

PART I.

Exile.

IN THE EYES of his community, Charles Carroll of Carrollton was a bastard. He was born on September 19, 1737, to Charles Carroll of Annapolis and Elizabeth Brooke. The elder Carroll was one of the two richest men in Maryland, and a Roman Catholic. Carroll for many years refused to marry Elizabeth Brooke legally. He feared that if he were to die first, Elizabeth would take the Carroll fortune into another man's family. And he wanted to test his son before granting him the inheritance.

Carroll of Carrollton bore the public stigma, and the private wounds, of his parentage throughout his career. A Frenchman who visited Annapolis in 1765 noted that the elder Carroll "has no family, only a b. [bastard] son who he intends to make his sole heir." Fifty years later, a Maryland society matron, Rosalie Stier Calvert, wrote that "Carroll is an illegitimate son."

Carroll was born in his father's imposing house in Annapolis. This tall, plain structure still holds a commanding view of the Spa Creek harbor. From the house, the water looks very close, but from the creek the mansion appears to be set well back, surrounded by a huge expanse of lawn. The Carrolls, clever and ambitious, planned it that way.

At some point, though, the patriarch sent Elizabeth and their son into exile at Doughoregan Manor, near Elk Ridge. This manor now stands in the Baltimore suburbs, not far from Baltimore/Washington International Airport, but then it was remote. Carroll would later remember "those happy days spent at Elk Ridge in her sweet company, our lonely retreat and mutual fondness." Carroll was isolated from other boys of his age and class. A small army of slaves, who no doubt pampered him, were his companions. It is not surprising that the boy grew

inordinately attached to his mother. Elizabeth Brooke's portrait, and her surviving letters, reveal a beautiful, feminine, gentle woman. In her solitude, she doted on her only son.

Carroll of Annapolis was also a loner. According to the French visitor, his contemporaries viewed him as "the most moneyed man in Maryland but at the same time the most avaricious." Carroll's outspoken Catholicism, too, made him disagreeable to the Protestant gentry of Maryland. The elder Carroll was deeply bitter about his family's treatment at the hands of the Protestant majority. Maryland had been founded by a Catholic as a refuge for people of all religions. But in one of the great ironies of American history, militant Protestants, who had come to the colony for asylum, usurped the government and deprived Catholics of their rights.

THE ORIGINS OF THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

The Carrolls were Irish noblemen, descended from the O'Carrolls, chiefs of Ely. In 1552, Teige O'Carroll was named lord baron of Ely by King Edward VI.

They remained faithful to the great tradition of Irish Catholicism. The mind of the Church had always emphasized that the object of politics is the common good. Christianity substituted the *ius naturale*, natural law, for the Imperial Roman, Stoic emphasis on the prerogatives of individuals. The *ius* was an objective, right ordering of society. During the Catholic era, the great monasteries in Great Britain and Ireland supported the poor. The Church also checked the power of the Crown, providing the beginnings of a mixed constitution. It declared that any law which conflicted with the natural law was null and void. "A law has as much force as it has justice," wrote St. Thomas Aquinas. "If, however, in some point it conflicts with the law of nature it will no longer be law but rather a perversion of law."

Toward the end of the Middle Ages, some Catholic thinkers began taking Catholic thought in a more individualistic direction. William of Ockham argued that only the individual has a real existence. His ideas, and those of John Duns Scotus, tended