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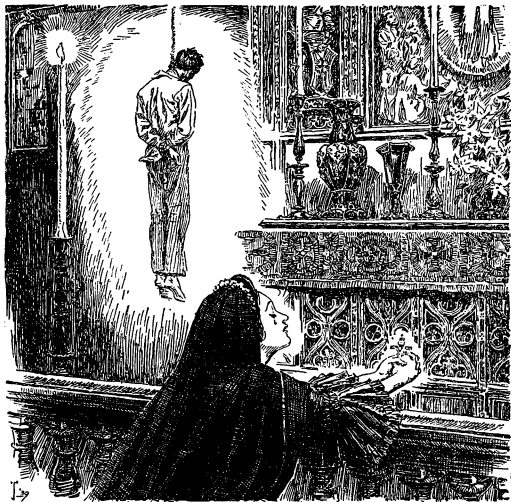
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FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor



WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH



"She spent the night upon her knees before the altar of the little village church."

The Door Without a Key

By SEABURY QUINN

The Chinese magic of Yai Ching ushers us into a romantic weird tale of the American Civil War—a tender and moving story

ATLANTIC CITY, N. J., Sept. 29 (N. P.)—Police here are seeking George K. Ormandie, whose bride of a few hours was found dead today in their suite at the Graynow Hotel, for ques-

tioning. Ormandie had married Miss Griselda Pancoast of Neponsit, N. Y., at St. Anselm's Church, Quogue, N. Y., yesterday morning, and the couple came directly to Atlantic City on their honeymoon.

At noon today, when neither of them appeared and housemaids had been unable to get response to repeated knockings, J. M. Davies, assistant manager, opened the door to the suite with a pass key, and the body of Mrs. Ormandie, dressed in her traveling-costume, and with only hat and gloves removed, was found lying before the sofa in the sitting-room. On the couch, beside her hat and gloves, was a new handbag containing a purse in which was \$500 in bills of various denominations. The couple's luggage had not been unpacked, and Mr. Ormandie was nowhere to be found. Dr. Wm. S. Bite of Good Samaritan Hospital, who responded to the hotel's call for an ambulance, pronounced the woman dead and declared she had been so for approximately 24 hours, which would place the time of her demise a few minutes after she and her husband had registered downstairs. An autopsy to determine the cause of death will be performed later.

Walter Munro, clerk, who was on duty at the desk when the Ormandies registered at the Graynow, asserted the couple seemed to be middle-aged and were obviously just married. "We see so many newlyweds here we learn to recognize them at a glance," he declared. Their luggage consisted of five bags, two a gentleman's and three a lady's, and was apparently brand new. Both were fashionably and expensively dressed.

No employee of the hotel remembers seeing either of them after O. S. Weaver and Ed Simmons, bellboys, escorted them to the suite which Ormandie had engaged by wire a week before.

While foul play is not suspected in connection with the tragedy, the authorities are anxious to find the missing groom for questioning.

George K. Ormandie was understood by relatives of the dead woman to have been a wealthy tobacco grower of St. Mary's City, Md., but official inquiries addressed

to that place reveal that no such person is known in St. Mary's City or vicinity.

—New York Evening Sentinel.

GRISELDA PANCOAST paused wearily in midstep to catch her breath. They were in the midst of a house party, and house parties meant extra work. Not that she minded them, their gayety helped her forget herself, but—they did mean extra work, and she was tired; tired with the exhaustion only a soul-starved sixty-year-old spinster can experience whose youth is a vague, misty memory and to whom old age is more than a mere threat. And yet she welcomed work, arm-cramping and back-stiffening though it was, for only through it could she have a contact with her cousins' guests.

Griselda did not dance. She hadn't waltzed or two-stepped since *Break the News to Mother and Good-bye, Dolly Gray* were reigning favorites. The younger members of the family and their friends fox-trotted and tangoed to the blaring of the radio and gramophone from breakfast to bed-time. Griselda was a stranger to the rules of bridge, both auction and contract, and the older members of the company played for a cent a' point with the avidity of Mississippi River gamblers from dinner-time till midnight.

Griselda would have loved to learn to play. More than once in fancy she had seen herself at the bridge table, cards fanned out before her, jewels flashing on her cream-white, rose-tipped fingers as she murmured languidly, "Eight spades," or "I double," or, as the evening closed, "That makes just fifty-seven dollars that you owe me, dear."

But there was none to teach Griselda how to play, or, if she had been taught, none to play with her. Aside from the fact that her time was taken up with carrying and fetching, darning, mending and attending on her cousins, she could not

afford a cent a point, or half a cent, or anything. Poor relations have no money to indulge in venial or mortal vices, and Griselda was a poor relation, fed and clothed with scraps and oddments from her cousins' table and wardrobes, granted boon of bed and shelter, but paid no wages and allowed no stipend. Except when some guest new to Lake Acres mistook her for a member of the hired staff and handed her a tip for catching up the rent in a torn gown or lending deft assistance at the toilette, she never had as much as ten cents she could call her own.

Like Mohammed's coffin, she was placed midway between the earth and ether. She was "Miss Griselda" to the maids and cook and chauffeur, even to the butler; accordingly she could not eat below-stairs or have social intercourse with the servants. In the reconditioned cast-offs of her relatives she was not presentable, save at the simplest family dinners. As a consequence she ate her meals alone in the bleak room fitted with discarded furniture or, more often, consumed a "snack" in the pantry where, in the isthmian passage between the dining-room and kitchen, she could absorb spiced crumbs of gossip from both poles of society as she munched her sandwich and sipped her glass of milk or cup of tea.

Now, with a tray of empty cocktail glasses in her hand, she paused beside the sun-porch steps to rest a moment. The party was in full swing. Chinese lanterns bobbed and curtsied in the gently rising breeze; from a marquee set out on the lawn the hot, erotic rhythm of a rumba beat upon the sultry air with the repercussive vibrance of a rada drum. White dinner-coated young men guided partners clad in sheerest crêpe or airy marquissette across the polished floor of the pavilion. Each side the green-tiled terrace where she stood, huge urns of molded stone were overflowing with bright blossoms; in a series of

long sweeps and terraces the shaven lawn sloped downward to the narrow border of white sand washed by the rippling waves of Lake Ronkonkoma where power boats lay circling lazily at anchor like a flock of idling swans. Beyond, there showed the glory of the woods, flaunting their draperies to each sighing breath of breeze, and in the distance were the low Long Island hills, mere mounds of shadow shouldering against the dulling luster of the violet evening mist. From the formal garden set behind the loggia clustering roses drenched the air with unutterable sweetness.

How like, yet how unlike Barleywood it was, she thought—Barleywood, near Carthagenia Creek where the broad bottom lands pushed the low, house-dotted hills back from the river's edge and her father's great-grandfather had held court baron and court leet, as was his right prescriptive as the lord of St. Michael's Manor. The power and the glory had departed long since, the golden past reflected faintly, like the faded effigies in old daguerreotypes, but the old house—in alien hands, now—still stood on the hilltop overlooking the Potomac; some vestiges of old mahogany were in the halls; a few old family portraits still hung on the walls. Among them was the picture of Great-Aunt Griselda, her namesake and a great belle in her day, whose unhappy love affair with the Yankee . . . Her reverie was broken by a hail, not loud, but soft and musically modulated, yet imperative as the trumpet call of the Last Day: "Cousin Griselda, come here!"

Cousin Clementine Spottswood held court on the east sun porch. It was a cool and pleasant place, a sanctuary from the young folks' rather rowdy gayety. Old-fashioned hunt patterned with bouquets of roses hung beside the well-screened casements; deep chairs and sofas of gray

willow covered with cool cretonne extended restful invitation; on the mirror-topped low table was a bowl of crushed ice flanked by a carafe of sweetened lime juice, tall, square bottles of dry gin and some siphons of seltzer.

Cousin Clementine looked what she was, a woman in her fifties trying with considerable success to appear in her late thirties. Her face was lightly lined about the eyes, but the artifices of beauticians had uprooted most of nature's milestones. Her blue-black hair was waved to delicate perfection, her lips were bright as a geranium—an attractive woman in a worldly way, scrupulous in each small detail of her appearance. When she spoke her voice was charming, but she was not at all a cozy sort of person. Her eyes were too hard, storktaking and appraising.

For once she and her little coterie of intimates were not absorbed in bridge. Professor Huling, lately back from China and Tibet, was holding forth on Oriental magic, and eight pairs of carefully mascaraed eyes were on him with the fascination women never fail to register when occultism is discussed. Between his long, white, "psychic" fingers Professor Huling drew a sheaf of six slim bamboo wands, each painted black and marked on one side with a latitudinal band of white. "These," he pronounced in his best classroom manner, "are the talismanic wands of the *Yai Ching*, or mystical Five Changes of *Wen Wang*, said by scholars to be the most ancient magical device and formula extant. Their use is very simple—see." He shuffled the light splints between his hands as if they were pung chow counters, and dropped them fanwise on the umber tiles of the porch floor. They fell in something like a military formation, a rank of three at almost even distances apart, two more like file-closers at their rear, and, athwart the two rows one lone stick, six inches front and center, like the leader of the de-

tail. Oddly, two of the little wands dropped on their rounded unmarked sides, four on their flat, lined surfaces.

"And now, observe," Professor Huling continued. "One lays the six wands parallel and brings them close together. Then he sees, formed by the markings on their flat sides interspersed with blanks, one of the sixty-four possible Chinese geometric hexagrams." Drawing the flattened wands together he pointed to the figure they described. "That is the third of the Five Changes," he announced delightedly. "A very fortunate sign. The door it marks should open on a garden filled with joys for its beholder."

"And how, precisely, is it used, Professor?" Cousin Clementine asked. "Is it a form of fortune telling?"

Doctor Huling smiled a patient smile. These women! "Not precisely, Mrs. Spottswood. The Chinese think it magic, and have thought so since the Twelfth Century, B. C. When the symbol has been formed by chance—or by the favor of the gods, as several million people believe—one gazes at it fixedly till its image has been firmly printed on the mind's eye. Then the votary sits or kneels with closed eyes—a blindfold makes it more effective—and imagines himself looking at a door on which the symbol is engraved. To get the best results one makes his mind a perfect blank, excluding every other thought from it, and concentrating only on the door which has no lock or key or latch, and opens only of its own accord."

"Opens, Doctor Huling?"

"Precisely, Mrs. Spottswood." There was just the proper blend of arrogance and deference in his tone. His hearers loved it. "'Opens' is correct. If one concentrates sufficiently, and stares at the door long enough with his mind's eye, the door, *Wen Wang* assures us, will swing inward by itself."

"Indeed? And then what happens?"

There was just the proper blend of incredulity and deference in her voice. The other seven ladies weren't quite sure they liked it. After all, Professor Huling was a very learned man and had spent years in the Far East. If he declared a thing were so . . .

"One just sits still and throws his mental gaze against the door marked with the mystic hexagram. If and when it opens—and it doesn't always do so—one continues kneeling as before, but in imagination one gets up and walks straight through the door. Then"—he paused impressively—"one sees what one may see."

"And what is that, Professor Huling? Something pleasant?"

Doctor Huling raised his shoulders in the slightest intimation of a well-bred shrug. "Not always, Mrs. Spottswood. I remember once in Singapore when we witnessed something quite the opposite."

"Oh, Doctor Huling, do tell us!" Mrs. Smythe-Felton besought. "Was it tragic?"

"Quite," Professor Huling answered dryly. "Three of us were trying it, and one of the party was a young man who had made arrangements to go tiger hunting in Sumatra the next day. Like so many white men in the East he had nothing but contempt for Oriental lore, and when it was proposed we make a few experiments with Yai Ching he scoffed at the idea. Curiously," he smiled grimly, "he was the first and only one to try it that night."

"Oh, and what happened, Professor?" Mrs. Smythe-Felton queried as the others seconded her question with approving nods and bird-like twitters.

"Young Ormsby tossed the wands and laid them side by side to form a hexagram. It was the Fourth Sign, which is usually not a fortunate one for the experimenter. He stared at the symbol until he'd fixed it firmly in his mind, then knelt down on a straw mat and tied a handkerchief around his eyes. Several minutes passed and noth-

ing happened, and finally he said petulantly, 'I'm tired of all this damned nonsense; pour me a drink, somebody,' and was just about to rip the blindfold off and rise when he dropped back to the mat with something like a gasp. 'The door's there!' he exclaimed. 'I can see it. Lacquered red, with the sign laid on it in gold leaf. It's opening—I'm going through!' For a few minutes everything was silent; then:

"'I'm in a jungle,' he called to us, speaking as if he were a long way off. 'It's a Sumatran jungle; I can hear the screeching of the parakeets, and—I'm where I'll be a week from now! Will I bag a tiger? I demand to see the future; I demand to know what's going to happen to me one week from this minute!'

"We watched him for perhaps five minutes; then my other friend called softly, 'What's happening?'

"'Nothing,' Ormsby replied. 'Everything's gone black as pitch. I can't see a thing; it's darker than a tomb.'

"'Better chop the time-span down a little, then, son,' the other man advised. 'Maybe the Yai Ching can't look that far into the future.'

"Ormsby nodded. 'I demand to see myself five days from now,' he called, as if he gave an order to a servant. Then, as nothing seemed to happen, 'Four days—three—two days—tomorrow—six hours—oh, God, not that; not that!' he screamed. 'They're putting me into a coffin—they're fastening down the lid—'

"He jerked the blindfold off his face and glared at us with eyes gone dead and glassy as those of a stale fish. Next moment he fell sidewise to the floor, dead from a heart attack."

"**H**OW dreadful!" Cousin Clementine controlled a shudder. Professor Huling had ability to dramatize his anecdotes, and had spared no histrionics in relating the tragedy. "Does the—the Yai

Ching only show the future?" she added as the silence fell and lengthened.

"Oh, no. Sometimes the seer sees the past; sometimes he has a flight of pure fantasy. It all depends."

"On what does it depend, Professor?" ventured Mrs. Smythe-Felton.

"Oh"—Doctor Huling spread his hands and raised his brows in a serio-comic grimace—"that's hard to say. The seer's experience and background, possibly. Our psychologists will tell you that it's nothing more in principle than the old crystal gazing-sphere, something on which we can concentrate our senses—dull our conscious minds and release our subconscious. Four hundred million Chinese, many of them graduates of our best universities, think that it's real magic, a manifestation of the will of the immortal gods."

"What do you say it is, Professor?"

"I wouldn't know." His face was mask-like. "Wouldn't one of you like to—er—see what lies behind the door without a key?"

"Mercy, no!" Thus Mrs. Smythe-Felton. "I shouldn't care to look down in my own casquet—don't some of you girls want to try?" She swept the circle with defiantly bright eyes.

No one took the challenge up, and Professor Huling stroked his small mustache. "Perhaps you've made a wise decision, after all, ladies," he murmured.

"It's rather dangerous to pry into the future, or the past, for that matter. Besides"—he cast a mildly caustic glance at them—"I scarcely think you're ideal subjects for experiment."

"You mean we lack imagination, or the power to concentrate?" Cousin Clementine's voice was faintly touched with frost.

"Oh, no; by no means, quite the contrary," he smiled. "The ideal guinea-pig for these experiments is a person just a step or two above the high-grade moron; imaginative, and if possible a little super-

stitious, but rather tractable and vulnerable to suggestion. You ladies are a trifle too well-balanced, too sophisticated, too hard-boiled, if you'll forgive the vulgarism—" He waved a hand expressively and let the gesture finish for him.

"Oh, dear, it would be interesting if someone — to see what happened," lamented Mrs. Smythe-Felton, "but as Professor Huling says . . . well, if one's not the type one's simply not the type."

A flash of fluttering drapery highlighted the night outside the sun porch, and Cousin Clementine smiled briefly, not entirely pleasantly, but with satisfaction.

"I think I can provide the 'guinea-pig' for your experiment, Doctor Huling," she announced; then, raising her voice, "Cousin Griselda, come here!" It was quite in character for her to omit "please" from the summons. Griselda's bounden duty was to come when called, and whether it pleased or inconvenienced her was of no moment.

IN HER season-before-last's dinner dress, pieced out with a hip-yoke to give it necessary length, ill-fitting shoes with slightly run-down heels and gray-streaked hair whose curl was patently put in with papers, Griselda was a bitter contrast to the modishly costumed and coiffed ladies who regarded her with something like the interest which a biochemist might evince in a new rabbit or white rat come to his laboratory.

"Doctor Huling, this is my husband's cousin, Miss Griselda Pancoast," Mrs. Spottswood semi-introduced.

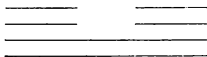
"Cousin Griselda, Doctor Huling needs your help in an experiment." With a nod that said, "Tell her what to do; she'll do it, or she'll hear from me," she turned to the Professor.

Urbanely Doctor Huling showed the wands to Griselda, told her how to fix the hexagram and door in her mind's eye and

prepare to walk through if the door should open.

"Think of a red door, Cousin Griselda, a door of Chinese red with a gold figure drawn on it," Cousin Clementine directed.

"Not necessarily," Doctor Huling countered. "Any sort of door will do. Your bedroom door, the garage door, or just a garden gate, if you prefer. Only, be sure to think of it as having this sign on it——" He threw the wands upon the floor and gathered them together, so that they lay parallel. His small intelligent eyes narrowed at the figure made by the white markings on the sticks. It consisted of six lines, arranged thus:



"H'm," he frowned a little. "The Fourth Sign, or Li Chi. Perhaps we'd better make another cast. The Book of Rites is not especially propitious——"

"Oh," Cousin Clementine broke in, "let's try the Fourth Sign, by all means, Professor. It's all in fun, anyway."

He shot a sidelong look at her. "You insist?"

"Why not? What possible harm——"

Doctor Huling turned to Griselda. "I'll make another cast, if you'd prefer," he whispered. "The Fourth Sign's not particularly lucky, especially if you find the door leads to the past——"

Griselda laughed. It was an odd laugh, very low; a little uncertain, just a little frightened, and it seemed to hang in midair. "It doesn't matter, really," she replied, and he noticed for the first time how melodious her voice was. "Cousin Clementine would like to have us use this sign, and I know she wouldn't wish me any harm."

"Not much more than Hitler wishes to

the Jews," he answered mentally; then, aloud: "All right, have you fixed the symbol in your mind?"

"Yes, Doctor Huling."

He drew a black silk handkerchief from the pocket of his linen dinner coat and bound it round her eyes. "Just relax, now," he bade soothingly. "Kneel here and fix your mind upon the door that bears the hexagram. Concentrate upon the door—the door—the door that bears the mystic hexagram," his voice sank to a sort of murmuring singsong, low, insistent, not to be denied.

GRISELDA knelt upon the cretonne sofa cushion, the impenetrable pall of utter darkness that the black hoodwink laid across her eyes, isolating her from all sense of reality. In obedience to Doctor Huling's orders she tried to make her mind a blank, to think of nothing but the cryptic six-lined figure which the markings on the Yai Ching wands had made, but despite her utmost effort other thoughts obtruded.

Thoughts of Barleywood they were, half clouded, half distinct, like memory-faces staring wistfully through the soiled panes of the dim, wiped-over years; not Barleywood as she left it when the pre-war panic of '14 gave the *coup de mort* to tottering family fortunes, sent her father to a suicide's grave and her a suppliant for alms to Northern cousins, but the Barleywood her adolescence knew.

In memory she trotted on her small bay mare along the country roads or galloped on her father's tall gray gelding while the hounds ran in full cry. The hum of fiddles and the "plinky-plank" of banjos sounded in her mind's ear as she remembered dances in the Hall; in fancy she recalled her schoolmates at St. Mary's . . . "all, all are gone, the old familiar faces!"

The talismanic symbol seemed to glow against her eyes like lights that flash across the retina when fingers press against the

lowered lids. Green, lightning-blue, or phosphorescent yellow, it blazed before her bandaged eyes, then grew and swelled and seemed to flare and flicker. At first it shone against a background black and soft as sable velvet, but gradually this changed, seemed to take on shape and definition. There it was, a door—no, not a door, a gate; the gate to a walled garden. And as she looked at it, it swung back of its own accord, hinges whining with a faint, low squeak.

In fancy she rose from her knees and walked toward it. She recognized it. Layer on layer of bitter homesick years could not obliterate it from her memory. The scent of honeysuckle, almost overpowering in its strength and sweetness, swept around her as she laid her hand upon the gate, and as she pushed it farther open a mocking-bird's sweet liquid notes fell on her ear. Home! Home again to Barleywood, with a quarter of a century's nostalgia behind her, and the turf-ringed flagstones of the garden path before.

YET it was not quite the garden of her memory. The phlox and marigold and ragged robin still bloomed beside the path, aromatic sweetbriar and Mary Washingtons still sprawled and clambered on the rustic summer-house, Virginia creeper and English ivy crept across the red brick wall, but the place was fresher, newer, better kept than she remembered it. The turf was closely clipped, no weeds were in the angles of the wall or flower beds; it was Barleywood with a manicure and marcel, or, perhaps, a younger Barleywood.

She glanced down as she stepped and came to a full stop with indrawn breath. The feet on which she walked were smaller, narrower than hers, almost child-like in their tininess, and were shod with dainty heelless slippers of black kid, laced on with narrow cross-straps. Her stockings were of heavy, lustrous white silk. Her gown was

flowered organdy, pale pastel blossoms on a ground of delicate blush pink, and its crenellated border flounced a full six inches from the ground, spreading out all round her like the bottom of a bell, or an inverted lily-cup. Between the dress hem and the little black-kid slippers showed an inch or so of white-silk stocking, but her ankles were encased in pantalets of handkerchief linen edged with a deep border of Val lace.

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Griselda weakly. She raised her dress hem a discreet six inches. Underneath the organdy was a petticoat of sheer, fine lawn, knife-tucked, and each tuck edged with baby lace. Beneath the first petticoat was another, equally light and finely made, and under that another, and another—and another, till at last there came a fifth, of starched fine linen, flounced with six-inch ruffles. Under all was a plain cream-colored underskirt of baby flannel, soft as silk and almost light as gauze.

"Oh, my!" she repeated. Her gaze had fallen on the hand that raised the fragile undergarments. It was small and slender, like her kid-cased foot, and pale as a magnolia blossom. It was not manicured, according to the modern mode, but the nails were neatly trimmed and rounded, and shone with a luster of their own. About her wrist was clasped a bracelet of woven human hair—bright, auburn, and as soft and fine as milkweed-floss—in which was set a gold-framed disk of moss agate. This was not the reddened, work-roughened, ill-kept hand belonging to Griselda Pan-coast; it was a lady's hand, soft and pink-and-white, unused to toil as any lily of the field. "For goodness' sake, who *am* I?" she asked breathlessly, and put a hand against her throat. A narrow band of velvet from which hung a heart-shaped locket met her trembling fingers.

Senses whirling, she looked around her helplessly . . . these fine, soft, long-outmoded garments, this body which obeyed

her will but was not hers . . . what? . . . how? . . .

"Mis' Grisel, oh, Mis' Grisel!" the hail, called in a mellow Negro voice, came to her from the mansion's side door. "Come on ter dinner, honey; yo' pappy's waitin' in de dinin'-room, an' he don' lak ter be kep' waitin' on his vittles!"

Griselda tripped along the flagstone path, her billowing draperies floating cloud-light round her, entered the side door and crossed the wide hall. Candles burned in silver wall-sconces; their orange flames were caught and multiplied and flung back by the shining surfaces of mahogany chests and tables. An aged Negro in a flowered waistcoat, ruffled shirt and swallowtail of black broadcloth with silver buttons waited at the door of the dining-room, bowed to her with deference, as to a queen, and drew a Hepplewhite chair back for her.

At the table's farther end, beyond the silver candlesticks and the flat bouquet of flaming jacquemints, sat a gray-clad gentleman with upward-sweeping white mustachios and a small white imperial. From the five strands of his shoulder knots she knew he was a colonel. From his gray frock coat . . . in a moment she had placed him. Great-Great-Uncle Cicero Pancoast—dead and in his soldier's grave since 1863 when General Lee drove Hooker's forces from the field at Chancellorsville.

Unbidden, words came to her lips. "I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, Papa. I was walking in the garden—" Her sentence ran low, trickled out and died like water in a brook when boys build a mud dam across it. The words were hers, although they came without volition, but the voice—although it issued from her lips she'd never heard it before.

THE Colonel smiled at her, a trifle sadly. "I know, Griselda," he replied, "with Willie and Jerome and Lucius away, there's not much life or gaiety around the old

place these days. But this cannot go on for long, my dear. Pope and Banks were soundly trounced, and Burnside was almost wiped out. The Yankee paltrons can't hold out much longer. They'll sue for peace before Christmas. . . ."

Griselda nodded grave agreement, but her thoughts were racing uncontrolled, and the words that came to her beat on her ears unheeded. In school she'd learned the South was overwhelmed, not defeated, but the fact that it had lost the war remained. The Colonel spoke of Pope and Banks and Burnside; that meant Cedar Mountain, Fredericksburg and Manassas had been fought. Antietam, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg were to come—this old gentleman was marked for death. . . . She stilled her racing, panic-driven thoughts, as the tired old voice went on:

"And then we'll have such times as never were seen hereabouts, my pet. England only waits our victory to renew her trade with us; they're crying for our cotton and tobacco everywhere in Europe. Our country has a rendezvous with destiny; the glories of the past will pale to insignificance—"

He paused, for the black butler set a silver platter mounded with a freight of snapping-hot fried chicken-breasts before him, and for a moment he was engrossed in the rite of serving.

It was a meal the like of which Griselda had envisioned more than once in memory as she served her quarter-century of Purgatory in her cousins' house: the chicken golden as new-minted coin, the gravy pearly-white and rich as clotted cream, spoon bread, beaten biscuits, quince and apple jelly, butter fresh-chilled from the spring house and innocent of artificial coloring, cherry tarts and hot, black, bitter coffee rendered bland by the addition of great drafts of cream and barley sugar. Finally the bottle of Madeira in its wicker cradle, with a small cut-crystal glass half filled be-

fore her, and a silver chalice at the Colonel's hand.

After dinner she sang for him in the drawing-room, accompanying herself on the German-built piano, and songs of unrequited love, tender ballads of sweet passion, and the rollicking, gay *Johnny Sands* and *Bory O'Moore*.

In the privacy of her bedchamber she surveyed herself in the tall pier-glass. Her face was long and oval, lips a little thin and rather sad, eyes large and dark with latent lights of laughter in their somber depths, lustrous brown hair shading almost into black and bursting from the confines of its pins to curl in little tendrils round her ears and down her cheeks. She knew the face that topped the slender throat, the sloping milk-white shoulders. A thousand times she'd seen it looking at her from its gilt frame in the hall. Great-Aunt Griselda gazed back at her from the mirror.

THE restful days were multiplied to lazy weeks. The Colonel rode away to join his regiment and Griselda settled down to the routine of Barleywood. Dim and dimmer grew her other self, the days of unrequited servitude melted into hazy, vague remembrance; often she had difficulty in realizing she had ever been another person than the chatelaine of Barleywood, and before a month had passed she was more than half convinced the other life had been a troubled, disturbed dream, her "knowledge" of the war's outcome and the Reconstruction miseries of the South the figment of a night vision.

But one thought kept obtruding: Always she had heard Great-Aunt Griselda died a broken-hearted, bitter old maid, her whole life blasted by her tragic romance with a Yankee officer. Was this a vision of the future vouchsafed to her in a prophetic dream in which the other incidents were only surplusage? Had she been warned against a heart-entanglement with the

enemy? It seemed absurd. Barleywood lay in a calm spot in the maelstrom of the war. No Union soldiers had set foot within the region, save when they came to grips with the Confederates at Fredericksburg and were driven from the field with dreadful slaughter.

Occasionally rumors of the war came to her. On every front Confederate arms won victory. The Yankees had retired from the field at Chancellorsville, repulsed with heavy losses, but—did she "remember" this, or was it mere coincidence?—Colonel Pancoast had died gallantly as he led the last charge that routed Hooker from the field.

She changed her flowered organdies for black dimities and lawns, closed the grand piano in the drawing-room, and went about the work of organizing Barleywood. By the Colonel's will she was his only heir, and though most of the men of the community were off to war she managed to secure the help of Lawyer Smallweed to prepare new leases for the tenant farmers, find a factor for her crops in Norfolk and arrange the sale of eighty acres of rich bottom land. Mr. Smallweed had assured her that Confederate currency was sure to be redeemed, but, remembering that a pair of boots had cost her thirteen hundred dollars, paper money, she insisted that the purchase price be paid in silver, and in silver it was paid, the bright coins shipped by special wagon-post from the Treasury in Richmond.

Nor was she at a loss to use the silver. When tax assessors laid a heavy impost on her property she bought great sheafs of paper bills with her hard money and paid the levy promptly. She drove shrewd bargains with the local tradesmen, made them weigh and measure everything she bought while she stood watching. When her factor sold a cargo of tobacco to a blockade runner she demanded her share of the purchase price in golden British sover-

eigns. She caught the half-breed overseer, Jephtha, attempting to dispose of slaves' provisions to an army contractor, and with her own hand lashed him till he screamed and wept for mercy. Then she set him laboring with a hoe in the tobacco field and hired a thrifty German tenant farmer, exempt from military duty because he had a withered arm, to supervise the plantation. Barleywood was prospering as it never had when the old, gentle, ineffective Colonel owned it. When the victory was won she would be one of the richest heiresses among the landed gentry of the Potomac.

But now the tidings from the front were disquieting. Confident of victory, General Lee had crossed the Potomac, marched through Maryland and invaded Pennsylvania where the flower of his army met with Meade at Gettysburg and shattered like a wave against a rocky headland. Vicksburg fell, Atlanta had been sacked and burned, the lush valley of the Shenandoah was swept with fire and sword until "a crow which flew across it had to carry its own provender."

Here and there came rumors of invaders' forage parties. Cattle and horses were taken, homes were burned, standing crops destroyed, houses ransacked for their silverware and jewelry. The Negro slaves were terrified. "De Yankees" might come any moment, breathing fire and brimstone fumes, lashing their spiked tails, goring hapless pickaninnies with their sharp brass-pointed horns.

IT TOOK possibly a minute for the sounds to batter through the ramparts of her sleep, but when she opened her eyes she was wide awake. The air that flowed in through the open windows had a pre-dawn chill, the bedside candle flickered in its etched glass shade and cast grotesqueries of goblin shadows on the whitewashed walls.

Griselda sat up listening, every sense

alert. Her soft dark hair was disarranged from sleeping and made a sensuous warm cloud round her face and shoulders. A little moist, the light batiste of her night-robe clung to her lissome figure, followed every curve and each small roundness almost like a second skin. Little flecks of curiosity stirred in her dark eyes.

The noises in the barnyard came again; men's murmured words, a low laugh, now and then a muttered curse; the clink of metal against metal and the clomp of shod hooves on the hard-packed ground as horses stamped. She threw the sheet and blanket back and pattered to the window. In the dull effulgence of a lantern's glow she saw them, men with sabers and revolvers belted to their waists, blue trousers tucked in high-topped boots, blue monkey-jackets piped with yellow. Yankee cavalry, raiders; horse-thieves!

Heedlessly she dashed across the hall and down the rear stairs, flung the back door wide and raced across the kitchen garden to the barnyard.

Arms out, she flung herself before the stable door, a pale white figure, cross-shaped, as if she had been crucified against the weather-silvered boards.

"How dare you?" she demanded hotly. "Leave my land at once, you thieving scoundrels!"

A snicker answered her defiance. "Twig th' shameless Rebel hussy, comin' out in 'er bedgown!" chuckled a trooper as he started toward her, hand outstretched to shove her from his way.

"Halt! Don't touch her, any of you!" the command came with sharp authority, and an officer stepped from the band of shadow circling the disk of lanternlight. By the twin bars on his shoulders she recognized him as a captain.

"I'm sorry, ma'am, to trespass on you this way," he apologized, "but this is war, and orders are to commandeer all livestock for the army——" As he spoke he bent

with stiff precision from the hips and raised a gloved hand to the brim of his slouch hat, holding the salute while he addressed her.

Despite her rage and excitement she found the gesture interesting, arresting. Southern soldiers were just gentlemen in arms, their social intercourse was governed by the dictates of civilian courtesy. This man was different. Something in his bearing and demeanor, the very way he moved and walked and stood, proclaimed him soldier by profession, trained and vowed and dedicated to the cause of Mars as doctors might be bound by oath to Æsculapius or priests be wedded to the Church. He was lithe and lean and handsome with a grace and ease of movement almost feline. His hair was very black and shining, not with bear's grease or pomade, but with a luster of its own, and it was cut so short it almost seemed to bristle on his head. His black mustache was close-cropped—it seemed scarcely more than a third eyebrow—and his beard the smallest she had ever seen on a man's face, like a hairy little beetle that had lighted on his chin and nestled underneath his lower lip. Hard riding and long duty had almost exhausted him, but the weariness that paled his face did not reach to his smiling gray eyes or his pleasant mouth.

Griselda's heart gave a cold, nauseating lurch. This handsome debonair man in the well-cut blue uniform, this Yankee soldier, was he? . . . could this be? . . .

He was still speaking, and she caught his words through the dim fog-whorls of her spinning thoughts: "—unless you are prepared to offer proof of loyalty to the Union."

"Loyalty?" she echoed scornfully, and her voice had the hard raucousness of tearing paper. "My loyalty is to my country, sir. We recognize no alien sovereignty!"

"I feared as much," he answered and she saw the laugh-lights vanish from his eyes.

"I regret, therefore, it is my painful duty to sequester your livestock as contraband of war." He spoke without inflection or emotion, like one who reads a formal document, but as her hot tears started she saw his hard gaze soften as a twinkle of amusement tinged with pity lighted in his eyes.

Now she was crying tears of rage mixed with embarrassment. Realization came to her and drove the hot, shamed blood into her throat and cheeks and brow. She stood before these men, these enemies of her country, these trespassers upon her land, in nothing but her nightgown. For the first time she became aware of the night chill, of the silhouette her body made against the breeze-blown linen of her gown, of her bare feet soiled with dust and dung of the barnyard. With a gesture of instinctive modesty she crossed her arms above her bosom, as if to draw a sheltering cloak about her.

Next instant she was lifted in a pair of blue-sleeved arms and borne across the stable yard, through the kitchen garden and the back door of the mansion.

"I'm sorry that we have to do this, ma'am," the captain apologized as he set her on her feet, "but war is war, and orders have to be obeyed." Then with another salute he left her.

Griselda lay in bed until the setting moon had left the night dim under the high stars, and the silver pallor of the dawn gave way to amethyst and rose lights in the eastern sky. But sleep was not for her. The clatter of accouterments, the muffled voices of the troopers, the pounding of the horses' hooves, the outraged lowing of her cattle driven from their comfortable stalls to slaughter, and the squeals and grunts of mortally offended pigs routed from their sties would have kept her awake even if a more insistent dread had not gnawed at her brain like a maggot. A dozen times she clasped her hands until her fingertips went white and bloodless

and her nails bit in her knuckles as she prayed with fervor bordering on hysteria, "Dear Lord, sweet, pitying Lord, don't—please don't let the Yankee come into my life. But, dear Lord, if it must be that he shall come, grant that he be the man who bore me in his arms tonight!"

THE troop made headquarters at Barleywood. Officers and non-commissioned officers slept in her guest rooms, men made barracks of the largest barn, and from the paddock where they kept their mounts they rode off every day—more often in the night—to raid the barns and stables, chicken-houses and pig-sties of neighboring plantations. Griselda watched the troopers and officers eat up her substance like Pharaoh's locusts, saw her home-brewed beer and home-pressed cider disappear like water in a sandbank down the troopers' thirsty throats and her choicest wines served in the dining-room where Captain Delatour O'Donnell and his two lieutenants ate in feudal grandeur, served by the silent-footed, frightened butler as if they had been gentlemen, not sons of Yankee tradesmen. Her own meals were served to her in the upstairs sitting-room, and when necessity compelled her to descend the stairs she passed the Yankee soldiers and their officers with averted eyes.

Still, woman-like, she saw more with her seemingly studied inattention than a man could see by close inspection. Captain O'Donnell puzzled her. He was in his middle thirties, she surmised, for when she saw him in the daylight little flecks of gray showed in his coal-black hair, and at the corners of his eyes were little nests of wrinkles, reminiscent of long years of gazing into sun and wind. His soldiers stood in awe of him, she knew. So did the boyish subaltern and the older, brown-mustached lieutenant. When one of these gave orders to the troopers obedience was sometimes slow in coming; when the Captain

spoke, the troopers leaped to do his bidding, "as if they had been trained beasts and he their trainer," she thought scornfully. Yet—

He puzzled her. His voice was low and musical when not raised in command, and there was a quality in it, a likeness to her own pronunciation, which sounded strange on Yankee lips. Sometimes he said "you all" for plural "you." Sometimes he swore, and when he did there was a hard, sharp bitterness about the oaths that fairly made her flesh creep.

THEY had been quartered on her for a week when shortly after reveille Captain O'Donnell called the slaves together in the lot between the summer kitchen and the herb garden. Spruce and trim, his troopers ranged in company front behind him; each side and slightly to the rear his lieutenants stood with drawn sabers. The bugler stood at his elbow, and at a nod blew "attention." Then the Captain drew a folded paper from his tunic pocket, shook it out and read in a hard, formal voice: "By the President, a proclamation—On and after January 1, 1863, all persons held as slaves by persons in rebellion against the Government of the United States shall be thenceforth and forever free."

Stolidly, with no more understanding of the words than if they had been Latin, the Negroes listened to the reading. When he finished they looked at him silently, awaiting dismissal. "You know what that means, don't you?" he asked as the silence grew and stretched. "You, there, Abraham"—he nodded to the butler who stood in the front row of the servants—"don't you know what's happened?"

"Cap'n, nawsuh," answered Abraham with an obsequious bow. "Can we all go back to our wuk, now, please, suh?"

"You damned old fool," O'Donnell began, then stopped with a short laugh. "You don't have to go back to your work, any of

you. You're free men and women, now. No one can give you orders which you have to obey unless you feel like it. You can leave this place whenever you may wish, and no one can make you come back."

"May I say something, Captain O'Donnell?" Cool and self-possessed, proudly defiant as Marie Antoinette before the Revolutionary tribunal, Griselda stepped around the left flank of the rank of troopers. He glanced at her. In her plain black frock, without a touch of color, save in ripe lips and flaming cheeks, she seemed positively regal. Her glance fell on—and went directly through—him. As for any awareness she showed of his presence, he might have been a hundred miles away.

"It's irregular, but I see no objection to your speaking, ma'am," he answered with a salute.

"Thank you." Icicles seemed to congeal on her syllables as she turned her back on him and addressed her ex-slaves. "The Captain tells you you are free," she announced. "So you are. No one can order you to work, or even make you stay upon this land, but no one is obliged to feed or clothe or shelter you. If you wish to go you may, but if you go you'll have to go at once. I'll give no food or clothes or shelter to those who do not work for it. And if you leave Barleywood, where will you go, what will you do? No one will hire you as servants or field hands—there are too many men and women out of work already. Those of you who wish to stay may do so, just as always, and they may work for food and lodging. If any of you wishes to leave, let him go quickly, for I'll have no loafers on my land."

"Well said, ma'am," she heard O'Donnell murmur, but she gave no indication that she heard.

Jephtha, the ex-overseer, weary and resentful of the field work she had assigned

him, elected to leave Barleywood; so did half a dozen of the unwed field hands. The other servants, scandalized at the idea of leaving "Mis' Grisel," with or without permission, went about accustomed duties as if no such thing as the Emancipation Proclamation had ever been inscribed in the book of history.

GRISELDA awakened with a start. The noise that broke her sleep had been a tiny one, the very faintest clink of metal striking metal, but low and furtive as it was, it terrified her. She opened her eyes cautiously and looked toward the bureau from which the sound had seemed to emanate. The mirror over it was an oblong of shadow, reflecting the dim shadows of the room. She stared at it, saw the tiny point of flame the bedside candle made against the polished surface, saw—terror touched her soul like a cold flame. Across the darkened oblong of the mirror moved a shape, dim and indistinct, and only slightly darker than the darkness of the room.

Stealthily it moved, and now she heard another gentle clink. A hand was in her jewel box, rifling it of rings and brooches, ear-drops, necklaces.

She was not conscious she had made a sound, but the intruder heard it, and swung around to face her. Now the faint rays of the candle shone full on him, and she felt a sudden tightening in her throat. Her heart began to jerk like something in its death throes and she fought for breath. Picked out by the dim candlelight, hideous with hatred as the carved face of a gargoyle, she saw the saddle-yellow countenance of Jephtha, her ex-overseer. He moved toward her so silently that only the slight creaking of a floor-board marked the pressure of his feet, and she caught the nauseating reek of raw corn whisky. He was drunk; not harmlessly, but crazily, insanely drunk, the last faint vestige of whatever self-control

he had drowned by the fiery, sense-destroying liquor.

A lambent gleam of candle-ray fell on the butcher-knife in his hand, lit the staring, bloodshot eyes, the slaving lips and the pink tongue that flicked across them like a beast's.

"Lay still, Mis' Grisel', honey," he commanded in a whisper. "'Taint no one but pore Jephtha yere. 'Member how yuh flogged him an' sent him labor-in' in de fiel? 'Member how yuh done oppressed him? Jephtha's gonna take some lettle bits o' jew'ry fo' ter pay his way up No'th, but 'fore he goes he's gonna tend ter yuh—yuh jes' lay still and wait fo' him, he ain't a-gonna keep yuh waitin' long—"

Her scream of terror geysered up; a dreadful, bubbling shriek of unadulterated horror. It rose and flickered like a blast of flame, cut through the sultry darkness like a white-hot blade. A hand was on her mouth, rough fingers gripped her throat. She struggled with the frenzied strength of hysteria, wanted to faint, to die, but could not.

Feet padded on the floor, a voice hailed, "What the devil?"

"Cap'n, suh, yuh'd best be 'tendin' ter yo' business; Jephtha don' want fo' ter kill yuh, suh, but—" The sullen, drunken defiance went out of him with a small squeak, like a rat's squeal when the trap snaps on it. She watched in fascination as the saber blade flashed forward, disappeared, sheathed in the overseer's body, then reappeared again, a little globule of bright blood suspended from its point as if a ruby had been set in the white steel.

Swooning, she fell back upon the bed, but consciousness was only half gone. Through lowered lids she noted every line of her rescuer, and a longing to surrender herself to him flooded through her.

He was in his shirt and trousers, sleeves rolled back and neck-band open, and the

corded strength of his muscles was beautiful to look at as a piece of classic statuary. On his forearm was a tattooed device, a wolf's head ermine erased, with a scroll and mantle under it. "His family crest?" she wondered as she let herself sink into blissful, overpowering darkness.

NEXT morning she came down to breakfast. The lieutenants were on duty and the Captain occupied the Colonel's old chair at the dining-table. He rose and bowed as she entered, and she acknowledged the courtesy with a condescending nod. But inwardly she glowed. He was a gentleman, despite his blue uniform.

"I am indebted to you, Captain," she began, then, on a sudden impish impulse of snobbery, "*Je suis votre redevable, Monsieur le Capitaine.*"

Without a second's hesitation, naturally—and in far better French than hers!—he answered simply, "*Il n'y a pas de quoi, Mademoiselle; n'y faites pas attention!*"

"But I do wish to mention it," she answered as Abraham drew out her chair and seated her in her accustomed place. "However much it hurts my pride to be indebted to a Yankee—"

"Who says that I'm a Yankee?" he broke in, laughter struggling with annoyance in his voice.

"Your uniform—"

"Two years ago I wore the red shirt of the Garibaldian *carabinieri*, but I was no Italian; before that I was in the uniform of Napoleon III, Emperor of the French, yet I was no Frenchman."

"What are you, then?" she persisted. "Where were you born?"

"In Baltimore."

"In Baltimore," she echoed, "a Marylander, a native of our Old Line State—and in a Yankee uniform!" But she smiled a small, shy smile as she said it, and the meal proceeded to its close with no more talk of politics.

SHE learned his history by degrees. Son of an Irish emigré, a brilliant advocate and one-time judge, and a French mother, he had finished schooling in America at seventeen and been sent to the Sorbonne to perfect himself in Civil Law before returning to become a student in his father's office. The routine of the classroom wearied him, and he had no respect for Justinian or the Pandects of Imperial Rome.

Every minute he would filch from studying was spent in *salles d'armes*; when an opportunity to study at the Ecole Speciale Militaire came he turned his back upon the law forever, and two years later was commissioned *sous-lieutenant* of cavalry in the army of Napoleon III.

He had not long to wait for his baptism of fire. With his command he went to Sebastopol, helped assault the Malakoff and hold it in the face of fierce counter-attacks.

Three years later, in the Austro-Sardinian War, he rode at Magenta and Solferino, then, disgusted with Napoleon's duplicity, resigned from the French army and enlisted in the forces of Giuseppe Garibaldi, helping to bring Sicily into the new Italian nation.

Then came the news of civil war at home, and, a veteran of three campaigns at twenty-five, he sailed for New York, offered his sword to the Federal Government and was given a commission as a captain of cavalry.

Desdemona never listened with more thoughtful-eyed attention to the story of Othello's voyage and travail than Griselda did as Delatour O'Donnell told her of his life in camps and cities of the Old World. When he was done she knew all he had meant to tell her, and something more: He had wide experience of life and danger; battle, war and sudden death were as familiar to him as the breath he drew, but of women and their subtleties he knew no

more than any school-boy wrestling with the forms of grammar and arithmetic.

THE moon came slowly up above the eastern hills like a great disk of scorched gold. So swollen was it, so heavy, that for a time it seemed unable to clear the horizon. There it gleamed, its lower rim obscured, and the hollyhocks which fringed the bottom of the garden seemed to be drawn upon its face with charcoal. All about them was the warm, sweet scent of roses. Here and there a bird chirped sleepily, crickets shrilled their low, insistent laughter in the tangled grasses. Save for the occasional stamping of the horses in the paddock there was no other sound. They sat in the small summer house, unspoken, silent and content to be together. At length:

"We're leaving for the south tomorrow," Delatour announced. "The orders came today."

"Oh!" her exclamation was a sudden cry of pain. "Must—must you go so soon? I had hoped—"

"So had I—Griselda," he paused a moment as he called her name, the first time he had used it in addressing her; then: "This war can't last forever. When I come back will—I find you waiting?"

He heard her catch her breath, but whether it were sigh or gasp she uttered he could not be sure. "Now I know," she murmured, and her voice was deep with sobs. "Now I know the way her heart was broken!"

"Griselda dear, *cherie*, what is it that you say? You love me, don't—"

"Love you?" her hot words stopped him. "Better than my life, my breath, my heart's blood. And that is why my heart is breaking, dear. It is my doom to love you always, to be waiting for you to the end of time, yet not to have you, never give myself to you.

"If you were truly a Yankee it might

be different; you would know no better. But you're a Southerner by birth, a traitor to your country and your people—" Now the sobs broke through her voice and she fell silent, pressing both hands to her laboring breast, fighting down the frantic misery which seemed to close upon her heart like a vise.

"If I were in the other army, would it make a difference?" he asked her softly. "No one respects a turncoat, but——"

She flashed him a quick smile. It was as if a candle had been lighted behind the somber velvet of her eyes. "You wouldn't be a turncoat, love of mine. You'd merely be returning to the old allegiance. You left the French because your conscience disapproved their politics. How can you bear to tread your native country, your Maryland, your people, underfoot? How can you let them make you steal the goods and chattels of defenseless women—theft is theft, whatever name you choose to give it. Did our soldiers rob the Yankees when they marched through Pennsylvania? Did they steal and burn and pillage?" Again emotion stilled her voice.

He was busy with his thoughts till: "And I may come to you when war is done, if I forsake the Union cause——"

"Yes, *yes*, my love!" Her lips were soft and alluring, her breath was warm and tender on his cheek. She was another Judith in the tent of Holophernes, another Jael enticing Sisera—"If you do this for love of me I shall be waiting for you, surely—I and all I have are yours when you come back to me, however long the waiting is until you come again, my very dearest."

He drew her to him. Her lips parted and her body pressed against his fiercely, then went yieldingly flaccid in his arms.

Next morning when the bugles sounded reveille Lieutenant Bright was forced to take command. The Captain was not to be found, nor had his bed been slept in.

ST. JOHN'S DAY passed, and Michaelmas; the theatre of operations shifted to the south as Grant pushed on to Richmond. No word came to Griselda from her lover, but every night she set a candle in the window of her chamber; every night before she went to bed she put the curtains back and whispered as she faced the south: "Good-night, my sweet; sleep well and dream of me, and oh! come to me quickly."

He came more quickly than she'd hoped, but not as she'd envisioned his return.

Jubal Early's raiders had met Sheridan at Cedar Creek, been shattered like a potter's vessel, and were in retreat. The pounding of the flying hooves against the road was followed by a pounding on the door. When she went to answer the alarm a man fell stumbling across the threshold. His gray blouse hung upon his back in tattered shreds, as if it had been ripped by claws, his right arm dangled helplessly beside him, and a smear of blood spread clear across his right shoulder and down his sleeve. A steady ruddy trickle traced its way across his hand and dribbled from the useless, helpless fingers.

"Griselda—dearest!" he called in a bleak, hollow voice, and lurched across the doorsill to fall upon his face.

She could not carry him, or even lift him, but she brought water in a basin and a flask of brandy, cut away his shredded coat and blood-stained shirt with her scissors and bandaged his wound with strips ripped from her fine petticoat. Then, when she'd put a pillow underneath his head, she sat beside him on the floor and held his hand in hers. She watched him in the candle-glow, thinking how fine his face was, his thin-drawn, handsome dark face with its features clear-cut as the image on a coin, and as immobile. Once or twice she smoothed the hair back from his forehead and bathed his temples with the last drops of her hoarded bottle of cologne.

"Delatour," she whispered softly, "Delatour, beloved."

At last he stirred, tried to rise, and sank back with a feeble groan. "Have to go," he muttered thickly. "Can't stay here. They'll be coming for me any minute—mustn't find me here. They'll arrest you for harboring an enemy—a deserter—"

"Hush, dear," she bade him softly as she dropped a light kiss on his brow; "no one's goin' to come and get you. You're home with me, now, and you shall never, never leave me any more."

Once in a lifetime comes a moment of fulfilment, a moment so completely satisfying that all time seems to halt for it, when there is neither looking backward with regret nor looking forward with anticipation; when everything is perfect with perfection like the everlasting, never-changing calm and happiness of Paradise. Such a moment came to Griselda as she sat in the hall by her fallen warrior with the candlelight upon her gleaming black hair and the lovelight glowing in her eyes.

"Delatour," she murmured once again, "my one, my true, my only best-beloved!"

Early in the evening there had been a young moon in the cloud-washed sky. Now the moon had foundered in a tumbling surf of clouds, and a keening blast foretold the coming of the storm. The wind sank from an ery scream to a dull, sighing wail, then to a lower, more ominous note. It did not seem to howl or moan so much as mutter. It stalked round and round the house, trying doors and shutters, rattling windows, rapping with malicious, ghostly fingers at the casements, then fleeing with a spiteful, cackling scream of laughter.

Suddenly, with a high, shrieking roar, the storm swooped down. Rain sweated on the windows, turning them to bright black mirrors in which every little object of the dim old rooms reflected dully.

And with the coming of the tempest came another sound, the splashing tramp

of horses' hooves, the jangling clank of metal striking against metal, a hoarse, imperative command: "Dismount; surround the house; squad forward!"

When their pounding on the door met no response they burst it in. She turned her head and looked at them, not with defiance, almost without interest.

"You there on the floor!" a loud voice dinned in her ears. "Is that man a rebel—d'ye hear?"

They did not seem like men; they were just things. Things in dark blue, slicked with rain until the blue was shining-black. They had no faces, only eyes that glared and glowed at her—and voices; raucous, snarling voices that beat against her shrinking brain like lash-strokes.

Something tramped across the bare and polished floor, stood beside her, looking down. "By God," it bellowed with a guffaw, "it's O'Donnell, the deserter. Pick him up, some of you—make a litter for him. We'll take him to headquarters."

Then she was alone, sitting on the floor, one slim hand smoothing the pillow on which his head had rested, caressing the dent where his shining hair had pressed. Words beat against her mind's ear dully, muffled like the sound of surf heard far away:

"Great-Aunt Griselda died with a broken heart . . . she loved a Yankee officer. . . ."

The court-martial did not take long. The evidence was quickly heard. Captain Bright, once lieutenant under O'Donnell, had been in charge of the detail which made the arrest. He recognized his former captain, missing since the previous June, wounded and in rebel uniform. There was no testimony in defense. The sentence could be only one thing.

She tried to get to them to testify, to see the president of the court. They would not let her in.

At last she forced her way into the pro-

vost marshal's office. "I made him do it, sir," she confessed. "He loved me, and I tempted him; seduced him from his duty by promising to marry him. It is I, not he, who should be shot. I am the guilty one; the fault is wholly mine."

The provost marshal, Colonel Webster, was a bank's attorney in civilian life. They said he had ice-water in his veins, that he was never known to smile, that he could look a man square in the eye and take his last dollar, or sell the roof above a widow's head without the quiver of an eyelash. His eyes were gray.

Strange, empty eyes they were, cold as frosted windows with the blinds pulled down, but with someone peeping skillfully beneath them. Steel-bowed spectacles shimmered between his gray eyebrows; his gaunt, ascetic face was unrelieved by any tinge of color in his cheeks or in the tight line of his lips.

"We have no case against you, Madam," he told her, speaking precisely, as he did on Sundays back in Brooklyn when he read the lesson for the Sabbath school. "And the sentence of the court is that the traitor suffer death by hanging, not by musketry. Women have been temptresses since Eve and Delilah and Jezebel. It is the man's part to resist temptation."

"Then grant me one favor," she begged. "When the sentence has been carried out, may I have his—his body, to be buried in my family plot, where I may lie beside him?"

"Spies' and traitors' bodies are buried in quicklime. I'm sorry I cannot grant your request, Madam. Good day," answered Colonel Webster.

THEY let her see him for a little time the night before they hanged him. The Irish sentinel on guard before his cell came to about face and stood with his back to them, humming a snatch of tune to drown their conversation from his ears:

"Belave me if all those endearin' young
cha'ms

Which I gaze on so fondly today . . ."

Her eyes were wide, suffused with tears, but star-bright as they came to rest on him. Her lips were trembling like those of a little girl who weeps for her lost doll, and she held her little pink-and-white hands to him as she said his name with broken helplessness. "Oh, my dear, my darling."

He took her hands in his, held her cheeks between his palms and drew her face against his bars. "Don't let it break your heart, dear," he besought. "It is not hard to die; I've looked death in the face a thousand times and never been afraid——"

"But I'm losing you, we're losing each other," she sobbed brokenly. "I promised myself to you if you did this thing for me; now I can't keep my promise——"

"Hush, dear," he ordered almost sharply. "You don't believe this life is everything; no more do I. In the morning I'll step through a door; the lockless door that lets into Tomorrow's garden. Do you remember what you told me once, 'I'll be waiting for you, however long it is until you come'? So shall I be waiting for you in Tomorrow's land, my dearest, for there we're given back that which we most loved here."

"But I'm unworthy," she moaned softly. "It was I who brought you to this—oh, my darling, what if I'm not permitted to come to you——"

"Then I shall come for you, my little dear one; never fear," he comforted.

For a little while they spoke no more, for though the bars were between them they clung and kissed, arms circled round each other, lips and hearts together in a final long farewell.

"Now, dear," he gasped at last, releasing her for a moment, "one last kiss for long remembrance, then good-bye. I'll close my eyes and stop my ears so I can't

hear you leaving, and when I open them again, you'll be gone, but I'll have the memory of your lips on mine until we meet again in the enchanted land beyond the door to Tomorrow."

There was no sunrise the next day, but he was hanged just half an hour after reveille.

She had spent the night upon her knees before the altar of the little village church, praying not for his soul, but for hers, begging that her spirit might be loosed when his went forth . . . she heard the bugles heralding the sunless dawn, heard the ruffling of the drums that told the drop had fallen, and begging for unconsciousness that would not come, she beat her forehead on the altar rail.

The wood seemed strangely soft. It felt more like a hand against her brow and cheeks, the drum-rolls seemed to change their tempo and timbre, to be translated into words. . . .

SHE was kneeling on a sofa cushion in the center of the floor of Cousin Clementine's sun porch, and Professor Huling stood beside her holding the silk handkerchief with which he'd bound her eyes in one hand, slapping her softly on the cheeks and brow with the other. "Wake up, Miss Pancoast," he commanded. "You've been unconscious almost five minutes!"

Griselda's hand flew to her mouth. "Five minutes?" she repeated brokenly.

"Almost," the professor assured her.

She felt the roughness of the fingers on her lips and held her hand out. It was neither small nor slim nor white. It was reddened, work-worn, slightly swollen at the joints with arthritis, roughened at the finger-tips from needlework, the ugly unkempt hand of one who drudges for her daily bread.

She looked around her. Eight curious ladies gazed at her expectantly. "What did you see, Griselda?" Cousin Clementine

demanded. "You were unconscious quite a while."

"I—it seemed that I was back in Barleywood," Griselda answered brokenly. "I thought I saw the old place as it was before——"

"You would," Cousin Clementine broke in. "I don't think we need detain you further.

"She's like all Southerners," she confided to Professor Huling and her friends as Griselda left. "They're always living in the past, you know — suffering from a carry-me-back-to-old-Virginny complex. Goodness only knows what they'd do if they went back. I notice most of them are glad enough to come North when they have the chance. They're sure of something to eat here, at least."

She turned bright eyes on Doctor Huling. "You really think that's all she saw, Professor? Just that tumbledown old mansion?"

"I think it likely, Mrs. Spottswood. As we grow older the urge to regress to our childhood and its scenes grows stronger. Her former home's associated in her mind with carefree irresponsibility—it's a form of uterophilia."

"I see," responded Cousin Clementine, who had not the faintest idea what uterophilia was, but connected it in some vague way with the writings of Sir Thomas More—or was it Plato, or Dorothy Thompson?

GRISELDA paused before the village drug store. It was a five-mile walk back to Lake Acres, and the day was searing-hot. She wanted a big chocolate soda, a big, sweat-beaded glass of luscious dark-brown syrup with a double scoop of creamy-white vanilla ice-cream in it and a bubbling crown of foam above, but chocolate sodas were fifteen cents, and she had only a dime tied in the corner of her handkerchief. Still, you could buy an orange phosphate for a dime, and that at

least would be cool. She pushed the swinging screen doors open, climbed upon a stool before the fountain and prepared to give her order when the spruce young soda clerk had done with the distinguished-looking gentleman who occupied the stool next to hers.

"Son," she heard the gentleman inquire, "can you tell me where th' Spottswood place is, 'round here? Ah've looked all over Long Island, an' one says go that way, an' one says something else, but Ah don't seem able to locate Lake Acres."

Griselda warmed toward the inquirer. His accent was so lushly Southern, his rich voice so redolent of home—"I live at Lake Acres, sir," she ventured timidly. "If you'd like I'll gladly show you the way—"

"Will you, indeed, ma'am?" he answered gratefully. "Ah'd appreciate it if you would." He eyed her, as in doubt, a moment; then:

"Ah was just about to have some light refreshment, ma'am. May Ah have the honor of yo' company in a chocolate soda?"

She knew she shouldn't do it. He was a total stranger, it was like a pick-up which she'd heard her younger cousins describe, but—nothing in the world looked quite so good as the tall chocolate ice-cream sodas which the neat young white-clad man was already concocting. "That would be very nice," she answered primly.

She sipped and spooned in silent bliss a moment, then turned amazed eyes on her host, for he was asking: "You're not by any chance a Pancoast, are you, ma'am? It seems to me you favor an old friend of mine from down near Carthagen Crick—"

"Crick!" When had she heard a creek called "crick" before? Tears started to her eyes as she replied, "I am Griselda Pancoast."

"One of the Barleywood Pancoasts? Well, well, this surely is a sight for tired eyes, ma'am. Ah"—he slipped down from

the stool and made a formal bow—"Ah am George Ormandie, of St. Mary's City, at yo' service."

The open motor car in which he drove her to Lake Acres seemed bigger than a Baldwin locomotive, and there must have been a ton of chromium trimming on it.

He was a most distinguished gentleman. His white hair, white mustache and white imperial gave him a look resembling General Fitzhugh Lee, whom she remembered from the Spanish War days. His linen suit, Panama hat, expensive shoes and well-kept hands bespoke a man of wealth. On the little finger of his right hand was a heavy seal ring, its device incised in a dull red stone. As he swung the steering-wheel to turn the car into Lake Acres' driveway she caught her breath in a short gasp. The crest was a wolf's head ermine erased, and under it was cut a scroll and mantle. For the time it took to draw a deep, long breath, Griselda Pancoast, drudge-cousin of the wealthy Gerald Spottswoods, took leave of her thin, aging body, and was once again a beautiful young woman lying in a half-swoon on a high old-fashioned bed and noticing through half-closed eyes a family crest tattooed upon a virile young man's sword-arm. Then the car slid to a noiseless stop and he was handing her from it as if she were some great lady and he her cavalier.

IT APPEARED that Mr. Ormandie had come North for the sole purpose of buying an old Southern farm from Cousin Gerald. The land was valueless, and Cousin Gerald would gladly have disposed of it at fifty cents an acre, until he saw the Ormandie motor. Then the unearned increment of the farm took a sudden stratospheric flight, and the deal was closed at ten dollars an acre. Cousin Gerald's eyes almost popped from their sockets at the size of the roll from which the new bills were stripped.

Mr. George K. Ormandie was one who should be sedulously cultivated, Cousin Gerald thought; so he invited him to dinner, gave him cards at some good clubs, and set about the work of cultivation with expert attention to detail.

Cousin Clementine declared the age of miracles was far from being past. Mr. Ormandie showed every sign of being smitten with the obviously absent charms of Cousin Griselda. He took her to the theatres and night clubs, on long drives about the country, even to the races. In August he proposed to her. They were married on the eve of Michaelmas in St. Anselm's Church at Quogue, and set out for Atlantic City the same afternoon.

GRISELDA looked about her timidly, not at her husband, but at the sumptuous sitting-room of the Hotel Graynow's finest suite. She was afraid, more frightened than she'd ever been in all her life. Sixty years of spinisterhood conditions one for celibacy. Now she was a wife, a married woman, and—what did one do in such circumstances?—what was expected of one? . . .

Still with her eyes averted she took her hat and gloves off and dropped them on the couch beside her handbag. "George," she whispered diffidently, "there's something I must ask you. The crest on your seal ring, is it—where did you—"

A laugh stopped her; not the hearty throaty laugh of her husband, but a different sort of laugh, lighter, younger, and with a note of tenderness in it. "Griselda," said a voice—not the voice of George K. Ormandie.

She looked up, startled. Her husband was nowhere in sight, but she recognized the man who smiled at her, his bright black hair, his small mustache and beard, his clear gray laughing eyes. "Delatour," she whispered unbelievably. "Oh, my—"

Involuntarily she held her hands out to

him, and recoiled as she saw them. Though manicured and carefully cared for, they were still the corded, slightly gnarled hands of an aging woman.

"You—you're just as you were—I'm an old woman, a hideous old hag!" she wailed.

She glanced down, as his pointing finger indicated. "Why, I'm on the floor—I'm lying there—" she began, then stopped in stark bewilderment. How could she be lying quietly like that, and yet be looking at herself?

"Where is my—Mr. Ormandie?" she asked dully. Somehow, her thoughts would not behave. If this woman on the floor at her feet were the real she, then who—

"My dear, can't you understand?" the young man's voice replied. "There never was a George K. Ormandie. I only wore that name—and form—to come to you. Remember? I told you I'd come to you if you didn't come to me. See—"

She felt her hand grasped lightly, felt herself pulled forward gently—over her own body, lying there so still and white—felt a sudden sharp, heart-piercing pang. Then she was in his arms, her lips on his, her pulses beating out the rhythm of his name: "Delatour—Delatour!"

Now he put her from him gently, but retained her hands in his. "Look at you now," he ordered, laughing.

Framed in the mirror they stood side by side and hand in hand, just as they'd stood in the old garden when the guns were bellying defiance and attack around the works of Petersburg.

"See, dearest one, the door," he bade.

Far back in the mirror, like a portal seen at the end of a corridor, a gate swung in the breeze, an unlatched gate that pierced a garden wall of weathered brick. She felt the pressure of his hand on hers, and stepped beside him toward the swinging gate.

A mocking-bird was singing as they entered the old garden.