

**SCENES AT WASHINGTON;  
A STORY OF THE LAST  
GENERATION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649698196

Scenes at Washington; A Story of the Last Generation by Various

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Cover @ 2017

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**VARIOUS**

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SCENES AT WASHINGTON;

▲  
STORY OF THE LAST GENERATION.

BY

A CITIZEN OF BALTIMORE.

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NEW YORK:  
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS.

1848.

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Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1848, by  
HARPER & BROTHERS,  
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the  
Southern District of New York.

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## SCENE AT WASHINGTON.

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### CHAPTER I.

"FOOL! fool!" she cried, stamping her little foot violently on the floor, as she entered the room, and throwing her beautiful head into its loftiest attitude.

"Who is it, sister, you are honoring with that fine epithet?"

Instead of a reply, the same expressions were repeated, while the face of the speaker betrayed evident marks of agitation from something she had just heard.

"Well, but what is it? Perhaps if you tell me, in giving vent to your ill-humor in words, you will find some relief: anyhow, you will save your foot which, as you are using it, is in some danger of bruises, at least."

"Why, there is Dr. Leslie down stairs, and I have just heard him tell mamma that his nephew Charles is become religious. What a fool! who would have thought it? The last thing I could have supposed would have entered into his thinking head!"

"You take it very much to heart, anyhow, sister; and I see how it is plainly enough. After all your by-play with

Mr. Dickens and others, it is clear that you like Charles better than you do any of them : or, why else do you show this irritation ? However, if you will only keep in your present mood, it will be all the better for me, for you know that Charles promised to wait for me, provided I would be a sober girl, and learn to be a good housekeeper. But compose yourself. Charles's father has died lately, you know, and he is expected from Washington to see his mother : we can then have from himself the reasons for his conduct."

"Reasons, indeed ! He is a fool, I tell you, Agnes, or else he is crazy, and I don't care which,—it is nothing to me."

"As to his being a fool, this is the first time I ever heard you say anything like that of him, nor do I, for myself, feel disposed to think he is crazy."

"He has certainly got an able advocate in you, Agnes, and I advise you to make haste and perfect yourself in housekeeping : you can then remind him of his promise. But seriously, this is a bad affair. Religion, to be sure, is a thing very much to be desired when one is going out of the world ; but while we are in the full possession of its splendors and favors, *c'est une autre chose*. Charles is certainly a great fool to resign all these, and connect himself with a demure sort of folks, who think it a sin to laugh. Besides, I suppose he must bend that tall and elegant figure down to the lowly slouch of humility. It is too ridiculous ! And then, too, he must lose caste, and what a loss to society. Very few men can talk like Charles Leslie. And further, he will never dance again ; but that is of no con-



sequence, for I never liked to see him dance. Then only I could laugh at him ; but as soon as he led his partner to her seat, his high bearing commanded my respect again. Dancing, I see, is suited to boys and girls only. A man that can talk, ought never to dance ; but if he cannot talk at a party or a ball, I give my consent that he make himself less ridiculous by dancing."

" Ah, sister," said Agnes, laughing, " you have made a long speech, and convinced me that this is indeed a sad affair."

" It is nothing to me. The world is made up of all sorts of people : what one society loses, another must gain. I have just begun to look at one side of it, and it is fair and promises much. I leave Mr. Charles Leslie to look at the other."

This conversation passed some time in the year 1807, between two sisters, Clara and Agnes Sydenham.

Mr. Sydenham was one of our old patriots, who warmly espoused the cause of his native country, in her great struggle for Independence. Having borne arms in support of the principles which he clearly saw were his birth-right, he contributed also by his counsels and efforts to form and set in motion the new government of Maryland. After the peace of 1783, he intermarried with Miss Clara Courtenay, a descendant from the gentleman of that name, who came as one of the first settlers in our state, in the train of Lord Baltimore. The ladies of our old families were of a style, and manners, and principles, as unlike as superior to those of the present generation. Modesty, dignity, reserve, were their principal characteristics. When brought into com-

pany, the young aspirant was taught as well the courtesy of her own sex towards the other, as the deference and respect which the other was bound to pay to hers. Even in their amusements, the same modesty and reserve were perceived; for in the grave minuet, the lady was seen moving in the figure slowly, and at a distance from her partner, and when it was over, he led her to her seat by the tips of her fingers. What would women then have thought of the wanton, licentious waltz! Education, in every way, in those days, was to fit young women to make useful mothers; and not by a system, enervating both mind and body, disqualify them utterly for the discharge of those sterner duties which must always follow the mere dreams of our youth. Mrs. Sydenham was eminently a lady of those olden times, many of whom, at the period this narrative begins, were still alive in Maryland, showing to the rising generation of women in the new republic what women had been under the colonial government. The family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Sydenham, Clara and Agnes, and Frederick, a promising lad of fifteen, then at college. The eldest daughter had died two years before.

Clara, just nineteen, was a character of no common order. Without being critically beautiful, her features were strongly attractive, while her manners threw around her a grace which was altogether irresistible by those whom she wished to please. This, however, she was not always disposed to do. Her pride was excessive; but her judgment was excellent, and her sensibility of the acutest kind. Thus constituted by nature, with her education embellished by the accomplishments which were then beginning to be

general in society, and her principles formed by her mother, this interesting girl commenced a life whose trials were to be as severe as they were extended through years.

Agnes was just seventeen : a rose yet in the bud, but giving the fairest promise of expanding into surpassing loveliness : and such, time proved her to be. Gentle and beautiful being, thou wert, indeed, a flower that bloomed and died too soon !

Clara already had many admirers ; but keenly sensitive to whatever was not correct in manners, or striking in intellect, the gay beaux who fluttered around her were oftener the subjects of her ridicule for their deficiencies, than claimants upon her preference, from their admiration. But amongst the many who were in her train, she found Charles Leslie very little disposed to flatter her. Deeply attached to her, and, of course, jealous of all who approached her, he never failed to show off all her admirers little to their advantage, or to censure her own behavior, if it did not exactly meet his fastidious ideas of grace and propriety. The consequence was repeated quarrels, which, though they convinced Clara that Charles felt an interest for her, had not as yet made her aware of the extent of his feelings, nor did he believe that she had any for him, beyond those of respect for his character.

Charles Leslie, also, was a descendant from two of the oldest families that had emigrated to our state. His grandfather, by the maternal line, was an agent for the Lord Proprietary at an early period of the revolution, but had left no sons. - His grandfather, by the paternal line, was a Scotch physician of eminence in his profession, who had