Here were houses and churches and a few inadequate school buildings, and here, on Seventh Street, was the principal business section. The government of the seven wards, into which Washington was divided, was administered from the stucco City Hall on Judiciary Square, which contained the office of the mayor and the rooms used by the Boards of Aldermen and Common Council. This building also held the circuit and criminal courts and the office of the United States marshal of the District. Behind the City Hall was the town's only general hospital, the E Street Infirmary; and still farther north on the square, which extended as far as G Street, was the ancient county jail.

The city's business—in contrast to that of Federal Government, which required a setting of porticoed immensity—seemed all to be done in a small way. Ugly blocks of offices had been hastily run up as a speculation. Shabby boardinghouses, little grocery shops, petty attorneys' offices and mean restaurants and saloons served the fifteen hundred clerks who were employed in the departments. The clerks were too poorly paid, and, in the unceasing scramble for appointment, too insecure to bring their families with them; and, since so many bachelors in single rooms required a large number of individual fires, they were also responsible for the unusual quantity of woodyards, which plied an untidy trade in almost every other square.

It was a Southern town, without the picturesqueness, but with the indolence, the disorder and the want of sanitation. Its lounging Negroes startled Northern visitors with the reminder that slaves were held in the

capital. Hucksters abounded. Fish and oyster peddlers cried their wares and tooted their horns on the corners. Flocks of geese waddled on the Avenue, and hogs, of every size and color, roamed at large, making their muddy wallows on Capitol Hill and in Judiciary Square. People emptied slops and refuse in the gutters, and threw dead domestic animals into the canal. Most of the population still depended on the questionable water supply afforded by wells and by springs in the hills behind the city. Privies, in the absence of adequate sewage disposal, were plentiful in yards and dirty alleys, and every day the carts of night soil trundled out to the commons ten blocks north of the White House.

Outside the area in which the population was concentrated, were lonely tracts of woodland and commons, broken at intervals by large estates, planted and bowered in trees, and by settlements which had pushed out from the expanding center of the town. The effect of this random development reminded one foreign observer of "a frame of Berlin wool work in which the fair embroideress has made spasmodic attempts at a commencement." The elaborate paper plan of the capital gave no indication that within the city limits the labeled streets and avenues were country roads, which crisscrossed in the wilderness.

> There is a map of Washington accurately laid down [wrote that genial traveler, Anthony Trollope]; and taking that map with him in his journeyings a man may lose himself in the streets, not as one loses oneself in London between Shoreditch and Russell Square, but as one does so in the deserts of the Holy Land, between Emmaus and Arimathea. In the first place no one knows where the places are, or is sure of their existence, and then between their presumed localities the country is wild, trackless, unbridged, uninhabited and desolate. . . . Tucking your trousers up to your knees, you will wade through the bogs, you will lose yourself among rude hillocks, you will be out of the reach of humanity. . . . If you are a sportsman, you will desire to shoot snipe within sight of the President's house.

The oldest of the village communities which had developed in Washington was situated near the Navy Yard on the Eastern Branch, and was the home of the mechanics, laborers, carpenters and office workers who were employed at the yard. Neighbored by the Marine Barracks, it was rural and self-contained, although it was connected with the rest of the city by an omnibus line. At the foot of Eleventh Street, an infirm wooden structure, the Navy Yard or Eastern Branch Bridge, gave access to the Government Insane Asylum and to the Maryland countryside. Farther east of the yard was the Congressional Cemetery, city property, in spite of its name; while the bend of the river was bordered by the extensive grounds in which stood the poorhouse and the smallpox hospital. The Eastern Branch was not navigable for ships of war above the Navy Yard, and commerce with Bladensburg, once lively on its waters, had become a thing of the past.

Southwest Washington, divided from the other sections of the city by the old canal, was familiarly known as the Island. On Greenleaf's Point, the angle of confluence of the Potomac and the Eastern Branch, was situated the United States Arsenal, with the Penitentiary a little to the north. The Island had some reason for local pride and ambitions for further development. It included the Mall, with the Smithsonian Institution and also the militia armory. At the foot of Sixth and Seventh Streets were the wharves for the steamboats and sailing vessels which connected the capital with the railroads at Alexandria and Aquia Creek; or made longer voyages by way of Chesapeake Bay and the sea. From the end of Maryland Avenue ran the Long Bridge, the thoroughfare from Washington to Virginia, and the great mail road between the Northern and Southern States.

The good name of the Island, however, was tarnished by the disorder that frequently broke out in its tangle of poverty-stricken alleys. The less populous parts of the city harbored, not only ill-famed resorts, but gangs of rowdies who disturbed good citizens by their lawlessness, and had even started riots during municipal elections. The respectable settlement of the Northern Liberties, located above G Street, had its sordid districts. Other plague spots were Negro Hill far out on North Tenth Street; English Hill, east of the City Hall; and Swampoodle, an Irish colony in a marshy tract near North Capitol Street.

It was a courageous man who ventured to walk alone by night in the ill-lighted streets of the capital of the United States. The inefficiency of the Washington police was as notorious as the prevalence of its footpads and hoodlums. The municipality supported a day force of fifty patrolmen; while the fifty members of the night force were paid by the Government. The chief duty of the latter, however, was the protection of the public buildings; while the city's appointments were made as a reward for services in the local elections. Both forces, remarked Philp's guidebook, "contrary to the usages of other cities, do not separately patrol the entire city, but are to be found in bodies at the most public places."

The town's outstanding grievance, as well as its great pride, derived from the fact that it was the seat of Federal Government. Toward Congress, the supreme authority in the District, it maintained the attitude of a neglected and fretful stepchild. In truth, the grand scale of the city's design was responsible for most of its deficiencies. The fitful Federal appropriations for improving the streets were at no time the equivalent of a tax on the Government property; and, except for the grounds around the Capitol and the President's House, the national authorities had done little to beautify Washington.

From the viewpoint of Congress, the demands of the city were insatiable. Enormous sums had been appropriated to build the aqueduct which would eventually carry over Rock Creek a supply of pure Potomac water adequate for the city's needs. In making this outlay, the legislators had been prompted,

not only by considerations of health, but by a desire to reduce the fire hazards. The Washington fire companies, however, were controlled by gangs of toughs, and the frequent conflagrations raged unchecked, not only because of a scarcity of water, but because of rowdyism, confusion, and stone and pistol fights. In every department of civic life in which Congress lent aid to Washington, it encountered the inefficiency of the ward system of municipal government, common in towns of that day.

From its close association with the Government, Washington derived the peculiarity of its seasonal character. It was a winter resort. After the quiet drowse of a long, unhealthy summer, the town awakened each autumn to prepare for the opening of Congress. The dismal railway depot welcomed travelers from North and West. The wharves were busy with the Southerners, arriving by steamer from Aquia Creek. In the train of the legislators followed office seekers, claimants, lobbyists, delegations, inventors and reporters. Minstrel shows came, and opera companies; and famous stars, Joe Jefferson and Charlotte Cushman, Edwin Forrest and Edwin Booth, played at the dingy old Washington Theatre at C and Eleventh Streets. There was a stealthy invasion of pickpockets, confidence men and vagrants. By the end of November, the town was lively. The desolate Avenue hummed with hacks, with the elaborate carriages of the legations and the blooded horses of the Southerners. Shops furbished their windows. Hotels and boarding-houses filled up, and so did the E Street Infirmary, the poorhouse and the county jail. Practical motives dictated the presence of all the winter sojourners. There were no parties of idle, amusement-seeking tourists. The townsfolk entertained their friends and relatives, and every winter a bevy of pretty girls came for the festivities of the social season; but, apart from these negligible few, Americans did not visit Washington for pleasure. Although it had many churches, an active Young Men's Christian Association and a dignified official society, the city bore an unwholesome name among the pious folk of the nation. It was darkly imagined as a sink of iniquity, where weak-minded bachelors were exposed to the temptations of saloons, gambling hells and light women; and the prevalence of hotel life was instanced as a proof of the city's immorality.

Such was the capital of the United States in December of 1860, the sprawling and unfulfilled embodiment of a vision of national grandeur. Unfinished though it was, it perpetually evoked comparisons with remote antiquity. Henry Adams would recall a boyhood impression of "the Post-Office and the Patent Office which faced each other . . . like white Greek temples in the abandoned gravel pits of a deserted Syrian city." An Army officer, Colonel Charles P. Stone, thought that the Treasury would make the grandest Palmyra of them all. Anthony Trollope was also reminded of the ruins of Palmyra by the framework of the new Capitol dome; and a popular designation of Captain Montgomery Meigs of the engineers, often seen

superintending the work on the Capitol Extension, was "Meigs among the ruins of Carthage."

It was a mere ambitious beginner, a baby among capitals. Its defects were those of youth and energy and inexperience. Yet people were ready to fancy it moldering and abandoned, a relic of an optimistic moment of history when men had essayed an experiment called democracy. Dissolution was heavy in the air; and even the rising monuments of the republic wore the image of ruin and decay.

The presence of the old General was reassuring to the worried residents of Washington: to those who were used to living in the capital; who depended on their jobs in it; owned property in it; saw it hopefully, not as it was, but as it might grow to be; and even cherished, some of them, the ideal of a permanent Union of the States. As Scott limped to Winder's Building from his low coupé, drawn by a powerful horse, the passers-by lined up, removed their hats, and cried, "God bless you, General."

II. *"The Union, Sir, Is Dissolved"*

THERE were people who loved Washington, not alone with an habitual affection for warm firesides and growing gardens, but because they found enjoyment in the particular life the town afforded. They derived a vicarious excitement from the proximity of Government, and from the many rumors of which Washington was the sounding box. They watched with pride and pleasure the progress of the public buildings, attended the improving lectures at the Smithsonian Institution, danced at the hops at the big hotels, and ran pell-mell to the fires.

In spite of many diversions, living was leisurely and almost rustic in character. After church on Sunday, friends went to hospitable houses to dine, sometime between the hours of four and seven, on the excellent and varied fare provided by the markets. There were agreeable evening tea parties in the parlors. From lamp-lit windows came the sound of piano music, or the deliberate slap of the cards in a game of euchre or whist. Like villagers, the townsfolk went to the depot to welcome visitors, or speed them on their way. Sportsmen caught rock bass at the Little Falls, and gunned for duck and reedbird in the Potomac marshes. Along Rock Creek in springtime, the Judas trees unfolded their purplish-pink blossoms. Everyone feasted on shad and strawberries, and in the dimming light white dresses gleamed on the doorsteps. The city's children shuffled in the dry gray slush of the poplar plumes, and April gave place to May, not only as mud is succeeded by dust, but as hyacinths and snowdrops and lilacs yield to woodbine and clematis and a wilderness of roses.

In fine weather, there were many outdoor excursions. Lodges and societies danced and picnicked at pavilions in the groves near the town. People voyaged by steamboat to Alexandria and Fort Washington and the dilapidated countryseat of George Washington at Mount Vernon. Columbian College on the pretty eminence of Meridian Hill was a favorite place to visit. North of Washington, too, were the fine estates of Eckington, Harewood and Kalorama. Three miles beyond the crossing of the city boundary and Seventh Street was a wooded hill on which stood the Soldiers' Home, founded by a part of the tribute which General Scott had levied on Mexico City. A long drive out on the Seventh Street Road, beyond the District line, led to Silver Spring, the summer home of the venerable statesman, Mr. Francis P. Blair. Across the Long Bridge, the pillared mansion of Colonel Robert E. Lee crested the Arlington Heights. Carriages were always rolling

across Rock Creek to Georgetown, with its dignified streets of old-fashioned, red-brick houses. The duty of paying calls involved an arduous amount of travel, for ladies were expected to leave their *cartes de visite*, not only in Georgetown, but even in distant Bladensburg.

The town had its aristocracy. It was, said the *New York Herald*, "the abode of a very slow and respectable people, who cool themselves during the hot weather by the delightful remembrance that they are of gentle blood." Prominent residents were allied to the statesmen of the South through family connections in Maryland and Virginia, and during the Pierce administration the official society was Southern in tone. In its inner circle were included the members of the diplomatic set, as well as Northern Democrats who had shown themselves tolerant of slavery. Other notable gentlemen from the free States were courteously, if formally received.

It was a society which permitted an unusual freedom to ladies. Moving breathlessly and without privacy in a shower of white kid gloves and calling cards, they had a role to play in the parlors; and might still enjoy homage at an age when in other American cities they would have been relegated to knitting by the fireside. The galleries of the "sacred" Capitol were bright with their bonnets. They thronged its corridors, sending in their cards to summon acquaintances from the floor of Senate and House. If her husband were occupied, it was considered correct for a lady to be escorted to a levee by one of his friends. Failing a female companion for a tour of the public buildings, she might with decorum accept the attendance of a child. In the H Street mansion of Mr. W. W. Corcoran, there was an octagonal alcove, hung with red velvet, where the famous statue of the *Greek Slave* stood, protected by a gilded chain. It was nakedness, but it was art, and even ladies looked and admired.

The social season opened on New Year's, which throughout the country had become a day of great jollification, of paying calls and making presents and drinking eggnogs and hot punch. In Washington, the hospitable custom of keeping open house prevailed in official as well as private circles, and on New Year's Day was held the first of the winter receptions at the Executive Mansion. No refreshments were offered at these functions, but the general public—or at least the part of it that was white and respectably dressed—circulated freely in the mansion, and shook the President's hand.

After the first of January, the round of entertainment began. The morning and afternoon levees, the "at homes" and dinners and musicales were but preludes to the splendor of the balls and the big evening parties with music and supper. By night, gloomy streets resounded with the restless stamping of horses, the crack of whips and the shouts of coachmen, as the carriages moved slowly into line, and before some lighted residence discharged their freights of ladies, shaped like great bells. The fragile, low-cut evening dresses of the 1850's were fashioned of gauze and illusion, and garlanded with roses, white clematis, water lilies, violets or scarlet honeysuckle; and headdresses