



***MARY  
JOHNSTON***

***PRISONERS  
OF HOPE:  
A TALE  
OF COLONIAL  
VIRGINIA***

**Mary Johnston**

# **Prisoners of Hope: A Tale of Colonial Virginia**

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# PRISONERS OF HOPE

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# CHAPTER I

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## A SLOOP COMES IN

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"She will reach the wharf in half an hour."

The speaker shaded her eyes with a great fan of carved ivory and painted silk. They were beautiful eyes; large, brown, perfect in shape and expression, and set in a lovely, imperious, laughing face. The divinity to whom they belonged was clad in a gown of green dimity, flowered with pink roses, and trimmed about the neck and half sleeves with a fall of yellow lace. The gown was made according to the latest Paris mode, as described in a year-old letter from the court of Charles the Second, and its wearer gazed from under her fan towards the waters of the great bay of Chesapeake, in his Majesty's most loyal and well beloved dominion of Virginia.

The object of her attention was a large sloop that had left the bay and was sailing up a wide inlet or creek that pierced the land, cork-screw fashion, until it vanished from sight amidst innumerable green marshes. The channel, indicated by a deeper blue in the midst of an expanse of shoal water, was narrow, and wound like a gleaming snake in and out among the interminable succession of marsh islets. The vessel, following its curves, tacked continually, its great sail intensely white against the blue of inlet, bay and sky, and the shadeless green of the marshes, zigzagging from side to side with provoking leisureliness. The girl who had spoken

watched it eagerly, a color in her cheeks, and one little foot in its square-toed, rosetted shoe tapping impatiently upon the floor of the wide porch in which she stood.

Her companion, lounging upon the wooden steps, with his back to a pillar, looked up with an amused light in his blue eyes.

"Why are you so eager, cousin?" he drawled. "You cannot be pining for your father when 'tis scarce five days since he went to Jamestown. Do the Virginia ladies watch for the arrival of a new batch of slaves with such impatience?"

"The slaves! No, indeed! But, sir, in that boat there are three cases from England."

"Ah, that accounts for it! And what may these wonderful cases contain?"

"One contains the dress in which I shall dance with you at the party at Green Spring which the governor is to give in your honor—if you ask me, sir. Oh, I take it for granted that you will, so spare us your protestations. 'Tis to have a petticoat of blue tabby and an overdress of white satin trimmed with yards and yards of Venice point. The stockings are blue silk, and come from the French house in Covent Garden, as doth the scarf of striped gauze and the shoes, gallooned with silver. Then there are my combs, gloves, a laced waistcoat, a red satin bodice, a scarlet taffetas mantle, a plumed hat, a pair of clasped garters, a riding mask, a string of pearls, and the latest romances."

"A pretty list! Is that all?"

"There are things for aunt Lettice, petticoats and ribbons, a gilt stomacher and a China monster, and for my father,



lace ruffles and bands, a pair of French laced boots, a periwig, a new scabbard for his rapier, and so on."

The young man laughed. "'Tis a curious life you Virginians lead," he said. "The embroidered suits and ruffles, the cosmetics and perfumes of Whitehall in the midst of oyster beds and tobacco fields, savage Indians and negro slaves."

The girl put on a charming look of mock offense. "We *are* a little bit of England set down here in the wilderness. Why should we not clothe ourselves like gentlefolk as well as our kindred and friends at home? And sure both England and Virginia have had enough of sad colored raiment. Better go like a peacock than like a horrid Roundhead."

Her companion laughed musically and sang a stave of a cavalier love song. He was a slender, well-made man, dressed in the extreme of the mode of the year of grace sixteen hundred and sixty-three, in a richly laced suit of camlet with points of blue ribbon, and the great scented periwig then newly come into fashion. The close curled rings of hair descending far over his cravat of finest Holland framed a handsome, lazily insolent face, with large steel-blue eyes and beautifully cut, mocking lips. A rapier with a jeweled hilt hung at his side, and one white hand, half buried in snowy ruffles, held a beribboned cane with which, as he talked, he ruthlessly decapitated the pink and white morning-glories with which the porch was trellised.

The house to which the porch belonged was long and low, built of wood, with many small windows, and at either end a great brick chimney. From the porch to the water, a hundred yards away, stretched a walk of crushed shells

bisecting an expanse of green turf dotted with noble trees—the cedar and the cypress predominating. Diverging from this central walk were two narrower paths which, winding in and out in eccentric figures, led, on the one hand, to a rustic summer-house overgrown with honeysuckle and trumpet-vine, and on the other to a tiny grotto constructed of shells and set in a tangle of periwinkle. Along one side of the house, and protected by a stout locust paling overrun with grape-vines, lay the garden, where flowers and vegetables flourished contentedly side by side, the hollyhocks and tall white lilies, the hundred-leaved roses and scarlet poppies showing like gilded officers amidst the rank and file of sober esculents. Behind the house were clustered various offices, then came an orchard where the June apples and the great red cherries were ripening in the hot sunshine, then on the shore of a second and narrower creek rose the quarters for the plantation servants, white and black—a long double row of cabins, dominated by the overseer's house and shaded by ragged yellow pines. Along one shore of this inlet was planted the Indian corn prescribed by law, and from the other gleamed the soft yellow of ripening wheat, but beyond the water and away to the westward stretched acre after acre of tobacco, a sea of vivid green, broken only by an occasional shed or drying house, and merging at last into the darker hue of the forest. Over all the fair scene, the flashing water, the velvet marshes, the smiling fields, the fringe of dark and mysterious woodland, hung a Virginia heaven, a cloudless blue, soft, pure, intense. The air was full of subdued sound—the distant hum of voices from the fields of maize and tobacco, the faint clink of iron from the smithy,

the wash and lap of the water, the drone of bees from the hives beneath the eaves of the house. Great bronze butterflies fluttered in the sunshine, brilliant humming-birds plunged deep into the long trumpet-flowers; from the topmost bough of a locust, heavy with bloom, came the liquid trill of a mock-bird.

It was a fair domain, and a wealthy. The Englishman thought of certain appalling sums lost to Sedley and Roscommon, and there flitted through his brain a swift little calculation as to the number of hogsheads of Orenoko or sweet-scented it would take to wipe off the score. And the girl beside him was beautiful enough to take Whitehall by storm, to be berhymed by Waller, and to give to Lely a subject above all flattery. He set his lips with the air of a man who has made up his mind, and turned to his companion, who was absorbed in watching the white sail grow slowly larger.

"How long, now, cousin?"

"But a few minutes unless the wind should fail."

"And then you will have your treasures. But, madam, when you have assumed all the panoply your sex relies on to increase its charms 'twill be but to 'gild refined gold or paint the lily.' The Aphrodite of this western ocean needs no adornment."

The girl looked at him with laughter in her eyes. "You make me too many pretty speeches, cousin," she said demurely. "We know the value of the fine things you court gallants are perpetually saying."

"Upon my soul, madam, I swear—"

"Do you know the amount of the fine for swearing, Sir Charles? See how large the sail has grown! When the boat rounds the long marsh she will come more quickly. We will soon be able to see my father wave his handkerchief."

The young man bit his lip. "You are pleased to be cruel to-day, madam, but I am your slave and I obey. We will look together for Colonel Verney's handkerchief. How many black slaves does he bring you?"

She laughed. "But half a dozen blacks, but there will be several redemptioners if you prefer to be numbered with them."

"Redemptioners! Ah, yes! the English servants who are sold for their passage money. I thank you, madam, but *my* servitude is for life."

"The men my father will bring may not be the ordinary servants who come here to better their condition. He may have obtained them from a batch of felons from Newgate who have been kept in gaol in Jamestown until word could be got to the planters around. I am sure I wish the ship captains and the traders would stop bringing in the wretches. It is different with the negroes: we can make allowance for the poor silly things that are scarce more than animals, and they grow attached to us and we to them, and the simple indented servants are well enough too. There are among them many honest and intelligent men. But these gaol birds are dreadful. It sickens me to look at them. Thieves and murderers every one!"

"I should not think the colony served by their importation."

"It is not indeed, and we have hopes that it will cease. I beg my father not to buy them, but he says that one man cannot stop an abuse—that as long as his fellow-planters use them he might as well do so too."

Sir Charles Carew delicately smothered a yawn. "The ship that brought me over a fortnight ago," he said lazily, "had a consignment of such rascals. It was amusing to watch their antics, crowded together as they were in the hold. There were two wild Irishmen whom we used to have on deck to dance for us. Gad! what figures they cut! The captain and I had a standing wager of five of the new guineas as to which of the rascals could hold out longest, promising a measure of rum to the victorious votary of Terpsichore. When I had lost a score of guineas I found that the captain was in the habit of priming his man before he came upon deck. Naturally, being filled with Dutch courage, he won."

"Poor Sir Charles! What did you do?"

"Sent the captain a cartel and fought him on his own deck. There was one man in the villainous company whom, I protest, I almost pitied, though of course the rogue had but his deserts."

"What was he?"

"A man of about thirty. A fellow with a handsome face and a lithe well-made figure which he managed with some grace. He had the air of one who had seen better days. I remember, one day when the captain was bestowing upon him some especially choice oaths, seeing him clap his hand to his side as though he expected to touch a rapier hilt. He was cleanly too; kept his rags of clothing as decent as circumstances allowed, and looked less like a wild beast in a

litter of foul straw than did his fellows. But he was an ill-conditioned dog. We had some passages together, he and I. He took it upon himself to defend what he was pleased to call the honor of one of his precious company. It was vastly amusing.... After that I fell into the habit of watching him through the open hatches. A little thing provides entertainment at sea, Mistress Patricia. He would sit or stand for hours looking past me with a perfectly still face. The other wretches were quick to crowd up, whining to me to pitch them half pence or tobacco, but try as I would, I could not get word or look from him. Sink me! if he didn't have the impudence to resent my being there!"

"It was cruel to stare at misery."

"Lard, madam! such vermin are used to being stared at. In London, Newgate and Bridewell are theatres as well as the Cockpit or the King's House, and the world of *mode* flock to the one spectacle as often as to the other. But see! the sloop has passed the marsh and has a clean sweep of water between her and the wharf."

"Yes, she is coming fast now."

"What is coming?" asked a voice from the doorway.

"The Flying Patty, Aunt Lettice," the girl answered over her shoulder. "Get your hood and come with us to the wharf."

Mistress Lettice Verney emerged from the hall, two red spots burning in her withered cheeks, and her tall thin figure quivering with excitement.

"I am all ready, child," she quavered. "But, mark my words, Patricia, there will be something wrong with my paduasoy petticoat, or Charette will not have sent the

proper tale of green stockings or Holland smocks. Did you not hear the screech owl last night?"

"No, Aunt Lettice."

"It remained beneath my window the entire night. I did not sleep a wink. And this morning Chloe upset the salt cellar, and the salt fell towards me." Mistress Lettice rolled her eyes heavenward and sighed lugubriously. Patricia laughed.

"I dreamed of flowers last night, Aunt Lettice; miles and miles of them, waxen and cold and sweet, like those they strew over the dead."

Mistress Lettice groaned. "'Tis a dreadful sign. Captain Norton's wife (she that was Polly Wilson) dreamed of flowers the night before the massacre of 'forty-four. The only thing the poor soul said when the war-whoop wakened them in the dead of the night and the door came crashing in, was, 'I told you so.' They were her last words. Then Martha Westall dreamed of flowers, and two days later her son James stepped on a stingray over at Dale's Gift. And I myself dreamed of roses the week before those horrid Roundhead commissioners with the rebel Claiborne at their head and a whole fleet at their back, compelled us to surrender to their odious Commonwealth."

"At least that evil is past," said the girl with a gay laugh. "And ill fortune will never come to me aboard the Flying Patty, so I shall go down to the wharf to see her in. Darkeih! my scarf!"

A negress appeared in the doorway with a veil of tissue in her hand. Sir Charles took it from her and flung it over

Patricia's golden head, then offered his arm to Mistress Lettice.

The wharf was but a stone's throw from the wooden gates, and they were soon treading the long stretch of gray, weather-beaten boards. Others were before them, for the news that the sloop was coming in had drawn a small crowd to the wharf to welcome the master.

The dozen or so of boatmen, white and black, who had been tinkering about in the various barges, shallops and canoes tied to the mossy piles, left their employments and scrambled up upon the platform, and a trio of youthful darkies, fishing for crabs with a string and a piece of salt pork, allowed their lines to fall slack and their intended victims to walk coolly off with the meat, so intense was their interest in the oncoming sail. A knot of negro women had left the great house kitchen and stood, hands on hips, chatting volubly with a contingent from the quarters, their red and yellow turbans nodding up and down like grotesque Dutch tulips. The company was made up by an overseer with a broadleafed palmetto hat pulled down over his eyes and a clay pipe stuck between his teeth, a pale young man who acted as secretary to the master of the plantation, and by three or four small land-owners and tenants for whom Colonel Verney had graciously undertaken various commissions in Jamestown, and who were on hand to make their acknowledgments to the great man.

They all made deferential way for the two ladies and Sir Charles Carew. Mistress Lettice commenced a condescending conversation with one of the tenants, Darkeih added a white tulip to the red and yellow ones, and



Patricia, followed by Sir Charles, walked to the edge of the wharf, and leaning upon the rude railing looked down the glassy reaches of the water to the approaching boat.

The wind had sunk into a fitful breeze and the white sail moved very slowly. The tide was in, and the water lapped with a cooling sound against the dark green piles. In the distance the blue of the bay melted into the blue of the sky, while the nearer waters mirrored every passing gull, the masts of the fishing boats, the tall marsh grass, the dead twigs marking oyster beds—each object had its double. On a point of marshy ground stood a line of cranes, motionless as soldiers on parade, until, taking fright as the great sail glided past, they whirled off, uttering discordant cries and with their legs sticking out like tail feathers. Slowly, and keeping to the middle of the channel, the boat came on. Upon the long low deck men were preparing to lower the sail, and a portly gentleman standing in the bow was vigorously waving his handkerchief. The sail came down with a rush, the anchor swung overboard, and half a dozen canoes and dugouts shot from under the shadow of the wharf and across the strip of water between it and the sloop. The gentleman with the handkerchief, followed by a man plainly dressed in brown, sprang into the foremost; the others waited for their lading of merchandise.

Before the boat had touched the steps the master of the plantation began to call out greetings to his expectant family.

"Patricia, my darling, are you in health? Charles, I am happy to see you again! Sister Lettice, Mr. Frederick Jones sends you his humble services."

"La, brother! and how is the dear man?" screamed Mistress Lettice.

"As well as 'tis in nature to be, with his heart at Verney Manor and his body at Flowerdieu Hundred."

The boat jarred against the piles and the planter stepped out, grasping Sir Charles's extended hand.

"Again, I am happy to see you, Charles," he cried in a round and jovial voice. "I have been telling my up-river good friends that I have the most topping fellow in all London for my guest, and you will have company enough anon."

Sir Charles smiled and bowed. "I hope, sir, that you were successful in the business that took you to Jamestown?"

"Fairly so, fairly so. Haines here," with a wave of the hand towards the man in brown, "had a lot picked out for me to choose from. I have six negroes and three of those blackguards from Newgate—mighty poor policy to shoulder ourselves with such gaol sweepings. I doubt we'll repent it some day. The blacks come by way of Boston, which means that they will have to be cockered up considerably before they are fit for work. Is that you, Woodson? How have things gone on?"

The overseer took his pipe from between his teeth and made an awkward bow.

"Glad to see your Honor back," he said deferentially. "Everything's all right, sir. The last rain helped the corn amazingly, and the tobacco's prime. The lightning struck a shed, but we got the flames out before they reached the hogsheads. The Nancy got caught in a squall; lost both masts and ran aground on Gull Marsh. The tide will take her off at the full of the moon. Sambo 's been playing 'possum

again. Said he'd cut his foot with his hoe so badly that he couldn't stand upon it. Said I could see that by the blood on the rag that tied it up. I made him take off the rag and wash the foot, and there wa'n't no cut there. The blood was puccoon. If he'd waited a bit he could 'a' had all he wanted to paint with, for I gave him the rope's end, lively, until Mistress Patricia heard him yelling and made me stop."

"All right, Woodson. I reckon the plantation knows by this time that what Mistress Patricia says is law. Here come the boats with the boxes. Tell the men to be careful how they handle them."

After a hearty word or two to tenants and land owners the worthy Colonel joined his daughter and sister; and together with Sir Charles Carew they watched the precious boxes conveyed up the slippery steps, the overseer shouting directions, plentifully sprinkled with selected, unfinable oaths to the panting boatmen. When all were safely piled upon the wharf ready to be wheeled to the great house, the empty boats swung off to make room for others, laden with the colonel's Jamestown purchases.

One by one the articles climbed the stairs, each as it reached the level being claimed by the overseer and told off into a lengthening line. Six were negroes, gaunt and hollow-eyed, but smiling widely. They gazed around them, at the heap of clams and oysters piled upon the wharf, at the marshes, alive with wild fowl, at the distant green of waving corn, the flower-embowered great house, the white quarters from which arose many little spirals of savory smoke, and a bland and childlike content took possession of their souls.

With eager and obsequious "Yes, Mas'rs" they obeyed the overseer's oburgatory indications as to their disposition.

There next arose above the landing the head of a white man—a countenance of sullen ferocity, with a great scar running across it, and framed in elf locks of staring red. The body belonging to this prepossessing face was swollen and unshapely, and its owner moved with a limp and a muttered curse towards the place assigned him. He was followed by a sallow-faced, long-nosed man, with black oily hair and an affected smirk which twitched the corners of his thin lips. Singling out his master's family with a furtive glance from a pair of sinister greenish eyes, he made a low bow and stepped jauntily into line.

The third man rose above the landing. Sir Charles, standing by Patricia, laughed.

"This world is a place of fantastic meetings, cousin," he said, airily. "Now who would suppose that I would ever again see that chipping from a London gaol I told you of—my shipmate of cleanly habit and unsocial nature. Yet there he is."

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# CHAPTER II

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## ITS CARGO

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The afternoon sunshine lay hot upon the house and garden of Verney Manor—the leaves drooped motionless, the glare of the white paths hurt the eye, the flowers seemed all to be red. The odor of rose and honeysuckle was drowned in the heavy cloying sweetness of the pendant masses of locust bloom. Down in the garden the bees droned in the vines, and on the steps the flies buzzed undisturbed about the sleeping hounds. Above the long, deserted wharf and the green velvet of the marshes quivered the heated air, while to look upon the water was like gazing too closely at blue flame. From the tobacco fields floated the notes of a monotonous many-versed chant, and a soft, uninterrupted cooing came from the dove cot. Heat and fragrance and drowsy sound combined to give a pleasant somnolence to the wide sunny scene.

Deep in the cavernous shade of the porch lounged the master of the plantation, his body in one chair, his legs in another, and a silver tankard of sack standing upon a third, over the back of which had been flung his great peruke and his riding coat of green cloth, discarded because of the heat. Thin, blue clouds curled up from his long pipe, and obscured his ruddy countenance.

His shrewd gray eyes under their tufts of grizzled hair were half closed in a lazy contentment, born of the hour, the pipe, and the drink. The world went very well just then in

Colonel Verney's estimation. His crop of the preceding year had been a large and profitable one; this year it bid fair to be still more satisfactory. During the past few months he had acquired a number of servants and slaves, and his head rights would add a goodly number of acres to his already enormous holdings; land, land, always more land! being the ambition and the necessity of the seventeenth century Virginia planter. Trader, planter, magistrate, member of the council of state, soldier, author on occasion, and fine gentleman all rolled into one, after the fashion of the times; Cavalier of the Cavaliers, hand in glove with Governor Berkeley, and possessed of a beautiful daughter, for whose favor one half of the young gentlemen of the counties of York and Gloucester were ready to draw rapier on the other half,—Colonel Verney's world was a fair and stirring one, and gave him plentiful food for meditation on a fine afternoon.

Opposite him sat his kinsman and guest, Sir Charles Carew. He was similarly equipped with pipe and sack, but there the resemblance to his host ended, Sir Charles Carew being a man who made it a point of honor to be clad like the lilies of the field on every possible occasion in life, from the carrying a breach to the ogling a milkmaid. The sultry afternoon had no power to affect the scrupulous elegance of his attire, or to alter the careful repose of his manner. In his hand he held a volume of "Hudibras," but his thoughts were not upon the book, wandering instead, with those of his kinsman, over the fertile fields of Verney Manor.

"You have a princely estate, sir, in this fair, new world," he said at last, in a sweetly languid voice.

The planter roused himself from considering at what point of his newly acquired land he should begin the attack upon the forest. "It's a fair enough home for a man to end his days in," he said with complacency.

"We of the court have very erroneous ideas as to Virginia. I confess that my expectation of finding a courteous and loving kinsman," a gracious smile and inclination of the head towards the older man, "is the only one in which I have not been disappointed. I thought to see a rude wilderness, and I find, to borrow the language of our Roundhead friends, a very land of Beulah."

"Ay, ay. D' ye remember what old Drayton sings?

'Virginia!

Earth's only paradise!'

And a paradise it is, with mighty few drawbacks, now that the King has come to his own again, if you except these d—d canting Quakers and Anabaptists, and those yelling red devils on the frontier, and the danger of a servant insurrection, and the fact that his Majesty (God bless him!) and the Privy Council fleece us more mercilessly than did old Noll himself. I verily think they believe our tobacco plants made of gold like those they say Pizarro saw in Peru. But 'tis a sweet land! Why, look around you!" he cried, warming to his subject. "The waters swarm with fish, the marshes with wild fowl. In the winter the air rings with the *cohonk! cohonk!* of the wild geese. They darken the air when they come and go. There in the forest stand the deer, waiting for your bullet; badgers and foxes, bears, wolves, and catamounts are more plentiful than are hares in

England. You taste pleasure indeed when you ride full tilt through the frosty moonlight, down the ringing glades of the forest, and hear the hounds in full cry, and see before you, black against the silver snow, a pack of yelling wolves. Then in summer the woods are full of singing birds and of such flowers as you in England only dream of. Strawberries make the ground red, and there are wild melons and grapes and mulberries, and more nuts than squirrels, which is saying much for the nuts. Everything grows here. 'Tis the garden of the world. And what is there fairer than the green of the tobacco and the golden corn tassels? And the noble rivers, whose head waters no man has ever found, hidden by the Lord in the Blue Mountains near to the South Sea! Sir, Virginia is God's country!"

"You in these lowlands have no trouble with the Indians?"

"None to speak of since 'forty-four, when Opechancanough came down upon us. The brush with the Ricahecrians seven years ago was nothing. They are utterly broken, both here and in Accomac. Further up the rivers the devil still holds his own, we hearing doleful tales of the butchery of pioneers with their wives and children; and above the falls of the far west, in the Monacan country, and towards the Blue Mountains, is his stronghold and capitol; but here in the lowlands all's safe enough. There is no fear of the savages. Would we could say as much of the servants!"

"Why, what do you fear from them?"

"It's hard to say; but an uneasy feeling has prevailed for a year or more. It's this d—d Oliverian element among them. You see, ever since his Majesty's blessed restoration,



gang after gang of rebels have been sent us—Independents, Muggletonians, Fifth Monarchy men, dour Scotch Whigamores—dangerous fanatics all! Many are Naseby or Worcester rogues, Ironsides who worship the memory of that devil's lieutenant, Oliver. All have the gift of the gab. We disperse them as much as possible, not allowing above five or six to any one plantation, we of the Council realizing that they form a dangerous leaven. Should there be trouble, which heaven forbid! they would be the instigators, restless mischief-makers and overturners of the established order of things that they are! Then there are their fellow criminals, the highwaymen, forgers, cutpurses and bullies of whom we relieve his Majesty's government. They are few in number, but each is a very plague spot, infecting honest men. The slaves, always excepting the Portuguese and Spanish mulattoes from the Indies, who are devils incarnate, have not brain enough to conspire. But in the actual event of a rising they would be fiends unchained."

"A pleasant state of affairs!"

"Oh, it is not so serious! We who govern the Colony have to take all possibilities, however unpleasant, into consideration. I myself do not think the danger imminent, and many in the Council and among the Burgesses, and well-nigh all outside will not allow that there is danger at all. We passed more stringent servant laws last year, and we depend upon them, and upon the great body of indented servants, who are, for the most part, honest and amenable and know upon which side their bread is buttered, to repress the unruly element."

"What will you do with the convicts you brought with you this morning?"

"Use them in the tobacco fields just now when all hands are needed to weed and sucker the plants, and afterwards put them to hewing down the forest. I told Woodson to bring them around to me this afternoon when they had been decently clothed. I always give the scoundrels a piece of my mind to begin with. It saves trouble."

"Do they give you much trouble?"

"Not on this plantation. Woodson and Haines are excellent overseers."

The planter refilled his pipe, struck a light with his flint and steel, and leaning back amidst the fragrant clouds, allowed his eyelids to droop and his mind to wander over a pleasant sunshiny tract of nothing in particular.

Sir Charles tasted his sack, adjusted his ruffles, and resumed his reading. But even the delectable adventures of the Presbyterian knight, over whom all London was laughing, palled on such an afternoon, and the young gentleman, after listlessly turning a page or two, laid the book across his knee, and with closed eyes commenced the construction of an air castle of his own.

He was roused by the sound of approaching footsteps upon the shell path leading to the back of the house, and by the harsh voice of the overseer.

"Here come your hopeful purchases, sir," he said lazily.

The overseer turned the corner of the house and came forward with the three convicts at his heels. He doffed his hat to the two gentlemen, then turned to his charges. "Fall into line, you dogs, and salute his Honor!"

The first man, he of the long nose and the twitching lip, smiled sweetly, and bent so low that his fell of greasy hair well-nigh swept the steps; the second, with a brow like a thunder cloud, gave a vicious nod; the third, with as impassive a countenance as Sir Charles's own, bowed gravely, and stood with folded arms and a quietly attentive mien.

The planter gathered himself up from his chair and came forward to the top of the steps, his tall, corpulent figure towering above the men below much as his fortunes towered above theirs.

"Now, men," he said, speaking sternly and with slow emphasis. "I have just one word to say to you. Listen well to it. I am your master; you are my servants. I reckon myself a good master, it not being my way to treat those belonging to me, whether white or black, like dumb beasts. Give me obedience and the faithful work of your hands, and you shall find me kind. But if you are stubborn or rebellious, by the Lord, you will rue the day you left Newgate! Whipping-post and branding-irons are at hand, and death is something closer to a felon in Virginia than in England. Be careful! Now, Woodson, what have you put these men to?"

"They'll go into the three-mile field to-morrow morning, your honor, unless you wish other disposition made of them."

"No, that will do. Take them away."

The overseer faced about and was marching off with the recruits for the three-mile field when his master's voice arrested him.

"Take those two in front on with you, Woodson, and send me back the brown-haired one."

The "brown-haired one" turned as his companions disappeared around a hedge of privet and came slowly back to the steps.

"You wished to speak to me, sir?" he said quietly.

"Yes. You are the man who was tolerably helpful in the squall last night?"

"I was so fortunate as to be of some small service, sir."

"You understand the handling of a boat?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hum. I will tell Woodson to try you with a sloop when the press of work in the fields is past. What is your name?"

"Godfrey Landless."

"Chevalier d'Industrie and frequenter of the Newgate Ordinary," put in Sir Charles lazily. "Of the Roundhead persuasion too, if I mistake not,—from robbery in the large, descended to thievery in the small; from the murder of a King to knives and a black alley mouth. Commend me to these grave rogues for real knaves! Pray inform us to what little mishap we owe the honor of your company. Did you mercifully incline to relieve weary travelers over Hounslow Heath by disburdening them of their heavy purses? Or did you mistake your own handwriting for that of some one else? Or did you woo a mercer's wife a thought too roughly? Or perhaps—"

The man shot a fiery upward glance at the slim, elegant figure and mocking lips of his tormentor, but kept silence. Colonel Verney, who had returned to his pipe, interposed. "What is all this, Charles? What are you saying to the man?"

"Oh, nothing, sir! This gentleman and I were shipmates, and I did but ask after his health since the voyage."

"Sir Charles Carew is very good," the man said proudly. "I assure him that the object of his solicitude is well, and only desires an opportunity to repay, with interest, those little attentions shown him by his courteous fellow voyager."

The planter looked puzzled; Sir Charles laughed.

"Our liking is mutual, I see," he said coolly. "I—but what is this, Colonel Verney! Venus descending from Olympus?"

Out of the doorway fluttered a brilliant vision, all blue and white like the great butterflies hovering over the clove pinks. Behind it appeared the faded countenance of Mrs. Lettice, and a group of turbaned heads peered, grinning, from out the cool darkness of the hall.

"Papa!" cried the vision. "I want to show you my new dress! Cousin Charles, you are to tell me if it is all as it should be!"

Sir Charles bowed, with his hand upon his heart. "Alas, madam! I could as soon play critic to the choir of angels. My eyes are dazzled."

"Stand out, child," said her father gazing at her with eyes of love and pride, "and let us see your finery. D' ye know what the extravagant minx has upon her back, Charles? Just five hogsheads of prime tobacco!"

Mistress Lettice struck in: "Well, I'm sure, brother, 'tis much the prettiest use to put tobacco to, to turn it into lace and brocade and jewels,—much better, say I, than to be forever using it to accumulate filthy slaves."

Patricia floated to the centre of the porch and stood sunning herself in a stray shaft of light, like a very bird of

paradise. The "tempestuous petticoat," sky-blue and laced with silver, swelled proudly outwards, the gleaming satin bodice slipped low over the snowy shoulders and the heaving bosom, and the sleeves, trimmed with magnificent lace and looped with pearls, showed the rounded arms to perfection. Around the slender throat was wound a double row of pearls, and the golden ringlets were partially confined by a snood of blue velvet. She unfurled a wonderful fan, and lifted her skirts to show the tiny white and silver shoes and the silken silver-clocked ankles. Her eyes shone like stars, faint wild roses bloomed in her cheeks, charming half smiles chased each other across her dainty mouth. Such a picture of radiant youth and loveliness did she present that the Englishman's pulses quickened, and he swore under his breath. "Surely," he muttered, "this is the most beautiful woman in the world, and my lucky stars have sent me to this No Man's Land to win her."

"How do you like me?" she cried gayly. "Is 't not worth the five hogsheads?"

Her father drew her to him and kissed the smooth forehead.

"You look just as your mother did, child, the day that we were betrothed. I could not give you higher praise than that, sweetheart."

"And does it really lack nothing, cousin?" she cried anxiously. "Is it in truth such a dress as they wear at Court?"

"Not at Whitehall, madam, nor at Brussels, nor even at St. Germain have I seen anything more point device than the dress,—nor as beautiful as the wearer," he added in a lower voice and with a killing look.