

Annapolis and Annapolitans

BY HARRISON RHODES

THE objection to having a past is, with towns as with ladies, that it sometimes involves having no present. In ancient towns which it pleases susceptible writers to describe as fragrant with memories, the quaint inhabitants, sickening of picturesqueness, are generally to be found reviling their fate and longing for the vulgarity and newness of some nearby factory city. Indeed, every sentimental and philosophic tourist must have had moments when he was surfeited with the melancholy of crumbling towns asleep in the sun along the disused highways of old kings, and thought how cheerful it would be to chance on some little capital which had not decayed, but still sat trim and gay upon its ancient site, and gave the visitor a sense of the continuity of its history. For such moods there is Annapolis.

The Annapolitan Golden Age preceded the Revolution, and doubtless in the early days of the nineteenth century, when Baltimore successfully seized the commercial supremacy of Maryland, decline and even decay threatened Annapolis. But the Naval Academy descended like a god from the governmental machine at Washington and stayed the process. The presence of our great school for sailors has insured a constant streaming to and fro of a pleasant, gay, much-traveled naval society. Annapolis has never become just a seepy, forgotten, country town. What has happened to it is unique. It has had no booms and industrial growth. No suburban vulgarity mars its distinction and no factory chimneys stain its soft sky. It is still just a little city clustering round the little hill on which the State House stands, but it is still a gentle-



THE STATE HOUSE COMES TO BE YOUR
FAVORITE LANDMARK

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THE TOWN WAS PLANNED FROM A DESIGN OF SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN

man's town, a suitable residence for gentlemen and their families. It is true that the Assembly Rooms in Duke of Gloucester Street are no longer used for the Annapolis dances, and that the movies have a vogue perhaps unsuitable in the town which had the first theater in America. If Annapolis had its Ruskin, such things would evoke shrieks of protest. The present chronicler, perhaps a

tame soul, can only rejoice that some decent prosperity has clung there, that ladies from the beautiful old red-brick Georgian houses can go to the little market by the waterside and bring home a full basket. Annapolis has changed with the times, but only in a seemly and dignified way.

There is, of course, no modern metropolitan turmoil. Not a year ago one of

the Sisters of Notre Dame repeated what she evidently thought a rather outrageous witticism of one of the Redemptorist Fathers, to the effect that you could hear the grass grow in the Annapolis streets. That Father was probably from New York. At any rate, he went too far, for though a richness of *patine* has come with the years, a softening of outline and a deepening of color, yet the town is swept and dusted, the excellent hotel has that so desirable hot and cold well plumbed into it, and in the sumptuous old mansions they still give occasional dinner-parties—if the hour is now eight instead of three it is humbly submitted that this is only a change for the better. On second thoughts, even the modern picture might almost persuade a Ruskin, provided he was blindfolded when he was taken inside the gates of that architectural monstrosity, the Naval Academy, and only allowed to wander at will about Annapolis itself. The town is indeed a prize for the American tourist touring in his own land, especially if he has learned to love the old American flavor of our old American towns.

The American flavor of Annapolis is a phrase which perhaps calls for immediate explanation. For the flavor of the place is still amazingly English. The street names, Duke of Gloucester, Prince George, Fleet Street, Conduit, King George, Han-

over, Cornhill (which is Cornhill Street as it never was in London), and Shipwright Street all smack of London. They are intimately and sometimes pathetically reminiscent of the English queen for whom the town was named. Prince George Street is for her husband, and Duke of Gloucester for her little son, the only one of her seventeen children who survived babyhood, survived only till he was eleven. Now that the Revolution is so far away and England and America are again allies, there is something very pleasant in these old names which Annapolis never changed. Nowhere in America does one get a stronger sense of the English origin of us, of a family connection which somehow survived the quarrel and has now come right again. Some day Annapolis would be the suit-



THE CHASE HOUSE, PERHAPS THE MOST MAGNIFICENT OF ANNAPOLIS MANSIONS

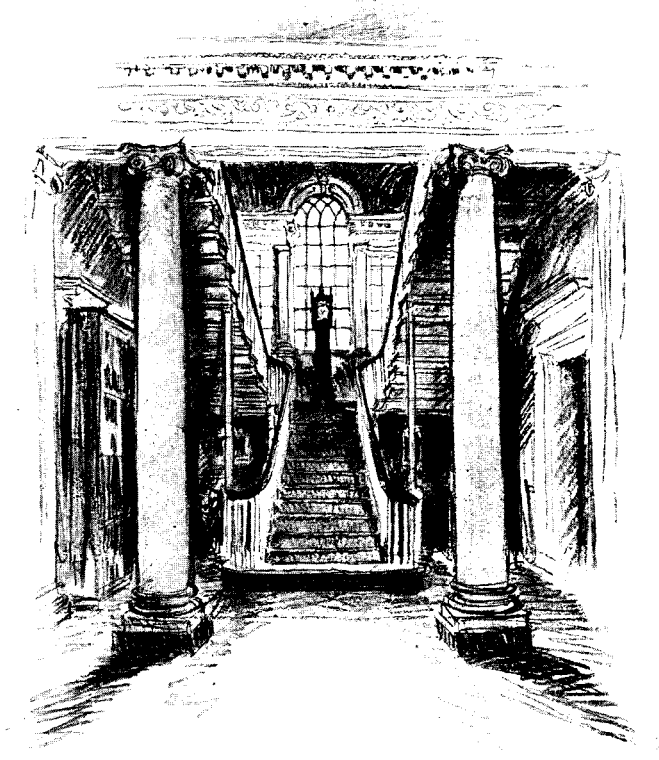
able site for some friendly small celebration of the renewed Anglo-American tie, the more so as near by stands the statue of Baron de Kalb, a German who had lived in France and loved her and came across to America to die here in our first fight for liberty.

Annapolis might almost be an English county town, if it were not for the half-tropical heat of some of its summer days, for the presence of a large soft-spoken, easy-going black population, and for the nearness of the great bay of Ches-

crabs, that England most fades away. And yet what is left is full of memories of the English colony, planted in a new landscape and by new waters, and in spite of this keeping in America something of old England, her traditions, her merriness and her love of good cheer.

The town can be seen in an agreeable saunter. And such is the method often pursued by the day's trippers who come on the trolley lines from Washington and Baltimore or on the historic *Emma Giles*, which, since almost legendary days, has

three times a week paddled her slow, majestic way from the Patapsco to the Severn and on beyond Annapolis to the West River. Annapolis is still somewhat shy and coquettish in her welcome to strangers. There are, it is true, two railroad offices in the little street near the Naval Academy, presumably put there because they look well, for there are no railroads wandering so far afield and the trolleys and the spacious but unreliable *Emma* are literally the only public conveyances by which Maryland's capital may be approached. Annapolis, however neat and trim it may be, is still agreeably remote and comparatively unknown to the Great American Public.



THE STAIRCASE IN THE CHASE HOUSE IS ONE OF THE GORGEOUS BITS OF AMERICAN DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

apeake. It is perhaps in the confusion of Market Space at the edge of the little harbor, some summer Saturday morning, or some hot moonlit August Saturday night, when there is a great deal of chatter and a wealth of color in female attire, and a profusion of soft-shell

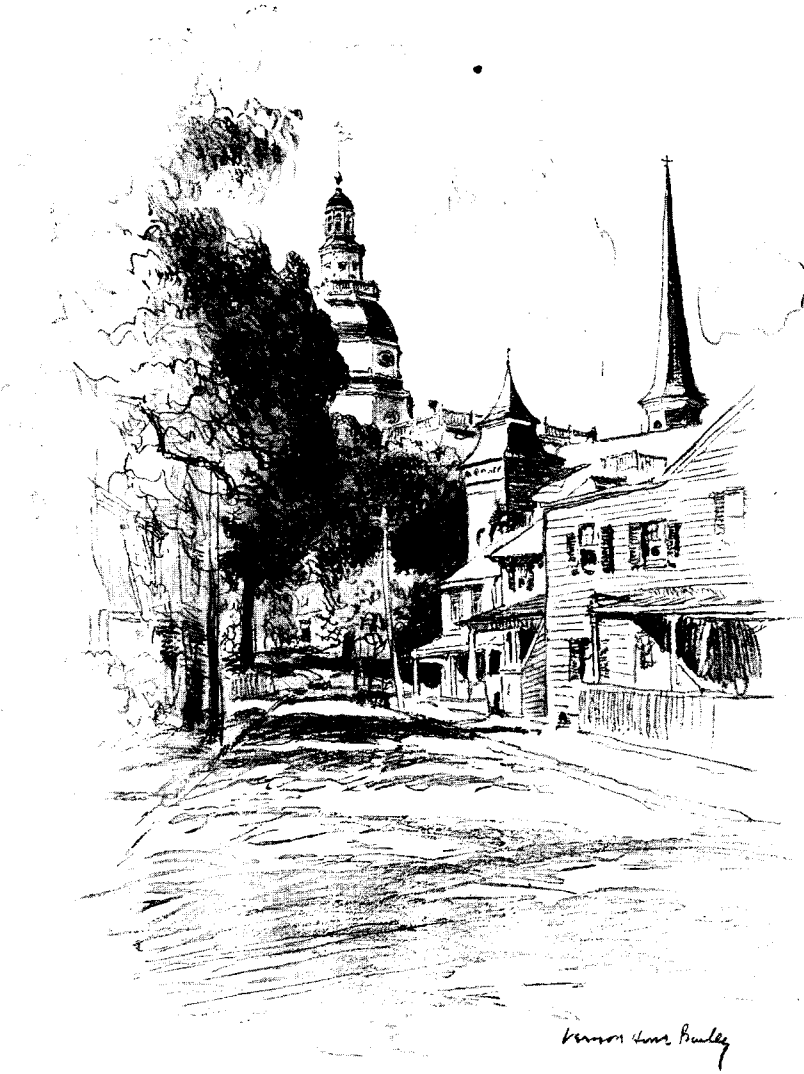
In the days when they let you climb the State House tower no visitor needed a map; from that eminence the little city lay spread out admirably for his view. But, even so, the map of Annapolis, nicely drawn, makes a pretty possession. The town was planned, so it is



THE HOUSE OF CHARLES CARROLLTON WITH ITS QUAIN MONASTERY GARDEN SLOPING TO THE SPA

said, from a design of Sir Christopher Wren for the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire of 1662; with streets radiating from State House Circle in a fashion which was later adopted on a more magnificent scale for the nation's capital. Indeed, the legend is that Mr. Washington, who, like all Virginian gentlemen of the eighteenth century, knew the pretty, pleasure-loving Maryland town well, himself suggested that the

city named for him should be, if one may put it that way, "a greater Annapolis." The part of the town between the State House and the harbor is like a spider's web, with queer cross-cuts between the radiating streets by narrow alleys and flights of steps known only to the adept native Annapolitan, which give the oddest and most picturesque views of the pretty white dome at the center. Even State House Circle, which



THE HAZE OF THE GOLDEN AGE STILL LINGERS OVER ANNAPOLIS

runs right round the Capitol, might be confusing—there is an agreeable local legend of the one tavern situated there, where slightly befuddled strangers sometimes stopped as many as a dozen times to ask their way, and then trotted round the circle and came in for a hot flip or a glass of rum and to ask their way again, gaining in time a certain taste for the procedure.

The State House is a quaint and admirable red-and-white Colonial build-

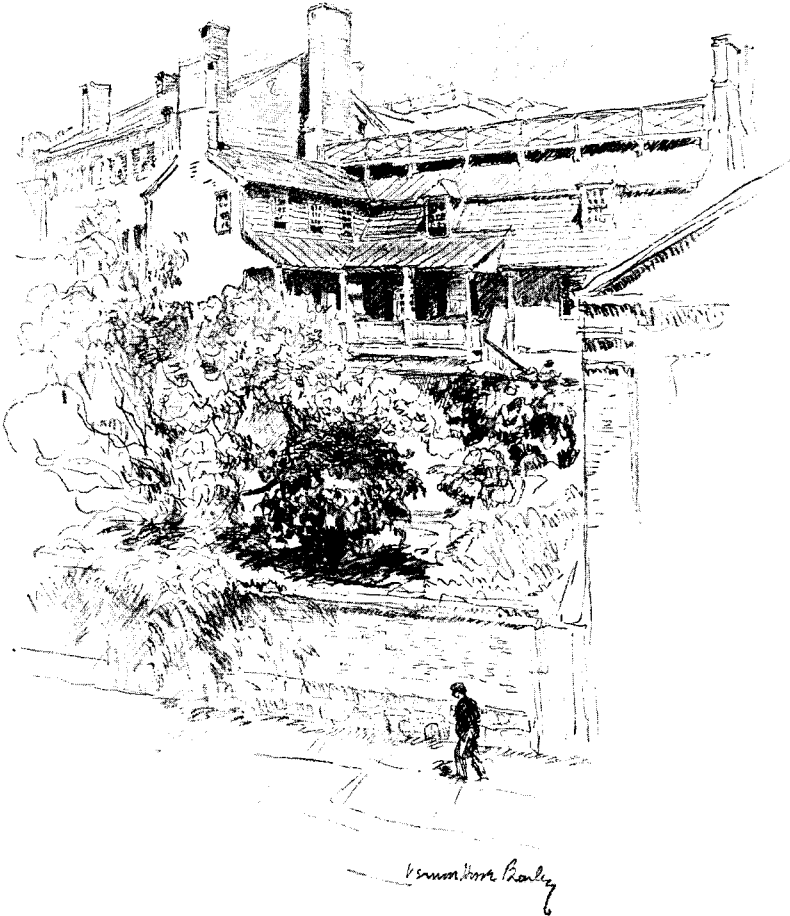
ing, the marble halls of which still echo to the words of General Washington surrendering his commission to the Senate of the United States then in session there. (Later, as you stroll through the town, you may, if you like, visit the site of Caton's barber shop, where an ancient colored man shaved the General that very morning.) There are historical collections in the rooms, but the rooms themselves and the views from their windows are the chief attraction. There,

too, was the thrill you received when you were told that the ascent to the cupola was forbidden, "on account of German spies," whose dark projects could be no further explained.

If you linger in Annapolis you will find it pleasant often to pass the State House, sometimes to go into it, other times only to sit in the sun in front of it and meditate upon what good luck a State House has which is placed upon such a little green hill, down the smooth turf slopes of which it would be so delightful for a child to roll. If you care to be critical, you may say that the dome is too big for the building and you may

wonder idly why it has a look more of Holland than of England. But it comes to be your favorite landmark. You turn for glimpses of it from every corner of the town, and from the waters and the green country near by you welcome the pretty sight of it.

Aside from the State House, the old houses are the chief historic attractions of Annapolis. There are perhaps a dozen notable residences, and, all in all, they are perhaps the most beautiful red-brick Georgian houses in the country. Few of them are exactly on what you would call a town-house model. Old Annapolis was so planned that most gentlemen's resi-



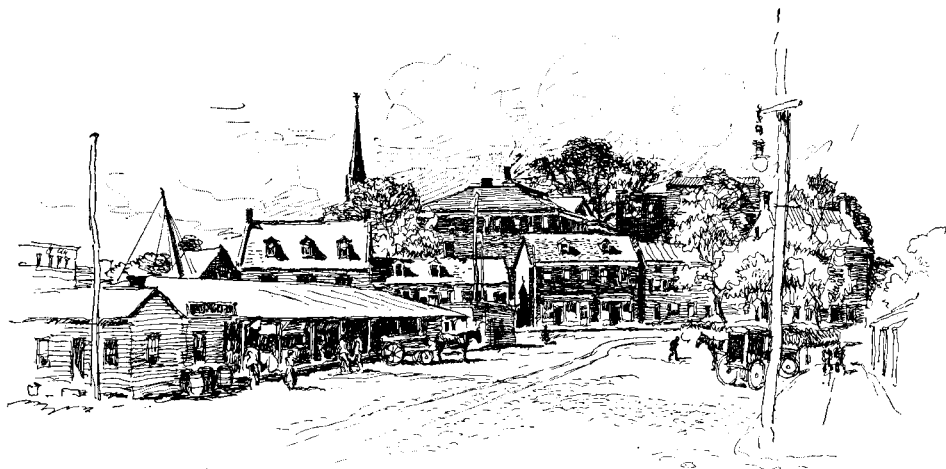
IT SEEMS AS IF YOU COULD WALK STRAIGHT INTO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY



THE FLAVOR OF THE PLACE IS STILL AMAZINGLY ENGLISH

dences sat in gardens that were terraced down to the water's edge. It was thus possible to build houses with flanking pavilions or wings, with the most felicitous results. The proportions of the Annapolis houses are so good, the red brick, mostly imported from England, so mellow in tone, the carved decorations of doors and windows are of such a delicate, distinguished, and restrained beauty, that you can make no better architectural pilgrimage in America than to the little town which holds them.

The interiors are excellent, too, though it is not always possible to visit them. Some of the descendants of the old Annapolitans have become embittered by would-be visitors, and will even sit in an upper window, smiling sourly and mockingly upon the stranger who in vain rings their front-door bell. But there are other houses where, if the proper credentials and letters of introduction have preceded you, you may be admitted to drink a dish of tea in a drawing-room which has been continuously



THE MARKET SPACE AT THE EDGE OF THE LITTLE HARBOR

in the service of the ladies of the same family since the middle of the eighteenth century. It is for many Americans an almost incredible American experience, and the fragrant, serene loveliness of such an old house is something which no reconstructed interior with antique furniture from the dealers can ever reproduce. Annapolis was rich during that Golden Age before the Revolution, and the best mahogany furniture and the best Lowestoft china and some good paintings—if not quite the best—came over from England for the Annapolis houses. Every one had relatives and friends there—as, for example, Mr. Jennings in Prince George Street, whose father had been a cousin of old Sarah, the great Duchess of Marlborough—and the best that the good taste of London could select was at the disposal of Maryland connoisseurs. In at least one Annapolitan house things stand where they were bought to stand, and they do really seem more intimately in the right place than does the usual loot of Europe which fills our new American palaces. There is a harpsichord in a corner of the parlor, and in the attic still lies the box in which it was shipped from England a century and a half ago. And there seems nothing strange about this. The ladies of that family are good housekeepers and they know such a box will come in handy some time in the next century or two. Such houses are no mere museums.

Flowers from the old beds still fill the same china bowls, and the children of this last generation still probably pick out tunes on the old harpsichord and strike the same wrong notes that they did when it was new so long ago. When the door is ajar upon Duke of Gloucester Street it seems as if you could walk straight into the eighteenth century, as if it lay just at the end of the corridor and in the sunlit garden.

These are the most fragrant and lovely Annapolitan moments, these spent in the houses still in the possession of the great-great-great-grandchildren of the original builders. But there are other old residences in the town which have fallen into very pleasant uses—indeed, none of the great Annapolitan houses has sunk to actual decay. The house of Charles Carroll of Carrollton was for a long time a seminary of the Redemptorist Fathers, and is now used, with its quaint monastery garden sloping to the brink of Spa Creek, as a kind of rest-house for missionaries on holiday from savage foreign lands. There is a trim launch moored at the foot of the garden, and it is pleasant to think of the returned Fathers taking an occasional spin up the stately Severn or down to broader reaches of the Chesapeake itself.

Near by, in Shipwright Street, is another old house with a pretty sunny garden now inhabited by the Sisters of the Order of Notre Dame, who are willing

to take you for a decorous turn through the pleasant rooms and into the tiny chapel. It would do the ladies good who earlier inhabited it to see how clean and polished and sweet everything is now under the Sisters' care. This house, so the guide-books guardedly assert, "may be the original of Carvel Hall" of the famous novel. But Mr. Winston Churchill has shown mercy upon a town he presumably likes by refusing to authenticate any of his "originals." It is true that the hotel, which is in what was the Paca house, has been resolutely renamed Carvel Hall, and people do go along its corridors muttering darkly something about its having been "the home of sweet Dorothy Manners"; but, on the whole, Annapolis has by his wisdom been spared, and you are not pestered with the kind of people who think a town a mere appendix to any novel which may be written about it.

The Chase house, standing near the Naval Academy gate, is perhaps the most magnificent and stately of Annapolis mansions. It rises to three superb stories, built, so the legend goes, for a view; for they say that when the Harwood house, just opposite, was being planned, the Chase of the time paid a large sum that Harwood might keep his new house low and not spoil his neighbor's outlook. Only the other day in New York a piquant story was current of how a rich old gentleman, opposite whose house a new building was being planned, offered to take a lease of its four upper stories for the duration of his life on condition that they were *not* built and so did not cut off his sunlight. But twentieth-century New York lavishness is scarcely an advance on the eighteenth century in Annapolis. And few of the New York palaces have been put to so gracious a use as this old red-brick Maryland residence. It has now for more than twenty years been a home for "aged, infirm, and destitute women," for "decayed gentlewomen," to use the phrase which the judge who built it would have employed. And the delightful thing is that these dear ladies live there with most of the fine old furniture, the delicate, lovely, old china—indeed, with most of the splendid sumptuousness which belongs of right to such a

proud old mansion. There is nothing starved or niggardly about their old age, and you feel merely that they are just kindly consenting to let the sweetness of their presence and the perfume of their old-time memories pervade the house, as does the scent of lavender and of pot-pourri other houses which are not lucky enough to shelter aged and destitute gentlewomen. And the Chase house is superb, its staircase one of the really gorgeous bits of American domestic architecture.

There is here no intention of presenting a catalogue of Annapolis sights. It must be enough to hint that, as you saunter through her quiet streets, you will find old houses and picturesque corners, and that you will lounge with pleasure on the greensward of old St. John's College campus. You will like to see the antiquated, rickety fire-engines of the Waterwitch and other volunteer fire companies which are falling to pieces in the sun behind the Town Hall. You will observe with gratification what was once the Assembly Rooms in Duke of Gloucester Street, and remember that near by was the Play House, the first theater in America. You will inevitably walk a little way into the eighteenth century.

The legends of so many sleepy old towns in America hint at amazing Colonial gaiety that you sometimes grow skeptical, but there is really reason to suppose that Annapolis, in at least the decade which preceded the Revolution, was the most cultivated and most pleasure-loving city of America. It was termed at once the Athens and the Paris of America. In the singularly happy phrase of a local historian, Annapolis was the "rendezvous of a learned and dissipated society," a combination so engaging that it seems at once to set a standard for fashionable folk, in the hope of finding which one would even now travel the world over.

The town was full of British officials, rich Maryland tobacco-planters and merchants, Virginia gentlemen and their families holiday-making, lovely actresses on tour, French hair-dressers, race-track touts, leading jurists and savants. For years, even after the Revolution, the Jockey Club of Annapolis was the most



STATELY MCDOWELL HALL, ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

famous club in America. Mr. George Washington set down in his note-book what he lost at the Annapolis races, and De Tocqueville, in his, called the town the only finished city in America. It had a famous "Tuesday Club" and had (and still has) the oldest fishing club in the country, which disputes with Philadelphia for the honor of having had the famous Fish-house Punch named for it. On one day in its harbor Annapolis saw ships from Barbados, Limington, Demerara, Aux-Cays, Amsterdam, Dublin, St. Croix, Salem, Port au Prince, Charleston, St. Bartholomews, Newport, Norfolk, and New York. Even religion had

a certain satiric sprightliness of tone. The only missionary effort which enlisted the sympathy and the money of the Annapolitans was one "to convert the Quakers of Philadelphia," an attempt worthy a "learned and dissipated society."

The New Theater was opened in 1752 by the "company of comedians from Virginia" with "The Beggars' Opera" and a farce entitled "The Lying Valet," to begin precisely at seven o'clock. The boxes were ten shillings, the pit seven shillings sixpence, and "no persons were to be admitted behind the scenes." The comedians stayed on in the usual reper-

tory of the day, "The Busy Body," "The Beaux' Stratagem," "The Recruiting Officer," "The London Merchant," "Cato," and "Richard III." They went afterward on tour to Upper Marlborough, Piscataway, and Chester Town on the Eastern Shore—barnstorming indeed. During this time there was also exhibited a wax-work of the Queen of Hungary sitting on her throne, and of the duke, her son, and of her courtiers.

That was indeed the Golden Age, a happy, careless, pleasure-loving time. Yet this same gay population took fire when the call of Liberty came. Annapolis had its own Tea Party, and you can still see the "Peggy Stewart House" and the window from which the invalid Mrs. Stewart watched her husband burn his tea-laden ship while the defiant Annapolitan population cheered him from the shore. There were three signers of the Declaration of Independence among those who lived in the splendid red-brick Annapolis mansions. And it must not be forgotten that signing was putting one's fortune to the hazards of war. When Charles Carroll of Carrollton put

his pen to the document a bystander remarked, "There go a few cool millions." Millions meant more then than they do now—but an Annapolis man was a sportsman as well as a gentleman; he could risk his all for patriotism as gallantly as if he were at the Jockey Club during race week. It may be wondered whether the descendants of the Marquis de la Fayette in France realize that after the Revolution the General Assembly, sitting at Annapolis, made him and his heirs male "forever natural-born citizens of Maryland." Do they know that pretty little Annapolis is legally, if they would have it so, still their home? A privilege a Frenchman to-day might proudly wear in his buttonhole, as if it were the Legion of Honor.

The haze of the Golden Age still lingers over Annapolis, like the glow on a landscape of some old painter. But the Golden Age is gone. And it is perhaps for the ordinary passer-by a work wholly of supererogation to attempt any picture of what Annapolitan life now is. Yet it is a tempting project to one who has learned to like to attempt the survey of any social landscape.



HOME OF GOVERNOR WILLIAM PACA, SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE



THE GREENSWARD OF OLD ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE CAMPUS

"Crab Town" is what the modern Annapolitans in easy speech among themselves call their little city, though they do not relish it so much in the mouths of strangers. But the crab, soft or hard shell, and all the varieties of sea food, are justly famous. And, though the supply to-day is greatly depleted, the Chesapeake is still the most lavish of bays, and every port on any of its noble tributary rivers profits by this abundance. The kindly fruits of sea and land always seem excellent and cheap in Maryland, and the capital is somehow faintly aromatic of good living, of hard drinking, too, perhaps, in the days before war-time prohibition came in. And in any case, of Southern hospitality and of a general mellow ease and blandness of life.

Annapolis is a town to which people come back. It is a pleasant backwater to which sometimes those drift who are tired of the storms of the outside world. Good climate, good company, good food, and the opportunity for a contemplative and philosophical old age are the lures. Naval and military people, too, who have through long years seen Annapolis in the golden light of their youth, come back on their retirement and settle in one of the old town houses or one of the old country-seats near by. And parents with girls to be married might do worse by their offspring than to establish the family not too inconveniently remote from the Naval Academy's gates.

The country is never very far away from a little city like Annapolis. Almost every one has some patch of land, big or little, in the Maryland farming regions.

The gayest dogs of the Annapolitan Club may be found talking of the tobacco and potato crops and the state of the tomato-market. They combine agreeably the characteristics of the town and the country gentleman.

The Legislature, of course, fills the town when it is in session with a horde not quite Annapolitan in tone. But the legislators and state officials use the trolleys freely, and many of them fix their residence—or their furnished room—among the more metropolitan advantages of Baltimore. The others congregate in special legislative hotels and boarding-houses. They do not very appreciably affect the tone of the dignified and aristocratic capital.

If, in a way, little has been said about the Naval Academy, it is only because its story has been so often told. Because, too, from the point of view of picturesque and beauty it is one of our national failures. Yet the bright dome that covers the resting-place of John Paul Jones is, with the State House, one of the twin landmarks which you see across country or water as you come near Annapolis. And midshipmen and naval-reserve lads are the pleasantest things to look at in the town's streets, except the pretty girls who have come, too, to look at the boys. The little street through which the inhabitants of the Naval Academy stream forth is an odd little thoroughfare. It contains, besides the preposterous railway offices already mentioned, mostly smart tailors and jewelers. The tailors' windows are gay with all the diverse colors and insignia which the navy permits to fortunate and beautiful youth, and the jew-

elers, branches of the best Philadelphian shops, are presumably there so that *gages d'amour* may be reciprocally given by young men and maidens.

Indeed, love and war take first place in Annapolis to-day, more than ever. And there, more than almost anywhere else, gaiety seems right and sweet. The famous old masquerades have been given up, but there is always a dance Saturday night at the hotel, which is almost the prettiest and most moving sight in the world. During the summer the boys came in spotless linen, like swarms of gallant white butterflies; no one not in white seemed to think of going upon the dancing-floor. And, as if by some kindly magic, it seemed that every little visiting girl was flawless in form and feature, and had on quite the prettiest summer frock there could be in the world. Somewhere

outside, you knew, there was the Severn, and, beyond, the Chesapeake, and still farther, the navy and the dark sea and all the unknown chances of the war. The sense of all this and the tender good-bys that perhaps the morrow would bring hung in the air and beat in the music of the jazz band. It was just because the boys and girls of America were remembering country and duty that they could venture to be gay.

And always in the quiet moonlit evening the State House sat on its green hill and the old red-brick houses watched the night in the quiet, leafy streets. Somewhere, you could imagine, the three "signers" and Mr. Washington might have been sitting around the mahogany-tree to wish America, and especially her sailor lads from Annapolis, God-speed and victory.

Compensation

BY RUTH COMFORT MITCHELL

ALL those dark days in spring when we would sew
 At the Red Cross, all this racked, crawling year,
 She was serene, unclouded: no one near
 Or necessary to her had to go.
 She could roll bandages and never know
 The black imaginings . . . the choking fear. . . .
 I envied her her placid face, her cheer,
 With a hot envy molten in my woe.

But now, with a red world washed white in peace,
 Where life and love flow warmly back to me,
 She knows no leaping rapture, no release,
 No sanctuary in a holy place,
 And I speak softly that she may not see
 My surging pity for her placid face!