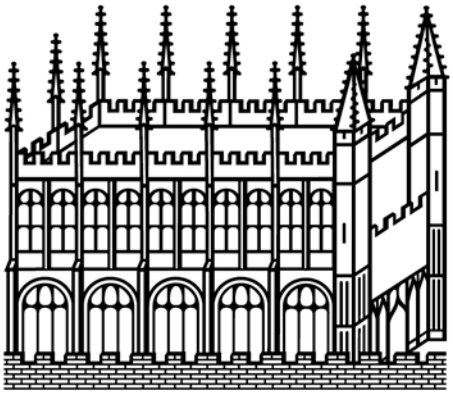

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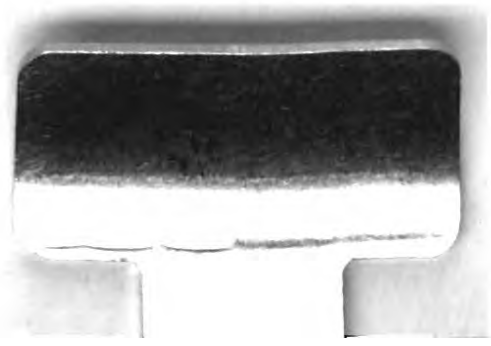

SPY No. 13

SPY No. 13

by

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

LONDON
PHILIP ALLAN

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To my daughter

BARENDINA GARDENER CHAMBERS

Broadalbin House

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SPY No. 13

I

PRETTY NIGGER

I

There came a gallop of hoofs; jingle of chain and spur and equipment.

From an upstairs bedroom window in Blanton's house two young girls looked out and down; and giggled.

Three troopers with an officer of Colonel Dick Rush's regiment of lancers had ridden up under the apple trees in front of Secret Service Headquarters.

The Pennsylvanians, carrying long lances garnished with scarlet pennons, were pleasing to the female eye. The two girls regarded them with interest.

But their stern young captain immediately dismounted and strode into the house, his sabre banging at his heels; and the girls continued their interrupted occupation before a bedroom mirror, the faded, and wavy glass of which distorted their faces and sent them into fits of laughter.

Under the apple trees one admiring lancer said to another: "That's a elegant gal up there at the winder."

"Yeah," said the other, "and that's a pretty little nigger with her. Pretty as a white gal."

At Secret Service Headquarters, momentarily now at Blanton's—and whence Marmaduke Blanton had fled in disgust at Yankee approach—were gathered in conference several solemn civilians and officers.

Their tobacco smoke drifted across the room, through open windows into breezy September sunshine.

Outside under deep-fruited apple trees lounged a dozen or fifteen shabby-looking men, some gaunt and bearded, others mere boys with smooth, weather-browned features.

In the eyes of all was the same indefinable look; around each sunburned neck was coiled, invisibly, the hangman's rope.

For these men were spies, scouts and couriers of the Union Army, awaiting duty. And he who was called might return with information, or might remain in Dixie to dance the dreary gallows jig.

Some of these silent fellows, in their shirt-sleeves, were playing cards and checkers; others lay on the grass with remote and speculative gaze fixed on the blue hills, whence, across hazy meadows and woodlands, came bugle music and beating of drums.

In the sunny smoke mist of the room in Blanton's house there was no sound except an intermittent creak from Colonel Sharpe's rocking chair, and the syncopated rattle of a military telegraph instrument in an adjoining "best parlour." A Federal detective slowly paced the hallway, guarding the closed door of the tobacco-reeking room.

Then, abruptly, a man came out of the parlour where the telegraphing was going on, and entered the room.

He was a square-hewn, bearded man. Two small eyes glimmered in ambush behind high cheek bones.

"All right, gentlemen," he said harshly.

Captain Cadwallader of the 6th Pennsylvania Lancers got up out of the rocking chair; the Chief of the Federal Secret Service sat down in it, crossed one knee over the other and took a dry suck at his curved pipe, which had gone cold.

His narrow glance travelled from one man to the next; lingered a little maliciously on George Sharpe, Colonel of the 120th New York Infantry; squinted at Charles Cadwallader, the obliging captain of Pennsylvania lancers; at Dick Rivett, captain in his own corps of spies and guides; at Alexander McCloud—his cipher man; at George Waring, six feet three of handsome, ruddy youth in the fanciful hussar uniform of his 4th Michigan Cavalry.

It was September, 1862, and the Northern armies still remained beautiful in spots, and still very full of hussars, lancers, Zouaves, and *voltigeurs*.

"Just a moment more, gentlemen," said Major Allen grimly. "They are enciphering my report for the President."

Then the hallway door was flung open, and Stanton's "shadow" entered, cloaked, slouch hatted, darkly handsome, and as gracefully sinister as an opera villain about to betray a simpering soprano.

His name was William Moore—like Captain Kidd's gunner. The shadowy private secretary to the Secretary of War shook

hands stealthily with those he knew, bowed to others, flung aside his cloak with a superb gesture.

" All *right* ! " rasped Major Allen.

Silence in the smoky room ; then Alan Pinkerton—known in the army as Major Allen—spoke again in a voice so dry it seemed to crackle :

" There's dissatisfaction in Washington with my department, gentlemen. You all know it. Know this, too : I'm not apologizing for my department—or for myself "—— He looked at Moore as though to say : " Tell that to Stanton and be damned to you both ! "

" I'm no politician," he snarled, " —whatever else I may be. Here's the situation : my general, of course, has got to know what is going on out yonder behind the river and the rebel cavalry screen. Mr. Moore, you are here to tell Mr. Stanton what measures I am taking to find out—"

He was stuffing his crooked pipe with shag ; he lighted it now :

" —All right, tell him that the rebels have just hanged the two spies I sent to watch Stuart. That makes three of my men gone. . . . That makes three of my best spies hanged this week ! . . . Well, I'm sending two more. My very best."

He scowled at Moore, and his voice became so dry that it grew squeaky, like an ungreased axle : " My compliments to Mr. Stanton ! Yes. Maybe you might respectfully remind the honourable Secretary of War that his Secret Service operators have done no better than mine."

Mr. Moore folded his arms and nodded, slowly, dramatically.

Pinkerton rose. He said to Colonel Waring : " You see those men out there under the trees ? They're some of my scouts, spies, couriers and detectives. Captain Dick Rivett, here, of our service, will go out with you and pick out any man you want for General Asboth. Take him along with you. You may take one of my Virginia Indians, too, if you like."

The handsome young cavalry colonel thanked him and nodded to Dick Rivett.

To Captain of Lancers Cadwallader, Pinkerton turned :

" General McClellan permits me to draft two men for my service from your lancers."

Cadwallader handed him a list of men available and suited by temperament for Secret Service duty. On this list two were marked as fearless, intelligent, and fond of that peculiar kind of excitement arising from personal peril.

"Send them," said Pinkerton briefly.

"I took the liberty of bringing them with me—" Cadwallader pointed through the open window to the orchard where three lancers sat their horses. Cadwallader's horse, also, stood there.

"All right," said Pinkerton, "send back their nags and their fancy lances to Colonel Dick Rush—who possibly knows what to do with such weapons." He added sourly, "and that's all."

There ensued a brief, uncomfortable pause, then officers and civilians rose to take leave; Colonel Waring following Dick Rivett and Sandy McCloud; Cadwallader going out with Mr. Moore and his opera cloak. When they had gone, Pinkerton looked defiantly at Colonel Sharpe.

"George," said he, "I'll be honest with you. I know, if I quit this job, you'll succeed me."

"I don't know that," said Colonel Sharpe. He was in full uniform—tall, well built, full lipped, slightly heavy of features, and wore a cavalry moustache and short side-whiskers.

"Is it to be straight talk?" demanded Pinkerton harshly.

"Yes, straight, Major."

"Then, if I resign, you'll be head of the Bureau of Military Information, and Deputy Provost-Marshal-General."

"Do you mean to resign, Major Allen?"

"Yes. My general is going to be superseded. I know it if you don't. But I guess you do know it. When Little Mac goes, I won't remain. He's not only my friend, but he's the best general officer in the United States—whatever others think. And the army, God bless it, agrees with me."

Sharpe remained politely silent.

"George," rasped Pinkerton, "I'm no cur in the manger; I'll make it as easy and agreeable for you as possible. That is why I asked you prematurely to come here. Something has got to be done about Jeb Stuart. I think I've a spy they can't catch and hang, and who is going to find out for us what is happening over yonder. I want you to see her."

"*Her?*"

"Yes, her," retorted Pinkerton. "All women are not damn fools."

"Is she here?"

"Upstairs."

He stepped to the door and bade the Federal detective on guard to bring in Number 11.

"Alone!" he added, calling after the man. "Tell her I'll see her little friend later."

To Sharpe he continued, squinting hard at him through his pipe smoke:

"She's Miss Cushman—to you and me. Ever heard of her?"

"You mean the popular actress, Pauline Cushman?"

"I do. She's Number 11. She's already been inside the rebel lines for me several times. I have no surer, cleverer spy. If they ever catch her—and they never can!—I'll give 'em leave to hang her. That's what I think of her."

There came a rustle of fashionable silk skirts at the door. Alan Pinkerton rose and moved forward.

"How are you, Miss Cushman?" he said drily. "You're a bonnie picture now—you are, indeed, ma'am. Let me present to you my"—he coughed—"my intimate friend, Colonel George Sharpe. You and he may become closer friends than even he and I——"

Pauline Cushman looked at Sharpe and held out her hand with a winning smile. She said in her beautifully modulated voice:

"We all become devoted to one another in the Secret Service."

Pinkerton offered the rocking chair, and she settled herself and her crinoline in it gracefully and looked at the two men.

She had fine eyes and typical footlight features, large enough and symmetrical enough for paint and wig to enhance.

Every movement and gesture and expression seemed to be unstudied, so natural was her manner. And her art.

"It's Jeb Stuart—and suicide—isn't it, Major Allen?" she asked Pinkerton with another smile.

"It's Stuart, ma'am."

"I guessed so."

"I don't order you to go," croaked Pinkerton, "if you feel that way."

She shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, I'll go to Martinsburg, Major."

"I'll not let you go, if you feel that it's suicide," returned the Chief of Secret Service, irritably. "Not that I'm inhuman, ma'am, but a hanged spy is no use to the United States."

Miss Cushman laughed—a full, rich, throaty laugh, calculated to entrance any audience. "Oh, Major," said she, "you're too Scotch to take a jest. I'm not the least afraid."

"Maybe I am Scotch and dull, ma'am; but I want no more corpses scaring the poor nags on Jeb Stuart's picket lines."

"Jeb Stuart isn't going to catch me," said Miss Cushman carelessly. "What scouts are you sending me for couriers?"

"Jack Babcock and Gus Littlefield. I give you my best, ma'am."

She seemed pleased.

He sat squinting at her out of slanting eyes—pipe in hand, one knee crossed over the other, slumped deep in his chair—his characteristic attitude.

"Now, lassie, said he, "what have you to tell me? There's a question in your bonnie eyes."

"I'd rather not go alone this time," she said quietly.

"Well, then, you wish to take along your little friend upstairs? Is that it, ma'am?"

"Yes. I shall need her."

"Possibly. But do *I* need her?" he growled.

"Shall I call her in?"

"Let us hear a word of her first," said Pinkerton warily.

"She's a very young actress in my stock company," explained Pauline Cushman. "When she makes up as a Negro girl you'd never know she wasn't one. She's been a nurse for two years at base hospitals. She's very anxious to do Secret Service work."

"Maybe. But is she fitted?"

"The best fitted of any operator I know, man or woman, Major."

"What may be her name, ma'am?"

"Her stage name is Lucille Lyndon; her real name is Loveless. Old man Loveless—you know, sir—was her father——"

"Simon Cameron's horse broker—God rest his bones!—I forgot he's dead, ma'am. Well, then, is this girl as shrewd as was old Sam Loveless?"

"Yes. Except for one thing. I'm sorry, but she has a demoralizing effect upon men."

"What's that you say, ma'am?"

"The child is born to trouble men. And hers is a tender heart. I scold her."

"You mean the girl is light?" demanded Pinkerton sourly.

"No," said Miss Cushman, "but she is one of those who—one of those women to whom *all* men are immediately attracted. There *is* such a kind of woman, you know, Major. And, as I say, she has a youthful heart——"

Pinkerton gave her a dour look:

"And you recommend her, ma'am, to *me*, ma'am?"

"I do, Major. She's a gay young thing, full of laughter and of life; but gaiety of heart is no sin, and I know of nothing to her discredit. . . . And she is a natural as well as an accomplished actress.

She can seem to be anybody ; deceive anybody ; and the youngness of her and her lovely face would fool the devil himself."

" Maybe, ma'am. But can I trust so giddy a lass ? " demanded Pinkerton.

" I am placing my own life at her mercy," remarked Miss Cushman. " She is wise, faithful, brave, and true. Try her."

" You left her upstairs ? " inquired Colonel Sharpe.

" Yes, Colonel. Shall I call her ? "—she looked at Pinkerton. He nodded.

Pauline Cushman sprang up in her silk and crinoline, opened the door, and lifted her celebrated silvery voice : " Gail ! Come down ! " Then she returned to her rocking chair.

A moment later a young mulatto girl stole noiselessly into the room. She wore a single cotton garment, gone ragged with much washing. Her little bare brown feet were shapely and delicately formed ; so were the childish hands as she took her skirt between forefinger and thumb and curtsied.

" Mawnin', marsters," she said softly ; " is yoh washin' ready fo' de laun'ress ? "

Pinkerton, red with surprise and anger, was on the point of telling her to get out, but checked himself in the same moment ; and his dour features relaxed into a sheepish grin.

Pauline Cushman laughed her delight.

" I thought," she said to Colonel Sharpe, " that he'd understand better if he saw her in character. So she made up while we were waiting upstairs."

The two men looked hard at the girl—at her close-clipped, tightly curled dark hair ; at her velvet eyes full of youth's light gaiety ; at the full, laughing lips ; at the slim body fairly a-quiver with suppressed mischief.

" Sit you down, lassie," grunted Alan Pinkerton.

Miss Loveless seated herself happily, confidently, unsubdued.

" Loveless is your name, ma'am, I'm informed ? " he demanded.

" Gail Loveless."

" Hae ye father or mither ? " Alan Pinkerton was, sometimes, deliberately Scotch.

" None, sir."

" A pity. And what age may you have, miss ? "

" Twenty, sir."

" A play actress, I'm told."

" Characters and dancing—yes, sir."

" You were a hospital nurse lately ? "

"Two years." She named several base hospitals. He coolly named another, and the girl nodded, surprised:

"You were nurse at Frederick Hospital, and Dwight Dudley was your orderly. Well, then," continued Pinkerton with a reluctant and almost kindly smile, "I know all about you, Miss Loveless"—he fished out some papers and displayed them—"Here you are. I've had you looked up"—turning to Pauline Cushman—"ever since you first asked leave the bring the young lady here, ma'am. Well, we *have* to *know*! Washington, New York, and all the North are full of rebel female spies, agents, scouts, and whatnots. . . . So you want to be an agent of the Secret Service, do you, Miss Loveless?"

"Yes, very much."

Pinkerton favoured her with a hearty scowl.

"Hae ye courage, lassie?" he demanded, becoming Scotch again.

"Yes, sir."

"Never afraid?"

"Oh, yes—sometimes."

"And what do you do when you're afraid? Run?"

"Oh, no, sir. . . . But I can't help being afraid, sometimes. Still, there is something almost pleasant about being scared, you know," she added shyly.

"What's that you say, ma'am?"

"Well—there is a kind of charming thrill——"

"Nonsense!"

Pauline Cushman interrupted: "There really is, Major Allen. Every spy and scout feels it a little, even when badly scared."

"Is—that—so?" growled Pinkerton, puffing his crooked pipe.

After a frowning silence he peered sideways at Colonel Sharpe: "It's true, George. They all say so. All my spies experience a charm in personal danger." And, to Miss Loveless:

"So you like to play peekaboo with that auld carlin, Sawny McDeath?"

"I don't know, I never tried it," said the girl.

"If you're caught, they'll hang you," he said, brutally blunt.

"Yes, sir—if I'm caught." She looked at the other girl and they almost giggled.

There was a silence. Miss Loveless still smiled; but there was no bravado in her smile—nothing more than gay self-confidence.

"Well, then," said Alan Pinkerton, "listen, now, the two of you, to what I have to say.

" If you have a real aptitude for this work, you must possess, also, enough fearlessness and daring to overcome the sense of danger, and find a kind of strange pleasure in situations involving great peril. . . . From what you tell me, ma'am, I guess you have that aptitude.

" But, to be successful, and keep your neck out of the noose, you must also be clever, quick-witted, observant. You should not be foolhardy ; you should know fear ; and you must feel enough afraid to realize the consequence of detection. Do you follow me ? "

" Yes, sir."

" Because, lassie, what good is a swinging corpse to me—or a dangling dead girl to your distracted country ? "

" No good, sir," admitted the girl, a little breathlessly.

After a pause : " You still desire to go ? " he demanded.

" Yes, sir."

Pinkerton turned to Miss Cushman : " She'll take poor Madden's number, thirteen—" He wrote it down under her name : " S. S. Operator No. 13, passes as Lucille Lyndon, nigger laundress."

His small, brilliant eyes seemed to bore clean through them. Then he rose and the girls stood up.

" There are four, in the Rebel Secret Service, ye'll beware of," he said coldly. " There's Rose O'Neil, Beauregard's chief scout ; there's Belle Boyd—eighteen years old—and Jeb Stuart is God, to her.

" There's Vespasian Chancellor, Stuart's chief scout ; and there's Jack Gailliard, a bad young man with a laugh, who does devil's work for Jeb Stuart."

He offered a dry hand to Miss Cushman, and then to Miss Loveless.

" You go to-night. In two days I send you John Babcock."

" Good-bye," said Miss Cushman brightly to Colonel Sharpe, who bowed in silence.

Miss Loveless nodded to him mischievously, and, seeing him redden a little, kissed her finger tips to him, enchanted with her visible conquest.

She whispered to Pauline Cushman as they went out : " He's only a great big boy, that Colonel. Did you see his silly blush ? "

II

North and south stretched the range of cobalt-blue mountains. A few trees had turned flame colour.

In the valley of Virginia the air had a fragrance like new cider, and everywhere apple trees sagged to the grass, loaded with ripe fruit.

In the pleasant sunshine, Stuart's idle cavalrymen, strolling from the camp on the oak-covered hill to the river fords below, noticed a young coloured girl washing clothes above the ford.

"Pretty li'l nigger," they said, nudging one another.

She was so slender and dainty that they would have taken her for a grand lady's maid had she not been washing clothes. For she seemed to be of the more delicate and refined type of domestics reserved as personal servants.

"Who's yuh quality folks, Mandy?" they called out mischievously, strolling arm in arm; and the girl always answered scornfully:

"Major General Jeb Stuart, if you-all has got to know. And my name is Lucille, not Amanda."

They didn't believe it, and were inclined to cluster around her —she being excessively pretty and desirable; but when Bob, Jeb Stuart's mulatto body servant, came down to the water with a basket of Headquarters' table linen, their simmering audacity cooled.

"Yuh cl'ar outen hyar!" said Bob majestically, "an' quit pesterin' de Gin'ral's onliest laun'ress!"

"Oh, Bob," said the girl, looking up from the water's edge, "they ain't bother me none." She gave the soldiers a coquettish glance, adding that she liked to hear folks talk and carry on while she soaped the linen.

"Pears lak yuh is too fon' of white trash," grumbled the mulatto, dumping the table linen on the grass. "Yuh look out fo' yuhse'f, li'l black gal!"

He stared arrogantly at the snickering troopers, then shuffled away toward the gleaming tents on the hill beyond a fine house called The Bower, where an old colonel and his family still exercised hospitality and eminent domain in the teeth of the Yankee army across the river.

"What yuh doin' to-night, Lucille?" inquired a sergeant of cavalry, boldly approaching.

" I got a beau," said the girl, wringing out a man's shirt. " Look at that shirt," she added. " Ain't it pretty ? That's Gin'ral Jeb Stuart's best shirt. You-all oughta see it when I irons it ! "

A clever looking young man in civilian clothing, who happened along, overheard her.

" Howdy, Lucille," he called out in gay salute.

" Howdy, Cap'n Gailliard, suh," replied the girl, dimpling at him.

At that moment cavalry trumpets sounded on the hill and the idlers at the ford got up from the brilliant green grass, unwillingly, and moved off toward the tented hill.

Every trooper, as he passed, had a word of banter for the girl ; and she had a saucy reply for every one of them and a veiled provocation in her laughing eyes.

Captain Jack Gailliard sat down on the grass, plucked a green blade and chewed it leisurely.

" How yuh comin', Lucille ? " he drawled.

" What yuh want to know for how I'm a-comin' ? " she retorted. " I reckon you better quit botherin' yuh haid about coloured girls, Cap'n Gailliard."

" You're pretty enough for a white girl," he said ; " give me that soap and I'll wash the brown off you——"

He reached out for the soap ; she snatched it :

" You leave me alone," she said sweetly.

" You look like a pale gold rose," he said. " Some day I'll catch you and kiss you, too."

" I kick and scratch," said she. " Maybe I'll bite."

He looked around him. Nobody was near. " I think I'll do it now," he threatened, a trifle flushed.

" You go long," she said, " and let me be. I gotta do the Gin'ral's wash. 'Pears lak Bob's in a awful hurry. I reckon the cavalry is ridin' somewhere right soon."

" So it is," said Jack Gailliard. " Will you give me a kiss, Lucille ? "

" Where yuh reckon they goin' ? " she inquired, scrubbing away at an undershirt.

" Oh, somewhere to chase Yankees," he said carelessly.

" I heard talk they is gwine off to catch Abe Lincoln in Washington. You hear that talk, Cap'n ? "

He laughed.

" Some," she persisted, " say as how they is ridin' a raid into Pennsylvania."

"Where did you hear that nonsense?" he demanded, sharply.

"Nigger's talk."

"Too damn much," he muttered.

"Is we-all sure gwine to Pennsylvania?" she asked, wonderingly, her wide velvet eyes on his annoyed face.

"You listen to me," he growled, "and mind your own business, or somebody will give yuh a spanking!"

"Not yuh," she retorted defiantly. But her pretty eyes dared him; then with a twist of her supple hips she turned again to her soapsuds.

When at last she rose with her basket of snowy, wet clothes, he got up, too. The subtle and disturbing fragrance of her as she moved slowly by him, quite close—and his own business with her—troubled him as she brushed by him; and he passed one arm around her slender body.

"Yuh quit pesterin'," she murmured. "Ain't yuh 'shamed o' yuhse'f, Cap'n Jack?"

But she had been taken at a disadvantage and was helpless, holding tightly to the basket full of clothes in front of her; and the young fellow laid one hand flat on her pale brown cheek, turned her shapely head, and kissed her.

They felt the shock of it, both of them; unprepared for such sensation.

Neither of them spoke. Presently she moved on lightly, gracefully, with her basket of wet clothes. A little way along the path she looked back at him.

Young Gailliard walked across the meadow toward the cluster of tents where the Confederate Secret Service was housed near Headquarters.

Halfway he turned to the right and looked out over the lovely September landscape. Haze softened the mountains near Harpers Ferry to a delicate powder blue; the great river glimmered below. Cavalry were riding on the Darksville Pike. He could see cavalry guarding all the fords from McCoy's down to White's Ferry. On the knoll to the left a standard was flying lazily over Jeb Stuart's modest Headquarters tent. He could hear the distant wind-blown music from a cavalry band near Martinsburg; even see the flash of their brazen instruments as the sun caught them.

The west wind was sweet with the odour of ripened apples. But the pretty dark girl he had kissed smelled like apple bloom in April.

The boy stood unquietly, looking out over the valley—or clusters of valleys—to the eastward.

Across that shining river lay a huge Yankee army, perplexed, undecided, still shocked from the crash of the great battle where ten thousand grey-jackets lay dead among twelve thousand dead blue jackets in the lovely and fatal Valley of Virginia.

As he stood there, Vespasian Chancellor, Jeb Stuart's chief scout, came loping along on his scrawny horse.

"Nice view, ain't it?" he said politely, drawing bridle.

"Yes. I want to ask you something, Vespy; you know a mulatto or a quadroon when you see one?"

"I reckon."

"You can *always* tell, no matter how white they seem?"

"Yaas, suh."

"How much white blood does a quadroon show? Enough to take the blue out of the half-moon on the finger-nails?"

"I reckon not, suh."

"It's *always* bluish and *never* white?"

"I don't guess it's ever white like ours."

They turned together and proceeded toward the tents and shanties of the Confederate Secret Service, Gailliard walking with one hand on the cantle.

"Mr. Gaston sent for me," remarked Chancellor. "Reckon they's a Yankee spy in the Valley."

"He sent for me, too," said Gailliard.

They found General Lee's chief cipher operator talking in his tent to Colonel Stoddard Johnston, Forrest's chief of spies.

"Chancellor," said Mr. Gaston, "did you get through to Frederick?"

"Yaas, suh. I jes' rid in."

"Any record of a Mary Vail there?"

"Thar wuz a Mary Vail thar, suh. She left when the Yankees arrived."

"Did you get her description?"

"Yes, suh. I reckon she's the same lady that's bo'din' over to Claybourn's in Martinsburg."

"Are all her papers in order?"

"Yaas, suh."

"Then you are satisfied that she is all right?"

"No, suh," drawled the spy.

"Why not?" asked Gaston, sharply.

"I can't say, Mr. Gaston. I jes' don't reckon she's all right."

"Well, then, watch her closely. There's too much talk going on in this camp. The very niggers are discussing secret orders

from Richmond. Anybody can pick up enough loose gossip in Martinsburg to damage this army and damn the Confederacy." And, to Gailliard: "Captain, did you learn anything about that mulatto laundress that General Stuart's Bob picked up in Martinsburg last week?"

"She gossips—like all—niggers. That's all, sir," said the boy. He had reddened and choked a little at the word nigger.

"What did she gossip about?" demanded Mr. Gaston.

"She said she'd heard that the cavalry were going to raid Pennsylvania. Wanted to know if 'we-all' were going."

Gaston said angrily to Colonel Johnston: "I told you how it is in this goddam camp. How do you keep your own camp clean of gabblers?"

"Lock 'em up," replied Johnston tersely. "Bragg's orders."

"He's damned right! Vespasian, if you hear a word out of this Vail woman, lock her up! And you, Jack, find that yellow girl who washes the General's shirts, and tell her to shut her yellow mouth or go to the calaboose! I want you to watch her, anyway. She has been seen talking to the Vail woman. I've sent for Rose O'Neil. I'm turning her loose on Mary Vail. She's in Martinsburg now. Any least sign—any loose talk about the cavalry and Pennsylvania—and you fetch both these women to me—the mulatto Lyndon, and Mary Vail, I mean. I've sent Belle Boyd into Chambersburg; and I'm damned if I let this cursed gossip leak into the Yankee lines to hang her and destroy Jeb Stuart and his whole command."

III

Starlight drenched the Valley of Virginia with a thin silvery lustre. The night air was like the aroma of pale wine grapes in vintage.

From the great mansion with its lighted windows came the sound of dance music at intervals, or the solo clang of Joe Sweeny's banjo ripping out "Ben Cotton's Walkaround" or "Oh, Lord, Ladies!"

Always where Stuart stopped there was dancing, and pretty women. Wherever he halted in town or hamlet, country girls put on their best calico and the Quality its loveliest rag of treasured silk, to dance to one of his cavalry bands or romp through a reel to the ringing ripple of his 9th Virginia minstrel's banjo.

Jeb Stuart, in his gayest uniform, yellow sash, patent leather

boots and gold spurs, was dancing every dance; and his boyish gaiety swept every laughing girl into a scented vortex around him.

Here all hearts loyal to the scarlet battle flag with its blue saltire and stars beat wildly, defiantly, as the grey uniformed youngsters whirled beauty in the dance.

Here also was a wonderful source of information to those reckless enough to seek it—to listen surreptitiously to a whisper here and there—catch a veiled glance and decode its meaning.

And here Quality and village maid, Dandridge and dairy-maid, danced and laughed and pirouetted and footed it to banjo and cavalry band.

And here, lovely, flushed, and sparkling, was Pauline Cushman, known as Mrs. Vail in Martinsburg, dancing exquisitely with Von Borcke, who never before had held so enchanting an armful of floating grace to his gold-laced breast.

The apple toddy, too, was delightfully inflaming to wits and hearts; and there were exquisite vintages from The Bower cellars, too, older than the oldest Negro on the plantations.

Bob, in full African elegance, was there to help out the Dandridge servants. And by his side, in snowy kerchief and starched white, tripped Lucille, Headquarters laundress to Major General J. E. B. Stuart—to fetch and carry and wait upon the gay and great; and to listen with all her small, close-set ears, for a word that might ruin the flower of the Confederate cavalry some blue and golden October day—God willing.

Once she caught a whispered word from a staff lieutenant—Channing Price—to another boy, John Pelham; something about taking two guns of his own and two from Hart's battery——

Once she heard something about a Colonel Imboden in West Virginia—something relative to getting the enemy away from the Potomac fords.

Twice, in the merry press around the punch bowl, she caught phrases relative to cutting railroads; and the name of a town, Chambersburg.

Mrs. Vail, dancing with a very young officer, was suddenly thirsty. Oh, no, no toddy; merely a little glass of Bower House Madeira—

In all the engaging glory of her billowy crinolines she stepped out to the veranda—and farther out among the Cherokee roses in the thin, silvery starlight where great, phantom oak stood lacing the dewy lawn with intricate shadows.

Close to her glided a slim shape in starched white.

"Pauline?"

"Quick, then!"

"John Pelham takes four guns somewhere. Imboden draws our cavalry away from the fords. Railroad to be cut somewhere. Chambersburg, I think——"

"When?"

"I don't know. To-night, I believe. Is John Babcock here?"

"Yes. Go back and listen."

The little laundress slipped away among the massed roses as white as her starched dress and kerchief. The very young staff officer was already looking along the veranda for Mrs. Vail, two slim brimming glasses in his hands, tremulous with golden Madeira. She came slowly out into the starlight to meet him. She kissed his lifted glass very solemnly. She said:

"To The Cause, Captain. God go with horse and guns, to-night!"

The lad looked at her, pale and startled. Then his stiff, scared face relaxed and cleared. Because it was impossible that this pretty Maryland woman could know about a flying battery of horse artillery and fifteen hundred reckless horsemen destined to terrify half a continent.

"To God and the guns, and the loveliest eyes on earth," he said. Then he bowed from his slim waist and drank to the trinity.

She broke a white bud from its stem and gave it to him, and the boy blushed and drew the stem of the Cherokee rose through a small gold-edged slit in his buttoned cavalry jacket.

Banjo, strings, fiddles, now; and a young girl playing a harp; and Jeb Stuart's clear, joyous voice leading the singing of the "Stirrup Cup":

"Wine in the cup and cup to lip!
Good-bye, dear heart, good-bye!
Saddle and sword and spur and whip,
And a glance of the eye—good-bye!
Here's a cup to the Stars and Bars,
And a cheer and a laugh and a sigh—
Venus adieu, salute O Mars!
Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye!"

Then the silvery finale of the bugles ending the evening; and the ball at The Bower was history.

Through hazy starlight and a thin mist from the river, cavalier

and lady, swain and maid, drifted away into the October night.

Mary Vail curtsied to host and hostess and took her graceful leave. The little laundress carried her cloak out to the buggy where her homespun driver sat waiting to take her back to the boarding house in Martinsburg.

The driver was John Babcock. The little laundress could have clapped her hands—and herself into the guard-house.

Then, as Pauline Cushman set a silver-slippered foot upon the buggy step, she felt the lightest of touches on her gaily shawled shoulder; and turned slowly around to meet the sombre gaze of Vespasian Chancellor.

"One moment, ma'am," he said.

There was a ghostly silence.

"What is it you wish?" she managed to ask him.

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but the Provost Marshal wishes a word with you. Pray step this way, ma'am."

Pauline Cushman paled a little. But she lifted her head calmly and looked across the grass at the cavalry camp on the hill, where white tents glimmered in the starlight.

"Will you lend me your arm, sir?" she murmured.

From the buggy seat, John Babcock, slouched in the buggy, looked after her, dumbly, as she moved slowly away, leaning on the arm of the Confederate chief of scouts.

The little laundress, also, was looking after her.

Officers and ladies gathered there on the veranda steps were watching the scene gravely. Somebody said to Babcock: "There are other carriages behind you. Drive on and pull up under the trees over there."

He sat up stupidly, shook his reins, and the buggy creaked ahead, turning to the right, and drew up again somewhere among the oak trees.

Here he slumped motionless. And, to him, in a little while, crept a slim shape through the gloom and mist—the little laundress in deadly alarm, barefoot once more, and in her single, faded garment.

"Evenin', suh," she said softly, "H'it's a night of stars, suh."

He recognized one of the night passphrases of Pinkerton's operators, and replied with the agreed answer, "Yes, it's a night of stars and bars. How many stars do you count?"

"Thirteen," she whispered.

"Add thirteen to a hundred and six," he said.

"Done. And the answer is?"

"The Union forever. . . . What has happened to Number 11?"

"She has been arrested. They have her in the Provost tent. Stuart, Borcke and Pelham have been there to question her. Vespasian Chancellor and Captain Gailliard have discovered evidence against her in her room in Martinsburg. I don't know what the evidence may be, but there is a military court sitting drumhead, now. You had better try to get away."

"If I go it will look bad for her," said Babcock quietly.

"If you stay they will hang you, too; and that won't help her. Have you a horse, hidden?"

"Yes."

"Then get back to Major Allen and tell him that Stuart's cavalry and Pelham's artillery leave to-night and cross the river. The talk is of Pennsylvania and Chambersburg. Imboden is to draw our cavalry away from the fords. Leave your buggy there and find your horse. For God's sake, hurry!"

"Are you involved in any suspicion?" he asked hoarsely.

"Not that I know of."

"You remain to take your chances?"

"Yes."

He got out of the buggy, tied the horse.

"I'll see you through with me if you say so," he whispered.

"No."

She turned her back on him and walked away through the dew-wet grass, hurrying as soon as the trees concealed her; and came breathless and anxious to the cook-tent and shanty where the Headquarters' black servants were established.

"Whar yuh been a-traipsin'?" demanded Bob, suspiciously.

The girl giggled.

"Huh! Co'tin' long o' some no 'count nigger!" sniffed Bob disdainfully. "Mars Gailliard he done been askin' 'bout yuh-all."

Her heart stood still.

"What does he want of me, Bob?" she managed to ask lightly.

"Mo' co'tin'," said Bob ominously; "but not de kin' ob co'tin' yuh been a-doin'. Yuh gotta go to Mars Dandridge—ober dar to de big house. Dars a co't martial holden ober dar. Das de kin' ob co't gwine teach you sum'fin you don't know, nigger gal!"

"Who, *me*?" she asked saucily, and with death in her heart.

"Yaas, yuh! 'Long ob all de debblin' an' de gwines on in dis hyah cav'ly camp."

"What you mean, Bob?"

" Das what I mean. De debbil's in ev'ybody. Debbil in yuh, too, ah reckon. Dey done catch a Yankee spy, an' dey gwine hang her in de mawnin'—er, mebbe in de sunset hour. An' dars de co't an' dars de co'tin' yuh gwine git. An' Mars Gailliard he sez——"

" All right," said Gailliard's voice from the darkness. He came up, took the little laundress by her delicate arm, very gently.

" Clear the cook-tent, Bob. Clear out everybody. I want to talk to Lucille. Light a lantern, Bob, and keep these niggers away—"

He led the girl into the cook-tent, dropped the flap, lifted a lantern and took her by her slender hand, turning it over so that he could examine the roots of the finger nails.

They were palely bluish. Well, then, she *was* black.

" Where have you been since the dance ended ? " he demanded.

She hung her head sulkily: " Dunno," she muttered.

" Yes, you do. Where have you been ? "

" I won't tell on him," she retorted defiantly.

" Tell on whom ? "

" Only he's a lieutenant; and I won't tell you what we done."

" What you did ? " repeated Gailliard, sharply.

" Down by the river," she giggled.

" Oh, that's what you've been up to, is it ! " growled Gailliard. " Well, you're a saucy wench, and too damned fond of kissing."

" I like it," she admitted, looking up at him demurely. Death lay cold in her frightened heart.

" Listen to me, Lucille," he said; " they've caught a Yankee spy in Bower House. There's no mistake about it. She's that Mary Vail of Martinsburg. She really is Pauline Cushman, of the Yankee Secret Service. Do you know her ? "

A silence.

" Do you or don't you ? " he demanded.

" Yes, sir, I does."

" I *know* you do. You were seen speaking to her several days ago. Besides, she admits it. Now, Lucille, where did you know Pauline Cushman ? "

" I was her dresser and maid in the theatre."

" So she says. When did you leave her ? "

" When I heard she-all was a Yankee."

" Well, you seem to tell the truth. That is what she says, also. Besides, I'm certain that you really are a black girl. I thought maybe you were not. But I reckon you're what you say you are."

He took her by her soft, brown arm again: "The gentlemen of the military court desire to see you. Come with me and don't be frightened."

They walked together over the grassy hill in the misty radiance of the stars. The girl was almost faint with grief and fear, but she wriggled coquettishly against him to free his arm, then dropped her velvety little hand, searching until it nestled into his.

"Marse Stuart won't scold me, will he, Captain Gailliard?" she murmured.

"He is there."

"Is they gwine do me a harm, suh?"

"No. But this is a most damnable thing that this actress woman has tried to do to us! Betray our secret movements to the Yankees on the very eve——" He checked himself with an oath.

Lucille whimpered: "She seemed lak a kind, good lady, suh. Only when I found out she was a Yankee——"

"She's a devil. She's been in our lines before. Chancellor nearly caught her once. We've got her this time, anyway."

The clustered candle lights in the great hall dazzled the little laundress as they entered Bower House. Sentries on guard held them; then they went into a lamp-lit library where several officers sat whispering at a table; and Pauline Cushman lay apparently asleep deep in a huge upholstered chair.

She opened her eyes and straightened up when the little laundress came slowly into the room.

"Well, sir?" demanded a major of cavalry, very quietly.

Captain Gailliard, at attention, said: "The girl is a genuine Negro and is perfectly truthful, sir."

The officers, after whispering together, decided to examine her, and she was formally called and sworn.

"Oh, gentlemen," said Pauline Cushman quietly, "there is no need for all this, is there?" And she looked at Gail Loveless with a pallid smile and said: "Poor little Lucille Lyndon. You were a good maid and dresser to me."

A captain of cavalry said to the little laundress: "You recognize and identify this—lady?"

"Yes, suh."

"She is the well-known actress, Pauline Cushman?"

"Yes, suh."

He turned to another officer of horse artillery, who merely shook his head and said: "I have no question to ask this coloured girl."

To Lucille the grave, weary-eyed captain of cavalry said in his pleasant voice: "That is all. You may go."

She looked at Pauline Cushman, who looked steadily back at her.

"I loved you, ma'am," said the little laundress, "—only you turned Yankee."

"I love you still," said Pauline with her pallid smile.

"I—I hope, ma'am, that you'll come to no harm," faltered the little laundress. She had turned quite pale for a mulatto.

"Nothing really can ever harm the soul," said Pauline Cushman.

So they acted the last scene and parted; the ruling passion strong in death, and both of them perfect in their art even in the shadow of Death's own descending curtain.

Captain Gailliard followed her to the veranda; and here the girl seemed to grow giddy, holding to the painted rail a moment and swaying backward—into his arms.

She was a light burden. He lifted and carried her out to a garden seat under the great oaks, returned to the house and came again, bringing a glass of cold water.

A noise of spurs and sabres on the veranda aroused her. The gentlemen of the drumhead court were returning to the cavalry camp on the hill. Gailliard, who went hastily to join them, stood aside at salute as Pauline Cushman appeared between two troopers with drawn sabres. She moved with confidence and grace into the misty light of the firmament, and with all the dreamy acquiescence of one who, prepared for death, sets out tranquilly toward those far bournes from which no traveller returns.

The little laundress rose on legs that trembled under her, and crept across the grass to where Captain Gailliard stood.

"Are they going to hang her?" she whispered.

"Yes."

"*Now*?"

"To-morrow at sunset. They are taking her to the Provost. You had better go back to your cook-tent. Shall I walk with you?"

"If you—would be—so kind, suh——"

They moved slowly and in silence across the grass. The cavalry camp, as yet, showed no sign of midnight departure; sentries walked their posts; horses stamped the picket line; lights were extinguished except at Headquarters and in the Provost Guard tent.

"Is she in there?" whispered the little laundress.

Before Captain Gailliard could reply, a hissing rush and a glare of light dazzled them as a rocket soared skyward from the river below. Another red glare blinded them; another and another, as rocket after rocket swished upward, roaring above the fords; and bang, bang, bang went the cavalry rifles and carbines in the misty bushes.

Instantly their ears were deafened by a perfect hell of trumpet and bugle blasts; roar of voices from darkened tents; shouting of half-dressed officers stumbling out of tents. Torches blazed up everywhere; the trample of excited horses shook the ground; everywhere men were battling with horses, saddling up, pulling their mounts into line; volley after volley of musketry rattled out along the river.

An officer, riding up, called out to Gailliard: "Yankee cavalry attacking at White's Ford!"

In the frightful racket and confusion, amid darkness and fitful torchlight, the little laundress ran crouching among the trampling confusion toward the Provost tent. Under her single garment, strapped to her naked body, was a long razor-edged knife in its velvet sheath. She threw herself flat on the wet grass, felt for it, drew it, and reaching out, slit the white wall-tent swiftly, and without a sound.

So keen her knife's edge, so silently she accomplished it, that the woman, lying on a blanket within, never heard or saw her; nor did the armed sentry, craning his excited neck out the open flap to stare at the rifle flashes along the river below.

It was only when a soft hand touched her cheek that Pauline Cushman sat up swiftly and looked fearfully behind her.

The next instant she was out of her blanket and out of the tent, threading the dusky confusion of milling horses and men—off into starry darkness and down the hill and away to the mountains looming like a ghostly cloud bank low in the west.

The little laundress, trembling at the door of the cook-tent, saw Jeb Stuart gallop up in the torchlight, followed by a staff officer from Hampton; and she heard him say angrily to Rooney Lee:

"Pleasanton has broken into Martinsburg with a thousand cavalry and six guns! Sir, I give you exactly twenty minutes to throw him out and across the Opequon!"

At that instant a frantic sergeant of the Provost Guard rode up, almost too scared to speak, but managed to report the Provost tent-wall slit, and the Yankee spy vanished.

Stuart glared at him, blue eyes ablaze. Suddenly he shouted with laughter:

" I'm glad of it ! " he cried gaily ; " we're off for Pennsylvania, and I don't care whether the whole world knows it ! May God speed her pretty feet ! Stand to horse ! "

In the darkened quarters of the cook-tent the little laundress lay on her blanket amid her baskets and hampers and scattered laundry. Sometimes she shivered from the tips of her delicate toes to her finger ends. Sometimes she quivered with sheer joy in the dreadful game so safely ended where she had faced and defied and euchred Old Man Death.

Close to her tent the troopers were riding on their way down to the Opequon, laughing, joking, bragging that they had twenty minutes in which to chase the Yankee cavalry out of Martinsburg, and that ten minutes would be quite enough.

One of the harum-scarum riders, passing, leaned low from his gaunt horse and pulled up the flap of the cook-tent.

" Where's that pretty little nigger ? " he called out. " I reckon I'll need a laundress myse'f when I'm promoted Gin'ral of this hyar army ! "

The little laundress, lying on her dark blanket, brushed the tears from her frightened eyes and giggled.

II

SKIN DEEP

Captain Jack Gailliard, of the Confederate Secret Service, was a bad young man, according to Alan Pinkerton, known as Major Allen, Chief of the Federal Secret Service. But he was a good young man to gaze upon, even in his careless attire of a Virginia Valley farmer.

He came along whistling blithely that lovely October morning, sauntering down from Stuart's cavalry Headquarters under the oak trees into the charming old village of Martinsburg.

Guileless gaiety made even more innocent his beardless, sun-tanned face. He whistled and sang "Lorena," soulfully.

But his secret young mind was dark with deathly thoughts, and he mediatated stealthy schemes as he strolled along, whistling and singing:

"We loved each other then,
Lorena,
More than we ever dared to tell—"

The while his clever mind was busy with dangerous designs.

For a cipher dispatch from Mr. Gaston, General Lee's chief cipher operator in Richmond, had just come in, warning the Confederate Secret Service operators at Jeb Stuart's Headquarters that, somewhere, another Yankee spy had penetrated the Confederate lines on the Potomac.

Which information made it grimly necessary to identify, catch, and hang that spy, lest Jeb Stuart start on his reckless raid into Pennsylvania and ride to utter ruin with two thousand laughing horsemen.

"It matters little now,
Lorena,
The past is the eternal past,
Our heads will soon lie low,
Lorena—"

he warbled in a tender and melting baritone as he came in sight of the Boyd place—a two-storied house guarded by silver maples, and almost smothered in roses and honeysuckle in late bloom.

Just beyond the house ran a broad, clear, rapid stream—the Opequon—where a young coloured girl knelt on a sandy crescent, washing clothes.

Then suddenly—and as always heretofore—and always to his surprise and hot chagrin, he experienced that same odd, breathless excitement at sight of the girl—felt the same throbbing trouble in his heart, and a swift heat in his boyish cheeks, at the mere nearness of this lithe, brown-skinned, half-naked young girl.

He had seen her at intervals, now, for about three weeks; and this had happened to him from the very first sight of her, had even increased in violence—this sudden, passionate awareness of her—of her lovely, pale brown features, her velvet-fringed eyes, and the slender grace of her warm, breathing body.

That such a girl could have any emotional effect upon a Gailliard of Bayou Princesse seemed incredible.

Annoyed, perplexed, ashamed, he would not even admit it to himself, and yet, here it was happening again—the swift flush painfully warm on his face, and the same and sudden trouble with heart and pulses.

"Mawnin', Captain Gailliard, suh," she drawled in her sweet, childish treble.

"Good morning, Lucille," he replied with forced carelessness. "Are Mr. and Mrs. Boyd at home?"

"No, suh; but I reckon Miss Belle is. Look at all these hyar pretty clothes! Miss Belle done buy 'em when she wuz visitin'—in de Washington prison——"

"Who told you that?" he inquired, stopping beside her.

"Miss Belle she done tell me, suh. Axed me wuz I keerful, an' if I knowed how to wash fine linen."

He glanced down, unwillingly, into her upturned face. The girl was so delicately brown—scarce darker than a brunette—so daintily made, and so pretty that always when he saw her his first suspicions revived, that here was a girl of his own colour in disguise; and he could scarcely force himself to believe that she really was a Negro.

But the pale bluish half-moon at the base of her finger nails had proved her dusky skin to be no disguise She certainly had African blood in her.

"How are your flaming love affairs coming on, Lucille?" he inquired, with dry humour, yet oddly unquiet.

The girl giggled and turned to her washing, with a provocative twist of her slim hips.

"You better keep away from white soldiers," he added harshly.

"They's always pesterin'," she laughed, soaping a chemise of frail, sheer stuff. "Yuh done kiss me, once, yuhse'f, suh," she added with shy audacity.

"I did," he said, reddening, "but I had a reason."

"What reason, suh?" She kept on busily scrubbing and rinsing.

"Well, I wanted to look at your finger nails—for one thing. And it's damned lucky for you they passed inspection."

She laughed: "Yuh 's'picioned I wuz a white gal come a-spyin', Captain Gailliard, suh?"

"I wanted to be sure," he admitted sulkily.

"Tha's the onliest reason why you kiss me?"

"—And I wanted to take a good look at that little bridge of cartilage which divides your nostrils underneath, Lucille."

"Wha's that, suh?" she asked, opening her lovely, dark-fringed eyes.

"Usually a certain test. If it's wide and thick it's African. Yours isn't. . . . And if it hadn't been for your nails I'd have arrested you."

"Lan's sakes, why?" demanded the girl, laughing and wide-eyed.

"Quadroon, or octoroon, or whatever you are, Lucille, there's enough white in you to give you a white girl's nose. And, only for the certain sign on your finger nails——"

She lifted her slim, wet fingers and looked at the exquisitely formed nails.

"If I wuz white," she said, "maybe you'd come a-co'tin' me, Captain Gailliard, suh?"

"Certainly," said he dryly. "I always court every pretty girl I see."

"Sorry I isn't white," she said with an enchanting smile over her bare shoulder, "but tha's how things is in this hyar world o' sin, Captain Gailliard, suh. Yuh oughta know it, too, kaze I reckon yuh is a sinner."

"You think I am, Lucille?"

"Yes, suh. Mischief in yuh eyes."

"In yours, too."

They instantly opened wide again, like dark fringed orchids, and he felt the blood stir in his face and heart.

Then he set his jaw and scowled at her. "Your former friend, Pauline Cushman, the Yankee spy, got away in the excitement when the Yankee cavalry attacked last week," he said. "I am wondering where she got a knife to slit the Provost guard-tent."

"Lan' sakes," said the girl, "did she-all do that?"

"That's what she did," he nodded grimly; "and now she's gone to the Yankees with her budget of news. . . . It's lucky for you that you told the truth about your relations with her to the gentlemen of the military court."

He gave her a hard look; and it hurt him, somehow, to do it:

"Until I'd taken a look at your finger nails," he continued, "I was pretty sure you were one of their actress-women spies. That's what Mr. Chancellor thought, too."

"If I wuz a Yankee spy, would you-all hang me, Captain Gailliard, suh?" she giggled.

"I don't do any hanging. But they meant to hang Pauline Cushman."

"Hang a *white lady*!"

"Why not? She attempted to send General Jeb Stuart and two thousand poor boys to their deaths. Do you suppose the Confederate Government can afford to take a chance with such a woman?"

"No, suh." She sighed. "I reckon," she added sadly, "that the Gin'ral ain't a-ridin' to Pennsylvania no mo'. Oh, lawzee-me! I wuz a-hopin' an' a-prayin' how he fix up to ketch old Lincoln in Washington. An' tha's whut I wuz a-wishin' an' a-prayin' along o' washin' this hyar chemise fo' Miss Belle when yuh come a-whistlin', suh."

"Don't worry, Lucille," he said, smiling at her pious fervour.

"No, suh. But I wuz a-wonderin' how come Gin'ral Jeb Stuart send me down hyar a-washin' fo' li'l Miss Boyd? He say how he like how I wash an' iron. So I wuz a-puzzlin' an' a-wonderin', an' I kinda figgered out he done send me away kaze he gwine ride to Chambersburg——"

"Lucille," interrupted the young man sharply, "if you don't learn to mind your business and hold your tongue, your career as a laundress in this army will end!"

"Suh?" she asked blankly.

"I mean it. Stop trying to puzzle out what General Stuart

is going to do! I told you a week ago to mind your own business and control your curiosity. If you don't you'll be sent out of camp as a common nuisance."

The girl seemed scared.

"But Yaller Bob done tole me," she whimpered.

"Told you what?"

"How Gin'ral Jeb Stuart is a-fixin' to take him an' Joe Sweeny 'long o' Major Pelham an' de hoss-guns, kaze de Gin'ral reckon he can't git along nohow wifout Yaller Bob——"

"That damned yellow nigger is too uppity!" said Gailliard angrily. "I'm going to tell the General how he brags and gossips. If any Yankee spy gets in here and listens around the cook-tent, he'll learn enough to destroy this army!"

"But ev'body's talkin' 'bout de ridin' raid to Chambersburg, suh——"

"If that's so, then there won't be any! And listen to me, Lucille; if you hear any such gossip, you come to my tent and tell me, and I'll turn any blabbing Negro or soldier over to the Provost Marshal! And if you hear of, or happen to see, any man or woman you don't know, prowling around the cook-tent or laundry-tent, come instantly and let me know. Or tell Mr. Chancellor. Do you understand?"

"Yes, suh."

"Very well, then. Be a good girl; do your washing and mind your own affairs. . . . And don't go traipsin' around with young men, white or black."

"Lawzee me," said the girl, "I does love to laugh an' carry on, suh."

"I know you do. And you'd better not. . . . You said, once, that you liked to be kissed, too."

She laughed.

"*Do* you?"

"Yes, suh. Don't *yuh*?"

"No," said he, "it's damn foolishness."

He walked on abruptly toward the Boyd House. He was no longer whistling, and there had come into his flushed features a strange, strained look.

When he entered the gateway and approached the rose-smothered veranda, through the blossoming sprays he saw a slight figure seated in a rocking chair, dressed in the freshest summer toilette of cool pink muslin.

Close-plaited braids of dark hair shaded clear, pale cheeks and

delicate brows, from under which a pair of brilliant eyes were observing him.

La Belle Rebelle! Miss Boyd. Yesterday a schoolgirl, not long out of Mr. Staley's Washington College—a graduate at sixteen. And, to-day, the most celebrated agent in the Confederate Secret Service.

Now she had returned to her Virginia home from a term in the Old Capitol Prison and a later arrest in Baltimore, and had been sent out of the Union lines with the cold warning that she would certainly hang if she ever came back.

Captain Gailliard swept the grass with his hat in a profound bow, and Belle Boyd rose and swept him with her brilliant eyes, and the veranda floor with a graceful curtsey.

At her invitation he came up and reseated her with a grand air, and then took a chair himself.

Was Miss Belle in health? She was. And he? In perfect health—with deep gratitude for her polite inquiry.

A pause; their voices lower after a cautious glance around:

"Any news, Miss Belle?"

"That new laundress of ours is just a giddy little thing with no harm in her, Captain Gailliard. All she thinks of is to flirt with anybody, white or black, and go dancing about town when the moon is up."

"She gossips."

"All Negroes do. You know that."

"But she's always talking about Pennsylvania," he said irritably.

"Everybody knows that Jeb Stuart is going," said the girl quietly. "Every cavalryman, every one of John Pelham's gunners, every camp-follower, every Negro knows. Joe Sweeny's made up a tune about it for his banjo. Yellow Bob brags that he's to be taken to take care 'ob de Gin'ral.' It's known in Richmond; it's known on the Potomac."

"That's terrible," murmured Gailliard, twisting his strong, bronzed fingers.

"It can't be helped," said Miss Boyd coolly. "It always is the same. No secret remains a secret very long inside our lines. And yet—here is the saving grace of it all—no really vital secret of ours ever leaks out into the Yankee lines. Do you realize that, Captain Gailliard?"

"Their spies carry out information to McClellan, don't they?" he demanded.

"They do. Always erroneous information—so far. Don't you

know, Captain, that we never have been surprised in any major engagement? But *they* have been."

"That is true, ma'am," he admitted.

"Let me tell you what I believe is the trouble with the Yankee spy system. They have a good Secret Service organization; their operators get into our lines; their scouts and couriers carry news back to McClellan. And *always* the news is wrong. And that is because their spies are not trained to estimate numbers. They have not yet learned how to count men, horses, guns at a glance.

"Spies send back grossly exaggerated estimates; their Major Allen reports these figures to McClellan. It petrifies him and he demands more troops.

"And that is why we beat them in battle after battle and continue to block them and scare them and hold our lines with less than one-third the number of troops that they have, and less than a quarter of the numbers which they believe we possess."

The two young people looked at each other for a moment, then laughed—the clear, gay laughter of the very young.

"My goodness," she said, "how stupid they are. Some day I'll tell you about my prison experience. All the time I was in prison I kept on sending information into our lines. Under their blue Yankee noses!——"

They went into fits of laughter again, the girl rocking to and fro in unrestrained mirth, the young man trying to control his and recover his voice.

At last, and with some soberness: "Miss Belle," he said, "Mr. Gaston telegraphs us that another Yankee spy is inside our lines somewhere."

"So I hear," said the girl, becoming serious in her turn.

He said: "Somehow or other Gaston has learned that this spy has been here some time and is known as Number 13 in the Federal Secret Service."

"Our people caught and hanged a spy whose number was 13," said the girl.

Gailliard nodded: "A month ago. His name was Madden. Major Allen must have given the same number to the spy we are warned to look for. Do you know, ma'am, whether it's a man or a woman?"

"I don't," said Miss Boyd, "but it may be a woman. You remember that charming widow, Mrs. Greenhow—who was Rose O'Neil—poor Bob Greenhow's wife? She left the Old Capitol Prison before I arrived. But by 'prisoner's telegraph'

—you understand—she got word to me that the Yankees are sending a number of clever women into the South; and that we should watch for them. That actress who escaped last week—Pauline Cushman—was one of them, no doubt. I don't know her number. There's another—a Mrs. Edmonds. And still another, a Miss Loveless—Lily Loveless, I believe. Of course they have numbers in the Federal Service. So it may well be that there is another woman in our lines, Captain Gailliard."

He shot a keen, troubled look at her:

"Jeb Stuart can't go to Pennsylvania if there's a spy in camp to report his intentions," he said.

"He told me he was going, anyway," said the girl, "spy or no spy."

"I don't see how he dare ride out, ma'am."

"Oh, he just laughs and says that a spy will send out wrong information, anyway. . . . Last night he and Major von Borcke, and John Pelham rode up to the veranda here; and they had Joe Sweeny and his banjo; and they sat their horses and serenaded me—just like a parcel of boys at the V. M. I.

"So my father and mother made them dismount and come in, and they had cake and juleps—all except Jeb Stuart—and Papa said it was highly dangerous for the General to go to Chambersburg, but the General acted like a schoolboy, and made Mamma dance a polka with him to Joe's banjo—and von Borcke danced with me—and Papa called in Lucille—she's a pretty, dainty thing! —and made her dance with him in her white starched skirts and kerchief—oh, don't laugh, Captain Gailliard, for that coloured girl can dance like a dream on those slim little feet of hers——"

"You spoil your personal servants, ma'am——"

"Of course we do! But who doesn't spoil children?——"

"—Makes them uppity," muttered the youth.

"So it does, sir; my mammy bullies me; my maid does what she pleases; so does our Jimmy. But I will say that this pretty little laundress General Stuart sent me to keep while he's away is always obliging and never lazy or impertinent. I'm very fond of Lucille already, and I know I shall hate to part with her when the General returns from Chambersburg."

"If ever," said Gailliard gloomily. "Well, ma'am, Chancellor is out prowling after that spy they warn us of, and I'm going to ride over to Wade Hampton's lines and look about; and I suppose you'll be here or flirting with Old Grumble Jones——"

The girl clapped her lovely hands and laughed: "I *do* flirt with him—poor old wounded thing! How did you know?"

"Oh," said Gailliard, "you'd make saucy eyes at the Pope himself!"

Her laughter ran out uncontrolled: "But *you*, Captain, seem to be, with your gay and reckless reputation for gallantries—and indiscretions—seem indifferent to my 'saucy' eyes."

"Ma'am, I was at your feet at first glance——"

"No, sir, you were not. A girl knows. And *I* knew instantly."

"Pray, ma'am, what did you know?" he asked, smilingly.

"That your heart was as remote as your gaze. That your gallant words and chivalrous manners were mechanical——"

"Oh, ma'am, how can you say——"

"—Because I could see that your heart and mind were already preoccupied and engaged sentimentally elsewhere"—she laughed—"perhaps *generally* elsewhere; but I believe *particularly*. Anyway, you don't care a button for me."

It was quite useless for him to swear that his heart was hers alone; La Belle Rebelle only jeered and taunted him.

"At Major von Borcke's dance the other night," she said, "you gazed more romantically at other girls than you did at me."

"Because, mademoiselle, you gazed more romantically at Lieutenant Price than you did at me!"

A slight colour tinged the ivory white of her cheeks:

"Why not, sir? He, at least, behaved as though he adored me. But *you* ignored me! You even looked oftener and more interestedly at little Lucille the laundress, who was serving punch, than you did at *me*!"

To his consternation the blood instantly heated his sun-browned cheeks and settled into a flush.

"You ought to blush," said the girl, "for your neglect of me. That shows you still have a conscience and are not wholly hardened." She laughed at him again as her father and mother came up the path—the former, who looked worn and ill, wearing the uniform of the 2nd Virginia Infantry.

"Mother," she cried, "I am the toast of the camp, and even General Stonewall Jackson calls me his 'dear child'! And yet this bad young man thinks that our little laundress, Lucille, is better worth looking at!"

For the first time in his irresponsible and heart-devastating career this popular young man found himself confused and embarrassed and utterly unable to carry it with his usual and debonair impertinence, or make his forced laugh sound genuine.

Even La Belle Rebelle was surprised at the effect of her innocent raillery, so hot and flustered had her victim become, and so incapable of retort in kind.

However, he managed to take his congé with graceful propriety ; he kissed her mother's thin, pale hand ; kissed hers, which had the smooth beauty of her eighteen years ; saluted with engaging formality her pallid father and took himself off, raging inwardly.

What the devil had happened to him, then, that a light, unmeaning jest from a jeering girl should set his face aflame and knock his common sense to bits !

Instead of walking he began to stride, as though to out-distance whatever dogged him. For, in his anger, he seemed to be vaguely aware that *something* was dogging him—haunting him. Something indefinably alarming.

Furiously, he began to realize what it might be—for his mind's eye already beheld it, recognized it—the phantom of a slim, brown girl with eyes like dark fringed orchids and lovely little hands and naked feet——

Vespasian Chancellor, returning from the cavalry regiments up the river, riding his bony old sorrel racker, reined up on the Bower road.

He had, he said, discovered no trace of this mysterious Operator 13, of whom Richmond warned them. The Provost guard at Darksville had arrested a dozen people, so far, but all had proper passes, and he had nothing really against any of them. He said he was satisfied that they were merely good, loyal strangers from the surrounding country, bringing in, afoot or in market carts, their spare farm produce to the brigade cavalry camps.

" No, suh," he repeated to Captain Gailliard, " this hyar Federal Operator 13 is none of these people. Maybe we ought to look for him in our own uniform."

" I've been through the recruits in the 9th and 10th Virginia and 2nd South Carolina Cavalry to-day," said Gailliard. " That completes my search of the Cavalry Division. I think we should look for this ghostly Number 13 among servants and camp-followers at all regimental and brigade Headquarters."

Chancellor, lounging on his horse, remarked that he had already done so.

" Somehow or other, Captain," he drawled, " I can't seem to get it outen my haid that the quadroon laundress, Lucille Lyndon, is into this business."

"You heard her testimony at the drumhead court last week?" inquired Gailliard with nervous emphasis which made his smooth voice a trifle harsh.

"I did, suh."

"The court found nothing against her."

"No, suh."

"Well, then, why do you suspect her?"

"I been askin' myse'f, *is* she a suah-enough dyed-in-the-wool nigger?" drawled Vespasian Chancellor, cutting himself a quid from a twist of tobacco. Slowly absorbing it he ruminated a while and finally concluded: "Yaas, I reckon she's black. But they is black snakes, tuh."

"Some."

"Not many," agreed the chief of spies gently. "Whut puzzles me," he continued, "is my feelin's. Sometimes my feelin's work like a houn'-dawg's nose. I got a instinct."

"I know you have."

"Yaas, suh. Allus had a instinct when things are not quite right. Keeps pesterin' me twill I go and find out one way or another."

"You had that instinct about Pauline Cushman," said Gailliard gravely, "and you were right."

"Yaas, suh, I wuz."

"Have you that same instinct concerning Lucille Lyndon?"

"Waal, suh, it's hard to say. Sometimes I have, and then again I h'ain't. Seems like some days I feel she's not all what she oughta be. An' then, again, I reckon she's only a pore li'l coloured gal an' the onliest thoughts in her pretty haid is to giggle an' kiss."

"Is she much—that way?" Gailliard seemed to find some difficulty with his voice.

"You mean carryin' on, suh?"

"Yes."

"I reckon she's a armful."

"L-loose?"

"What yuh call loose, suh! Yuh know how young coloured gals carry on. An' next thing they has a baby."

Gailliard reddened and swallowed hard. He said: "I don't think she's that sort. She's been a lady's maid. That kind of superior coloured girl usually is clever enough to take care of herself."

"Not with a white young marster, suh."

Gailliard said irritably: "She's a free Negro. She has no

white master, young or old. She's smart enough to keep herself out of trouble, I believe."

"Yuh been watchin' her, suh?"

Again the young man reddened; and Vespasian Chancellor looked away, his deep-set, remote gaze on the Shenandoah Hills.

"Yes," said Gailliard, "I have kept an eye on her since the General sent her to the Boyds. Because—well, everybody likes Lucille and makes much of her; and there is careless talk at the Boyds' table—not only among young staff officers, but in high command. You know that, Chancellor."

"I duh, suh. An' I deplore it."

"Any servant can pick up vital information at a dance or dinner table."

"Yaas, suh. And I don't deny they duh pick it up an' *somebody* sends it on to the Yankees. But what saves us is that the damyanks don't know what to do with vital information."

They laughed, and the tension relaxed.

"Look at Little Mac over there," continued Chancellor. "I make no doubt that one of their courier-scouts carried news of the Pennsylvania raid to Major Allen; and that he took it to McClellan. And what do they-all duh about it? Why, they scatter their cavalry all over the continent, chasin' shadows that ain't yet started. And Colonel Imboden already has drawed them off of the Potomac fords."

"That's the trouble," said Gailliard; "General Stuart won't wait for us to catch this Operator Number 13 or scare him and drive him out of camp. If he'd only postpone——"

"No, he won't wait," said Chancellor. "He's jes' a-honin' to go, and by golly he's a-goin', tuh."

"You are sure?"

"I am. All the cavalry are ordered to Darksville to-night. I got that a hour sence from Rooney Lee."

"Then they'll go northward to-morrow?"

"I reckon."

They gazed hard at each other.

"I haven't any faintest idea where to look for this damn Yankee spy," said the younger man. "We have our agents in every marching regiment; and not one of them has discovered the slightest clue. . . . Of course there *could* be a Yank with a telescope, hiding out somewhere hereabouts. God knows there are enough woods and thickets and mountains."

"Yaas, suh, we've had a-plenty of that breed. But they don't

know how to count troops or hosses or guns. What we should fear, suh, is a Yank in our camp, sneakin' around and listenin'. An' last night orders from Richmond were read aloud to every regiment of hoss in this hyar division—not only by the brigadiers an' colonels, but by the Gin'ral himself. An' I ask you, Captain Gailliard, is that fair to us in the Secret Service? No, 'tain't."

"It really isn't."

"No, 'tain't. We can't be responsible. . . . Waal, I'm ridin' out, suh. Old Stonewall wants I should get through and look over things. I take a expert wire-tapper—Billings."

"You'd better be careful. We've stirred up every Yank north of the river, you know."

"Yaas, suh," drawled Chancellor, "And I aim to watch our line of couriers between Richmond and Baltimore. That's the road any Yank would follow outen the Valley. And if they's any gallopin' North to-night, takin' news outen this hyar camp to Little Mac, I aim to stop it if God favours me."

"Do you want me to go?"

"No, suh."

"Why not?"

"I reckon I'll ask you politely, suh, to see that nobody leaves camp twill the cavalry ride out of Darksville."

"Why, the Provost Guard——"

"I know, suh. I mean—nobody, *yuh* know."

There was a strained pause.

"H'it's my instinct workin', suh," drawled Chancellor.

"I see. . . . You mean that I should continue to keep an eye on Lucille?"

"I duh, suh."

Another silence. In the young man's head and body heavy pulses were throbbing, and he felt the cold of apprehension.

"Have you discovered anything at all, Chancellor?"

"No, suh. Not a damn thing. It's only my feelin's that won't quit pesterin' me."

Warmth stole into the young man's chilled veins again.

"Very well," he said quietly. "And do be careful out there——"

He concluded with a slight gesture northward; then stood looking after the Chief of Spies who had put his racker to a gangling canter.

About sunset, without bugle or trumpet, the grey-jacketed cavalry began to pass toward the rendezvous at Darksville, squadron

trampling after squadron. John Pelham's guns were on the way, too, thumping and clanking down through the sunset light, followed by a section from Hart's horse-battery—all moving along the bush-bordered, tree-shaded roads and across a rickety railway line, thence down toward McCoy's Ford, and Destiny.

That fine mansion on the hill, known as Bower House, or The Bower, was all ablaze with candles.

They were dancing there as usual; colonels, majors, staff-officers, even General J. E. B. Stuart himself, gaily, delightfully, with Belle Boyd, who wore a lovely gown bought in Baltimore by God's grace and the solemn acquiescence of General Dix.

Jack Gailliard prowled the veranda, peering in on all the brilliancy, and listening to the voices and laughter and to a stringed orchestra led by Joseph Sweeny on the banjo.

But Lucille Lyndon was not among the black servants in their turbans and kerchiefs and clean, starched dresses. And whether she was strolling down by the river with a dark-skinned beau or—alas!—with some unprincipled white soldier—preoccupied Jack Gailliard; and he meant to find out.

He had a horse at Headquarters—a fine one, nine-tenths thoroughbred, and taken by him from a Yankee cavalryman when the 6th Pennsylvania Lancers charged the bridge at Antietam.

An orderly—a lank mountaineer spy—saddled and bridled the nag; Captain Gailliard mounted and rode slowly down to the Opequon through the clustered starlight set with a new moon.

A white-clad figure stood on the Boyds' lawn. To his rage his heart suddenly became irregular, beating thickly; and he felt the blood stinging the tanned skin of his cheeks.

"Damnation," he muttered to himself, "am I crazy, or a filthy, lecherous beast!"

He bungled his stirrup as he dismounted, nearly fell; and tethered his horse to the gatepost with shaky fingers.

She was all in white. A white rose was pinned to her snowy kerchief. She was the most delicately lovely thing he ever had looked upon.

"Good God," he said to himself. But, to the little laundress: "Evening, Lucille. What are you doing down here all alone, with so many dusky beaux waiting for you down by the river?"

"Evenin', Captain Gailliard," she replied in her soft voice. "I ain't bother my haid along of any camp nigger."

"You demand quality in a beau, don't you?" he asked, walking toward her.

"Yes, suh, quality." She added impertinently: "Coloured or white, suh, but it boun' to be quality."

"Didn't I warn you against unprincipled white men?" he demanded sharply.

"Yes, suh, but I ain't scared of nobody, suh."

"You think you know how to look after yourself, do you?"

"Yes, suh, I think I does." She fingered the white Cherokee rose pinned to her kerchief.

She was very near him; her starched skirts touched his leg. His heart began to pound. There was the same swift heat in his cheeks, and dryness in his throat; a sort of soundless crash of his senses. Inwardly raging, he waited to control his voice and clear his mind. And the little laundress looked at him, faintly smiling.

Suddenly something blazed darkly in his brain. And then she was in his arms, warm, yielding, her pliant body moulded to his own.

A moment—not brief—before mental chaos became sense again. He released her. Neither spoke under the breathless lustre of the stars.

Then her voice, soft, unsteady: "Is *that* why you came, suh? To kiss me?"

It was a moment more before he could force a laugh.

"No," he said, "that's not the reason. I want to talk to you."

She giggled: "Pretty way you have of talking, suh."

"I thought I'd better begin that way," he said, "because the rest isn't pleasant."

"No, suh?"

"Not very, Lucille. In fact, it's disagreeable. Because I want to ask you, bluntly, whether you ever repeat to strangers anything you hear in the Boyds' house. Do you?"

"Strangers?" repeated the girl, innocently. "I don't know any."

"You don't know everybody in camp, do you?"

"Most ev'body," she said with a shy laugh.

"I know you're very popular," he said. "Everybody spoils you—the General, the Boyds. All officers have a pleasant word for you. And, I'm sorry to say, most of the soldiers make eyes at you. But that's not what I mean. There are strangers in camp every day—farmers, planters, pedlars, people of all sorts with passes out of neighbouring villages and towns. Do you ever talk to them?"

"I pass the time of day with polite folk that tells me howdy, suh."

"Do you gossip? I mean about army matters? Conversation you hear when the family entertain? Or when officers come here?"

She seemed confused.

"I mean, do you babble to anybody anything you happen to hear?"

"I dunno," she murmured in evident perplexity. But her dull voice and hanging head made it plain to him that here was no clever enemy to the Southland; no trained spy planted by Major Allen; nobody dangerous to the Confederacy save innocently and inadvertently and through the carelessness of the more intelligent who ought to govern their tongues.

He drew a long breath of unconscious relief. It would be rather terrible to discover in this young, dark, pretty thing anything evil enough to hang. He looked at her lovely throat and neck and a slight shiver passed through him.

"Why yuh ask me all these questions, Captain Gailliard, suh?" she inquired with a childish simplicity that shamed him.

"Oh, well," said he, "I know you are all right."

"Yes, suh, I am."

He began to walk to and fro under the stars, his hands clasped behind him. The girl watched him in silence, the vague, half smile on her lips once more.

Then, abruptly, he bade her good night, went quickly to his horse, mounted, and was off in darkness at a gallop.

The girl stood unstirring as long as she could hear his horse's hoofs on the hard, stone road.

When the distant sound had died away she went into the house. Joe, one of the spoiled Negroes of the establishment, in his gaudy servant's livery, was asleep and snoring in the hallway. Others seemed to be in the kitchen across the yard. There was a light there, and another light moving about stables and barnyard.

The little laundress went very quietly up the carpeted stairs to the landing and paused before a closed door. Here Miss Boyd's little sister slept.

Very cautiously Lucille Lyndon opened the door. The child was sound asleep.

Now, gently closing the door, she stole across to her own room which, in her quality of personal maid and laundress, had been allotted her.

In the room, also, slept Miss Belle's own maid, but she was at Bower House, now, in attendance upon the family.

When the girl had entered her room and lighted a candle, she noiselessly locked and bolted the door.

The first thing she did was to lift her white starched skirt and cotton chemise. Under it, belted around her naked body, was the big knife in its velvet sheath.

This she slid out and pressed a spring in the big buck-horn hilt which proved to be hollow. Out of it she drew some small bits of tissue paper, a tiny magnifying glass, a delicate crow-quill pen scarcely thicker than a hairpin; a fine sponge, a small camel's hair brush, and three little glass phials.

First of all she dipped the brush into one of the phials and, with it, carefully stained the half-moon at the base of her finger nails a bluish colour.

Then she slipped off her stockings and touched the base of each pretty toe.

Then, completely disrobing and removing her leather belt, she filled a tin washbowl with water and let fall into it a few drops of black liquid from another phial.

With the aid of an old wooden-rimmed looking glass she went over her entire body, face and limbs with the little sponge—the liquid drying almost instantly to a pale amber tint.

Now she replaced two phials, and the sponge and brush, in the knife hilt, and dressed herself.

The big Cherokee rose lay on the table. From it she detached a broad, heart-shaped petal, laid it over a little square of tissue paper and, with a pair of sewing scissors, cut the tissue into the shape of the rose petal.

Then she sat down at the pine table, dipped her crow-quill into the third phial, and wrote on the tissue paper—though her wet pen showed no stain of ink and left no trace of writing:

MAJOR ALLEN:

Stuart crosses McCoy's Ford to-night, October 10th, riding north toward the mountains, Mercersburg, and Chambersburg.

Two thousand cavalry, four guns.

OPERATOR 13.

This bit of tissue she pinned to the white rose in place of the petal detached; and the lovely flower appeared to be perfect again.

Now she deliberately rolled together the single detached rose-petal and the shred of tissue, swallowed the rather fragrant pellet, extinguished the tallow candle, and went lightly to her window.

No light, now, in quarters, barn, or stable; all was still in the

moon-set starlight. Not a sound save the hushed tinkle and gush of the silvery Opequon over its pebbles and glimmering sands.

She opened her door, stole downstairs. Hanging in the hall closet was an old slouch hat of Mr. Boyd's. There were a pair of heavy, spurred boots there, also. They would keep the dew from her slippers, anyway. She pulled the hat over her short curls; drew on the boots over her slippers, and stole over the carpet to the veranda and out across the dew-wet lawn.

No lights, now, in the village; nothing visible yonder except ghostly white porticoes and shadowy galleries; and tall, still trees in the starlight.

Now, for the first time, the little laundress felt afraid—or perhaps it was the chill of the river mist, thinly rising along the bushes, that made her so cold.

She went a little way up the road, then through an orchard to the open meadow. Not a glimmer of light in Darksville. Nobody could guess that two thousand grey-jackets were standing to horse down there, or that galloping mounted-artillery, saddled, harnessed, and hooked up, awaited only a whispered word of command to the gunners astride their horses.

She could neither see Bower House nor hear the distant dance music. Down along the river not a sound from the sentinels and grey-jacketed vedettes; only a low belt of fog along shores invisible, and a vast misty void beyond.

It seemed a century—it was less than twenty minutes—before she heard a horse coming—not fast. After a few moments the noise of hoofs ceased; and she saw ghostly shapes of horse and rider approaching her across the soaking grass.

When the horseman saw her he dismounted and led his mount to where she stood in the misty lustre.

"Evenin', suh," said the little laundress softly. "H'it's a night of stars."

The passphrase of the United States Secret Service.

To it the shadowy horseman replied with the prescribed answer: "Yes, it's a night of stars and bars. How many stars do you count?"

"Thirteen."

"Add thirteen to ninety."

"Done. And the answer is?"

"Union forever."

He wore the uniform of a Confederate cavalryman. She hesitated a moment, then, unpinning the white rose from her kerchief,

handed it to him. "It's *this* petal," she whispered, touching it with the tip of her dusky middle finger. "It's pinned fast," she added.

He drew the pale blossom through an open button-hole of his grey jacket, mounted his horse and gathered curb and snaffle into steady, capable hands.

"You are Augustus Littlefield," she murmured.

"Yes, ma'am."

"You have your pass and furlough?"

"No, ma'am. I ride over with Hampton's Horse. My contact is Operator 17 in Mercersburg."

"Mrs. Edmonds?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Tell her to hurry."

"I will, ma'am."

That was all.

Operator 13 watched horse and rider continuing their leisurely, soundless course across the grass.

When they had disappeared in the thin hill-mist, she turned back to the house below. Her starched skirts were limp and drenched with dew, but her stockings and feet were dry. After a little way she came again into the orchard, and stopped there, frightened.

For there was a light in her bedroom window. Across it, now and then, passed the phantom figure of a man.

Then, in the deathly danger of the moment, she felt that strange, warm charm of peril flow in her veins like a thread of blood stealing through chilly water.

She crept nearer. A saddled horse stood tied to the gate post.

She looked up at her lighted window. Two wavering shadows moved on wall and ceiling—a man's and a woman's. Once the man's face was illumined by the candle. He was Vespasian Chancellor! Then the woman moved into the light for a moment; and the little laundress saw that she was Belle Boyd.

Chancellor came to the open window, presently, and called down to somebody near the lilac bushes below, whom she could not see:

"She's skedaddled, suh. But there's enough skin-dye in this hyar washbowl to tell the story!"

Oh, God! She had forgotten to empty the washbowl! Everything else she had remembered—taken every possible precaution except this!

"Why do you think it's skin-dye?" came Jack Gailliard's unsteady voice from the darkness.

"My hands is fast-brown a'ready," said Chancellor, "and dry's a bleached bone! She ain't no nigger, suh: she's Operator 13. An' I reckon my instinc' an' feelin's was right, suh; an' this hyar washbowl is more'n enough to damn an' hang her!"

For a moment her limbs, body, brain, and blood turned to ice; then that strange warmth stole through her again like a pulsing thread of blood.

She stooped low and crept along the fence under the honeysuckle until she came to the tied horse.

Strapped to the cantle was a long grey military overcoat.

With trembling fingers she unbuckled the straps, unrolled it, got into it, pulled her slouch hat low over her face, untied the horse, and, setting one clumsy, spurred boot to the stirrup, climbed into the saddle and freed the horse-pistol from its buttoned holster.

In the act of drawing it out she suddenly saw Captain Gailliard beside her, white as death in the starlight. He caught the horse's head; and she swung her heavy horse-pistol by the barrel and struck him full in the face with all her might.

He crumpled up without a sound, his convulsive fingers dragging the horse's head down with him to the wet grass.

She stared down at him. His face wore a scarlet mask of blood. Then, with a sob, she jerked the snaffle rein out of his nerveless fingers, touched the horse with knee and heel, guiding him out through tall, wet grasses and away into the thickening hill-fog where lay her only hope of life.

III

RING-AROUND-A-ROSIE

The river was invisible, but its flowing could be heard under darkly drifting mist.

Scarcely a sound from the waiting regiments; muffled tinkle of spurs; now and then a soft clash of sabres on stirrup-irons; metallic stirrings of hoofs on stones.

Fog blotted out the stars—or was it already dawn dissolving them above the mist at McCoy's Ford?

A phantom regiment, the 2nd South Carolina Cavalry, sitting their horses in column of fours, became dimly visible. Wraith-like shapes of men and horses *en vedette* detached themselves from the whitening riverside vapours.

Some Confederate scouts and two dozen dismounted men of the 10th Virginia came creeping through wet bushes.

A mounted officer, muffled in his scarlet-lined riding cloak, spoke in a quiet voice: "Is that you, Phillips?"

"Yes, General."

"What time have you?"

"It is a quarter to five o'clock, sir."

"Wait till five."

Lieutenant Phillips silently extended his arms, keeping his men back.

Now, through intense silence, came the scrape and jarring of slowly moving artillery. Two guns of Hart's horse-battery jolted down through the mist, mounted cannoneers ghostly and gigantic above the bushes.

The first gun and its caisson halted at the water's edge.

A tall, bony trooper of the 2nd South Carolina, who wore a white Cherokee rose in his buttonhole, was directed to dismount and show the shallowest part of the ford to the gunners.

As he dismounted and led his horse down through the stunted willows, another and smaller figure rode out of the bushes, dismounted, and stumbled along beside him in clumsy boots.

"It's a night of stars," whispered the little newcomer, breathlessly.

The tall trooper did not answer.

Down among wet willows they continued, to the water's edge, the little figure stumbling along beside the tall one, the two guns crushing a slow way through squashy swale and scrub.

"Hyar, suh," said the tall trooper to the officer commanding Hart's section, "lays the onliest shallows in this hyar ford. Your drivers should hold to the right of that dead oak."

The battery commander walked his horse out on to the sandy shore. The two who had piloted him—the tall figure and the short one—turned back into the willows together, dragging their drenched horses.

When the bushes hid them the tall trooper turned swiftly on the other: "God help you, ma'am; I sensed it was you before you gave me the passwords!"

"I knew you by the white rose," she whispered. "Is the paper petal with my cipher message safely pinned to it?"

"I reckon. Are you in trouble, ma'am?"

"Yes, I am."

"How do you figure to get out, ma'am?"

"Ride through the ford when the rebel cavalry rush it. I've got to."

"Can't you get to the mountains?"

"I tried. Stonewall's men fired on me. They are thick in every pass and path. I had to come down to the river. There was no other road open. Anything is better than being caught and hanged—back there in Martinsburg," added the girl unsteadily.

"Who ketched you peekin', ma'am?"

"Belle Boyd, Chancellor, and Captain Gailliard. They found hanging evidence in my bedroom. Gailliard got—hurt. Chancellor is after me. Up on the mountain. I wish somebody would give the signal to cross the river," she added with a sudden sob of fear.

"Steady, ma'am," he cautioned her. "A skeered spy is a hanged one."

"Yes. I'm scared and excited, but I'll be cooler in a moment."

"Did you kill Gailliard, ma'am?"

"No."

"Shoot him, or hawg-stick him, ma'am?"

"No, I hit him in the face with his own pistol, and rode off on his horse. If it gets much lighter down here, somebody may recognize Captain Gailliard's horse. Or notice the colour of my face——"

"We're going through in a few minutes, ma'am. Keep cool."

Operator 13, in her slouch hat, boots and Confederate overcoat, gave a desperate glance around her at the foggy bushes.

"Oh, God," she whispered, "why don't they hurry!"

Operator 90, who was Federal spy Augustus Littlefield, wearing a white rose on a Confederate uniform of the 2nd South Carolina Cavalry, laid a great, bony, kindly hand on the frightened girl's shoulder.

"Ma'am," he said simply, "we'll both hang if we're caught. We know that. So we better try to forget it and do our duty ca'm and quiet."

"Yes," whimpered the girl, "but I can't wash off this dark stain on my skin; and if they see a nigger in Confederate uniform it will be the end of me."

"Ma'am," said Littlefield, "when the scouts start out across the ford there'll be firing. You start, too, leading your hoss. And jess as soon as you git to the shore, mount and ride like hell." He added, "If you're shot in the back it's better than dancin' the sunset jig, ma'am."

"Yes, it is. I'll try to get through somehow," she murmured.

She straightened her shoulders and lifted her head defiantly, but it was an effort. She said: "And you'll try to make contact with Operator 17 in Mercersburg, won't you?"

"I will, ma'am, if God lets me."

"It's Mrs. Edmonds, isn't it?" she asked. She knew, but she was trying to regain self-command.

"Yes, ma'am, she's S. S. 17."

"Tell her I'll keep on to Chambersburg and telegraph across to the colonel of the 6th Lancers at Frederick," said the girl, nervously.

Again Gus Littlefield laid a kindly paw on her quivering arm.

"Courage, ma'am. You got a-plenty. I seen you giggle at death. You been in worse pickles nor this. Me, too. We won't dance no sunset jig this time. No, ma'am. When the rebel rush begins, git on to your ole nag, and ride like a devil!"

A moment's strained silence, then he climbed slowly into his saddle and started off toward the road where the cavalry were waiting in close column.

As he rode he pulled the white rose from his buttonhole, stuffed it into his breeches pocket, and took his place in the ranks, leaving Federal Secret Service Operator 13 alone in the middle of a Confederate division where, disguised as a Negro laundress, she had

personally been known to almost every man in the cavalry camp.

Now, in the dawn dusk which was turning the fog pallid, her pretty, brown-tinted face was not visible in the shade of her slouch hat brim. Even her overcoat and spurred boots would attract no attention because, although new uniforms had arrived from Richmond for some of the cavalry regiments, the Confederate horsemen, en masse, were still somewhat ragged after Antietam; and any kind of clothing was gratefully worn.

But the girl was in extreme danger. If Captain Jack Gailliard of the Confederate Secret Service had been too severely hurt by her to follow her, nevertheless Vespasian Chancellor, the cleverest of Confederate operators and Chief of Scouts, was now searching for her, high and low. He knew, too, that she had ridden off on Gailliard's own horse. She was in deathly terror of this man whose " instinc' " at last had undone her.

She did not know what to do to escape him. She dared not try to join a cavalry regiment and edge into column on the ford road back there among the oaks.

She dared not attempt to join Phillips' scouts, even in the pale dusk of the river fog.

From where she stood at her horse's head, among the willows, she could see a camp-servant and two led horses waiting; and she recognized the horses as Lady Margrave and Skylark, two favourite mounts of General Jeb Stuart.

In that case, she realized with a pang of fright, the mounted camp-servant must be Yellow Bob, Stuart's body servant, who so often had hectored and bullied her and bragged about his own importance.

Here was a new and very deadly danger a few paces away. If Yellow Bob recognized her he would give the alarm—that is, if he had heard what she had done.

It was at that moment that all her latent but peculiar courage returned to her. Every vein in her body reacted to that strange thrill of pleasure which peril excites in those few who are qualified to do efficient work in the shadow of the hangman's noose.

That biggity mulatto, Yaller Bob! She had fooled him a dozen times a day! She would do it again. She would do more—she would make a fool of him and steal his horses—General J. E. B. Stuart's two beautiful and favourite horses, Lady Margrave and Skylark!

At the mere idea all the clever, reckless sense of humour in her deliciously suffused her. Death grinned at her. She giggled.

Now all the actress in the girl was in confident and controlled ascendancy. If she spoke to the mulatto and revealed herself he might or might not have heard that she had been unmasked as a spy; that she had murderously struck down Captain Gailliard; and that Chancellor and Miss Boyd were after her.

It was perfectly possible that this news had not reached Yellow Bob, or, perhaps, had not yet been carried to Headquarters, what with Chancellor and Belle Boyd galloping the mountain trails where Jackson's pickets had fired on her as she swung her horse toward headlong escape.

It was a risk—a longer chance than her momentary safety seemed to warrant.

The next instant she made up her mind; took her horse by the head and moved through the willows toward Yellow Bob where he sat his horse, holding the halters of Lady Margrave and pretty Skylark.

"Oh, Bob," she called softly.

"Who dat?" hissed the mulatto fiercely, turning in his saddle.

"H'it's on'y li'l Lucille, Bob. H'it's on'y de Gin'ral's onliest li'l laun'ress——"

"Whar yuh come f'om?" he whispered in a passion. "Yuh git outen hyah! De Gin'ral ain't takin' no laun'ress when he-all ride a raid! Is yuh crazy, chile!"

"Oh, Bob, I'se jess a-honin' to go——"

"Yuh *is* crazy," he hissed. "Ain't nobody tell you dat Marse Jeb an' me is a-ridin' out to fight de Yankees?"

"I'se jess a-honin' to see yuh fight de Yankees, Bob——"

"Who? Me? Wha' foh yuh wants to see me fight er battle?"

"Kaze yuh is so han'some an' brave, Bob. An' I jess feel lak I gotta follow yuh——"

"Who? Me?" demanded Yellow Bob, bewildered by such a sudden declaration from an exceedingly pretty quadroon who had persistently jeered him and snubbed him in camp.

"Oh, Bob," she said in her melting voice, "jess lemme follow yuh an' de Gin'ral's hosses an' I'll be yuh onliest gal all de time lak yuh asked me——"

"Yuh stuck yah li'l pink tongue out at me when I ast yuh to be mah onliest gal——"

"I wuz that skeered, Bob——"

"What de Gin'ral gwine say when he-all see yuh——"

"Ain't de Gin'ral gotta wear a clean shirt, Bob?"

"Gor a-mighty, who de debbil gwine change he shirt when he

fightin' an' a-yellin', an' a-shootin' ever' minute ob de day ? 'Splain me dat, yaller gal ! "

" Bob, I'se yoh onliest li'l gal, an' I'se a-gwine along o' yuh, honey ! "

Yellow Bob was enormously flattered. That the dusky belle of the camp, sought by every Negro—and, alas !—by almost every white soldier in the division—should at the eleventh hour succumb tohis importance and his personal charms filled him with immeasurable pride.

" Gor a-mighty," he said softly, enchanted by the tribute and happily convinced that he deserved it.

" Whar yuh git dat hoss ? " he demanded. " Looks lak I done see dat hoss befo'."

The girl giggled : " I loves yuh, Bob, an' I done tuk de fustest hoss I see."

" Gor a-mighty," he breathed, rolling his eyes at her and her horse. " Whar yuh git dat clothes, Lucille ? " he asked, grinning.

She tossed her head : " Yuh ain't seen dem boots nowhere befo'," she began, when suddenly the first splash sounded from the water's edge and, far in the fog, a pistol flashed.

The next instant she was in the saddle, sidling close up beside Yellow Bob. She could see Lieutenant Phillips run out into the water, followed by two dozen dismounted men, all wading belly deep, splashing toward the unseen shore beyond which now was belted with flashes like floating fireflies in the mist.

The crackle of pistol fire merged into a ragged rattling volley from Federal rifles. With a roaring rush through the fog, Wade Hampton's horsemen took to the water, followed by Hart's battery, the straining horses bounding forward through clouds of foam.

Across the river a fight was going on in the fog : Colonel Butler's 2nd South Carolina Horsemen closing with the Union pickets and vedettes, sabre against sabre and bayonet. The fog was full of shouting ; yells from galloping riders ; sharp cries from directing officers ; musketry rising to roaring crescendo—then a dropping shot or two—then, suddenly, all sound extinguished.

The Union pickets and vedettes had all been killed, taken, or scattered. Distant scampering hoofs of stampeding horsemen and thunderous, thrashing gallop of Confederate cavalry through churned waters that boiled to the riders' thighs—these were the only sounds in the grey obscurity, now—these, and a few far shots sent after scattering Federal vedettes of the 12th Illinois Cavalry, riding frantically to warn their Captain Logan that two thousand

rebel horsemen were across the Potomac, and hell was breaking loose along the Mercersburg road.

On the downstream edge of the ford the section of young Pelham's four-gun horse battery splashed across; the waters washing caisson and gun-carriage hub deep, and drenching the drivers in their saddles. Here the river is very crooked and thrusts northward a deep angle, the base of which rests upon a shore of sand and rock and river willows.

From the apex of this angle, Yellow Bob, racked by sudden and overwhelming love, and bursting with excited self-importance, spurred his lank hunter out into the stream, leading Lady Margave and Skylark with all the grace and deftness of a perfect Negro horseman. And there are no better riders in the world.

Close at heel through watery obscurity rode "li'l Lucille," hard put to manage Gailliard's horse, which was part thoroughbred. The poor beast and its rider, half blinded by driving spray and the turmoil of plunging horses, reared and scrambled and shied and bounded about, endangering Yellow Bob and the led horses and causing confusion among the mounted gunners who yelled hearty curses at her and struck at her horse with dripping fists.

In mid-ford Major Pelham sat his horse, waving the mounted gunners right or left, and bringing order out of confusion, his calm young voice scarcely raised, yet perfectly distinct amid the tumult of the wallowing brigades of horsemen.

"Oh, Bob," he called out pleasantly, "take the down-river edge with the General's horses and follow the 9th Virginia on the other side!"

"Yaas suh, Major!" bawled Yellow Bob, enchanted at being personally addressed by the most popular man in the army; and he spurred out through shoaling water, Lady Margrave and Skylark galloping gallantly at lead, and little Lucille, still fighting Gailliard's horse, wrist, knee, and heel, plunging along beside him and up the bank to the Yankee shore.

"Whut I gwine duh, Bob?" she gasped, as they rode out into a ploughed field. "I done loss mah lef' boot in de water!"

Bob turned in his saddle, exasperated, and looked down at her slim little foot in its soaked white cotton stocking.

"Debbil in ebyrting dis yar mawnin'!" he cried. "Debbil in de hosses, debbil in de gunners, debbil in yuh, too. Wha' fore yuh done come wif dis hyar army, yuh li'l debbil? 'Splain me dat!"

"Kaze I loves yuh, honey; I done tole yuh dat. Oh, Bob, is yuh gwine len' me a lef' boot?"

They were riding forward across a field, now, in the rear of the 9th Virginia cavalry, pouring in column of fours through a gap in a snake-fence.

"Ain't got no extry boot," grunted Yellow Bob, glowering at her.

"Yaas, yuh has, honey," she insisted in her soft young voice.

The cavalry ahead halted; they could see officers' arms upflung in signal; a red guidon bobbing forward alongside of the motionless column.

"Whar yuh gwine find a extry boot, Lucille?" he demanded fretfully.

"Whut's dat yaller boot-top a-stickin' up outen yoh saddlebag, honey?"

"Dat is mah onliest pair ob extry jockey boots what I done bring to res' my feet!" He gave her a hostile and selfish look, but wavered when her lovely, distressed, dark-fringed eyes met his.

"Gor a-mighty," he burst out, "is yuh gwine take mah onliest new bes' boots, Lucille?"

She rode up closer, put aside his hand, and began to unbuckle the saddlebag on his crupper and peer and pry and rummage.

"How come yuh is totin' all dis hyar gallus pants an' jacket an' yaller-top boots?" she demanded excitedly.

Yellow Bob said solemnly:

"Dis hyar am mah onliest bes' Sunday meetin' jockey-clos, Lucille, an' when I gits to Chambersburg I'se gwine show de Yankees how a quality nigger kin set his saddle when de Gin'ral has a march-past an' de ban' plays big an' banging——"

"Is I gwine set beside yuh wif one boot an' half naked?" she wailed.

"Kick off dat boot," he advised her, "an' ride barefoot lak yuh is mah hoss-boy."

The girl promptly kicked off her remaining boot, lifted one leg after the other, stripping off the white, wet stockings, and rested her bare brown toes in the stirrups.

Here was a far safer aid to disguise than a single spurred boot, which, in her suddenly extemporized rôle of horse-boy, might have been noticed—boots being a rarity in the Confederacy, and far beyond a Negro stable-lad's reach.

Far ahead several sabres shot up high in the watery light of daybreak, waved in circles, slanted forward; the grey column moved forward; so did Yellow Bob, Lady Margrave, Skylark, and little Lucille on Captain Gailliard's horse.

It was ten miles' steady ride northward to cross the Pennsylvania border. As soon as the cavalry were across, their flanking, foraging wings spread out widely east and west, gathering in Yankee horses and cattle and prisoners from tiny hamlets and scattered farms, from a remote region where there existed neither telegraph nor railroad to dread or to destroy.

All the morning Yellow Bob had been bending every effort to overtake General Jeb Stuart and Headquarters, but regiments and brigades and batteries obstructed him, and, apparently, nobody had instructions to forward a dark gentleman of importance, followed by a barefoot stable-boy and two led horses.

All knew him, of course; many teased him and laughed at him, telling him that, although there was shooting going on in front, it was horses' hides and not his that caused anybody any anxiety.

This was cruel, because Yellow Bob had already swung a lusty sabre in pitched battle, and had behaved like a gallant armour-bearer behind his gay and reckless master in more than one mêlée.

However, they wouldn't let him through—or, maybe, couldn't; and he and his led horses and little Lucille—whom the troopers took for some stray stable-lad—found themselves at noon outside Mercersburg, amid swarms of cavalry driving in herd after herd of frightened Pennsylvania horses from the outlying country to east and west.

Here, on a hill, Yellow Bob left her to hold the halters of Lady Margrave and pretty Skylark, in the shade of some maple trees near a deserted barn, and galloped off to make his way into the village below, which was full of Confederate cavalry having their horses shod by astonished but helpless Yankee blacksmiths.

Sitting on the doorless sill of the barn was a bare-legged boy in ragged pants and jacket, staring down at the grey riders in the village.

Now, in bright, pitiless daylight, Operator 13 was becoming frightened again. It seemed certain that some trooper among all these men she knew, and who knew her, would recognize her presently. Certainly, too by this time Chancellor or Miss Boyd must have informed Headquarters of her detection in Martinsburg, and of her escape.

Where was Vespasian Chancellor? Where was Operator 90, with his white rose? Had Gus Littlefield managed to get free of his 2nd South Carolina Cavalry and carry news of the raid to Mrs. Edmonds? To Averell? To Washington?

The girl shivered in her grey overcoat, where she stood barefooted in the grass, holding the three halters in nervous fingers.

If Chancellor had joined the raiders, and if he encountered her, he would know her. She could not hope to escape those cruel eyes. That meant a drumhead hanging without any doubt at all.

This was no real disguise—this grey overcoat and slouch hat. And, under her overcoat, she wore her starched white dress of a lady's maid, and had with utmost difficulty kept it lifted above her waist lest it show under the skirts of the overcoat.

In imagination she could see Vespasian Chancellor's narrow gaze fastened upon her, and hear his drawling, gentle voice bidding her unbutton her overcoat.

She looked around desperately with a sudden wild design to fling herself into the saddle and ride for her life. And saw in the fields on every side grey-jackets riding, encircling the entire landscape. Then her scared eyes fell upon the ragged, tow-headed boy sitting on the sill of the deserted old barn. It came to her instantly what she ought to do. She had started to do it even before the thought materialized; and already she had begun to lead the three horses toward the gaping barn.

The blond Dutch boy rose as though alarmed when she came close to him. She spoke smilingly and encouragingly; but the scared lad was ready to bolt as she collared him.

"Listen to me," she said breathlessly, "I am not going to hurt you——"

"I'm afeard of darkies!" he whined, struggling wildly in her clutches; but she shoved him ahead into the depths of the dim barn, dragging her three horses after her.

"Now," she panted, "give me your clothes!"

He was too terrified to obey. She flung the three bridles around an upright staple, seized the boy, and calmly stripped him to his skin.

"If you yell," she said, "I'll do terrible things to you. Go up into that empty haymow and lie down flat on your Dutch back!"

He went up the ladder like a panic-stricken monkey. Operator 13 flung off her overcoat, tore her white starched dress from her, pulled on his ragged shirt, pants, and jacket, and, gathering together her overcoat, dress, and stockings, shoved them into the trough of an empty stall. Then she fastened the halters of Lady Margrave and Skylark, who rolled large, dark, inquiring eyes at her, and led Captain Gailliard's nervous horse out into the rear yard which was thick with weeds grown taller than her head. Here, under the

sagging wreck of an ancient shed, she fastened the horse, confident that no grey-jacket would come foraging into so obviously abandoned a spot. Certain, also, that when the grey cavalry had gone on toward Chambersburg, Gailliard's horse would make noise enough when hungry and would be discovered by some grateful Pennsylvania Dutchman.

Now she ran back into the barn and darted up the ladder and saw the Dutch boy, stark naked, lying flat in the empty loft, rolling terrified china-blue eyes at her.

"Don't you dare move until supper time, you silly little boy!" she warned him. "And if you obey me and are good, I won't come back and bite you to pieces, but I'll send you a nice, warm overcoat to wear and some cotton cloth to make shirt and breeches out of. Do you hear me?"

"Yaas—yaas'm!" he stammered through chattering teeth.

"Very well. . . . And maybe I'll ask God to send you a beautiful horse, too. When the moon is up to-night, tell your father to look around here with a lantern, and maybe God will send him a very beautiful horse."

She placed a lifted finger across her lips, then shook it warningly at him.

"You promise?"

"Yaas'm," he whispered.

So Operator 13 descended the rickety ladder and removed it, lowering it to the gaping planks of the floor.

Now she went to the horses, untied them, mounted Skylark bareback, and, sitting him with the ease and confidence of a rider who has nothing more to learn of perfect horsemanship, rode slowly out onto the grass, halted under the maples, and looked down into the turmoil of the captured town of Mercersburg.

The old-time Pennsylvania town swarmed with Confederate cavalry whose grey-jacketed, yellow-sashed officers spoke quietly and courteously to the astonished villagers, paying for everything they took from the shops—groceries, butchers' meats, shoes, underwear—and tendering Confederate money to the sweating blacksmiths and wagon builders for their forced services and materials.

She could see Wade Hampton's jaunty horsemen riding in with herds of Pennsylvania horses, with Ayrshire and Belted cattle, and with prisoners in beautiful new blue uniforms—men of Major Meyer's signal corps, surprised and taken in the fog with their horses, flags, field telegraph instruments and lances, near the Fairview signal tower.

With these signalmen were other disgusted Yankee prisoners from Logan's 12th Illinois Cavalry; and a number of civilians, too, fetched in under guard, lest they carry news to that huge Union army of General McClellan, surrounding this little column of Rebel riders who were so gaily and recklessly threading the divisional interstices of a hostile army three times their number.

It was high noon in Mercersburg; artillery and cavalry bugles were blowing; Pelham's agile gunners remounted and moved out, nonchalantly finishing their meagre midday meals in their saddles; Rooney Lee's flanking cavalry spread wide, predatory wings and talons to sweep up every Yankee horse on their northward journey. Headquarters waited, watching the cavalry of "Grumble" Jones mounting along the National Road, and curious to learn whether Jeb Stuart really was going on to Chambersburg or whether he had had enough of it and was turning eastward through Hagerstown and toward the friendly river and safety.

Operator 13, from her little hill, could see the General and his Headquarters' staff a little way below her in a small meadow.

They were so near that she could recognize individuals—Engineer Captain Blackford, Captain of Cavalry White, Major von Borcke, Wade Hampton, Butler—and could see Joe Sweeny with his banjo slung across his back, riding his big grey gelding.

Down there, too, was Yellow Bob, bustling about with camp plates and a sizzling frying-pan, and the brigadiers and staff officers were eating in their saddles, but Jeb Stuart ate nothing, standing apart from the others, deep in consultation with a shabby-looking fellow mounted on a gangling racker.

And suddenly the girl recognized Vespasian Chancellor. A pang of purest fright pierced her, chilling, stilling blood and pulse.

There was absolutely nothing to do about it. Skylark's topmost frantic speed could not carry her through that outer ring of flanking horsemen.

Jeb Stuart looked over his gold embroidered shoulder and, catching his Major's eye, nodded laughingly.

The next moment Major von Borcke, towering in his saddle, called out something to Yellow Bob and made a jerky gesture northward.

The girl saw the mulatto mount his horse and come galloping up the hill toward the clump of silver maples where she sat Skylark; and the halter in her stained brown hand quivered with fright.

Up the hill galloped Yellow Bob; but when he saw "li'l

Lucille," sitting his General's "onliest bes' hoss," the shock staggered him.

"Gor a-mighty, woman!" he squealed, "wha' foh is yuh a-settin' onto dis hyar Skylark hoss! Is yuh went plum crazy?"

"No, suh, Bob," said the girl tranquilly, "I isn't crazy no mo'n yuh is! I gotta ride somefin', isn't I?"

"Whar yoh hoss, chile?" he almost yelled at her.

"Das what I gwine axe yuh!" she said. "Who done sneak up dis hyar hill an' steal mah onlies' li'l hoss while I wuz a-walkin' an' a-coolin' Lady Margrave and Skylark an' a-watchin' 'em nibble dis hyar grass?"

"Debbil, debbil!" snarled Yellow Bob; "ef yoh hoss is stole, yuh gotta go home. Yaas, yuh is——"

"How I gwine git home, nigger! Yuh reckon I gwine hoof it mo'n twenty mile wif er millyun Yankee soldiers chasin' me? Ain't yuh got no sense? Oh, Bob, ain't yuh love me no mo'?"

Bob, who had turned a sickly greenish yellow with anger and fear, became a normal golden yellow again.

"What I gwine tell de Gin'ral?" he demanded.

"Ef yuh tell de Gin'ral dat yuh let li'l Lucille come along, I 'spec' he-all gwine act up mighty high," she said calmly.

"'Low I ain't fixin' tuh tell de Ginr'al nothing'," retorted Bob, rolling anxious eyes.

"Yaas, yuh is," said the girl coolly. "Ef de Gin'ral axe you how come it a li'l nigger is a-ridin' Skylark, yuh gwine say I is de bes' jockey stable-boy in camp to he'p fetch and care fo' de Gin'ral's hosses."

"Whar yuh git dem rags yuh is totin'?" inquired Yellow Bob weakly.

The girl laughed:

"Some one done hook de overcoat an' de hoss. Does I look lak li'l Lucille in dis hyar pants an' cotton sh'ut, Bob?" she asked, giggling.

"Yuh look lak yuh wuz a nas'y li'l saucy yaller nigger, das what yuh look lak," he replied, exasperated. "Debbil, debbil! De debbil's in yuh; de debbil's in me; de debbil's in ev'body——"

"Ef yuh tell anybody dat de li'l laun'ress what soaps de Gin'ral's onlies' bes' shirt is a-ridin' 'long wif yuh, de Provost gwine hang yuh, Marse Bob!" said the girl, still giggling.

"Ain't fixin' to tell nobody nuff'n," retorted Yellow Bob, sullenly. "How yuh gwine ride wif nuff'n 'scusin' de halter onto dis hyar Skylark hoss? I ain't never knowed yuh kin ride, Lucille."

"Ride better'n yuh-all," she jeered.

"Whar yuh git so hoss-wise an' biggity?" he growled. "'Pears lak you know a big lot too damn much 'bout ev'thing——"

"Shut you damn mouf, Bob!"

"Reckon I'se gotto—twill I kin git a strap to tan yoh bottom——"

"Oh, Bob! Ain't yuh lovin' me no mo'?"

"Yaas, I reckon I does. Das why I gwine wa'm yuh good, honey——"

Sweeny rode up the hill: "Bob!" he shouted, "follow Headquarters' guidon!"—and, swinging his mount, trotted off toward the General and staff, whose horses were now moving off at a walk at the head of Hampton's cavalry.

Beside General Jeb Stuart rode Vespasian Chancellor on his racker; and, as Yellow Bob leading Lady Margrave, followed by Operator 13 on Skylark, fell in just behind Joe Sweeny, the girl heard Chancellor's quiet voice continuing:

"Hyar's what I reckon is our situation, General; Yankee infantry marching west of us at five this morning; the Yankee cavalry general, Kenley, sent couriers to Hagerstown whar there's a hell's mint o' Yankees——"

"I'm not going to Hagerstown," said Stuart quietly. . . . "But continue, Chancellor."

"Yaas, suh. Wall, suh, I reckon Colonel Imboden is keeping Averell busy; Pleasanton remains near Knoxville; Stoneman's riders are plum tuckered over to Frederick whar the Yankee Lancers is——"

"Dick Rush's Lancers?" inquired Stuart with bright interest concerning his old antagonists at Antietam.

"Yaas, suh."

"I hope we'll meet them," laughed Stuart. . . . "Well, go on with your report."

"Tha's all, suh. Only I duh mistrust all these hyar Yankee scouts and spies and fugitives that is skedaddlin' north to spread the news of this hyar raid, suh."

"You think that laundress of mine got clean away north?" inquired Stuart.

"Miss Belle and I couldn't find hide or hair of her, suh; and Gin'ral Stonewall's mountain pickets fired at somebody who rode a horse like the one she stole from Captain Gailliard."

"Well," said Stuart, "we can't help it now. Is that all the news you have?"

"No, suh. A trooper of the 2nd South Carolina Cavalry deserted

us when we rushed the signal station. I mistrust he was a Yankee spy in our uniform, and that he is gone North."

After a grim silence Jeb Stuart's tanned face cleared, his blue eyes sparkled, his golden beard quivered with laughter.

"No use worrying," he said; "we're going to Chambersburg, God willing." He turned in his saddle: "Oh, Joe," he called back to Sweeny, "give us a little music, if you please!"

Vespasian Chancellor, too, looked around, and his dark, long-slitted gaze swept Yellow Bob and the ragged Negro boy in charge of Lady Margrave and Skylark.

Yellow Bob's saffron features were familiar to the chief of spies; his keen eyes lingered on Operator 13, glanced at the horses, reverted to the girl with the involuntary and totally unconscious instinct of a great, suspicious, watchful hound. Then Joe Sweeny unslung his banjo, tuned it deftly, ripped from its strings a rippling chord or two, and raised his voice in a song which the lively General took up, and the entire staff began to sing to the enchanting staccato of the ringing banjo:

"I know er pretty li'l gal,
Down Mobile;
Front name's Honey, hind name's Sal;
Down Mobile;
Onlies' rag she got to her back's
A ole stitch-up sweet-'tater sack;
But lawzee-me, when she give yuh er smack,
H'it tas'e jess lak
A hot honey-bun;
An' das what she done,
Ez suah's yuh bohn.
To me in de sun,
A-hoein' ob de co'n,
She give me er smack,
An' h'it tas'e jess lak
A sticky honey bee
Wuz a-stingin' me,
Twill her mouf wuz drippin'
Lak er peach dat's bit,
An' ah 'spec' ah'd die befo' she quit.

Chorus

"I'se got a pretty li'l gal,
Down Mobile!

Front name's Honey, hind name's Sal;
Down Mobile,
Down Mobile!"

Thus rode the laughing General and his staff into Yankee Land to the twang of a banjo and an old Louisiana melody.

Eastward and westward the bird-o'-prey wings of the Northward marching grey brigades swept the Pennsylvania countryside clean of horses and saw no hostile horsemen.

The column proceeded by brigades. In the centre of each brigade travelled captured led horses and prisoners.

Once the General turned in his saddle to look around at his favourite led horses, and he said banteringly to Yellow Bob: "I supposed you were clever enough to ride one horse and lead two! Where did you find that little black boy?"

Yellow Bob was too badly scared to reply, and merely rolled ashamed and frightened eyes at everybody who laughed at him. And it passed as a jest—yet Chancellor turned twice to look at the mortified and silent mulatto, and to let his long-shaped, narrow eyes rest with that unconscious "instinc'" of his on the slim little ragged Negro lad, riding Skylark with such lithe and careless co-ordination. Some black jockey, no doubt, as much a part of Southern stables and Southern life as any piccaninny toddling outside the quarters in the sunshine.

Toward dark it began to rain as the column bore to the east, riding through a hamlet called St. Thomas. But it was a little after nine o'clock when the grey-jacketed horsemen entered defenceless Chambersburg, where every house blazed with lamps and candles, and a scared group of prominent citizens, already warned by a Federal scout sent flying by Gus Littlefield, awaited in deepest perturbation the advent of rebel raiders.

Stuart spoke to them courteously, suggesting that all good citizens should remain quiet and obey martial law as administered by their new Provost Marshal, Colonel Hairston.

Officers politely requested shelter and food from the townspeople; regiments camped in the Diamond and along the streets.

Wade Hampton was at McClure's, Pelham at Noel's house; Grumble Jones at B. Chambers'; the Mansion House was full of field officers; the Franklin Hotel, Bank, Court House, and Town Hall swarmed with them. Hundreds of soldiers were sheltered in the Edgetool factory, brewery, Academy, paper mill, and tannery.

Yellow Bob, his horses, and Operator 13 found a rickety barn to shelter them from the rain.

The girl sat in the dark doorway, eating cold corn-bread and bacon, and watching cavalry details riding out to scour the region for horses.

A ring of alert horsemen surrounded Chambersburg. There was no possible chance for her to get out.

Yellow Bob, mortified by the General's good-humoured jest, angry and chagrined at having lost caste in the girl's eyes, and deeply troubled as to consequences, had little to say to li'l Lucille—and that little was monosyllabic and resentful—" debbil " being his usual reply or observation, uttered in a savage grunt.

When the horses were watered, fed, rubbed down, and bedded, Yellow Bob, still sulky, lay down in the straw beside his own mount, who was not likely to step on him.

Operator 13 walked to the doorway and looked out at the rain.

" Lawzee me," she said, " all de ridgements is got new close, Bob. Marse Butler's men is all rigged up in sky-blue overcoats ! "

Bob grunted.

" Whar dey git all dem pretty close, hunh ? " she demanded.

" Yankee close," growled Bob.

" Honey, would yuh be so kind to go out git me a new blue overcoat ? " she wheedled.

" Git it yuhse'f," he muttered.

" H'it's a-rainin'," she whined.

" Das why I done say, git it yuhse'f, gal."

" Bob, ain't yuh love me no mo' ? "

" Yuh done got me in trouble. Nuff'n but trouble eberywhere. Debbil in ever'ting. Das what yuh done ! "

" I'se gwine out," she said.

" Whar yuh traipsin' now ? "

" Gwine go find me a blue coat."

" Hunh," he grunted, " yuh jess try it ! "

She tried it, but was stopped in the street She had no pass, dared ask for none ; was deathly afraid of Wade Hampton, Military Governor pro tem, and in dread of the Provost Marshal.

There was no way to get out of this dark, rain-drenched Pennsylvania town. No way to get news to Averell, or to Colonel Rush's Lancers. Yet, somehow she had to escape. Death certainly awaited discovery, and discovery was inevitable if she were obliged to continue with the cavalry on their return march and cross the Potomac once more.

Gus Littlefield had said: "Better a bullet in the back, ma'am, than dancing a sunset jig in Dixie." The "Sunset Dance" was at a rope's end. Bullets were kinder.

She brooded over this until she was scared cold; then resolutely forced the horror from her mind.

On her way back to the barn she noticed a candle burning in an outhouse behind it, and saw a frugal and very fat citizen in his shirt-sleeves, lowering corked jugs into a well, for purposes of concealment from thirsty Confederate cavalrymen.

She could smell applejack, too, fragrantly aromatic in the wet wind.

A clatter of a cavalry patrol in the street sent the thrifty Pennsylvania Dutchman scurrying so fast that he forgot to blow out his candle.

Operator 13, with the innate instinct of vaguest purpose, crept into the latticed well-house, picked up two jugs, and crept out again on noiseless naked feet.

"Bob?" she called softly.

"Shet up, li'l debbil," he growled.

"Does yuh love toddy?"

"Debbil in yuh, yaller gal! Whar am de toddy?"

"Bob, I done fotch yuh a jug of applejack!"

Yellow Bob sat up quickly: "Is yuh lyin', Lucille?"

"No, suh."

He made his way to her in the dark, felt the cool jugs in her hands, clutched at them.

"Gor a-mighty," he chuckled, "whar yuh steal dis hyar applejack, honey?"

She told him, giggling; and the swift gurgle of the jug blended with her musical giggle.

"Yuh tas'e h'it?" he inquired with kindly impulse, not letting go of either jug.

"One li'l swaller, Bob——"

It was quite enough for her, too, bringing heat to her cheeks and body and chilled feet; and she climbed up into the loft above and, curling up deep in the hay, lay silent, trying to see her way to some clear, safe end before a military court ended her and saved her all trouble of further thinking.

In a little while it became quite plain to her that Yellow Bob was getting drunk.

"Lucille!" he shouted at her, "come down hyar an' play Ring-around-a-Rosie 'long wif me!"

"Hush yuh fool haid!" she retorted in a strident whisper. "Does yuh want de Gin'ral to heah yuh call me by dat name?"

"No, I doesn't. Come down, yaller gal!"

His loud voice alarmed her, and she thought it better to descend.

Yellow Bob was dancing around in the dark, singing "Ring-around-a-Rosie"; and suddenly the full danger of his condition dawned on the girl as he seized her, and made her dance in a circle with him at a headlong, dizzying speed. She tried to get loose; his grip held her, and he made her sing with him as they whirled there in utter darkness:

"Ring-around-a-Rosie,
Who's got the posy?"——

until, weary, breathless, half senseless, one of his hands slipped and she tore the other loose and reeled away.

By sheer luck she landed against the loft ladder, and went up on wavering legs to her hole in the hay.

He yelled for her a while, but couldn't find her. He was neither very drunk nor beastly yet; he was playful, glorious, boastful, happily delivered of his recent chagrin. He was Yellow Bob, the confidential, intimate, trusted, efficient servant of the greatest general on earth, who could not get along without him.

Operator 13, now thoroughly afraid of him, peered down through a crack in the planks where she lay flat on her stomach in the hay, listening to his singing and shuffling capers, but unable to see him in the darkness.

Suddenly a lantern gleamed at the doorway, and she saw Yellow Bob, dancing "Ring-around-a-Rosie", jug in hand.

Also, she saw a more terrifying sight—two men—one holding the lantern. He was Vespasian Chancellor. And with him, his head and face bandaged and only his eyes visible, was Jack Gailliard.

When Yellow Bob's dazzled and flickering gaze could be sufficiently focused to recognize his visitors, he sobered a little and tried to conceal his jug.

"Bob," drawled the tall Chief of Spies, "whar's that black boy you fotched along, ridin' Skylark?"

A sudden pang of fear sobered the mulatto to comprehension of his own danger, and he knew the General's punishment would be severe if it transpired that he, Yellow Bob, had countenanced and aided this escapade of the pretty quadroon laundress.

"Who yuh mean, suh? Dat no-'count nigger boy outen de stables?"

"I mean him," said Chancellor. "Where is he? I want to take a look at him."

"Yaas, suh," said Yellow Bob promptly. "Dat ornery nigger boy he tuk an' run down to de town. 'Pears lak he a-honin' to find him a new blue overcoat——"

"When did he go?"

"Been gone jess a minute, suh——"

"Yuh reckon he's comin' back, of course?"

"Dunno, suh. He done behave biggity, an' I kick an' cuff him. 'Low I done give dat black debbil plenty Jimmy Crackcorn on de haid an' shins. Yaas, suh. 'Spec he gwine jine de Jay Hawkers when he git him de sky-blue overcoat——"

"Who is he?" demanded Chancellor.

"Jess a ornary——"

"Whar did you git him, Bob?" interrupted the Chief of Spies.

"He-all jess a jockey, suh, hangin' roun' de hosses——"

"How long? I don't recollect seeing him."

"All de black hoss-boys looks alike, suh——"

"Come on, Chancellor," said Jack Gailliard wearily, "there's nothing in your suspicions."

"H'it's mah instinc' a-workin', Captain Gailliard, suh——"

"All right. Find my horse and you'll find the person you're after. She never came this way. She's in the mountains, I tell you."

"Yaas, suh." But Chancellor lifted his lantern and looked around—at Yellow Bob and his jugs, at Lady Margrave and at Skylark in their bedded stalls, then upward at the haymow above.

"Any soldiers up there sleeping?" he demanded.

"No, suh."

"How do you know, Bob?"

"I wuz up yander shakin' down de hay foh mah hosses, suh."

"I think I'll step up there——"

"Oh, come on," said Gailliard, detaining him by one arm.

Chancellor hesitated, his instinct working. Then it grew feebler—or seemed to—for Gailliard drew him to the door; and presently they went away together through the driving rain.

Operator 13 lay like one dead. For the shifting light of the lantern had sent one chance ray through the crack in the planks to which her eyes were glued. Chancellor was looking at the ladder; but Jack Gailliard had seen the light sparkle an instant on her eyeballs; she knew he had seen her by his manner.

And she knew, also, that he had let her go—let her live to take the desperate chance—if any—that remained to her.

Now, stiff and chilled with terror, she lay listening in darkness—she could not know how long—but the hours of sickening fear seemed to stretch into years.

Below in darkness Yellow Bob was getting very, very drunk, but he retained sense enough to let her alone. And, towards dawn, retained no senses at all; for she could see him lying prone in the pale light, beside a pair of empty applejack jugs.

And now, in the thick mist and drizzle of earliest day-break, the old barn began to shake and tremble with explosions where Confederate cavalry were blowing up store-houses, arsenals, and depots of supplies of the Union Army, and trying to blow up the iron bridge.

Everywhere Jeb Stuart's bugles were blowing, troopers saddling, mounting, clattering away out of town, bearing to the eastward—guns, gunners, cavalry, squadron crowding squadron—and amid a roar and clatter of hoofs from hundreds of led horses.

Guidons danced by; caissons, limbers, guns jolted briskly through the streets in the pale dusk of dawn.

Operator 13 rose from the hay and crept down the ladder to where Yellow Bob lay dead drunk on applejack.

First she saddled Bob's horse, then led out Lady Margrave and Skylark into the rank bushes behind the well-house where the same man she had seen before was still furtively fussing with his jugs and ropes and pulleys.

When he looked up and saw her he cringed, afraid, apparently, even of a rebel black boy.

"Come here," she called softly.

He was too fat to run; he came, slinking, fear-stricken.

"Are you a Union man?" she asked in a low voice.

He seemed incapable of speech, but finally nodded.

"Listen," she said, "I am a Union spy, disguised as a Negro boy. Is there any way I can ride out of here with these horses and escape to Harrisburg?"

"That wood-road——" he pointed with fat and trembling finger.

"Is it guarded by rebel cavalry?"

"Nobody is in them woods," he replied hoarsely.

She sat her horse in silence for a while. Grey-jackets were visible, riding flank to the moving column; beyond them vedettes were galloping in from the westward. The rebel cavalry was leaving Chambersburg and riding on—God knew where.

Now through the misty drizzle a tremendous explosion shook the ground and a sheet of fire burst out beyond the highroad.

"There goes fifty thousand Union muskets!" groaned the fat man, wringing his pudgy hands. There were only five thousand, however, that Stuart's grey-jackets had just blown up. Then came a rock-racking shock and roar and a vast flame as the last Federal depot of Quartermaster's stores exploded.

A terrible silence cut by clear, gay Confederate bugle calls. Far away to the eastward the girl caught the sound of singing and the faint twang of a banjo.

Without another word Operator 13 clutched the two halters and kicked Yellow Bob's nag into motion; and Lady Margrave and Skylark followed at a canter into the dusky woodland road.

She had been gone ten minutes, pehaps, and the fat man had returned furtively to his applejack and his well rope, when Vespasian Chancellor rode up on his gangling racker.

"Yuh!" he called out in his soft, dangerous voice, "who made that nigger in the barn daid drunk?"

The fat man, jellified by fear, stammered out that he didn't know there was a nigger in the barn.

"Whar's the black boy and the hosses?" asked Chancellor gently. And produced a heavy revolver and cocked it.

"And don't yuh lie to me, either," he added, looking at the fat man out of slitted eyes.

"Th-they went that way!" stammered the fellow, and lifted a shaky arm toward the wood-road.

"Yuh lie," said Chancellor softly. "I reckon I better kill yuh——"

"They did go that way!" screamed the man, "—a nigger boy and three horses——"

"Yuh dirty coward," said Chancellor, slashing him with a rawhide quirt, "—it's yuh that oughta hang and not that pore little Yankee gal ridin' gallant for her life and country!"

Nevertheless, he turned his gangling racker and spurred after her at full gallop.

IV

SHADOW DANCE

Word of General J. E. B. Stuart's rebel cavalry raid into Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, had gone forth by Union scout, by courier, by " grape-vine," by flag and fire.

Mounted troopers from Logan's 12th Illinois Horsemen warned General Kenley ; Kenley's excited troopers relayed the information to Brooks with blazing torches telegraphing from hill to hill ; Brooks, out of magnetic telegraphic communication, read the blazing news, and started his wet signal flags flapping under lowering skies until his last relay station electrified Little Mac's signal officers into horrified comprehension.

At Mercersburg Federal Secret Service Operator Number 17 made contact with Operator Number 90, who instantly mounted her wiry black horse and started toward Hagerstown carrying to the Federal cavalry general, Averell, a white Cherokee rose with one paper petal. Federal Operator Number 90, disguised under the uniform of a private of South Carolina cavalry, deserted at Mercersburg in the fog, galloped to the Maryland border, and thence, south along the railroad, flogging and spurring toward Army Headquarters at Knoxville.

Operator 13, in ragged shirt and breeches, her face and body stained as brown as a coloured boy's, her short, dark curly hair in the wind, kicked the nervous, high-strung horse she had stolen from Yellow Bob into a dead run with her naked heels, whilst she hung desperately to the halters of the two other stolen horses, Lady Margrave and Skylark—favourite mounts of the great Confederate cavalryman, General J. E. B. Stuart.

And always on her heels thundered Death, in the human shape of Vespasian Chancellor, determined to do this dangerous girl to death before she accomplished the destruction of Jeb Stuart and two thousand youthful riders who were circling a Union army of a hundred thousand men wild to get at them and tear them to pieces.

The wood-road was soft and moist and spongy; the forest seemed very still except when a wet wind stirred the autumn foliage and set painted maples dripping.

Through it, with the rush of a great wind, tore three galloping horses, urged on to frantic flight by a Secret Service Operator of the Union army who rode for her life and who alternately shivered with fear and giggled hysterically when she realized that she had turned horse-thief, and was making off with two of the most celebrated, valuable and most beautiful horses in the entire Confederacy.

She galloped due east. She could not help that, although Yellow Bob, the night before, had bragged that the cavalry were going to Gettysburg and then northward.

The dim wood-road seemed to parallel the Cashtown-Gettysburg highway. She hoped it might turn north, but it did not. Fortunately it remained a forest road where, at intervals, rows of great walnut and oak logs were piled among the ferns along the trail awaiting winter and mill-ward transportation.

The muggy, close air was saturated with the strong, aromatic odour of freshly cut walnut logs; now and then the girl had a swift glimpse of some deserted lumberman's sagging shack. She saw nobody; but her deadly fear was that she might gallop headlong into a horse-raiding wing of Confederate cavalry, be recognized and seized along with her stolen horses. And then, the awful shadow dance at sunset.

Under her ragged shirt, strapped to her naked body, she carried her long, sharp knife in its velvet sheath. She carried, also, in the holster of Yellow Bob's saddle, a heavy dragoon revolver, capped and loaded.

She had had absolutely nothing to eat for a very, very long time, and her slim stomach seemed to slap against her spine at every stride of her horse and jerk of the led horses' halters.

Gail Loveless, in all her dramatic career as a member of Pauline Cushman's celebrated theatrical company, never had played so exciting a rôle in any theatre as she was playing now; and never had experienced such thrilling and strangely alternating shocks of fear and of delight as this headlong gallop was giving her.

To deceive and flout and punish that preposterous yellow nigger, Bob! To fool an entire division of Confederate cavalry and vanish with the General's two favourite horses! To warn Little Mac and start a hundred thousand men in motion!

As she rode, these delicious and triumphant thoughts streamed

through her excited mind while the warm, wet wind rushed past her ears, intoxicating her.

And there was Captain Jack Gailliard, too! with his handsome face all bandaged where she had struck him. Was he also a subject for thrilling fear and mirth?

As she galloped, her flushed cheeks aglow, she thought of her desperate, swinging blow, and of the heavy revolver butt smashing down into his boyish face.

No, that was neither funny nor thrilling. Had it been necessary, she would have killed this young man—so close to her face had she beheld Death grinning at her in the starlight.

Galloping onward, now, but with no glow of victory in her pale, brown cheeks, she began to remember, also, that this same young man had seen her hiding from the hangman; and had let her go. Because he *must* have seen her; she was sure he had, by the expression in his eyes. And yet he had let her go.

Why?

Was it in sheer pity, knowing what her fate must have been? Spies do not pity each other to that extent.

Yet he had said not a word of his discovery to the Chief of Spies as the lantern flashed along the hayloft flooring.

Why?

The girl's colour came back into her pallid, brown dyed face.

Well then, all the worse for this young man—if he could not command his baser passions. . . . If he must succumb, first to his lust for a poor young girl whom he believed to be a quadroon; and then surrender to his passion for a Yankee spy who had attempted to destroy the flower of his country's cavalry.

Her heart had begun to beat as fast as the thudding of her horse's feet.

A miserable young man, to let that kind of passion or love or whatever he dared call it, interfere with his oath of duty to his Confederate Government! She despised him. She was not grateful! Let this young man beware of her if ever again he interfered!

Then the swift memory of the Boyd garden—of their embrace—his lips on hers—shocked her and left her anguished with its burning sweetness.

Breathless a moment, then rigid under a welling rush of anger. Never before had a man aroused such wanton, such indescribable emotion in her virgin mind and body! Never had she imagined herself capable of such shameful response to a man's predatory arms and lips.

Scarcely conscious of what she was about, she checked her horse, bringing him to a canter, a trot, then to a walk. God only could know how far she had galloped through the woods in the dim autumn twilight of the forest.

She walked her mount for a while to ease and breathe him, patting his wet neck, drawing Lady Margrave and Skylark up beside her and caressing the beautiful creatures—always with a nervous glance flung back over her shoulder lest pursuers already be closing in at heel. Lest the sunset shadow, cast by her own twitching, naked feet, should dance a ghastly shadow dance under some rebel gallows.

Suddenly, not far to the southward, a cavalry bugle rang out in the drizzling dawn.

White with terror, Operator 13 beat Yellow Bob's big hunter with fist and heel into a gallop once more, and rode for her very life, while the Confederate bugle echoes still vibrated in her startled ears.

Ten minutes behind her galloped Vespasian Chancellor, Confederate Chief of Spies, determined to destroy her, horse and man rushing onward like some huge winged thing swooping through the trees. His lean face had the dark dignity of an eagle's bent on murder ; his long, grey cloak flew flapping behind him as he crouched forward in his saddle striving to penetrate the wood and gloom ahead with fiercely piercing eyes.

And two miles ahead of him Operator 13, in ragged shirt and breeches, kicked frantically at Yellow Bob's crazed horse, driving him into a dead run, as she hung on desperately to the halters of Lady Margrave and Skylark, galloping gallantly beside her.

It was still deep dusk in the woods. Spectral trees streamed away on either side like speeding phantoms in a dream ; a wet wind drove fog into her face, blurring vision and soaking her to her stained brown skin.

Now, ahead, a pale watery light flickered through the forest ; the road led into a clearing, where it forked ; and the girl pulled in her panting, foaming horse and looked around, bewildered in the sickly light of daybreak.

One branch of the rough trail curved out southward toward Stonehenge and Fayettesville ; and she knew it must be crowded with grey-jacketed horsemen whose wide-winged flankers were sweeping the whole region to the very base of the mountains ahead. She must not ride through Black Gap ; she realized that. Must not turn southward at all. A gallows death lay that way.

The left hand trail was rocky and bushy and led upward along a small stream—the headwaters of the Conewago—toward abandoned lumber camps and scattered shacks of mountaineers near Wolf Hill.

Here lay her road to safety—by the grace of God—if, indeed, there were any way out of this Valley of Death for her.

For another instant she sat on her hard-breathing hunter, listening fearfully in the forest silence; and heard, very far away to the southward, a vast and muffled trampling noise of trotting hoofs where, through the drizzling dawn, two thousand grey-jacketed riders and their captured horses were passing through Black Gap.

She gave one last desperate glance behind her; heard nothing; then swung her horse up the rocky road along the brook, leading the other two horses knee-deep through wet laurel and rhododendron and out between cliffs; and came at last into a wide wood-road once more where freshly felled trees lay fragrant in the ferns.

Two shoulders of rock almost closed this lumber-road, and she was obliged to dismount and lead the three horses through, single file.

As she stood, a moment, to let them drink briefly at the brook, she caught the faint clink of a horseshoe on rock, and, turning around, saw Vespasian Chancellor ride up to the forks of the road below, rein in, bend low in his saddle and peer right and left for further trace of her horses' hoof-marks.

With the chill of death itself in her veins she tremblingly unbuckled the holster flap on Yellow Bob's saddle, pulled from it his heavy cavalry revolver; recapped and reloaded it; tied the three horses; and, stooping, crept back to where the hill's massive shoulders narrowed the pass and made of it a rocky gateway thick with ferns and laurel. Into this green, wet ambush she crawled.

She never had killed anybody or any living creature; never had seen anybody die except on the stage. She remembered that Pauline Cushman had showed her how to expire gracefully and effectively in the last act. She recollected that the leading man had instructed her, once, how to load, cap, cock, and fire a revolver; and she cautiously cocked the heavy weapon in her hand and levelled it through the laurel.

The Chief of Confederate Spies had walked his panting horse a little way along the southern branch of the wood-road, still leaning low in his saddle and scanning the soft, moist soil. Evidently

discovering no imprint of horses' hoofs he straightened up, turned his horse, and looked up at the rocky trail above, and saw the girl close to him, aiming her pistol. At the same instant there came a loud explosion ; his horse reeled and fell, shot dead through the head, carrying his rider crashing down among the bushes into the brook below. And here, where the big, bony horse had rolled and lay stone dead, sprawled grotesquely, damming the bloody waters, the girl found Vespasian Chancellor, one leg pinned under his dead horse, groping blindly about to free himself, and all covered with blood and mud.

When he had managed to disengage his leg and rise to his knees :

" Sit down on that dead horse " she said harshly, " and don't move a finger or I'll have to kill you, too ! "

Still on his knees in the icy water, he began to grope about again, uncertainly, and finally managed to pull himself upright. He seemed dazed and shaken, and presently he sat down on his dead horse, closing both eyes. Then, after a moment, very slowly he lifted his narrow head and looked up at her in silence.

" Who told you I had come this way ? " she demanded, cocking her pistol again.

" I reckon, ma'am, it was that fat Pennsylvania Dutchman at the well-house."

" Who else is following me ? "

" Maybe Captain Gailliard, ma'am. I reckon he'll try to find me sooner or later."

The girl bade him remain motionless in a fierce little voice and, coming up behind him, searched him for weapons, and discovered he was entirely unarmed.

" No, ma'am," he said in his quiet, pleasant voice. " I don't carry weapons." But Operator 13 backed cautiously away from him, clutching in her left hand a bunch of papers she had discovered in his coat pocket.

" If Captain Gailliard comes here, and if you call out to him," she said, " I'll have to kill you and then kill him."

" I understand, ma'am," said Chancellor softly.

She managed to keep one eye on him and one on the linen-backed map which she had discovered in his pocket and which she now unfolded. She could make nothing of it.

" Where is Jeb Stuart riding ? " she demanded.

" Ma'am," he said mildly, " I regret ve'y so'ly that I must decline to answer questions."

" You won't talk ? " she insisted sharply.

"No, ma'am. I can't."

"You tried to catch me and have me hanged, didn't you?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well then, if you don't answer me I'll have to kill you!" said the girl passionately.

"Pray do, ma'am," he said very quietly, looking her pleasantly in the eyes. "I reckon I'd like it better that-a-way than I would like hanging."

She knew she could not do such a thing to him as to shoot him. But *he* didn't know it. Nobody could guess what such a devilish girl would do in a panic, who had risked her life as a spy inside the Confederate lines; who had nearly killed Captain Gailliard and had ridden off on his horse; who had faced rifle fire and had forded the river in the midst of two thousand plunging rebel horsemen; who had tricked and made a drunken fool of Yellow Bob, stolen his horse and Jeb Stuart's two favourite mounts; and who now had shot him down and was now flourishing a loaded pistol and threatening him where he was seated on his own freshly killed animal, utterly, completely at her mercy.

"Mr. Chancellor," she said, "I don't want to shoot you. But I don't wish to die either. I'll go away if you'll tell me how to keep clear of the rebel cavalry."

"No, ma'am, I won't tell you."

"You won't?"

"No, ma'am."

"Do you hope they will catch me and hang me?" she demanded angrily.

"I do, ma'am."

"Me, a woman?" she asked, infuriated.

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but you are a deathly danger to my government, and you may yet ruin General Stuart and a whole division of our ve'y best cavalry. . . . I have no personal animosity against you, ma'am. . . . You are young, and fair to the eye"—he smiled faintly at her dark-stained skin—"and it's natural for any man to admire you—even when you are in Negro disguise. But, with all that, ma'am, you surely ought to die because the safety of my government is in danger as long as you remain alive. . . . Now, ma'am, you may shoot if it's got to be that way with you and me."

She knew that it was not to be that way.

At the point of her pistol she made him get up, drove him a little way into the laurel, and bade him stand there.

Then, always watching him, she managed to remove the bridle

from his dead horse; and, with this, pistol in hand and her long knife clutched between her teeth, she contrived to secure his elbows and wrists behind his back.

Now she forced him to precede her up through the rock-guarded portal to where the three horses were tied.

Her saddle and bridle she transferred to Skylark; then tried to get Chancellor on to Yellow Bob's horse. But, with his hands fastened behind his back, he couldn't mount the animal.

"If you'll give me your parole," she said breathlessly, "I'll trust you. Will you?"

"No, ma'am. I won't," he said quietly.

"Do you hope to get away?" she demanded.

"Hope is the last dish Life serves us, ma'am, I am still at table."

"Will you give me your parole," she repeated excitedly, "or won't you?"

"Why should I, ma'am? If you don't shoot me, Averell will hang me."

She looked at him helplessly, tears of impotent fury in her eyes.

"You know I can't murder you!" she cried with a sob in her voice. "I never before heard of a prisoner who was perfectly willing to be murdered. I can't get you on to a horse with your wrists tied up. I'm afraid to untie you. I'm afraid to kill you. I'm—I'm afraid of you anyway——"

She choked and the tears ran down her flushed cheeks.

"Will you let me alone if I let you alone?" she sobbed. "I'll give you Yellow Bob's horse if you'll go away! Will you?"

He looked hard at her: "Ma'am, are you truly afraid of me?"

"Yes, I am," she said, wiping her wet eyes clear with the back of one hand; "I guess I am a coward."

"Ma'am," he said, "you have more courage than any woman I ever knew. And most men. . . . Well, ma'am . . . you may untie my hands. I give you my parole."

She went to him instantly and untwisted and unbuckled the bridle that confined his wrists and elbows. He lifted his big swollen hands and looked at them, curiously, smiling a little.

He was still examining them, and trying to stretch the cramped and aching fingers, when a horseman with a bandaged face trotted up, caught sight of him, called out to him by name, hastily scrambled out of his saddle, and came running up the rocky road leading an ambling, stumbling horse behind him. And found himself with his nose almost touching a levelled pistol clutched in the steady fist of a ragged Negro lad.

" You drop that bridle and put up your hands, Captain Gailliard," cried Operator 13 excitedly, " or I'll shoot you all into little pieces this time ! "

Captain Jack Gailliard's reckless eyes gave her one astonished look ; then became painfully cross-eyed as they concentrated on that black, powder-ringed pistol muzzle which was close enough for his bandaged nose to smell.

" Good God, Lucille," he gasped in an amazement almost comic, " don't do a thing like that to me ! "

" Will you let me alone, then ? " she asked tremulously.

" Let you alone ? I should say I would. Please be a little careful with that horse-pistol——"

" Do—do you—surrender ? " she stammered fiercely.

There was a moment's silence. Gailliard's battered features reddened above the bandage and his swollen eyes sought Chancellor, who stood tall, gaunt, and silent, still massaging his big, bony hands and wrists.

Jack Gailliard stared at the Chief of Spies who stared back in grim silence.

" What kind of dirty business is all this, Vespasian ? " demanded Gailliard hoarsely.

Chancellor's slitted black eyes narrowed : " I reckon, suh, you don't aim to cast any reflection on me when yuh ask that question ? "

" But—good God——"

" Yaas, suh, that's my onliest prayer, too ; may God be good to us in this hour, Captain Gailliard."

Very slowly he extracted from his homespun pants pocket a section of Virginia twist ; bit off a portion, savoured it reflectively.

" Yaas, suh, Captain," he drawled, " I reckon we both belong to this young lady, now. Ef yuh jump she'll kill yuh. Ef yuh speak sof'ly yuh can step out o' this world of trouble, ca'm and polite, in a sunset square of Yankee cavalry. All depends on how yuh wants things fixed to suit yuh, suh."

Intense silence. The pistol muzzle always firm and steady. Jack Gailliard's fascinated eyes on it ; then on the girl who owned it.

Then the boy sighed audibly : " Very well, ma'am ; you have my word of honour."

" I want your parole, also," she insisted in a hard little voice.

He looked miserably at Chancellor, who shrugged his shoulders : " I gave the young lady my parole," he said pleasantly.

" All right," exclaimed the boy, " I give you my parole of honour,

then!" His voice was harsh with choked anger; he flung his bridle from him and, rudely putting her still levelled pistol aside, pushed past her into the rocky pass, and strode up to the Chief of Spies: "Goddam it," he said bitterly, "do you understand that this means a double hanging?"

"I do, suh."

The boy's battered face flushed to the roots of his hair; his breath came sharp and irregular; but the furious oath, and whatever else was quivering on his bitter lips, remained unuttered under the narrow intent gaze of Vespasian Chancellor; and he turned away suddenly and covered his face with both quivering hands.

"I reckon," said Chancellor softly, "we both aim to face it ca'mly, suh."

Gailliard's hands fell to his sides; he turned slowly to the Chief of Spies, his beardless lips twisted with unuttered reproaches and raging revolt.

A moment they gazed at each other, then the boy's eyes flashed with tears and his hand sought Chancellor's arm.

"I don't know how she got you," he said, "but I don't doubt you."

"You needn't, suh. She ambushed me and shot down my hoss. And thar I lay on my back in the brook like a oletarrypinturkle, suh, one laig pinned under my daid hoss, and a roarin' noise in my ears like the beat o' the sunset shadow dance——"

The boy made an involuntary movement at the repulsive suggestion; and when again he looked at Chancellor, his features had grown clear and very pale.

"Do you think there is any chance?" he asked. "The cavalry are at Cashtown."

"Gawd, no," said Chancellor quietly. "They go south to Emmitsburg, suh. What would fetch them up here into these Pennsylvania mountains?"

Operator 13, who had been watching them, pistol in hand, spoke now in a clear, hard voice:

"Gentlemen, I have two prisoners on parole and four captured horses to care for. And I should be on my way."

They looked at her in silence.

"Mr. Gailliard," she went on, "I see you have recovered your own horse. You will mount him, if you please, and lead Lady Margrave."

She turned to Vespasian Chancellor: "Be kind enough to take

the saddle from your dead horse, sir, and place it on this nag of Yellow Bob's. Here is your bridle."

Gailliard's face had become a sullen, ugly red again as he walked over to his browsing horse, pulled him out of the bushes, mounted, and, riding up to Lady Margrave, groped for the sagging halter.

He did not look at the girl again; but her dark eyes reverted to him, now and then, while Chancellor, wading in the brook below, stripped his dead horse of its trappings, and shouldering them, came striding up on his long, lank legs to saddle Yellow Bob's rangy hunter.

As he adjusted and with practised hand, tightened, buckled strapped, cinched, he chewed quietly his sweet Virginia plug courteously screening the trajectory of any rare ejecta with a large politely interposed hand.

When all was ready he stood to horse, awaiting further orders.

"Mount," said Operator 13 briefly; and was lithely in Skylark's saddle before the word left her lips. She did not know the road; she could guess, however, where lay the cardinal points of the compass; and she gathered curb and snaffle and put Skylark in motion.

Suddenly an unreasoning shaft of purest fear struck through her like an arrow. Pistol in hand she turned in a panic, her dark fringed eyes fairly glittering with terror and excitement:

"Gentlemen," she stammered, "I—I am s-scared to death! Be good enough to set your p-pace by mine!"

Vespasian Chancellor had ridden many a break-neck race with Death. So had Captain Jack Gailliard.

Never before had they ridden so terrific and terrible a course, hurling their horses blindly through laurel, fern, and azalea over an unknown mountain lumber-road in the drizzle and obscurity of a dark October afternoon.

Logs lay athwart the trail; their maddened horses sailed over them like hawk-chased swallows. Rocks, brooks, wind-falls, gullies, they scarcely saw, rushing through blinding mist with the wet darkness roaring in their ears.

Suddenly, through the woods, a red shaft of sunlight slanted across the trail—the most ghastly omen of it all for these two men who were riding headlong to their deaths. As though their distant Yankee executioner, with his cork-blackened hands and face, were already waiting impatiently in the red sunset light where two noosed ropes dangled under the long crossbar, cast sinister patterns across the withered grass.

They galloped out into a brushy clearing overlooking a flat valley of farm lands below; and the girl flung up one hand in a signal to draw bridle.

Minute after minute they sat on their reeking saddles while their quivering horses gasped and panted and mouthed at foaming bits in the ruddy light of a declining sun pouring between long, dark banks of clouds.

It was very hot and moist and still in the clearing, full of the odours of freshly felled trees and wilting foliage.

At the eastern edge of the clearing stood a lean-to near a spring and evidently just erected, and still fresh and fragrant with spruce, hemlock, and balsam thatching from which dripped globules of aromatic gum.

Nobody was there; the clearing was still as death, ringed by forested depths where wet leaves glistened crimson and gold and purple in the sun.

Operator 13, sitting her hard-breathing nag, listened intently, searching the thickets with restless gaze.

Nothing stirred there save a sombre butterfly sailing on dark, ermine-bordered wings. Not a sound except the tiny tinkle of a rill below the spring.

Again and again her weary gaze sought the little valley close below the knoll where they had halted. There were ploughed fields there, and reaped fields and pastures; and this wood-road ran into them; but no house or barn was visible; no fences, no sheep, no cattle; nothing of human handiwork excepting a planked platform with uprights, and a framed beam above them, which seemed to be a structure designed to support a winter hay-stack.

The girl looked hard and wistfully at the open country; but had no mind to venture into it until dark.

She was very tired and hungry, but no longer frightened.

Stiffly she freed one bare foot from the stirrup, dismounted, unbuckled Yellow Bob's saddle bag, and groped in it for food. She found a bottle of peach brandy, a large, German-looking loaf of Chambersburg bread, a large cold sausage, three onions, and a chunk of salt beef.

These she carried to the open-faced shed and laid them in the ferns by the spring. Then she came back, moving gingerly on her slender, bare feet.

"Gentlemen," she said gravely, "let us care for our horses and then eat and rest."

"Are we to unsaddle, ma'am?" asked Chancellor in his pleasant voice.

She looked at him with a pale smile and shook her head.

Jack Gailliard, also, got off his horse; and he and Chancellor and Operator 13 gathered dead grass with which to rub down, sponge off and refresh and cool the weary horses.

There was enough browsing in the bushes; Chancellor cut stakes; the girl drove them with her pistol butt; and, with halter, bridle, and picket-rope the four nags were tethered amid wild grasses and weeds along the tiny rivulet where they might also drink when they chose.

The girl glanced furtively from time to time at Captain Gailliard's sullen young face, but it was to Vespasian Chancellor she addressed herself, finally, inviting them both to share what food there was.

"I thank you kindly, ma'am," said Chancellor with a bow as courtly as any obeisance south of the Dixie line. But Jack Gailliard gave her a sulky look and continued to pull grass for his horse.

"Will you please eat with us, Captain Gailliard?" she said firmly, the inflection of her voice making the question a command.

"Very well," he growled, flinging his pulled grass on the ground under his horse's nose.

They sat down on the carpet of balsam in front of the shack. Operator 13 carved bread and beef, and sliced the sausage and onions with her long, keen-bladed knife. There was only one tin cup among them for water and peach brandy.

Operator 13 sat in such a position that she could see the valley below and also watch the road over which they had arrived which ran straight away to the westward for nearly a quarter of a mile. Her loaded pistol lay beside her on the ground; she ate slowly, sparingly, using her left hand, her restless eyes always alert and searching wood and field.

It was warm in the rays of the westering sun; Chancellor, facing it, remained undazzled as an eagle; but Gailliard shaded his eyes with one hand while he ate with the other. And, after a while, the girl was aware that, in the shadow of his hand, the boy was stealthily watching her.

When she realized it, to her consternation she felt a faint glow invade her face and throat; and, instinctively, drew her naked feet up under her, and fumbled at a gap in her ragged shirt.

She said to Chancellor: "Pray, sir, let me offer you some of this peach brandy. We all need a little, I think."

The grave, lanky Chief of Spies thanked her, poured out a cupful, and offered it to her with a bow.

The girl declined, saying that she would take one mouthful after she had eaten. So he silently emptied the cup, rinsed and refilled it, and handed it brimming to Jack Gailliard.

The boy took the tin cup in a steady hand and looked the girl full in the face:

"May I offer a sentiment, ma'am?" he asked smilingly.

"If—you wish, sir," she replied, startled.

"Then, to her—whoever she may be—wherever she may be—who holds my heart—whatever she may do with it!"

He emptied the tin cup, still smiling, set it aside with a gesture of finality, picked up a slice of sausage and of onion, and resumed his meal as tranquilly as though a lifetime remained ahead of him instead of a few hours.

Chancellor's long, dark, oblique eyes rested on him in quiet approval. Then, softly addressing Operator 13: "Ma'am, your life and ours is the kind of life that one lives to the full in a single day, I think. All that the human heart can experience of weal and woe, of pleasure and of dread, of hope and of despair, we sometimes experience and understand between the rising and the setting of the sun."

"Yes," she said in a low voice.

"Well, ma'am, we are fortunate, I reckon, even in misfortune. We have lived completely—no matter how briefly—before we take that darkened path to which we all are destined."

"Yes," she said.

"As for death, ma'am," he said tranquilly, "the only pity of it is the fear of it."

"Yes."

"Fear, ma'am, is a wicked thing. The mind cursed with it has looked on hell. Fear alone is cruel; death is kind. . . . Leastways, I reckon it is that-a-way."

"Yes," said Operator 13.

He smiled at her. He said softly: "Thought of God awes but does not frighten such as we are, and who have lived as we have lived and tried to do our best. Yuh know that, ma'am."

"Yes," she whispered.

Captain Gailliard had finished his meal. He lay on his belly in the ferns, his bandaged head framed by both hands, listening and watching her.

Vespasian Chancellor also had finished. There was nothing

more to eat, anyway. He plucked a stalk of wild redtop and chewed it reflectively.

"Well, ma'am," he concluded, "yuh surely fooled us all. I reckon it must be right pleasant for yuh to sit there ca'm and pleasant and feel that yuh have done yoh duty to yoh government."

"I have tried—I am trying——" her voice died out; she turned her head aside and looked out over the sunny valley. The fields below were so near that she could see yellow butterflies flying. She watched a bluebird alight upon the haystack scaffolding and listened to its softly warbled melody.

"Pennsylvania is a right nice country," said Chancellor in his agreeable voice. "I never saw fairer land than yon, ma'am."

Gailliard, lying in the ferns, his bandaged chin on his clasped hands, said dryly: "A pretty country to be hanged in."

There was a painful silence. The girl knew as well as they what was the penalty for a spy taken out of uniform in enemy territory. And she had taken them in Pennsylvania. And was on her way to deliver them to the nearest Federal pickets.

"Well, suh, Captain Gailliard," drawled Chancellor, "I reckon we knew what we were about when we followed this young lady. And we knew what our folks would do to her if we caught her. And she knew it, too. . . . Yuh did know, didn't you, ma'am?"

"Yes," said Operator 13, not turning her head.

"Not," said Chancellor gravely, "that it ain't a barbarous custom. I reckon it is. It always seems like to me that it would be both merciful and safe to lock up spies until the bey'nets had argued it out and the politicians had stopped their jawin'."

He sighed: "But military law is military law, and hanging is the verdict."

"No," said the girl in a low voice, "the verdict of a military court is either guilty or not guilty. Courts-martial do not sentence."

"Quite true, ma'am," agreed Chancellor politely. "You know your laws, ma'am."

Jack Gailliard said to him: "Is there any doubt in your mind that they'll hang us?"

"None, suh."

After a silence Chancellor rose on his long, gaunt legs and asked politely if he might find himself a quiet place to write a letter.

"There is no harm in it, ma'am. It's just to say a pleasant word to those I am leaving. Yuh may read it if yuh don't trust me."

She nodded, her velvet-dark young eyes fixed on the hayrick below.

So the tall, lanky fellow strode away and seated himself against a great tree where, with pencil, and a scrap of butcher's paper, he began to write, carefully, slowly, his tongue licking his lips with the mental effort at composition.

After a long while the girl turned and looked at Gailliard where he lay silent among the ferns with the level sunset light red on his bandaged face.

" Did you see me in the barn ? " she asked coldly.

He turned and gave her a surprised look.

" Did you ? " she repeated. Under his bandages his sun-burned skin reddened.

" You *did* see me," she concluded.

Another silence. Then : " Why did you let me go, Captain Gailliard ? "

No answer.

" You disregarded your duty," she said.

He remained mute. The girl looked hard at him out of beautiful, hard eyes : " Why ? " she demanded.

If she had expected a passionate avowal she was disappointed. The boy merely shrugged his shoulders and said carelessly : " If my government can't save itself without hanging a young girl, it can go to hell."

" Is *that* the reason ? " she asked.

" One of the reasons."

" Was there another ? "

What did this girl want him to say to her ? Whatever it was, she remained disappointed again, for he merely folded his arms and laid his head on them as though very tired.

Chancellor, under the big maple tree, intent on his letter, wrote slowly, resting the bit of discoloured paper on his bony knee. Forest and clearing were very still in the sunset light.

As Operator 13 sat in the ferns staring down at the green fields and fringing woods below, out of the gold and scarlet foliage rode a lancer, his long lance garnished with a red pennon, the metal on horse, saddle, and uniform striking fire in the rays of the sun.

A little way behind him two more lancers walked their horses out across the grass ; then came three more, abreast ; then an officer and a trumpeter all a-glitter. Then, in column of fours, led by their officers, an entire squadron of lancers moved out slowly, silently into the meadow, forming a long single line facing the skeleton hayrick, about two hundred yards from it.

In her happy relief and excitement the girl began to quiver all

over; was on the point of springing to her feet, when an ominous sound came from the depths of the gorgeous grove below—the low wail of fifes and the thudding of muffled drums.

Near her, among the broken ferns, Jack Gailliard lifted his weary head, then slowly sat up and looked down at the meadow.

Vespasian Chancellor, too, had heard the mournful sound. He lifted his dark, dignified, hawklike head from his writing, then rose quietly and came over to kneel down among the wild grasses beside Gailliard.

Nobody spoke. Nearer and nearer sounded the whine of the fifes and the deadened, shocking rhythm of the drums, still distant among the flaming maples.

Suddenly an entire regiment of cavalry in sky-blue overcoats trotted out of the woods, manœuvred smartly, and halted in single rank, forming, with their lancers, the three remaining sides of a square with the skeleton hayrick in the centre.

After them rattled a light buggy driven by two civilians. One of the men's faces and hands were blackened.

The buggy stopped beside the hayrick; both men got out and climbed to the platform, dragging with them a short ladder and a noosed rope. This latter they adjusted to the long beam between the two uprights, jerking it about, raising and lowering it until—finally satisfied—they slid the ladder to the grass and sat down on the platform.

The ghastly thumping and squealing of the Dead March filled the sunset silence now as a battalion of infantry marched slowly out of the sugar-bush behind the fifers and drummers, followed by a light farm-wagon guarded by dragoons.

In the wagon sat a man and a Catholic priest. The man, wearing only a collarless hickory shirt, dark trousers, and shoes, sat erect, looking straight in front of him. The priest was whispering in his ear—with difficulty on account of the jolting wagon.

Now in the red blaze of sunset, the wagon halted at the hayrick; the priest and the man with him got out and ascended the short ladder. A cavalry officer and two troopers also climbed up.

Immediately the man with the blackened face rose and came close beside the priest—the whole forming a dark group on the hayrick platform.

When the little crowd parted, a far, tenor command rang out along the ranks of halted horsemen: "Draw sabres!" The thin, whistling swish of steel whipped the silence like a wind.

Now, under the crossbeam, the figure in collarless shirt and black

trousers stood alone. A strip of cotton sealed his eyes ; his colourless hands were bound behind his back.

The next instant he shot up into the air, then dropped and landed with a jerk.

On the floor of the hayrick the red sunset set the shadows of his twitching feet dancing a silent shadow dance.

The jolly drums and fifes in the meadow were playing " When Johnny Comes Marching Home." Long lines of lancers, lances a-glitter, pennons flickering like tongues of flame were moving off at a canter. Blue-cloaked dragoons formed fours and followed. Some infantry soldiers were digging a hole behind the hayrick. A long, pine box stood near them on the grass. The setting sun's red blaze swept field and forest.

Now it was time for Operator 13 to join her own people in the fields below. She started to rise, but stumbled and would have fallen had not Vespasian Chancellor caught her and lifted her to her feet.

" It was too much for a lady to look upon, ma'am," he said soothingly. " I reckon we all need a little of that peach brandy before we are ready to go on."

" Get on to your horse," she said in a strangled voice. " Get into your saddle and ride away ! "

" Ma'am ? "

" Don't you understand ? " she sobbed. " I give you back your parole. Get away from here ! Quick ! "

The girl turned from him sharply, blind with tears, and stood swaying, sickened, faint. In her throbbing ears sounded the merry rattle of drums and the skirling of fifes ; and there was a lively noise of hammering, too, as a man with blackened face and hands drove ten-penny nails into the cover of a long, wooden box.

Operator 13 rubbed the welling tears from her eyes, made her way slowly to her horses, laid her quivering face against Skylark's saddle, and wept in silence.

When at last she lifted her head she saw Jack Gailliard standing beside his horse, waiting ; and her eyes flew wide with fright.

" Have you gone mad ? " she whispered. " What are you hanging around here for ? "

" You did not return my parole to me," said the boy.

Incensed, inarticulate in her rage and terror, the girl advanced toward him, her small hands clenched, her lovely mouth distorted.

" Get on to your horse and go ! " she gasped, beating at his

breast with frantic little fists; "go home and mind your d-damn b-business——"

He took her futile hands into both of his; kissed them again and again; took her hot, wet face into his arms and kissed the whimpering red lips—until no sound came from them, only the hot fragrance of her awakened soul and body.

And at last the girl put her trembling arms around his neck and kissed him.

The zenith was afire in the crimson afterglow when Operator 13, riding Skylark, and leading Lady Margrave, rode into Emmitsburg, and wearily asked the way to the quarters of the Provost Guard.

V

LADY GREEN-SLEEVES

Captain Charles E. Cadwallader's troop of the 6th Pennsylvania Lancers galloped into Emmitsburg, riding out through the evening glow along a wet road curving westward.

The old town had not altered much in a hundred years—had grown very little—that is, it had shrunk like an old, old man who had been young when "The Old Line's bugle, fife, and drum" sounded the marching music of the Maryland line of the Continental army.

The Philadelphia cavalry that now rode into it were looking for rebel cavalry, reported near Chambersburg and riding south.

Everybody in Emmitsburg had felt the earth jarring with the thunderous coming of the Yankee Lancers and had run to doors and windows to watch them pass—a torrent of whistling, snapping scarlet pennants and plunging horses.

Among these good folk was the beautiful and celebrated Lady Green-sleeves, who stood with white hands clenched and stared at the avalanche of slanting lances driving northward through Main Street.

Farther out on the Chambersburg road another person heard and then saw the Lancers—a shabby young horseman in straw hat and hickory shirt, whose small grey eyes were wet with tears; and who emerged from the roadside bushes as soon as the Lancers had passed, looked down a moment at their hoof-prints in the damp road, and then spurred his horse furiously toward Emmitsburg, urging him to a headlong run.

Another person, also, heard but did not see the passing Union cavalry; did not even know whether the galloping horsemen were Federal or Confederate.

This person looked like a Negro boy, hatless and bare-footed. She was Operator 13 of the United States Secret Service. She rode one horse and led another; and seemed to be very tired as she jogged along the mountain road through deepening sunset glory toward the Emmitsburg pike.

The young man in the hickory shirt arrived in Emmitsburg before she did.

As he passed the Morris house he saw Lady Green-sleeves on the veranda. He looked at her. She was worth looking at. She did not appear to notice him.

At that instant a sound of distant galloping again broke the golden stillness of the street; the young man turned his panting horse into a narrow, shady lane and dismounted. There was a horse-trough there. He let his horse drink a mouthful, then bathed his head and legs with a handful of drenched grass, pausing to watch another small patrol of Lancers canter up Main Street. Lady Green-sleeves also watched them. Lady Green-sleeves' eyes were the light violet tint of a flower de luce, but they seemed to darken as the Federal horsemen passed. She looked after them—until they were out of sight, then turned and entered the open doorway behind her. Somebody presently drew the window curtains of the Morris house.

A little girl in the shadowy back parlour sat before a small piano and played and sang "Maryland, My Maryland," very, very softly.

When Operator 13 of the United States Service rode wearily past Ste. Mary's College into Emmitsburg, she hoped to find the ancient village occupied by Yankee cavalry and already under martial law.

She saw no vedettes, no pickets, no cavalry, no Provost Marshal. There seemed to be nobody in the deserted street through which poured the rays of a westering sun tinging puddles of rain water clear gold.

The horror of that military hanging in the hayfield was still raw in her mind and she longed for forgetfulness in sleep.

Operator 13 was deathly tired, scarce able to keep her saddle on Skylark and lead Lady Margrave.

As she rode up to the post office, the assistant postmaster waddled out on the veranda in fretful argument with a dingy fellow citizen who followed, dangling a paper bag containing dry prunes.

So Operator 13 drew bridle to inquire for the Federal Provost; but before she could open her lips, the postmaster, continuing his argument, said stubbornly: "No, Clem; there's too much pomp an' horse-feathers into this here war to suit me. I wuz over to Frederick, and I seen that there fat Yankee General settin' pompious on to a hoss like a yeller-belly frog on to a lily-pad. Well,

let him set pompious. He can be if he's a mind to. But he ain't a-going to lay down no millingtary law to me."

Clem expectorated, extracted a prune from the paper bag and munched it, dubiously: "Martial law is millingtary law and ain't to be sneezed at, George," he remonstrated mildly. "Ef I wuz you I wouldn't wanta set on to no iron bunk in Fort McHenry. No sir, not me."

"I ain't aimin' to set on to no bunk of no kind, shape, or manner nowhere, neither," retorted the postmaster. "I'm a deputy United States official, I am. So let the Yankees act pompious on to their hosses if they's a mind to. I ain't a-going to turn no letters over to them nor nobody else, neither—I ain't."

Operator 13 touched her tangled, sweat-matted curls with a tentative forefinger:

"Evenin', marsters," she interposed timidly.

They turned from the doorway to stare down at her.

"What you want?" demanded the postmaster.

"'Scuse me, suh, I'se a-axin' yuh-all whar am de Provost in dis hyah town, suh?"

"There ain't no Provost here," replied the postmaster, angrily, "an' we don't want none, neither."

"Kin yuh-all tell me whar am de Linkum sodgers, suh?"

"There wuz a passel of Lancers went kitin' through before sundown, scarin' everybody," grunted the postmaster. "What you wanta know for?"

"I'se done come wif de hosses fo' de Provost, suh."

"I tell yuh there ain't no Provost here. There's a yeller-belly frog settin' pompious over to Frederick. Mebbe he'll charge you ten cents to take a peek at him."

He waddled into the post office and banged the weather-beaten door behind him.

His crony, Clem, expectorated, shook his wizened head, fished out a prune, munched it toothlessly, reflectively, indicating the closed door with troubled thumb.

"He's riled," he remarked. "One o' them lancer officers wuz all fer ransackin' the mail boxes, and George wouldn't have it. But I tell him he'll land into Fort McHenry ef he talks uppity to them Yankee Lancers. . . . What you want, bub?"

"I'se lookin' fo' de Yankee cav'ly, suh. Done fotch de hosses fo' de Provost——"

A distant drumming sound on the unpaved street silenced her.

Both turned to look and saw a dozen horsemen—more couriers from anxious Headquarters—coming at a lively gallop. It was a patrol of the 1st Maine Cavalry, hurled forward at random, to get some news of the rebel raiders.

They wore sky-blue uniforms and yellow-lined cloaks; and there was much bright yellow on collar, sleeve, and breeches. They pulled up with a clash of spur and sabre in front of the post office. There was a civilian riding with the yellow-chevroned sergeant commanding them, and Operator 13 kicked her mud-smeared horse into motion and, leading Lady Margrave, pushed up close beside him.

"Captain Rivett," she said under her breath.

Dick Rivett of Major Allen's corps of spies and guides looked around at the ragged coloured lad in stony silence.

She said: "I'm Operator 13, Gail Loveless. You remember?"

He inspected her leisurely, then nodded almost imperceptibly, and without any slightest change of expression, inquired:

"What are you doing here?" his lips scarce stirring when he spoke.

"I'm dead-alive in my stirrups," she whispered. "Can your troopers take these two horses to Major Allen?"

"No, we've orders to go forward. Have you happened to see Stuart?"

"Jeb Stuart passed Black Gap this morning on his way to Gettysburg——"

"Are you absolutely certain?"

"That's where they said he was going. Everybody knew it in Chambersburg. I saw him pass eastward through the Gap with two thousand sabres. Isn't there anybody to take my horses, Captain Rivett?"

"The 6th Lancers will be following us. Tell Colonel Rush what you want—I'm sorry, ma'am, but we've got to ride on——" he spurred forward, calling out to the sergeant: "Push on! This little darkey saw the rebel cavalry on the Gettysburg road! You'd better send a courier back to Frederick!"

A boyish trooper of the 1st Maine whirled his horse and went off to the southward on a dead run; the others, and Dick Rivett, galloped forward. In the windows of houses along the street curtains were drawn aside and anxious faces pressed against the panes. But nobody opened any doors to come out; and presently the window-curtains were redrawn across the pale, anxious faces, and sunset silence settled over Main Street once again.

Clem and his bag of prunes had disappeared; the postmaster

did not even peep out of his dusty windows. Operator 13, drooping in her saddle, touched Skylark with weary, naked heels, and the two horses moved on down the empty village road called Main Street.

Passing the old Morris house she saw a lady and a pretty child sitting on the veranda. The lady was slender and golden haired.

Coming, now, to a leafy lane she noticed a watering trough. The only person in sight there was a young man in a hickory shirt wearing butcher's boots and a straw hat.

He was grooming a nice-looking nag at the horse-trough; and, as Operator 13 turned into the secluded lane, he looked up lazily. But his small, clever eyes belied his indifference.

What he saw, apparently, was a ragged Negro urchin on a handsome sweating horse, leading another horse quite as handsome. He had seen the horses before, on the other side of the Potomac.

"Evenin', suh," ventured Operator 13. "H'it's mighty fair weather, 'scusin' de rain."

The clever, light grey eyes swept the girl from her sweat-tangled kinky curls to her dark, naked feet in the stirrups; shifted to examine the two horses, then keenly reverted to the forlorn figure drooping in the saddle.

"Whose little nigger are you?" he drawled.

"I'se Marse Allen's nigger, suh."

"What Marse Allen?"

"Dunno, suh. 'Spec he—all de onlies' Marse Allen what am."

"Are those his horses?"

"Yaas, suh."

Something in the young man's small, light grey eyes began to frighten her. He said in a stealthy voice:

"Where did you happen to steal General Jeb Stuart's two favourite horses?"

A silence, her hand always creeping toward her saddle holster.

"You murderous little nigger," he snapped out, "don't touch that pistol——"

But it was already glittering in her hand.

"Back off there," she motioned with her left hand.

"Wait a moment——"

"Damn you, do as I tell you!" she gasped.

"Very well," he replied in a low, agreeable voice, "but please handle your pistol with care——"

"If I have to kill you I'll do it," she whispered hoarsely. "Drop your bridle! Stand wide of your horse and mine!"

Then he began to laugh, noiselessly, his shrewd, smooth face eloquent with admiration and amusement.

"Put up your shooting iron," he said under his breath, "and let us quit fooling and discuss the weather. I reckon it's likely we shall have *a night of stars*."

The passwords of the Federal Secret Service seemed to shock her. Then her dumb lips began to quiver under the reaction; the heavy pistol in her hand sagged and trembled so that she could scarcely manage to shove it into the holster—scarce find voice to stammer out the prescribed answer: "Yes, it—it will be *a night of stars and bars. H-how many stars do you reckon will be shining to-night?*"

"*One hundred and seven!*"

"*Add one hundred and seven to thirteen*——" began the girl, but her voice was out of control and ended in a sob; and slowly she wilted like a dark flower in her saddle, sinking forward and laying her face against Skylark's disordered mane.

"You seem weary, ma'am," whispered the young man. He had left his horse standing and had come close to her stirrup.

She sat up with an effort:

"I've been badly frightened to-day," she murmured, "and I haven't had any sleep. I'm nearly dead on my horse—I've got to sleep——"

"Bear up a little, ma'am. You are Operator 13, of course. Do you know who I am?"

"You are Federal Operator 107, but I don't know your name."

"I was with Jack Babcock and Pauline Cushman in Martinsburg," he explained.

"What are you doing here?"

"Trailing a rebel Secret Service agent. What news have you of Jeb Stuart?"

"The rebel cavalry is on the Gettysburg road"—her voice grew slightly hysterical—"please tell me what I am to do with these horses."

"Can you keep your saddle for another few miles?"

"I've *got* to sleep I tell you——"

"Come with me," he insisted; "I will guide you out of this——"

"Let me sleep, first——"

"I can't wait. You must come——"

"I can't."

"I'm riding through Frederick," he urged, "and I'll take you and your horses to Colonel Dick Rush. A heavy patrol of his

Lancers rode through this town an hour ago headed north looking for Jeb Stuart. When they return this way Captain Cadwallader will see you safely through to Knoxville. Do you understand ? "

Gail Loveless strove to keep her heavy eyes open and to comprehend that Union cavalry really were between Emmitsburg and the eastward-rolling wave of grey-jacketed raiders.

" Get off your horse," said Operator 107, " and go and lie down behind those trees over there. The 1st Maine cavalry should arrive here very soon with more of the 6th Lancers. Pleasanton's troopers are swinging up from the southwest. You are perfectly safe."

Stupid as she was from exhaustion, something in the continuous and restless play of his clever light grey eyes seemed to keep her conscious and troubled.

" What is your name ? " she asked faintly.

" Josiah Bailey."

" And you were in Martinsburg with Pauline Cushman and John Babcock ? "

" Yes, I held their horses ready between Darksville and the river."

" Nobody mentioned you to me," she said. " I wonder why."

" Do you doubt me, ma'am ? "

But she couldn't really doubt him after his instantly correct reply to passwords known only to agents of the Federal Secret Service.

There came the noise of trotting horses from the main street; two troopers in blue ambled past. Their carbines were slung; they laughed together and bit into red apples as they jogged along. Clearly Federal cavalry in force were not far away.

" Very well," said Operator 13 in a voice made small and weak from fatigue, " you may take me to Colonel Rush at once."

But the young man appeared to have changed his mind. His eyes followed the Yankee troopers until they disappeared.

" No," he said, " you had better get a little sleep. The 6th Lancers should arrive at any moment, now, and you can see Colonel Rush then."

" I thought you wanted me to go with you. I can keep awake, I believe——"

" No," he said; " I've got to go on to the river, and you can't stick on your horse that far."

" I'll try."

" No," he repeated smilingly.

The girl in her ragged shirt and pants slid limply from the saddle to the ground and leaned against Skylark's shoulder.

Operator 107 mounted his handsome horse, took the halter of Lady Margrave and the bridle of Skylark from her limp grasp.

"You ought to be quite safe, ma'am, until our people arrive," he said soothingly. "Just lie down in the grass, yonder, and go to sleep under those nice trees until Pleasanton's trumpets or Rush's bugles wake you"—he looked hard at her—"and end your troubles for ever."

Operator 13 unclosed her velvet-dark eyes and lifted her dishevelled head from where it rested against Skylark's sweating shoulder.

"Have you any message for Colonel Rush, ma'am?" inquired the scout.

She forced herself to understand and to answer:

"Yes; the rebel horse blew up all the Quartermaster's stores in Chambersburg last night. They have with them nearly two thousand stolen Pennsylvanian horses. They took no Maryland horses or cattle. Their regiments are the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 9th, and 10th Virginia cavalry; the 7th and 9th North Carolina; the 3rd South Carolina; two Legions; and a flying battery of four guns from Pelham's horse artillery. . . . Two thousand sabres; four guns; two thousand led horses for remount; and many Union prisoners. . . . Jeb Stuart commands. Major von Borcke went back to the river after crossing under fire with the pickets. Jackson's infantry hold all the hill-passes. A cavalry raid by Averell, in force, at McCoy's Ford might ruin Jackson. Tell Colonel Rush to telegraph Major Allen. . . . I *must* sleep, now—if you'll excuse me——"

"Just one moment more, ma'am. Did Gus Littlefield get clear?"

"I don't know."

"Did Mrs. Edmonds?"

"I don't know. They hanged a man near Black Gap—I mean our people hanged him. It was horrible——"

Operator 107 turned sharply away; seemed busy with Skylark's girth for a moment, then slowly looked around at her again:

"Yes, ma'am," he said gently. . . . "Did Vespasian Chancellor follow you?"

"Yes."

"Did Captain Gailliard?"

"Y-yes——"

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

At the mere sound of his name, fatigue seemed to slip from mind and body, and she felt the mounting blood stimulate her heart and pulse and cheek once more.

"Where did you shake off these houn'-dawgs, ma'am?" asked the young man in his soft, persuasive voice.

"Near Black Gap. . . . After the hanging in the hayfield."

"Where do you think they are now?" he asked calmly.

"With Jeb Stuart, I suppose."

Operator 107 bent from his saddle and spoke again to her under his breath:

"I understand that a Confederate Secret Service agent known as Lady Green-sleeves has been living here in Emmitsburg with her pretty little daughter."

Gail Loveless looked up at Federal Operator 107 out of haggard, startled eyes.

"You know who Lady Green-sleeves is?" whispered the young man.

"Yes. Is she here in Emmitsburg?"

"She was here a week ago. That's why I came over—to arrest her. I haven't been able to discover any trace of her, and I believe she's gone on South. She was boarding here, last week, under the name of Mrs. R. Howe—she and that pretty child of hers—but she left on the tenth, I'm told, and is now, probably, with Jeb Stuart's raiders."

"What does she look like?" demanded Operator 13. A bright flush flooded her features. All traces of fatigue seemed to have vanished save for the almost ghastly expression of her sunken eyes, and the bony contour of her sunken cheeks and mouth.

"Well, ma'am, I've never seen her, but Major Allen's records show she's a lady born and a handsome one. A little taller than are you, ma'am, a graceful figure and a cultivated voice and manner."

"Who is she in private life?"

"She was a government clerk in Washington, and very lovely to look at. And—if you will excuse the freedom, ma'am—it is reported that she became the—sweetheart—of Lord Napier, the British minister to Washington. . . . And it is believed that the child with her is their daughter. That, ma'am, and her violet-coloured eyes and red-gold hair, is our record of Lady Green-sleeves, taken from the Old Capitol Prison where, lately, she was held on charges of doing terrible mischief to the United States."

"What did she do?"

"She was Beauregard's spy. She cost us thousands of men at Manassas, ma'am."

"Is she really so dangerous?"

"Deadly."

"Do you think it possible she might still be here in hiding?" asked the girl excitedly.

"It might be so, ma'am. But I am instructed to go on and look for her near New Market; and, if she isn't there, to continue on and search for her along the river fords. And that is what I am going to do. . . . Are you feeling some better now?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Well, ma'am, I have your report and your horses"—he smiled—"Jeb Stuart's horses; and I shall deliver both with your compliments. . . . Are you hungry?"

"No."

"Then go and sleep under the trees, ma'am; and, when you awake to the racket of Union bugles, and if you should see a lovely lady with angelic eyes and angel's hair sauntering down the street, take a couple of Colonel Rush's fancy Lancers; arrest her without warrant; and hold her until you hear from Major Allen."

"Are there any Union cavalry here now?"

"No, ma'am."

Operator 13 regarded him with hollow brilliant eyes burning with excitement. She had become nervously alive again. She had seen such a woman on the veranda of the Morris house not ten minutes ago. And there was a pretty child with her. Everything histrionic in her nature was now in the ascendant and wide-awake; and the mounting excitement of it dominated all fatigue.

For here was real drama! Here was the hiding-place of an incredibly beautiful and dangerous woman who was supposed to have loved recklessly a noble lord of high degree and who had sent thousands of Union soldiers to a bloody death. And she, Gail Loveless, was going to arrest her!

"Mr. Bailey," she said in an unsteady voice, "would a military court hang Lady Green-sleeves if I arrested her?"

"No, ma'am. She is to go to Fort McHenry for the duration of the war."

"Nothing worse? You are *sure*?"

"Not for her, ma'am."

"How do *you* know?"

"Major Allen told us that these are Mr. Stanton's positive

orders. . . . That Mr. Lincoln wouldn't allow any hanging in this case."

"Have you pencil and paper?" she demanded excitedly.

"Yes, ma'am——"

"Let me have them——"

He fished out several crumpled sheets, and a pencil; and Operator 13—always the born actress—wrote, resting the paper dramatically upon her horse's saddle:

LADY,

Ef you all wants a nigger boy run your errants i is hangin roun town near de pos office all day mam so no mo

speckfully

MOSE.

She showed it triumphantly to Operator 107.

"Yes," he said, "if she's here. . . . What a plot for a play!" he added, smilingly.

"I'll leave it at the post office for her," said Operator 13. "All women take fatal chances to get their mail. A possible letter is the one thing no woman can resist inquiring for. If Lady Green-sleeves is in Emmitsburg she'll get this note!"

"Take it over now," he suggested.

"How shall I address the note? To Mrs. Howe?"

"She passes as Mrs. Rosalie Howe, in Emmitsburg. Write, 'care Mrs. Morris.'"

Operator 13 folded the paper and wrote:

"Missus Rosy how care Miss Morus," on the outside. It was a grimy, smeared bit of illiteracy and looked genuine.

"I'll wait till you come back," said Operator 107.

So Gail Loveless, drunk with the excitement of her little drama, took the soiled note across to the post office where the fat assistant postmaster was at supper in a rear room that smelled of cider.

"What you want now, little darky?" he called out fretfully, a cup of coffee poised under his chin whiskers.

"Letter fo' Missus Howe, suh. Whar de lady's box?"

"Leave it on the counter."

Lucille laid the soiled note on the counter: "Is de lady in town, suh?" she inquired softly.

"No," he grunted.

"When yuh reckon she-all fixin' tuh come back?"

"I don't know. Her mail goes to Mrs. Gus Morris. Leave the letter, I tell you."

A pause. The postmaster guzzled his coffee, wiped his whiskers and scowled at Lucille.

"Is yuh-all see de gallus Yankee lancers ridin' de street to-day?" chirped Lucille, cheerfully, and evidently prepared for polite conversation.

"Yes, and there's more Yanks on the way," growled the postmaster. "What do you want hanging around here this-a-way?"

"Nuff'n, suh."

"Are you a contraband?"

"Yaas, suh. An' I jess a honin' fo' a job run errants."

"We don't want any contrabands in Emmitsburg," grunted the postmaster; and, carrying his sloppy coffee cup, he got up and shut the intervening door.

The moment it closed, Operator 13 reached over and took two letters out of the niche marked "Morris" and stuffed them into her pants' pocket. Then she went out noiselessly on naked feet, down the empty main street and across into the leafy lane to the horse-trough where Operator 107 sat his saddle, still smiling.

"I think the woman really is in town," said Operator 13. "Tell Major Allen that I'll try to arrest her. But I've got to get some sleep first. I can't stand up on my legs any longer, Mr. Bailey——"

"All right. You'll hear bugles before midnight, I reckon. Sleep tight, ma'am; your troubles are nearly ended."

Operator 13 nodded wearily, watched him ride away west by south with Lady Margrave and Skylark at lead; then stood unstirring for a moment more in the red afterglow—a ragged, forlorn little figure in the deserted lane where the smouldering west stained pools of standing water a sombre crimson.

The assistant postmaster of Emmitsburg presently emerged from his quarters behind the post office. He was in his shirt-sleeves, munching a wedge of pie. He noticed the same ragged Negro boy go limping across Main Street, and saw the lad lie down on the grass under the sycamore trees.

It was after sundown; time to lock up the post office and go to bed. He finished his pie, went in, started to blow out the two tallow candles in the dusky place. And saw a little white girl standing there in the sickly candle light.

"How did *you* get in?" he asked, surprised.

"You left the back door open," she said with an enchanting smile.

She was a charming little thing of nine or ten, perhaps; violet

eyed, straight of nose, full lipped, and her plump oval face was framed in a shock of pale gold hair.

"Is there any mail for Mother?" she inquired.

The fat postmaster put on his spectacles, peered into the Morris box, fished out a soiled, unstamped missive without any envelope and passed it over the counter.

"I thought there was two more letters," he grumbled, "but reckon I'm mistaken."

"Do you know who left this one?" asked the child.

"A ragged contraband boy. He's asleep over there under them trees."

The child looked curiously at the letter, then lifted her exquisite, clear blue eyes to the postmaster.

"So you and your ma has decided to come back to Emmitsburg," he remarked, yawning.

"Yes, sir."

"Like it here, missy?"

"Mother likes it."

"Didn't like it over to Chambersburg, did yah?"

"No, sir."

"Living down to Mrs. Morris' again?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I hope you aim to stay with us. It's a quiet town but our folks is neighbourly. Did you see them Lancers gallop through town this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, tell your ma not to worry none. We're too far from the war to be scared. Let 'em act pompious so long as they do all their fighting over to Frederick along the river! We're all snug and safe up here in Maryland. . . . You want a bit of striped peppermint, missy?"

"If you please, sir."

He unscrewed the zinc top of a jar of candy, handed her a stick striped red and white like a barber's pole.

The child curtsied her happy thanks, turned and went quickly away through the back door, her grimy letter clutched in one hand. She was rapturously sucking the peppermint stick as she hastened on through the starry dusk. Passing the sycamores she glanced curiously down at the ragged Negro lad prone in the grass, then, a little scared, ran on toward the Morris house where her mother was awaiting her on the dark veranda.

With her mother stood a young man in hickory shirt and butcher's

boots. His faded straw hat he held courteously in one hand.

Three horses stood tethered at the hitching rail outside the picket fence where thickets of phlox and white lilies perfumed the night air.

"Here is the letter, Mother," said the child happily.

"Thank you," said Lady Green-sleeves. "Now, go to bed, darling." They kissed, and the child went into the dark house.

The young man nodded to her as she passed and quietly continued his conversation with her mother: "We've got all the roads and paths stopped to the northward, ma'am. Every Yankee courier who galloped through here from Frederick has been gobbled by Jeb Stuart's vedettes. If I could take that Yankee Secret Service spy out of here I'd do it; but she isn't able to sit her horse, and I dare not stay here any longer, what with the chances that the Lancers and Pleasanton's regiments may ride in and stop me before our cavalry can get here."

"No," said Lady Green-sleeves, "you can't remain here much longer, Josiah."

"No, ma'am. Orders from Jeb Stuart are positive—'Wait in Emmitsburg till the road is clear, then don't spare spur till you are across the river and Stonewall's pickets stop you. Then tell him I'll cross at White's Ford.'"

"Do you think your road is clear now?" inquired Lady Green-sleeves.

"I'll wait a few moments more, ma'am."

Lady Green-sleeves said: "I'll take care of this young Yankee Actress until the Confederate cavalry arrive."

"Watch her, ma'am," he said softly. "She is a kind of she-devil."

"Do you believe she did betray your poor brother, Josiah?"

"She, or the other actress, Pauline Cushman, I reckon. Or Gus Littlefield. Or the Edwards woman. They're all alike as so many snakes."

Lady Green-sleeves laid a delicate hand on the young man's thin shoulder: "I really believe you had better leave those horses of General Stuart in the barn. Any Yankee patrol would be sure to stop and hold you. And—you know what that would mean."

It meant hanging. Both understood that. Both also knew that his brother had been caught and hanged that same afternoon on a hayrick gallows surrounded by a square of Yankee cavalry.

The young man said: "I believe, ma'am, that I could get cl'ar to the Potomac with one of the horses, anyway. Jeb Stuart thinks a lot of Skylark."

"Better not try it, Josiah."

"If I leave them in your barn," he insisted, "some Yankee Lancer patrol may gobble them both before Stuart gets here to-night."

"Perhaps. We must take that chance. It's more important you get through to Jackson with Stuart's message and my information."

There was another silence. Then: "I reckon you are right, ma'am. I certainly do hate to leave those horses. . . . And that poisonous little actress they call Operator 13. You'll see she's arrested?"

"I'll attend to her," said Lady Green-sleeves. "Hark!" she added in a whisper.

They stood listening in darkness. But heard no sound save the drumming of dew on the veranda roof.

"You'd better go."

The young man bent with courtly grace, lifted her white, slender hand, and touched the fingers with twitching lips. Then Lady Green-sleeves took his thin hand between both of hers and looked at him through a mist of sudden tears.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Your brother died like a Southern soldier and is numbered with our martyrs in this dark hour."

"Yes, ma'am he is. There was a priest with him—at the end. Yes, ma'am, he is on his way to God, I reckon."

He stood with his faded straw hat in both hands, fumbling it, staring into darkness.

"Well, ma'am," he added absently, "I reckon I better go to Stonewall, now. . . . And I thank you very kindly."

"May God comfort you in your grief," said Lady Green-sleeves tremulously.

"I thank you kindly, ma'am——"

He turned and descended the veranda steps, unhitched Skylark and Lady Margrave, and led them away in darkness toward the stables. After a while he reappeared and climbed into his own saddle.

"May avenging angels ride with you," whispered Lady Green-sleeves, fiercely.

He bowed very low in his stirrups, touched his horse and cantered away westward, his dingy straw hat still held loosely in one hand.

He had been gone an hour or more before Lady Green-sleeves finally left the dark veranda, went into the house and upstairs, and leaned for a moment over her sleeping child.

Mrs. Morris came into the corridor and spoke cautiously: "Have our people arrived, Rosalie?"

"Not yet."

"If they don't hurry, all the Yankee cavalry in Maryland will be here," whispered Mrs. Morris. "Is that actress spy of theirs still lying asleep under the trees?"

"Yes."

"If Jeb Stuart doesn't catch her she'll ruin him yet," said Mrs. Morris.

"I'll see to it that she contrives no more murders," said Lady Green-sleeves, descending the dark stairs.

"Where are you going, Rosalie?"

Lady Green-sleeves went into the back parlour, opened the drawer of a lacquered papier-mâché table, took a loaded pistol from it and came lightly back into the hallway:

"I'm going up the street to see whether this she-devil is still there," she said; "and if she is, I'm going to detain her there until our cavalry arrive."

She went out of the house, catfoot, leaving the front door open; crossed the fenced yard, let herself out of the picket gate and moved stealthily up Main Street in the misty starlight to where the sycamores stretched great, green-blotched limbs above the withered grass.

As she reached the sleeping figure lying like a shadow among tall brown weeds gone to seed, there came a far sound of scurrying hoofs, nearer, nearer, and two Lancers galloped by, their long lances slanting backward in the stirrup-buckets.

As the racket of hoofs and whistling snap of lance pennons died away to the westward, a slight stirring behind her attracted Lady Green-sleeves' attention, and her delicate fingers tightened on the pistol she clutched, buried in the billowy folds of her wide poplin skirts.

Then she turned, quietly, and saw what seemed to be a slim, ragged Negro lad standing silently at her elbow.

"Evenin', missus," said Operator 13. "Is yuh done see me sleepin' in de grass?"

Lady Green-sleeves said calmly: "Who are you, little coloured boy?"

"Mah name's Moses, ma'am. I'se a contraband, an' I is jes' a-honin' tuh run yuh errants, lady."

"Did you write a letter to me?"

"Yaas'm. Is yuh Mis' Howe, ma'am?"

"Yes."

Lady Green-sleeves looked intently at the ragged youngster who grinned artlessly back at her.

"Is yuh did yuh chores, ma'am?" inquired Operator 13. "H'it's mos' near mawnin', lady, an' I'se jes' a-honin' tuh wash de front walk an' de gallery, ma'am."

Lady Green-sleeves' uncertain gaze searched the shadowy, smiling features of this seeming Negro lad. If this, truly, were that murderous actress bent on the destruction of Jeb Stuart and all his riders, the disguise and voice, and acting were absolute perfection.

"Where did you hear of me?" asked Lady Green-sleeves.

"Gemman done tell me yuh-all lookin' fo' a right smart nigger, ma'am."

"Who told you that?"

"De pos' marster, ma'am."

"Oh, and so you left a letter for me."

"Yaas'm, lady——"

Their ears caught a distant jarring sound coming from far away in the northwest.

Both heard it. Through the veins of Gail Loveless crept the icy chill of fear. She looked into the lovely eyes of Lady Green-sleeves.

"Don't move," said Lady Green-sleeves softly as the pistol glittered in her firm, white hand.

There fell a terrible silence between them. In the frightened ears of Operator 13 the blood pounded like the loud tread of oncoming horses. Or was it the trampling of hoofs she really heard, solemn as the dreary, marching thud of muffled drums.

Lady Green-sleeves said: "God shall deal with you to-night as you have dealt with our nearest and dearest. . . . And one of these was hanged to-day. And you betrayed him to the gallows!"

Operator 13 shivered.

Lady Green-sleeves said: "And now you are planning to betray two thousand American lads to the merciless Yankee sabres! You spawn of Judas!"

Operator 13 strove to speak with stiff and fear-dry lips:

"I have—have betrayed nobody t-to the gallows," she stammered. "Vespasian Chancellor and—and Jack Gailliard were my prisoners; but I let them go."

"You came here to make a prisoner of me, did you not?"

"They would not have hanged you. But your people will hang me unless you let me go."

The heavy beating of her heart was like loud blows on her young breast; in her deafened ears roared the oncoming ground-shaking shock of horses.

Nearer it sounded, and nearer in the misty starlight—a dull, stubborn rhythm of hundreds of marching horses trampling steadily on through the night. The stifled thunder of their coming filled the starry stillness; the dark earth trembled underfoot.

Suddenly another noisier clatter broke out sharply from the eastward; and, with a rattling rush, two Lancers—Corporal Anderson of D Company, and Private Dougherty—appeared, spurring through the shadowy street toward the Gettysburg road.

As they galloped past there came a startled shout from the darkness ahead of them; frantic battering of iron-shod hoofs; a crash; then a pistol shot and the scream of a lanced horse.

But the two gallopers from Colonel Rush tore through the Confederate column and sped on, their bloody lance-heads a-trail behind them.

All around her boiled a turmoil of grey horses and grey men, as Lady Green-sleeves, pistol in hand, searched fiercely for the ragged figure that had disappeared among the shadowy horsemen crowding Main Street from curb to curb.

For the Yankee actress had vanished amid the confusion of milling horsemen thrown into momentary confusion by the two lancer-couriers.

But now the long column was re-forming, straightening out, moving on through Main Street.

The nuns from St. Joseph's, and the priests from ancient Ste. Mary's, awakened and alarmed by the uproar, were huddling near their colleges under the trees, trying to understand what was happening in this old Revolutionary town. And, among them, cowered Operator 13 behind a mossy wall, terrified but fascinated, thrilled with that strange pleasure born of peril; still lingering, attracted by the very danger that frightened her.

It was already midnight. The phantom rebel vanguard, guns, led horses, prisoners, had gone on through the old town street; but a ghostly regiment in column remained halted there—a band of mounted shadows among shadows, grey, formless, unreal.

Operator 13, scarce understanding what she was doing, yet already stirred and directed by that strange intuition which forestalls reason and purpose in such as she, stole out of Ste. Mary's dusk and crept toward the Chambersburg road. And saw, in the starlight, a troop of Federal cavalry moving at a walk toward the rebel-

choked town. She knew them instantly by their long lances athwart the stars.

Whatever it was—bravery, devotion, God knew, perhaps; for the horror of their situation so shocked her that she gave no thought to herself but sprang down the slope, calling out to them in a frightened voice, still running and stumbling, until a lancer drew bridle, dismounted, caught her by her ragged sleeve and dragged her back with him to where the little column of men and horses were slowly moving toward destruction.

"Halt! Halt!" she repeated in an agonized voice, appealing from one horseman to another; "can't you boys understand? I tell you the town is full of Jeb Stuart's cavalry passing through! Listen to me. I'm not contraband! I'm Operator 13 of the United States Secret Service and I know what I'm talking about——"

"Halt!" said a quiet voice in the starlight; and, "halt! halt!" was repeated cautiously along the line until the horses stood motionless.

An officer turned his mount, rode up beside her where she stood among the silent troopers, leaned down close to her and struck a sulphur match. It burned blue, then brightly, illuminating her face and his.

And she recognized him instantly, naming him, hysterically: "Captain Cadwallader, do you remember when you came to Major Allen's Headquarters in Blanton's house? I was upstairs with Pauline Cushman. I am Operator 13."

"You saw cavalry in Emmitsburg to-night?" he demanded.

"Yes——"

"Did they wear blue uniforms?"

"Yes, sir, but they got those in Chambersburg——"

"They are our own men," he said coldly.

"They are Jeb Stuart's!" she insisted.

"Very well," he said. "I'll go and see."

"I'm trying to tell you that Emmitsburg is full of Stuart's cavalry," she wailed, "and you won't believe me!"

"That is impossible," he retorted; "Stuart went on to Gettysburg. . . . And if you're a rebel agent sent to mislead us, you're in a lot of trouble right now, my lad."

He leaned over from his horse, took the seeming Negro boy by the collar, motioned to a corporal to discard his lance and follow, and said to his lieutenant: "Keep your men halted; I'm riding forward to take a look, and I'll be back in a few minutes."

Operator 13 squirmed in his grasp, begging and pleading, scared almost out of her wits; but the obstinate Philadelphian with all the arrogance of aristocratic bravery, rode on, dragging her along; and the corporal hustled her occasionally from behind with a sturdy boot toe.

Down the dark road and straight into Main Street they moved; and suddenly Captain Charles Cadwallader found himself riding close to a halted column of cavalry in blue uniforms.

"What regiment is this?" he inquired.

"Stuart's cavalry," replied a shadowy figure.

The unexpected and shocking reply caught him like a blow in the face; but he managed to weather it like a Philadelphian and a soldier.

"Oh I know that," he said carelessly, "but I'm asking you what is your regiment."

There was a silence of suspicion; a restless movement among the halted horsemen. The lives of these two Union cavalrymen quivered in the balance. The life of Operator 13 was not worth a Confederate penny.

Then somebody said in a distinct voice: "By God, he talks like a Yankee!"

Captain Cadwallader turned on the unseen speaker with an oath, cursing his impudence and indiscipline, and demanding what he meant by insulting a Confederate officer. At that instant Operator 13 wriggled out of his grasp and vanished in the darkness.

Whoever it had been that had dared to challenge a Philadelphia Cadwallader subsided, grumbling. Nobody else ventured to question him.

Very coolly the Lancer-Captain rode on a little way, then turned his horse and rode leisurely back again and out of the fatal village followed by his corporal, who was almost fainting in his saddle.*

Ten minutes later a company of the 6th Pennsylvania Lancers might have been seen skedaddling for life and limb toward Frederick and salvation, headed by their chastened and subdued commanding officer, Captain Charles E. Cadwallader, which seemed likely to solve their immediate problem, but offered no solution whatever to the fearful perplexities that beset Operator 13 of the United

* In a pencilled note to his sister "Tilly," Captain Cadwallader modestly intimates that his coolness and courage on this occasion were exaggerated. But the facts are as stated here, and may safely be included in authentic history.

States Secret Service, who was skulking along under the lilies inside the picket fence of the Morris house.

She dared not run—although her legs implored her to make vigorous use of them. She scarcely ventured, even, to glance over the fence toward that fearsome column of phantom horsemen which had now begun to move off slowly through Main Street.

But what most alarmed her was that the dark street had become crowded with the kindly citizens of this old Maryland town. They appeared from everywhere, carrying lighted candle-lanterns, crowding about the rebel cavalry and offering pans brimming with buttermilk, strips of bacon laid on corn-bread, fruit, and blue china bowls full of fragrant cider and home-made wines.

Men and women, old and young, hastily and half-dressed, children in their nightgowns and bare of feet, and houn' dawgs innumerable swarmed along the column which moved slowly, then halted, then continued to move and halt alternately while all Emmitsburg clustered at their stirrups to feed them and wish them safe travelling wherever God and Jeb Stuart might choose to send them.

In the light, vague and shadowy, of candle-lit windows, and of flickering, old horn lanterns, Operator 13 caught a vague glimpse of Lady Green-sleeves just entering her picket gate.

At the mere sight of her, a swift, hot flush of excitement swept the girl, and she crouched among the lilies watching her as a young panther watches quarry unattainable—yet always crouches to stare and watch.

Slowly Lady Green-sleeves mounted the veranda steps and stood there as though awaiting the arrival of somebody from the dark street.

There was some noise and laughter in the street where the hungry Confederate troopers were eating and drinking in their saddles, and where the horse-raiding details of the 9th Virginia were riding in with more Pennsylvania nags captured outside the Maryland border.

For a little while Operator 13 squatted low among the lilies, her dark eyes fastened on the vague figure of Lady Green-sleeves. At last, and very cautiously, she began to creep through the fragrant, flowery thickets toward a better position among some Rose-of-Sharon bushes which grew near a stable.

As she reached these in deepest shadow, somewhere near her a horse whinnied in the darkness.

The horse was Skylark.

If Operator 13 suspected any such thing—and probably it did not occur to her—nevertheless she realized that somewhere very near her was a horse which might offer her a longer lease on life.

Soundlessly, on naked feet, she made her way to the shadowy building, unlatched the unlocked doors, and, leaving them wide, peered into obscurity.

Starlight made of the inner darkness a silvery-grey gloom; she crept inside; the velvet lips of Skylark, still saddled and unfed, nuzzled her cheek and bare throat; and she knew the mare instantly. Then a low nickering from Lady Margrave averted her; but a third horse—a big hunter—remained silent and suspicious in his box-stall.

Operator 13 hesitated, frightened yet exultant, trembling with that strange thrill which is a kind of delicious terror.

Then she took Skylark and Lady Margrave by the heads and led them out on to the grass. Their hoofs made an alarming noise on the stable floor, but nobody in the house seemed to hear the trampling.

Through the thicket of Rose-of-Sharon in rose, white, and purple flower, she could see the street where candle-lanterns faintly revealed grey cavalry moving slowly out on the road to Frederick.

The fitful light revealed something else, also—a trooper of the 9th Virginia dismounting at the picket gate. And instantly Operator 13 knew he had come for her stolen horses.

The grounds around the Morris house were set with stately trees more than a century old. To the right of the house stretched a lawn leading into a large apple and peach orchard in the rear.

Operator 13 led her two horses thither, keeping well within the shadow of the great trees; and she saw the cavalryman, accompanied by Lady Green-sleeves, leave the veranda and walk toward the stables.

Terrible as was the girl's situation, a kind of fierce and triumphant madness possessed her. Everything in that dreadful instant of peril appealed to her—the scenery and the setting of the dramatic moment; the superb rôle she was playing; the approaching and unknown dénouement, whatever it was to be—all fiercely obsessed her with intense emotion that only an artist and a great one can ever know.

From the shelter of loaded fruit trees she watched her enemies; and saw them, presently, retreat from the looted stable, stand helplessly and look about, then walk back to the picket gate where the trooper mounted his horse, touched his cap, and trotted off after the Confederate rear-guard which now was riding through Main

Street on their long and brave and painful journey to the fords of the Potomac.

As the last grey trooper and the last Pennsylvania led horse trotted out of Emmitsburg, the wild heart of Operator 13 beat more wildly and she could scarcely restrain an excited cry of triumph.

And in that reckless second she tied her horses to a peach tree and stole leopard-like toward the darkened house to settle her affair with my Lady Green-sleeves.

VI

FATHOMS FIVE

Every window, door, and shutter in the ancient Morris mansion was closed, locked and bolted. There seemed to be no way of getting inside that Operator 13 of the United States Secret Service could discover.

Noiselessly as a skulking lynx she made the tour of the silent house, exploring keyhole, knob and lattice, and examining the interstices of shutter, blind, persiennes, and door. She climbed to the pillared gallery and stole catfoot along it, probing with slender fingers every window-ledge, sill, and threshold, flitting to and fro like a grey shape of shadow under sagging trumpet vines and clematis in feathery seed.

No sound came from within the mansion; the venerable town around her remained as still as its own graveyard.

But the girl was as persistent as a cat at a rat hole, utterly determined to get at that golden-haired woman of angelic eyes and stature who had sent thousands of Union soldiers to red destruction at Manassas, and who had so nearly delivered her to the military gallows.

Whether it was moonlight or starlight that filtered through vine and tree-top, the darkness seemed more silvery-grey, and the heavy scent of phlox and lilies grew fresher.

Dawn could not be very far away now. And, with dawn, the good farmer folk of Emmitsburg would be stirring in this fruitful Maryland countryside.

Gail Loveless lifted her ragged shirt and drew from its soft sheath the knife which was belted around her supple body. With the long, thin blade she probed the cracks of windows, shutters, and doors; and accomplished nothing.

But the patience of one female bent upon the undoing of another knows no obstacle; and the girl's resolve to get into the house and take my Lady Green-sleeves, as well as Jeb Stuart's horses, to Frederick became a fierce obsession.

As she worked tirelessly at hinge and sill her over-heated imagination of a Thespian pictured the amazing scene at Headquarters

with herself the centre of an incredibly dramatic climax, while astounded generals clustered around her in respectful admiration and the whole army cheered.

To triumph! And what astonishing spoils of war to offer to her bleeding, distracted country!—the most beautiful, most dangerous and most dreaded woman spy in the Confederate service; and the two favourite horses of the cleverest cavalry general in the world!

What spectacle could equal it in history except the pageant of a returning Roman conqueror bringing some lovely heathen queen in chains?

Her knife blade availed nothing; there was no getting into the aged colonial mansion that way.

She paced the gallery on naked, stealthy feet, to and fro, to and fro, until it became plain to her excited brain that there was no getting into the house by any violent means or device within her compass. And dawn was very near.

Very well then, she would wait until some early yawning servant opened a door, and then drag the golden one out of bed.

She slid down the trellis to the ground and hurried around to the orchard, where Skylark and Lady Margrave were nipping leaves from all the fruit trees within reach. Then she ran to the barn where the doors had been closed again, but where there was no lock; and she entered, cast a quick glance at the big hunter, filled a bushel basket with oats, and ran back to her stolen horses.

Once more she returned to the barn, where were two zinc pails; and these she filled with water at the horse-trough across the street and lugged them back to the orchard.

She herself was nearly starved. She found and ate some fruit —great ripe peaches with dripping white and pink flesh, and a huge, golden apple as sweet as honey.

While she ate she pulled out the two letters she had abstracted from the Morris box at the post office and contrived to read them in the greyness of the October dawn.

One of them, dated from Mercersburg, October 10th, was tragically brief:

MRS. AUGUSTUS MORRIS,

MADAM,

Two Confederate Secret Service agents, Colonel Williams and Lieutenant Dunlap, were discovered inside the Yankee lines at eleven o'clock last night, wearing Federal uniforms.

At half-past four this morning a military court found them guilty.

They were hanged at 10.30 a.m. Inform Lady Green-sleeves, Mem Cohen, Rachel Lyons and Mrs. Phillips.

V. CHANCELLOR.

The other letter was briefer :

LADY GREEN-SLEEVES,

The blockade runner *Miranda*, at anchor off False Cape, will send a boat ashore for you if you signal—with a white handkerchief in each hand.

GASTON.

Operator 13 needed to read the note from General Lee's Chief of Military Telegraph only once to understand it completely.

Either now, here in Emmitsburg, or somewhere on the long dangerous road between Baltimore, Norfolk, Back Bay, and False Cape, she, or others, must stop and arrest the beautiful Lady Green-sleeves before she could take ship for England and bewitch a meddlesome ministry already inclined to recognize the Southern Confederacy as a new autonomous nation among the powers on earth.

Dawn seemed very near, for the darkness deepened and the air grew fresher, and already a mocking bird ventured a timid, restless call-note or two.

Not far away a convent bell sounded three strokes.

Even before the pale flare of instinct in the girl's brain had flashed into thought, she had thrust the two letters into her pants' pocket, gathered from the picket fence a great sheaf of Madonna lilies, and was already legging it along Main Street and the crooked lane toward St. Joseph's.

As she came near she could hear, very faintly, the nuns singing in their Chapel ; and she hurried through the open postern, where an unextinguished lantern still glimmered, and made her way along the cloisters toward the refectory, where a candle burned, and two novices moved like grey ghosts among the shadows. The room was fragrant with the odour of hot bread.

" Are the lilies for us ? " asked one of them, a little startled, as the ragged Negro lad came panting to the open door.

" Yaas'm, lady—sister, ma'am. Mis' Morris done send 'em. Ax yuh kindly ef de sodgers done scare yuh-all ? "

The other novice laughed :

" Thank Mrs. Morris and say that no nun is afraid of Jeb Stuart."

Gail Loveless rolled her lovely, dark eyes at the plate of hot bread.

" Yaas'm, lady-sister. Lawzee me how dem beaten-biscuits du smell ! "

" If you want some breakfast," said the other novice, " go into the laundry." She pointed to the door and Operator 13 opened it and entered.

No candle burned there, but a grey light came in through the open gallery.

Almost immediately the novice came in with a plate full of beaten biscuit, molasses, and bacon ; and a cup of fresh milk.

" Was Mrs. Morris frightened by the shooting last night ? " she inquired.

" Yaas'm, lady," replied Lucille, munching away at the bacon and hot bread which she sopped in the black-strap and devoured in ecstasy, her eyes rolling heavenward.

" I wonder if you know whether Mrs. Howe has returned ? " inquired the novice cautiously.

" Yaas'm," replied Lucille.

" Is she going away again ? "

" Dunno, ma'am."

A bell tinkled from somewhere within ; the little novice folded her white hands a moment, then crossed herself, turned, and went into the refectory, her white veil floating like a cobweb in the wind from the closing door.

Instantly Operator 13 ran to the great wicker hampers filled with soiled garments. Here were the habits, wimples, collarettes, coifs and veils of the order destined for the laundry or for dry cleaning. And among them was the habit of a Sister of Sainte Chryseis, evidently a visitor at Saint Joseph's. The habit of this order seemed to be cream-white and brown, and hooded over the wimple like the capuchin of a Trappist, or of a missionary Carmelite father.

Lucille hesitated, then seized this unfamiliar dress, and the wimple and collarette and white wool stockings.

Rows and rows of coarse, low-cut shoes belonging to the nuns stood along the gallery, awaited cleaning. Lucille found a pair to fit her, unhooked a rosary from the bunch that dangled from a hook under the laundry clock, and, rolling everything into a hasty bundle, crept out into the grey light of daybreak.

Nobody in the street was yet astir ; she arrived in the orchard once more, breathless, and fell to putting on the garments over her

rags of a Negro boy—the coarse white stockings, clumsy shoes, white wool habit, starched collarette, bonnet, wimple, coif; and over all she flung the thin, nut-brown overcloak with its peaked capuchin which left her face in shadow.

Then, under this, she buckled her belt around her with the knife in its sheath behind and out of sight, and hung the rosary with its brass crucifix from the soft, leather girdle about her right thigh.

Never had this young actress dreamed of playing so magnificent a rôle in any drama ever written. Never had she known such alarm as now penetrated her with a terror so utterly delicious that the combination of pleasure and fear seemed almost unendurable.

She knew that the end already was very near—that the final curtain already was twitching to descend. But what might be the impending finale no longer worried her, and she gave no thought to it in the glory of her overwhelming exaltation. She realized only that hers was the leading rôle; that this was her drama; this her great moment; and she meant, by God's grace, to make the most of it though Death sat watching her across the footlights.

She had been knocking for nearly ten minutes at the front door of the Morris house when a sleepy, half-dressed Negro maid opened the door and stood rubbing her drowsy eyes.

"I have a message for Mrs. Howe," whispered Operator 13.

"Mis' Howe in baid, lady," whined the black maid, stifling a yawn.

"Wake her and say that a messenger from Mr. Gaston is here," murmured the girl.

"Mistuh Gasson, lady?"

"That's what I said."

"Lady, ma'am, I dassent wake up Mis' Howe——"

The girl pushed her aside and stepped into the hallway. There was a coat-and-hat closet with a key in the door which stood open just behind the Negro maid. With abrupt violence Operator 13 pushed the maid into it and turned the key on her. She listened a moment, but the Negress appeared to be dumb with terror, for no African howl came from within the locked closet.

Through the open front door the sickly pallor of daybreak illuminated the carpeted hallway. Operator 13 did not entirely close the door; a little morning light still came through the crack. She walked forward to the foot of the stairs and then stood still, listening intently.

She could see nobody on the dusky landing above, but there certainly was a noise of something stirring up there. A bedroom door opened; candle light flickered over wall and ceiling. Instantly Operator 13 started to ascend the carpeted stairs. As she arrived on the landing, Lady Green-sleeves confronted her.

There was a startled silence; then Lady Green-sleeves spoke, calmly inquiring where the strange nun came from.

"Your maid admitted me," said Operator 13. "I come from St. Joseph's."

"You are not a nun of St. Joseph's."

"No, madam, a visitor."

"Of what order?"

"I am Sister Aethra of Sainte Chryseis."

Lady Green-sleeves, evidently, knew that there was a visiting nun from another order at St. Joseph's, for she merely inclined her beautiful head and seemed to await further enlightenment concerning this strange, daybreak intrusion.

She was in her nightdress and barefoot; and the thick, wheat-gold hair, framing her lovely face, fell heavily almost to her waist.

"I bring you a message by grapevine," said Operator 13 in a low voice.

"From whom, sister?"

"From Mr. Gaston."

"Give it, then."

"Are you truly Mrs. Rosalie Howe?"

"Yes, I am."

"Secret Service Agent for General Beauregard?"

"Yes."

"This, then, is the grapevine message, madam; the blockade runner, *Miranda*, lies off False Cape. You are to signal her by waving a handkerchief in each hand."

"I understand," said Lady Green-sleeves quietly.

A silence. "Is that all?" asked Lady Green-sleeves.

"That is the grapevine telegram sent to you from Mr. Gaston in Richmond. There is another message from Vespasian Chancellor."

"Give it," said Lady Green-sleeves.

"On October tenth," whispered Operator 13, "Colonel Williams and Lieutenant Dunlap, Secret Service Agents of the Confederate Government, were taken inside the Yankee lines, tried by court martial, and hanged as spies."

Lady Green-sleeves' flushed features grew pale in the candle light.

"You," continued Operator 13, "are to inform Mem Cohen, Rachel Lyons, and Mrs. Phillips."

Lady Green-sleeves passed her white hand across her cloudy golden hair, pushing it from her brow and eyes. Even her lips were colourless.

"This will kill Rachel," she said, staring at the supposed nun. For a moment she stood mute, twisting agonized fingers, the beauty of her eyes quenched in tears. Then she went to one of the bedroom doors, knocked, opened it, and said to the querulous inquiry of Mrs. Morris: "They've caught Dunlap and Williams and have hanged them both. You'll have to notify Rachel Lyons by grapevine. I have to dress and leave immediately."

"Oh, Rosalie, how awful!" But Lady Green-sleeves silenced her with a hiss, warning her not to awaken the sleeping child.

"Our cavalry have gone on to ——" she whispered. "This town is full of Yankee spies and sympathizers; and Pleasanton's horsemen will be here on Jeb Stuart's heels before sunrise. I leave my baby in your charge."

"Where are you going, Rosalie?" whimpered Mrs. Morris.

"To False Cape. The *Miranda* is waiting. There's a nun here who brought this grapevine news. Give her some breakafst while I dress——"

She closed the door, nodded to Operator 13, pointed to a chair in the corridor and went into her bedroom.

The moment she disappeared, Operator 13 rose and softly locked the door of the bedroom where Mrs. Morris was now moving distractedly about.

There was one more bedroom. Operator 13 took the burning candle, opened the door and peeped in. A lovely little girl of ten lay sound asleep in bed, her golden hair in two burnished pigtails on the pillow, one partly opened hand on the bed's edge.

Now, with infinite care, Operator 13 removed the door key, which was inside, and locked this door, also, from the outside. Only the door of Lady Green-sleeves' bedroom remained unlocked, now.

"Mrs. Howe?" she called cautiously.

As Lady Green-sleeves, half-dressed, came out into the corridor, Operator 13 snatched the key from the inside keyhole, and had slammed and locked the door and flung the key down the dark stair well before the other understood what was happening.

She stared, astounded, at the nun, who stood with her long knife in her hand barring her way. Then her beautiful, incredulous

gaze changed, and a tempest of fury swept her features distorting her lips and lighting her wide, violet eyes to an infernal blaze.

"You are prisoner to the United States!" whispered Operator 13 dramatically. "I am an agent of the Federal Secret Service and I am here to arrest you. Come with me quietly, Mrs. Howe."

Her ruling passion seemed to transfigure the girl; she was intensely aware of every burning instant and of what she was doing to make this moment great and immortally her own although she had no audience except her victim.

Lady Green-sleeves was like some exquisite angelic shape cast out of Paradise and cringing to the curse.

"On what charge am I arrested?" she whispered.

"You are a Confederate spy in Maryland."

"Where is your warrant?" Her lips moved as though frozen.

"No warrant is necessary."

"Do you understand that I shall hang if you arrest me?"

"No. You'll remain in Fort McHenry. Come, Mrs. Howe."

"They'll tear you to pieces in the street——"

"Oh no they won't. Walk down those stairs ahead of me!"

A silence, unstirring; then: "May I speak to my little daughter——"

"I dare not risk it——"

"Are you so inhuman——"

"If you trick me, I hang. I've seen a shadow dance under a sunset gallows. . . . No, turn your back and start downstairs!"

"At least let me look at her——"

"If you don't obey and move forward I'll prick your neck with my knife point——"

In a flash Lady Green-sleeves sprang on her and caught her right wrist; the knife fell clattering down stairs; but the girl, as slim as a whip, and as supple and springy, clung to her prisoner, and they swayed together on the stair-landing, tight-locked, wrestling, throttling and tearing each other's arms and fingers free, only to seize and cling again, and strive to hurl each other headlong down the dusky staircase.

"I know you!" panted Lady Green-sleeves, beside herself with fury. "You are Operator 13! And now, you young murderess, I'll see to it that you are destroyed!"

The flying mass of her flashing golden hair was blinding the younger girl, who redoubled her blows at random, half senseless from the frantic battering of those dead-white fists. A bright gout of blood welled up on Lady Green-sleeves' mouth and became a

nasty scarlet smear across her face. She bared her teeth under her torn lip and ripped the nun's habit from the girl, leaving her brown-stained body writhing.

Twisting and doubling like fighting serpents murderously encoiled, they struck and dodged and swayed and slithered to the edge of the stairs, fell a step or two downward, recoiled clutching at each other, then slipped again and tumbled halfway down the stairs with a thudding thump that shook the entire house.

One of them lay quivering against the banisters, her disordered golden hair covering her bloody face.

The other, stark naked, made her way to the front door, shut and locked it, and groped about for her fallen knife, which she discovered presently.

But when she crept, panting, back to where Lady Green-sleeves lay crumpled up against the banisters halfway downstairs, she could not arouse her, or lift her, or even drag her the remainder of the way to the front door.

Shaking, gasping, almost fainting, Operator 13 contrived to gather up the fragments of her hooded habit and wimple and dress herself.

She was aware, now, of a horrid screaming noise from somewhere, but whether it was the black maid in the coat-closet or Mrs. Morris at a window she could not be sure.

She looked down at Lady Green-sleeves, battered, bruised, befouled with blood, and still beautiful.

Horror seized the girl, for that lovely neck seemed to have broken. But, as she bent low over the huddled woman, the violet eyes opened, and a sobbing breath set the body quivering.

The girl stood watching her, knife in hand, as she groped about, found the stair rail and pulled herself partly upright.

It was hopeless to attempt to carry her to the horses. There was nothing more to be done here, unless she meant to finish her.

Besides, it was broad daylight outside.

Fragments of Lady Green-sleeves' nightgown lay on the stairs. With these torn into strips the girl tied the lovely white feet at the ankles, drew the resisting arms back and fastened the wrists. And all the while the beautiful, dishevelled, bleeding creature was looking at her out of her bruised, violet eyes.

Then Operator 13 picked up her girdle, sheathed her knife, buckled the belt under her habit, and, holding to the stair rail, retreated slowly to the front door, opened it, locked it from the outside.

Nobody saw her. An early farmer, down the road, was driving a wagon full of apples toward Gettysburg. Nobody else was in the street.

When the mule-drawn wagon had disappeared the girl walked across the veranda and into the orchard where Skylark and Lady Margrave stood stamping, tail-switching, and tearing at fruit branches with nervous, impatient teeth.

Hooded, rumpled, still all a-quiver, but nervously keyed up to what lay before her, the girl in her soiled nun's dress mounted Skylark and, leading Lady Margrave, left the orchard at a walk, guiding her horses out across the grass.

From the open barn the big hunter in his stall whinnied and stamped; but she had enough on her hands without attempting to steal him.

The orchard-close was fenced with rails, but the bars were down. Through the gap she rode and out across Main Street into the crooked, shady lane, skirting the horse-trough and continuing along it between orchards in heavy fruit until the Frederick road cut her course at right angles.

Along this road were farmhouses with smoking chimneys, and white men and black at work among apple trees.

These turned to stare at a nun astride a blooded horse and leading another, but nobody moved to question or intercept her; and she urged Skylark into a gallop, who needed no urging however.

Rural folk at breakfast or afield or milking at the open doors of cattle-barns remained mute and amazed to see a little Sister of Sainte Chryseis go galloping through the ruddy sunrise.

Quail, dusting in the road, scuttled into weeds; flocks of meadowlarks rose and flitted across fields white with the spread gossamer of spiders' dainty fabrics. A homing fox, trotting through the corn along a snake fence, darted wide in panic, then turned impudently to gaze as the two horses thundered on toward Frederick.

It was still early when she galloped into view of the mountains on her right and the little river at her left where the Mechanics Turnpike passes near the westward bend of the Monocacy.

And here she came suddenly upon a heart-rending sight; a regiment of Federal Cavalry, limping along on exhausted horses, the hollow-eyed, mud-splashed riders reeling in their saddles from fatigue, the gaunt, sick horses stumbling on, urged and spurred till their torn ribs reeked blood and mud.

Behind them laboured a battery of horse-artillery—or what remained of it—the animals scarce able to drag gun and caisson. Even as she caught sight of them she saw horses stumble and fall and lie inert; saw cannoneers pick themselves out of ditches and try to pull their gun-teams upright.

Some of the cavalrymen saw her coming and an officer turned and came toward her at a stiff trot, halting her with uplifted arm.

When he understood she was an agent of the United States Secret Service and had listened to her story and examined the two letters taken from the Emmitsburg post office, he looked at her hopelessly, then back at the wretched horsemen stumbling on southward, then again gazed wearily at her.

"This is Pleasanton's command," he said. "We are dead in our saddles. Stuart is making for the fords; we are following.

"There is nobody to send back to Emmitsburg to arrest Lady Green-sleeves; no man or horse yonder could last. . . . You look sick and tired yourself, ma'am."

"Where are the 6th Lancers?" she asked. "Can't they go?"

"I don't know where they are," said the officer drearily. "If they're at Frederick they'll have to go on to the mouth of the Monocacy. Your horses seem fresh. You'd better ride on ahead of us."

"Take me through, then," she said desperately.

He gave her back her letters and attempted to keep up with her but finally begged her to ride no faster than a trot. Even at that pace they soon overtook the cavalry and guns ahead. A ghastly pallid colonel listened to her and the captain who escorted her and waved her on; and she spurred forward on Skylark, Lady Margrave thundering at lead, and scarcely a fleck of foam or sweat on either.

A mile and a half outside Frederick she rode into the camp of the 6th Lancers. Only a platoon or two remained on provost duty in town; there was not a trooper to be spared to ride back to Emmitsburg and arrest Lady Green-sleeves.

There was, however, a Federal detective named Wrigley at Provost Headquarters; and to him she confided her two horses.

From him, also, she learned that Jeb Stuart, his cavalry and Pelham's guns, together with Union prisoners and two thousand stolen Pennsylvania horses, had passed around Frederick through New Market, headed for White's Ferry.

"It's a terrible thing, ma'am, to leave that woman in Emmitsburg,

but it would be far worse for us if the rebel horsemen get back across the Potomac."

She showed him the two letters abstracted from the Morris box at the Emmitsburg post office. He was a foxy-faced, thin young man in soiled nankeen trousers and straw hat; he held the letters in bony fingers and studied them scowling.

"This grapevine telegram is correct," he said; "we did hang those two rebel spies. I ought to know; I caught them myself. And I'd like to nab this Lady Green-sleeves, too; but I've orders from Major Allen to watch the rebel townspeople in Frederick and arrest anybody who tries to get to Jeb Stuart."

"Are there any Secret Service agents in the town?" she demanded.

"No, but there's a cipher man at General Buford's Headquarters. You'd better telegraph Major Allen for orders."

"Can I communicate with Knoxville?"

"Certainly. You come with me, ma'am. I'll ride that handsome led mare into town bareback."

Lady Margrave was in no mind to cut up and Mr. Wrigley boarded her without trouble and trotted safely into Frederick beside Operator 13 on Skylark.

The Provost Guard were housed in an old flour mill near the railroad station; and here Operator 13 dismounted, observed with unfeigned astonishment and curiosity by sentry, military police, and lounging loafers, black and white.

A cavalry captain on duty directed her into an adjoining shed where a handsome young man sat before a telegraph instrument, eating from a dish of boiled rice and milk.

He had a lively eye; and when Operator 13 threw back her cowl and was revealed to him, he laughed because the brown skin-dye had worn off in patches, and the naturally pretty countenance of Gail Loveless, already bunged and cut and swollen by her terrific battle with my Lady Green-sleeves, was now further adorned by alternate patches of Negro brown and Caucasian white.

However he was a shrewd young man and readily detected beauty in disguise; and, under its suspected spell, hastened to lay aside his breakfast and call up Secret Service in Knoxville. And in a few minutes Major Allen was on the other end of the wire:

"Operator 13 reporting from Frederick, Maryland," she said; and young Mr. Barry transmitted it with a lightning rattle of his instrument; and waited.

Back came Major Allen: "Where is Stuart?"

Then reply, question, and reply sped back and forth over the magnetic telegraph:

"Stuart has ridden around through New Market headed for White's Ford by way of Hyattstown. Pleasanton follows but his horses can scarcely move."

"Is that the latest?"

Young Mr. Barry nodded to her and telegraphed back: "Yes, sir."

"Attention, Operator 13," came clickety-click over the wire, and young Mr. Barry read it aloud, by ear, as it rattled in:

"What have you to report?"

"Lady Green-sleeves is in Emmitsburg at the old Morris house. I could catch her if I had somebody to go back with me."

Major Allen replied: "Ask General Buford to detail a platoon. . . . Your reports through Operators 106 and 90 have also been checked up and are correct. Where is H. B. Smith?"

"Who is H. B. Smith?" she asked Barry.

"My boss, chief detective for the middle department of Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia. He's somewhere about in town."

And he telegraphed: "He is on duty somewhere in town."

Back came Major Allen: "See whether H. B. Smith can help you out. I understand from General McClellan that the last trooper left is chasing Stuart. Tell Smith for God's sake to catch that woman. Do you know whether she'll be there in Emmitsburg if I send Operators 106 and 90 after her from Knoxville?"

"She has orders to go to False Cape and signal a rebel blockade-runner called the *Miranda*."

"Is that certain?"

"I discovered her grapevine orders in a letter I took from the Emmitsburg post office."

"Turn in the letter to H. B. Smith. Tell him I am sending Operators 106 and 90 to False Cape. I want you to go on there, yourself, and aid them to intercept this woman before she can go to England and raise hell there.

"This is a deadly important matter. Mr. Stanton wants her, and I want her worse than he does.

"You are to draw any supplies and money you require from H. B. Smith. This telegram is your warrant.

"You go by way of Baltimore and Norfolk to Back Bay, on the Virginia border. Don't lose a moment. I want that woman either taken or destroyed!"

"Your orders shall be obeyed, sir," telegraphed Barry.

Then: "Sign off," came the clicking signal; and the episode was concluded.

"Oh glory!" said the boy, admiringly, "talk of romance!"

Operator 13 began to weep, forlornly, wretchedly:

"I'm so deathly tired," she snivelled.

Then the boy rose to the occasion with intuition and sympathetic celerity. He took a big tin of scalding water from the stove, went into his own room, which was blanketed off from the office, and filled a tin bath tub with hot water.

Then, very diffidently, he led the girl thither and showed her soap and towels, a man's nightshirt, and his own camp bed.

"That's what you want, isn't it?" he said.

"Yes," she sobbed, "and something to eat——"

"I'll draw rations for you, ma'am. Shall I buy you a calico dress in town?"

"No, I'll do that," she replied, laughing through her tears. "If I had some alcohol I could get off the rest of this brown skin-stain——"

"I'll find you a bottle, ma'am. Now take your bath and lie down. I'll ask the guard to see you're not disturbed."

He went out and talked to the corporal, who presently detailed another sentry to protect the privacy of the place and warn off all intruders.

Another soldier, armed with authority, drew rations and fetched the alcohol; and young Barry cooked the bacon and hardtack in a frying pan on the stove and boiled a pot of coffee, enchanted at this gleam of romance which had come into his business-like life.

He hummed, disrespectfully, as he cooked away:

"Buford and Bayard,
Buford and Bayard,
The one is weary
The other is tired!
I won't be drove
I won't be hired
To ride no hoss
For Gin'ral Bayard!"

He could hear the girl discreetly wallowing in the old tin tub. He set a camp table with his own tin service, dished up the tack and bacon and took a sniff at the coffee pot, humming cheerily and disrespectfully:

"Oh, Gin'ral Buford,
Look at what they done,
A-crossin' at the new ford,
Hoss an' Foot an' Gun!

"Oh, Johnny Buford,
An' Freddy Pleasanton,
They're over Number 2 Ford,
Every mother's son!

"Wake up, Johnny Buford,
Bayard, and Pleasanton!
Take a look to looward
Take it on the run!

"Wave your fancy new sword,
Cock your fancy gun,
Or Jeb will have you skeward,
Freddie Pleasanton!"

He heard the girl laughing musically as she splashed. He lifted a breadpan and beat a gay tattoo on it with a tin fork:

"First call for dinner, ma'am!" he called gaily. "Fall in!"

"Coming!" she replied. And after a few minutes she appeared wearing his nightshirt, which trailed over her bare feet, and swathed to the chin in his army blanket.

"Thank you for the alcohol," she said; "it took off every spot of stain remaining."

He saw her seated; then, with rare masculine delicacy, retired to a rear room where there was another telegraph instrument beyond anybody's hearing when the door had been closed—this in conformation to military telegraphic regulations.

From his east window he could look out on a courtyard, where Mrs. Bunn, the sutler's pretty little wife, was picking over peaches for peach turnovers—the same destined to stuff the garrison.

"Oh, Mrs. Bunn," he called, "there a lady in here without any clothes——"

"My God," said she, "what's this you're telling me, Mr. Barry!"

"No suitable clothes, I mean! She's your height and slimness. Go over to Ewart's Emporium like a good girl and buy her something

to travel in. And tell 'em to send the bill to the quartermaster and make it out to Major Allen of the Secret Service!"

She had her turnovers to make, but the pleasures of carte-blanche shopping prevailed.

Before Gail Loveless had awakened from a post-prandial nap on Operator Barry's narrow bunk, the sutler's wife returned with her bundles and a valise, and a duplicate bill that scared young Mr. Barry. However, he reflected, it was no worry of his; and he knocked at the door; had a sleepy answer; opened it, and shoved in the parcels.

He was scarcely prepared, however, for the vision in grey poplin and saucy little hat and shawl that emerged demurely from the masculine disorder of his quarters.

"Oh, crikey," he said, "you're too pretty to go gunning for rebel spies, ma'am. Why can't they send somebody who hurts one's eyes?"

They laughed like two children, and she inquired about a train and a revolver and some money for her journey.

A messenger from the Provost Marshal's had already brought the money—inspired, no doubt, by a telegram from Major Allen.

The revolver, belt, and ammunition, fresh from the Army Depôt, she buckled on in the privacy of the sleeping quarters.

He had her railroad ticket for her when she emerged.

"There are three loaded troop trains with steam up on a side track where the B. & O. crosses the Monocacy," he explained. "Eastward, between Frederick and Washington there is a train headed the other way. It leaves for Baltimore in an hour. I have an ambulance ready at the door for you."

"You are a wonderful boy," she said warmly. She was radiant. All trace of fatigue and privation had vanished—so resilient is youth in health when the tonic is excitement.

At the door a soldier stowed her valise aboard the ambulance and young Mr. Barry, cap in hand, handed her in.

"Thank you and good-bye," said the girl; and retained his hand a wicked moment—just long enough to ruin his peace of mind for a while.

He looked passionate volumes at her. It was another of her "moments." Only Juliet could have returned his look with such a devastating smile.

"Won't you tell me your name?" he whispered incoherently.

"Operator 13," she whispered back cruelly; the driver addressed his mules with misleading mildness, toying with his snake whip; and the ambulance rolled off through the lively streets of Frederick.

The girl slept aboard the cars all the way to Baltimore. Aboard the Norfolk boat she continued to sleep—waking long enough to take nourishment in the shape of crackers and stewed oysters—and then snuggled wantonly into the phantom embrace of Morpheus, and slept like the blessed who know no guile.

When, after early breakfast, she emerged on deck at the Norfolk dock, two men came forward to greet her. They were John Babcock and Augustus Littlefield of the United States Secret Service.

There was a carriage driven by two armed cavalrymen, and drawn by two splendid horses waiting for them; and in another moment Gail Loveless found herself seated between these two Secret Service men, and rattling through the streets of Norfolk at a brisk trot.

Her fellow Secret Service agents arrived by way of Richmond, having had "business" in the Confederate Capitol, they explained; and had been warned and instructed by Major Allen regarding the "business" now in hand.

When Operator 13 had finished her hurried story regarding the plight in which she had left Lady Green-sleeves, Babcock said: "The woman left Emmitsburg an hour after you did! She has nine lives, ma'am, or she'd have been hanged after Manassas!"

"The trouble," said Littlefield bitterly, "is with Mr. Lincoln. He won't hang anybody if he can help it."

"But the rebels," added Babcock, "are hanging our people all the time. They hanged Jim Andrews at Chattanooga. They hanged George D. Wilson, John Scott, Billy Campbell, Marion Ross, Perry Shadrack and Sam Slavens in Atlanta on Peachtree Street! They're going to hang Billy Knight, Billy Bensinger, Will Pittinger, Jake Parrott; and probably Dorsey, Wilson and Porter; and God knows how many more!"

"And," continued Babcock, smiling at Gail Loveless, "I guess they'll start us gallows-dancing if they catch us."

"As for your white panther with nine lives," continued Littlefield, "if we intercept and catch her, all she'll get will be a nice rocking chair and three meals a day in Fort McHenry."

"No woman ought to hang," said the girl. "There ought to be no hanging, anyway. I saw an execution. It is horrible. It isn't war. Why can't they shoot us decently?"

"I reckon it's too stylish for vulgar spies," replied Littlefield grimly. "Well, ma'am, if we've got to love our enemies and give 'em rocking chairs in government forts, I hope to God that Lady

Green-sleeves sets and rocks her damn head off in Fort McHenry before we see Knoxville again ! "

" Poor thing," said the girl gently—" if you had seen her lying there as though her beautiful neck were broken——"

" All sham and humbug, ma'am ! John Babcock and I have it by grapevine that she was seen in Baltimore last night wearing a heavy black silk dress and all her jewels, and stepping out high in her fancy little shoes ! "

The girl stared at him incredulously, but John Babcock confirmed the revelation with a curt nod.

" No, ma'am," continued Littlefield, " she warn't hurt none. A iced beefsteak will fix her face up—that an' a touch of paint.

" We missed her at the hotel and at the wharf. She had the impudence to go on a troop-boat as an officer's wife. We found out about it too late to head her off. All I hope is that we find her at Back Bay or on the dunes, somewhere."

" If she gets aboard that rebel blockader off False Cape and goes to England," added Babcock, " she'll do a vast mischief to the United States ! "

So, with gossip and surmise and jest and irony they passed the tedious miles over a pretty good road running to the North Carolina line. A basket of lunch helped them to while away the hours.

They met scarcely a soul along that wilderness of pine and cornfield, buzzard and razorback, swamp and brush and sand and marl where, at four corners, ancient sun-bleached taverns stood embowered in China trees, and a few Negro cabins with mud chimneys dotted the rare clearings. The sun hung low when they first smelled the salt of the distant ocean and the ranker odour from those vast and endless brackish bays and sounds and creeks and inlets which the great dunes separate from the Atlantic.

Millions and millions of waterfowl were flying over Back Bay—wild geese, wild ducks, wild swans—sweeping in wedges and strings and huge driving clouds through the sunset sky ; and their clamour filled the reddening heavens.

The soldiers who had been driving them drew up beside an ancient tavern ; Littlefield, Babcock, and Gail Loveless got out stiffly ; and Babcock went into the dusky tavern.

" We'll leave our baggage here, ma'am," said Littlefield in a sombre voice, staring out across the water. He added : " I sorely mistrust we've missed your Lady Green-sleeves."

Babcock came out, hastily, followed by two sullen fellows in sea-boots, carrying oars, who led the way down to a rickety wharf

where a sailboat rocked in the swell from the crimson tinted bay.

"Is she here?" inquired Littlefield.

"Her skiff left this wharf twenty minutes ago," said Babcock. He called to the two cavalrymen: "Put up your horses, go and get supper, and wait for us!" Then he and Littlefield gave hands to Gail Loveless and helped her down into the rocking sailboat where one of the sullen men held the tiller while the other stowed the oars and hoisted sail.

All the vast bay was a dazzling glare of fiery reflections from the setting sun. The crimson zenith rang with the tumult of geese and duck and swan, and their million wings filled the air with the rushing sound like the coming of a hurricane.

There was wind enough and a lively sea; spray clouded the bows and Gail Loveless crouched in the cockpit swathed in her new shawl.

After a long time she heard Gus Littlefield say quietly: "Thar they are, Jack."

"I see them," said Babcock.

Later: "I can't notice that we are overhauling them," remarked the younger man.

One of the sullen men said to his companion: "Dee is sailin' right smart."

The other replied: "I reckon dee is sailin' mo' faster as we-uns."

"Can you hoist more sail?" demanded Babcock.

"No, suh. Reckon we all ca'y'n mo' sail now than we got a right to."

It was true. Off the first group of islands the wind from the open bay was rising, and the starboard gunwale was deeply awash.

"Reckon yuh-all better bale her," remarked the man at the tiller, his shadowy, sea-bitten face under the sou'wester gleaming red as he turned and looked into the flaming sun.

They rushed on. Babcock and Littlefield baled; the drenched sheet strained and bellied; the jib bulged to bursting. Then crack! The boom swung over as they tacked and went boiling and plunging on in the tumult of waters dashed into crimson clouds by the infernal blaze in the west.

"Mos' thar, suh," said the man at the tiller to Babcock. "Yonder's the sea-dunes. Reckon dee's mos' ashore."

The other boat was no longer visible. A small island called Half Moon hid it.

A few minutes later the helmsman brought their boat up under the lee of a great, snow-white dune; his comrade stepped

overboard in his sea-boots and pulled the bow inshore; and Babcock, Littlefield, and Gail Loveless sprang ashore and clambered up the dune, ankle-deep in sand.

As soon as they gained the windy crest they saw the vast wastes of the Atlantic Ocean, and a thunderous surf rolling shoreward and bursting high along the beach.

They saw, too, a black steamer at anchor, half a mile out beyond that perilous coast, and a longboat pulling shoreward in the ruddy light.

Then they saw my Lady Green-sleeves standing all alone at the edge of the surging surf. And at that moment she looked back over her shoulder and saw them.

She wore a travelling cloak over her heavy silk; the wind had blown away her dainty hat and loosened her glorious hair, which was blowing about her like a golden banner.

The ship's longboat was not very far out.

John Babcock began to run toward her. She seemed not to notice for a moment, but suddenly turned with a pistol glittering in her gloved hand, levelled it and fired. Five times she fired at Babcock, at Littlefield, and, finally, at Gail Loveless, all running toward her.

Littlefield and Babcock had their pistols out but did not fire; the girl did not draw her pistol.

They were near enough to hear Lady Green-sleeves call to the men in the boat, now riding just beyond the breakers: "Drive them off! I am going to swim out to you!"

But it was evident that the boat's crew was not armed. The officer in the sternsheets shouted something which the wind crippled to an incoherent cry.

Babcock, running fast, was very near her when she dropped her pistol and began to wade into the surf, still carrying her valise.

"Don't do that, ma'am!" yelled Littlefield. "You'll git drownded!"

"Come back! We won't harm you!" begged Gail Loveless. "For God's sake, come back! We'll be kind to you——"

A wave broke over Lady Green-sleeves and wrenched the valise from her grasp. She stumbled under the impact of another breaker, turned and looked behind her through her streaming golden hair, her beautiful bruised face chilled and pale and dripping with spray.

Suddenly the undertow snatched her like a shark and a roaring wave overwhelmed her. Men were standing up with oars and

boat-hooks in the tossing longboat, and their seaward shouting came across the water like the crying of gulls.

"Her heavy silk dress is drowning her out there," said Babcock. He and Littlefield had waded in and were trying to face the breakers, peering blindly toward the spot where my Lady Green-sleeves had disappeared.

Her valise came tumbling in through the foam of the crashing surf.

Ashore, Operator 13 stood weeping and shivering in the red searchlight of the sinking sun.

VII

COUNTER-SPY

The days of dark confusion drifted by through thickening October and November mists. In them the paling star of General McClellan was blotted out.

Then Burnside's planet glimmered briefly above Marye's Heights, faded in the fiery fog of Pelham's guns, sank lower and was washed out in the last wave of blood which strewed the strand with eighteen thousand dead, marking high tide along the fatal river.

Every time the President meddled he produced paralysis or suicidal frenzy in his generals. He had not yet learned to pick a leader and let him alone.

And, with the downfall of his leaders and his armies the United States Secret Service went utterly to pieces.

Alan Pinkerton—the great detective—known as " Major Allen " in the army, resigned as Chief of the Secret Service because he loved and believed in Little Mac and resented his dismissal.

His agents, untrained in the art of war, invariably had over-estimated the numbers of the enemy. His beloved general, unable to check up on military misinformation, urged and badgered by a President ignorant of all military art, moved like a man bewildered in a nightmare while the whole land rang with his repeated demands for more and more men to help him out.

Now, under a brand new commanding general—about whom Jeb Stuart and Joe Sweeny had already made a saucy banjo song —the shattered Secret Service of the United States was being revived and reorganized.

George Sharpe, Colonel of the 120th New York Infantry, had been made Deputy Provost-Marshal-General. And the Bureau of Military Information was born out of chaos.

Colonel Sharpe, tall, well made, handsome, full-lipped under his curling cavalry moustache, beautifully uniformed, booted, and spurred, listened courteously to everything that General of Cavalry Averell had to say. Averell was even handsomer than Sharpe.

It was a pleasant picture of harmonious military life as it ought to be but seldom was.

Then came into the roomy wall-tent of Colonel Sharpe, Cavalry General Stoneman, who was not quite so picturesque to gaze upon.

General of Cavalry John Buford followed—noble in appearance, in thought, in deed. These three controlled twelve thousand free sabres. For at last the Yankee cavalry had come into its own. Jeb Stuart had shown them how it was done.

Presently Stoneman spoke again, and harshly:

"I'm deathly sick of being duped and hustled by the rebel cavalry, Sharpe," he said. "Averell, John Buford and I believe that our troopers, sabre for sabre, and spur for spur, are as good as Jeb Stuart's rangey grey-jackets, and that the fault lies mostly with your department which, so far, has furnished us erroneous information or none at all."

Harmony shivered for a moment in that roomy tent. Then George Sharpe, courteous, suave: "All errors made by my department are properly my fault, of course."

"Maybe. Maybe it's your fault, maybe it's mine, maybe it's Averell's or Buford's. Or we can go higher if we like. But, to what purpose?

"Because this kind of discussion gets us nowhere. We've got to believe in you; you've got to believe in us. That is elementary. That's the *sine qua non*. . . . Well, go on from there, Colonel."

"I really do believe in you and your blue-jackets," said Sharpe quietly, "if that's what you wish to hear."

"All right, then. Averell, Buford and I believe in you, and in your agents, couriers, spies and detectives. So now we can work it out together, can't we?"

"With pleasure," said Colonel Sharpe politely; and he relighted his cigar.

"Very well then," continued Stoneman; "the weather is clearing; there are plenty of signs of spring. I am going to give General Averell three thousand sabres and a few horse-guns and send him across Kelly's Ford to smash Fitzhugh Lee at Culpeper. Can you help?"

After a silence the Chief of the Secret Service nodded:

"I understand you," he said. "Secrecy is to be your main element in this operation. You want me to send a counter-spy to muzzle the person who has continuously reported your movements to Jeb Stuart."

"But first of all," said Stoneman drily, "to discover who that

person is. I tell you I'm sick of having every movement of my cavalry forestalled; and of encountering always, at point of contact, a heavier force than I have sent out. It's damnable, Sharpe. I've had enough!"

Colonel Sharpe was extremely sympathetic: "General," he said, "our service has been in some confusion as you know. I think everybody will find serious improvement in it from now on."

"Very well, then," growled Stoneman, "perhaps you could tell us who in hell is this rebel Secret Service agent who continues to torment and bedevil me twenty-four hours every day."

"Yes," said Sharpe, "I *could* tell you, General."

Stoneman, Buford, and Averell waited; but the Chief of the Federal Secret Service said nothing further to enlighten them.

"Of course," grunted Stoneman, "you will handle this devilish matter in your own way. I am not trying to penetrate any of your secret mysteries. All I ask is that Averell, here, be permitted to cross Kelly's Ford and destroy Fitz Lee without finding the entire Confederate army lined up grinning, and awaiting him at the water's edge."

His rough irony did not seem to annoy Colonel Sharpe.

"I shall do the best I can, General," he said in always agreeable voice. "And really I have no desire to make a mystery of the situation to you, or to any officer in high command.

"Here is the matter in a nutshell: a very clever Confederate Secret Service agent, Captain Jack Gailliard, succeeded in enlisting as a private in your 1st Rhode Island Cavalry——"

"Damnation! When?" demanded Stoneman angrily.

"After Marye's Heights. He kept Stuart informed. One of our detectives suspected that information was coming from the camp of the Rhode Islanders. But before we could identify and catch and hang the spy, he'd skedaddled."

"Where?" demanded Stoneman, incensed.

"South, probably. His usefulness here was, naturally, ended. But recently one of our agents discovered the person with whom Gailliard had been in daily touch."

"Who?" growled Stoneman. "Not a woman again, I hope."

"A woman."

"My God," exclaimed Stoneman, disgusted, "you've just hunted Lady Green-sleeves to her death and chased Belle Boyd into Richmond and locked up Nancy Hart. How many more females are spying on us?"

"Quite a number, General. This one in particular is a young

girl of excellent family, clever, resourceful, and blindly devoted to the Confederacy. She is Jeb Stuart's personal spy and has a regular commission from him."

"You know who she is, sir?"

"We know now who she is, General. We know *where* she is. We are going to try to arrest her if we can catch her within our lines. If not we shall hope to render her harmless."

"Can't you destroy her?" inquired Stoneman.

"If that becomes necessary I think we can," replied Sharpe gravely. "I am planning to catch her and lock her up in Fort McHenry."

"Better get rid of her completely," growled Stoneman. "Is her life worth more than Averell's three thousand youngsters? Or are your people all Quakers?"

"You don't mean that, sir," retorted Sharpe quietly.

"No, I don't. Sorry, Colonel. Only a spy is a spy whether male or female—and I'm sore all over——"

"So am I, General. I have no mawkish sentiment in the matter of this young woman. I give orders to kill where necessary. I observe the law consequent to the findings of military courts. Personally I happen not to believe in the execution of spies. Because all enemies of the United States are far more valuable to us alive than dead. And hanging never yet deterred any other spy from practising his or her profession.

"But that's neither here nor there. In this case, Miss Antonia Ford, alive, may willingly, or unwillingly, furnish us information leading to the detection and arrest of Confederate spies in our lines. But, dead, of what use to the United States would this young lady be?"

Stoneman grunted, unconvinced:

"You understand your own business, I have no doubt. Do you mind telling me how you intend to pull the fangs of this female snake?"

"I'll tell you, General. I have placed, near Culpeper, inside the Confederate lines, one of our cleverest Secret Service operators. I'd rather not give you her name. She is known only as Operator 13."

"Another woman, by God!" muttered Stoneman, scowling.

"When Greek meets Greek," smiled Averell—"I see. *Latet anguis in herba*, and all that."

"If you choose. Like Miss Ford, Operator 13 is young, attractive, and extremely well educated," continued Colonel Sharpe.

" Socially she is fitted to be where she now is. At Culpeper.

" There still exists, General, as you may perhaps know, a very delightful Southern society clinging to the small towns and to the great houses scattered along our ever shifting line of advance.

" Fredericksburg was everything most delightfully American in its social life and stately houses redolent of Washington and of Lafayette.

" It is in an isolated community of this level that I have placed Operator 13 with orders to render harmless or to arrest or to destroy Miss Ford. And I have every reason to expect that my orders will be carried out."

" Then," said Averell with his ready and engaging smile, " I may hope to ride through Kelly's Ford without finding Lee and Jackson's line of battle in front of me ? "

" We'll do our best, sir."

The three celebrated cavalry generals rose, shook hands with Colonel Sharpe, pulled on their yellow gauntlets, got into their gay saddles at the tent door and galloped away with their escort of Pennsylvania horsemen to talk it all over again with General Joseph Hooker. About whom Jeb Stuart and Joe Sweeny had already made a banjo song or two.

At that very moment, not far away across the river, a girl was seated at a piano, playing and singing one of those saucy banjo songs :

" Ole Joe Hooker a-setting on his hoss,
A-looking lak he's los' !
Kinda 'pears lak he don' know
What to do or whar to go !—
Oh the en' of his nose
Is as ruddy as a rose,
An' he goes in a doze
Kinda dreaming of his woes—

" Oh—h !
Ole Joe Hooker,
Is yuh plum full o' licker ?
Ole Joe Hooker,
Ain't yuh hear that drummin' ?
Ole Joe Hooker,
The Johnny Rebs are comin'.
Kiss yore ole black bottle goo'-bye ! "

The impudent rollicking air with its doggerel verses floated through open windows across the new grass of the lawn where two other girls were playing croquet.

The great white-pillared house was Blythedale; the girl at the piano was Rosalie Blythe; the girls playing croquet were Antonia Ford and Gail Loveless—the latter known only as Operator 13 at the Headquarters of the United States Secret Service.

If, among the dappled shadows cast by new foliage across the sunny grass, she saw also the swaying pattern of the hangman's noose, it did not seem to disturb her. Yet the gallows-tree casts a long and deathly shadow from its leafless trunk and limb.

The March air was soft and faintly fragrant; birds were melodiously noisy in the live oaks; the music of voice and piano came gaily through the window. In the warmth of the pale southern sun youth and spring were astir once more under the silvery blue Virginia sky.

It was Miss Ford's shot. She steadied her mallet with both hands, took aim at her opponent, and hit the red-striped ball a solid crack.

"Oh, dear," said Gail Loveless as her blue striped ball, struck squarely, bounded wide of her wicket, where it had lain in perfect position.

"Now," remarked Miss Ford, with satisfaction, "I shall send you away where you'll do no more mischief in the world." She placed the balls side by side, set her foot upon her own ball, and hit it. The impact sent her opponent's ball halfway across the lawn.

Another girl, leaning from an upper window, called down: "How cruel you are to Miss Loveless, Antonia! You treat her like she was a Yankee!"

"War is war," remarked Miss Ford. "Ask John Pelham."

The girl at the upper window blushed. She was very lovely. And that yellow-haired, smooth-cheeked boy, John Pelham, the idol of the Confederacy, had looked rather deeply into her young eyes. And was impatient to look again.

She was a Miss Shackleford of Culpeper, and her intimates called her Bessie.

Now, on the lower floor, the piano was being pounded valiantly, triumphantly, by Rosalie Blythe, and a new and defiant song came through Blythedale's open windows:

"Up with the crimson battle flag—
Let the blue pennon fly;

Our steeds are stamping fiercely—
They hear our battle-cry.
The bursting bomb, the bugle's scream,
Proclaim the Yank is near;
Strike! Strike for God and Dixie
And all we hold most dear!"

Shy applause from little Miss Shackleford, who had stolen noiselessly down into the music parlour.

"Now you sing, Bessie," cried Rosalie, jumping up from the piano stool.

And Miss Shackleford seated herself shyly and sang in excellent taste Anne Chambers' "Nec Temere":

"Gentlemen of the South,
Gird on your shining swords!
Like locusts in a drouth
Gather the Northern hordes.
Ruthless and fierce they ride
Gentlemen of the South,
Smite their barbaric pride,
At your thunderous cannon's mouth!
Cor unum via una!
Gentlemen of the South!"

On the croquet ground it was Gail Loveless' shot. A very long and almost hopeless shot. She swung her blue-striped mallet with deadly intent; her ball flew straight. Crack! She had hit Miss Ford's red ball at the final wicket and stake, and victory was within her grasp.

"Oh, Gail," exclaimed Antonia Ford, "what are you going to do to me?"

"Make an end of you, my dear," said Miss Loveless gently. And she did, without remorse, and ended the game with a slapping shot through the last two wickets, hitting the stake with a crack like a pistol shot.

They strolled back to the veranda, trailing their mallets behind them over the tender new grass.

"Did you see Elizabeth blush when I mentioned John Pelham?" said Antonia. "Isn't she the sweetest! And I do believe John Pelham actually is courting her."

"Does she care for him?" inquired Gail.

"Of course, Any girl would. And, if she gets him, every girl in the world will envy her. You will too, won't you?"

"He's the most beautiful thing on earth," said Operator 13.

Antonia murmured under her breath: "John Pelham the gunner. The 'Gallant Pelham.' Just a major of artillery. And all the world is in love with him. I'd rather die than marry a Yankee.* Any Southern girl would. But, if I could marry John Pelham at the price of my life, I'd die very joyfully to be his wife."

They mounted the veranda and laid aside their gaily painted mallets.

Rosalie Blythe had wearied of her war songs, and now she and Elizabeth Shackleford came out to the veranda where Antonia and Gail Loveless already were seated at a table picking lint.

Conversation concerned the review of the cavalry brigade stationed near Culpeper and scheduled for that same day.

Rosalie said: "My father had a telegram last night. There is going to be a court martial held at Culpeper."

"When?" inquired Operator 13, carelessly.

"On Thursday the fourteenth General Jeb Stuart is coming up by train to be a witness."

There was much excitement at that news, feminine exclamations of adoration, a babel of girlish voices suggesting picnics and parties and dances.

"Perhaps he'll bring John Pelham with him," suggested Antonia to Elizabeth; and the child blushed again in vivid silence.

"Is he bringing any more troops?" asked Operator 13, beginning to pick at her lint again.

"We don't need more troops," replied Antonia proudly.

As she spoke the distant strains of a cavalry band came to their ears.

"Here comes Fitzhugh Lee and his review," said Rosalie. "I do hope they've sent up new uniforms from Richmond. Or at least I hope that they've captured a brand new supply from the Yankees."

Nearer and nearer came the gay music of the cavalry band. Very soon the girls could see horses' heads tossing and brass instruments shining and glittering through the trees where pale sunshine fell.

"There's General Fitz Lee himself," said Elizabeth, timidly. "He looks like a Norse god!"

Lawn and veranda were shaking, now, under the tread of two thousand horsemen. Through the trees their beautiful red battle

* She did, however.

flags came into view; the brigade band rode out into the open sunshine with a dazzling flash of instruments and a gay roll of kettle drums.

"Oh goodness," said Antonia, "they certainly are a very ragged lot of riders, poor dears!"

They were. Their grey cavalry jackets had turned to all colours and to no particular colour; their headgear resembled last year's dead leaves in tint. But spurs and sabres and carbines flashed like silver in the sun; they rode jauntily, gaily, impudently alert.

Fitzhugh Lee—he of the Jove-like classic profile—rode nobly in new grey and gold with his freshly uniformed staff under the scarlet flash of battle flags.

There followed a colonel in faded tunic leading the 1st Virginia Cavalry, who wore blue uniforms taken in Chambersburg last October, and now ragged and dingy.

Then came the 2nd Virginia Horse, very ragged, followed, in order, by the 3rd, 4th, and 5th. Then guns clanked and chains and harness rattled; and the horse artillery appeared with its burning guidons bobbing, and graceful young officers displaying perfect horsemanship along the flanks of caissons, limbers, forges, and guns.

And Operator 13 was mentally counting every trooper, every horse, and every polished gun that jolted by, and planning to send the information to Colonel Sharpe by midnight.

After the review Major Blythe brought back some officers for midday dinner.

There was good Madeira and good Bourbon at Blythedale. Dinners always went gaily in the beautiful old dining room with its ancient silver and glass and its mahogany of Sheraton and Chippendale. Crimson damask at the windows reflected a rosy glow over the room making youth lovelier, and tinting with kindly warmth the faded uniforms and dingy gold on sleeve-arabesque and tunic collar.

Major Blythe, who had given his arm to Gail Loveless, seated her, and then took the table's head. His motherless daughter, Rosalie, took the other end of the long, three-sectioned Sheraton table.

There was a vast and happy confusion of voices—scraping of ball-and-claw-footed chairs as the ladies were seated by their cavaliers. In the gay tumult Gail Loveless noticed an empty chair on her left and turned to see who had been allotted to her at table. An officer in grey and gold was just coming in, had already approached the empty chair; was bowing low to her.

And she looked up into the scarred, sunburned face of Captain Jack Gailliard.

The frozen smile remained stamped on her features; her chilled heart seemed to stop, and every vein grew icy.

"Miss Loveless," said Major Blythe ceremoniously, "allow me, ma'am, to present my young friend, Captain Jack Gailliard, who is fortunate to be your cavalier. . . . Captain Gailliard, suh, Miss Loveless of Washington who is an honoured guest at Blythedale."

For one terrible, smiling moment their eyes met. Then he bowed with that Southern and exaggerated grace which such he inherited through generations of Bayou Princesse Gailliards.

Her first breath, drawn painfully, was almost a sob. And yet it was instantly evident that he had not known her. Her white skin, fashionably dressed hair, pretty modish clothes seemed utterly to disguise her.

Nor did he even seem to hear in her charmingly fresh and modulated voice any faintest echo of the saucy drawl of "li'l Lucille" the Headquarters' mulatto laundress at Bower House. Apparently there was nothing in this young girl that recalled to him the harsh frightened tones of the ragged fugitive who had so recently stopped him at the pistol's point, and who, with Vespasian Chancellor and himself, had watched a Confederate spy being done to death at sunset on a hayrick gallows.

Through the merry clatter of silver and china and chorusing voices of young and old filling the room with a gay racket, this young girl's voice came to him with limpid clarity: "We witnessed the splendid review of your cavalry this morning, Captain Gailliard. Which is your own regiment?"

"I have no regiment, ma'am," he explained politely: "I am on special duty under Mr. Gaston in Richmond."

"How romantic," she murmured. "I'm very sure you could, if you chose, tell me more wonderful stories than ever Othello told to little Desdemona."

"No," he said modestly, "I really couldn't."

"Haven't you had any adventures, sir?" Her velvet eyes were very wide.

"None worth mentioning, ma'am." Suddenly he was blushing.

And the reason for his mounting and painful colour was that something in her eyes, lovely as dark orchids, had suddenly reminded him of an infatuation of which no white man could be proud.

The girl knew it; intuition made her certain; and instantly, in spite of her peril, all the delicate devilry in her was aroused.

"Captain Gailliard," she said innocently, "I have often wondered how a black man like Othello could interest such a proud and charming girl as Desdemona."

Gailliard's face became fiery.

"Of course," she said, "you and I couldn't understand such a thing." She laughed innocently. "As though, for instance, a Southern gentleman like yourself ever could notice even the prettiest Negro girl in the South."

This was dangerous and cruel. The boy's features were surging with shame. She became a trifle scared at the visible mischief she had wrought, and kept her eyes on her plate until his guilty self-consciousness cooled to something like self-possession.

But she simply couldn't let him alone.

"Aren't you going to entertain me?" she inquired, smilingly.

"How, ma'am?"

"By telling me stories, Captain Gailliard. Did you ever encounter a really beautiful black Desdemona in your exciting and perilous career?"

"You are teasing me, ma'am."

"No. Why shouldn't a Negro girl be beautiful? The Queen of Sheba was black. And greatly admired and courted, wasn't she?"

"I never heard much about her, ma'am."

"Don't you know your Scripture, sir? And also everybody has heard about General Jeb Stuart's pretty Negro laundress who turned everybody's head and turned out to be a common Yankee girl with a dyed skin. Did you ever see her?"

Antonia Ford leaned over toward her: "You little wretch," she called across the table, "what are you tormenting Jack Gailliard about?"

"I want him to tell me a story and he won't," said Gail, pouting.

"I'll tell you one," said the badgered young man in sudden desperation, and almost glaring at her: "I once met a girl in Culpeper and fell in love with her the moment I looked into her eyes! Do you like that story, ma'am?"

"Goodness," faltered Miss Loveless, "was she as beautiful as that? And what happened then, sir?"

"The longer I looked at her the more madly I loved her."

"And——"

"That's the story, ma'am."

"But—how did it end?"

"It hasn't ended."

"You mean that you are still in—in love with her?"

"I am."

"W-what are you going to do about it?"

"Continue to love her, ma'am."

"Oh," cried Miss Loveless, "does she know?"

"Not yet."

"Are you going to tell her?"

"Yes I am."

"W-when?"

He deliberately pulled out his watch, consulted it: "In about three minutes."

"You can't! You wouldn't be rude enough to get up from this table and abandon me and go and propose to that girl. . . . Anyway it is rather rude of you, who are my cavalier, to tell me how you fell in love with some other girl——"

"It isn't some other girl."

At that a swift colour flooded her face. There was a flutter of pulse and breath and a tremulous little laugh:

"How gallant and daring you really are, Captain Gailliard! Suppose I should take your declaration seriously—how could you flounder out of it?"

"I am in deadly earnest, ma'am."

She affected to laugh, merrily, but the quaver in her laughter made her as furious as did the hot thrill of this young man's nearness to her.

"I'm in deadly earnest, too," she said gaily, "when I command you to tell me about the most exciting adventure in your military career."

"*This* is."

"How silly. Please, please, Captain Gailliard, tell me about the most dangerous moment in your whole life!"

"This very moment is the most dangerous," he repeated boldly, quite recovered now and determined in his sudden and overmastering passion.

She pretended real consternation:

"Are we really in danger here in Culpeper?" she inquired breathlessly.

"*I* am, Miss Loveless."

At that she laughed: "You are determined to pay your compliment very gallantly and recklessly, Captain Gailliard. Of which of my weapons are you particularly afraid?"

" Of your eyes, ma'am."

" Are you a burnt child, sir ? "

" Ma'am ? "

" Have other eyes resembling mine taught you fear ? "

Again the hot colour stained his face.

" You haven't yet told me about the really most dangerous moment of your life, Captain Gailliard," she reminded him.

" This is that moment, ma'am," he insisted. " No armed Yankee could scare me as your beauty does. You are bristling with deadly weapons—your eyes, your lips, your hair, your every feature, ma'am—and the terrifying loveliness and grace of your——"

" Please, Captain Gailliard——" she protested ; and felt again the mounting colour burning in her lips and cheeks. She had not bargained for this, God knows.

And now, striving to laugh at him, she saw the boy was suddenly very pale and terribly in earnest.

" In these days," he said with a hoarse catch in his voice, " we live a whole lifetime in an hour. I—I hope I am not offending you when I say——"

" Don't say it," she whispered, her pretty hand a moment on his grey sleeves ; then dropped ; and the tremulous twisting of interlocked fingers was very plain to his eyes.

Major Blythe was on his feet, now, amid cheering and the flutter of beating hands—the first sentiment with brimming glasses : " Our Country—the Confederate States of America ! "

When the fierce, gay din had subsided a little, " The Ladies ! " followed ; then " The President " ; then " General Robert E. Lee ! "

Amid the cheering and racket of clapping hands the doors of the great room were flung open and Jeb Stuart and John Pelham came in, red-sashed, gold-laced and clanking.

Then the tumult grew to a whirlwind of cheering ; men and women sprang to their feet surrounding the new arrivals with lifted glasses in the sunshine, where old Madeira flashed golden, and reckless waving arms splashed it in topaz spray over uniform and poplin gown.

When her turn came, Operator 13 made her curtsey to General J. E. B. Stuart and had her slender hand kissed by that blue-eyed, golden-bearded god. And then, threading the happy confusion, she made her way among them to the stairway, and to her chamber. And dropped nervously upon a chair to rest and try to think and

remember and consider—the while her velvet dark eyes roamed restlessly in effort at self-command and concentration.

From the window shade, partly lowered, the looped cord dangled; and the sun shadowed it upon the carpet, turning it to a perfect hangman's noose, swaying gently as the breeze stirred the shade.

One of those terrible moments of fear which all spies know had suddenly chilled her. Perhaps it had been Jeb Stuart's brilliant blue eyes that had awakened her to her perpetual peril. Perhaps it was the aftermath of her reckless flirtation with Jack Gailliard; and with Death. God, what rashness had been hers—to tempt the boy to remember her—to harp on the subject as though obsessed by some uncontrollable mania to do herself to death. The craze for posturing, for acting a part, for creating the dramatic moment—these would some day destroy her unless she could learn self-control.

The distorted sense of humour—the mad vanity of it—the dominant passion for clowning in the teeth of Death itself!—these one day would put an end to her attitudinizing and strutting in the very shadow of the gibbet.

She watched the shadow of the window cord with its hangman's loop, sway across the carpet. She listened to the gaiety below. Sweeny must be there, for she could hear a banjo rattling and fresh young voices catching up the air:

"Ole Joe Hooker a-settin' on his hoss——"

She thought of the intense blue of Jeb Stuart's eyes and shivered to realize that she had braved them. She thought of Jack Gailliard's eyes afire with sudden passion and trembled to have provoked it.

For a little, yet, the cold fright of her perilous situation chilled her. Then, as always, her young blood suddenly flowed warmly once more and she sighed, caught sight of her own beauty in the mirror and smiled, drawing a long breath. And once more the very charm of her danger gripped and held her in its all-embracing fascination.

She rose lightly, lowered the window shade. The shadow of the noose disappeared. A mellow lantern-like light filled the room where the sun illuminated the yellow shade.

Then she bolted her door, pulled up her billowy skirts, drew from its belt around her waist the long thin knife, and unscrewed the handle, which was hollow.

Here was the crow quill pen as thin as a hairpin, and a tiny phial full of colourless liquid and a few sheets of jeweller's tissue.

No writing appeared as her pen flew, tracing invisible characters

almost microscopic in dimensions. She detailed the events of the day, the numbers and condition of Fitzhugh Lee's regiments and horse artillery, their strength, their position.

She reported the arrival of Stuart and Pelham on court martial duty. She wrote that Antonia Ford had not yet attempted to communicate with any rebel spies inside the Union lines but that she might try to do so now because Captain Gailliard had arrived in Culpeper.

No more cavalry had come, she reported, and only Fitz Lee's brigade occupied Culpeper; and she assured Colonel Sharpe that her news was absolutely reliable.

When she finished she replaced pen, phial, and tissue in her dagger's hilt and slipped the blade into its velvet sheath once more.

The sheet of tissue she rolled into a tiny cylinder, took a tortoise-shell side-comb from her curly hair, unscrewed one tine which was hollow, placed the cylinder in it, and replaced the comb before the mirror.

A faint, aromatic, citrus odour remained in the room. She let the window shade slide up and the sunny breeze dissipated it.

Now she was ready to go down stairs and mingle with the others who had scattered far and near about the grounds to enjoy the pale warm sunshine of earliest spring.

On the veranda steps, in the sun, a picturesque group of young girls and junior officers in faded grey gossiped and laughed, watching the croquet players drive their painted balls over a lawn rather bumpy with tufts of new grass and mole hills.

She could see cavalry horses hitched along the low stone wall west of the stables, and troopers of the escort lounging there amid the dappled shadows of new foliage.

In the summer house, where honeysuckle and rose bush were amazingly green but not yet budded, Joe Sweeny picked dreamily on his banjo in sentimental accompaniment to the inevitable "Lorena," sung in a low voice by a girl from Charleston. On a wrought iron settee backed with grapevine filigree and painted green, Antonia Ford sat with Jeb Stuart in low voiced conversation. She held a cluster of pale yellow crocuses in her hand.

Gail Loveless lingered a little while to listen to, and join with the gay gossipers on the veranda steps. The talk was of war—eager questions from pretty girls, happy, boastful assurances from their cavaliers; and Operator 13 listened to the military indiscretions of youngsters in grey, storing everything away in her clever mind.

She did not see Jack Gailliard there. Nor was John Pelham visible. Bessie Shackleford, also, was missing.

But every now and then Gail Loveless turned her dark eyes on Jeb Stuart across the lawn, wondering what he had to say so earnestly to Antonia Ford whose pretty head was inclined so close to his that he was almost whispering into her little close set ear.

The Charleston girl and Joe Sweeny had taken up "Ashley":

"Dream, oh, dream of laurels won
On Virginia's battlefields,
Of thy work forever done,
Of the sacred truth revealed!
Still we stand here proud and free—
Slaves and bondmen but for thee!
Ashley's men shall ever be
Our defence and shield!"

But Turner Ashley and his white battle horse were dead; and now the blue-eyed, golden-bearded Stuart led Ashley's men. There he sat over yonder whispering grave secrets into a little ivory ear. And Operator 13 could only look at him across the croquet ground, and listen to Sweeny's banjo and wonder what Stuart was whispering to Antonia Ford.

And wonder, unquietly, where Captain Gailliard had gone and what he might be doing. And wonder, also, how soon she might venture to saunter toward the boxwood garden, and, from thence, slip away into the oak woods, and follow a little winding path along a stream where jasmine grew, until she arrived at her occult destination.

As Gail Loveless, strolling at hazard, skirted the ancient hedge of box, she caught a glimpse of two in the deserted garden where jonquil, crocus, and violet were in scattered bloom. And she saw John Pelham, his boy's face shining like a young and golden angel's, kissing the white hands of Elizabeth Shackleford yielded shyly to his swift caress.

"Thank God," she thought to herself, "John Pelham won't be here when Buford comes a-galloping."

She stole onward, walking on the grass to avoid the dry leaves on the path lest their crackling disturb this gentle child and her young god in the springtime of the year and of first love. Beyond where the garden ended in fruit trees swelled with buds, there was a grassy pond fed by the stream which ran through the oakwood,

and which she had meant to follow to the end of her intended quest.

But here, along the pond's edge, paced Captain John Gailliard, booted and spurred in his faded grey, while his saddled nag, straying at will, munched the tender grass.

It was too late to draw back; he had seen her. Here was a situation ripe for dramatic development—all elements, love, mystery, peril, cross-purposes—and she not only had no intention of avoiding it, but thrilled to its dangerous challenge.

All the actress in her rose tingling to the occasion and she saw herself in a rôle that future audiences should hear of with bated breath and rising hair.

As she sauntered on, faintly smiling as he uncovered and made toward her, she had no slightest doubt that he was here to relay to spies inside the Union lines whatever Jeb Stuart was whispering into the ear of Antonia Ford.

But she intended to see that her own business inside the Union lines should be transacted first.

"What a solitary young gentleman," she said amiably as he came striding across the meadow to confront her with the kind of bow that gentlemen bowed in Bayou Princesse a hundred years ago. "I thought, perhaps," she added, "that you might be waiting for me somewhere."

"I shall wait for you all my life, ma'am," he burst out impetuously. But the girl merely raised her eyebrows and reminded him that he had *not* waited.

"If I had not been on duty, Miss Gail," he said hotly, "the whole Yankee army could not have driven me from your feet!"

The boy was frightfully in earnest, and flopped down on his knees, rushing into a stammering and fiery declaration with one ragged gauntlet pressed to his heart:

"Miss Loveless, ma'am, no human being could help loving you at first sight, and I couldn't help it either. So when you looked up at me in the dining room I fell in love with you——"

"Please, Captain Gailliard——"

"For God's sake let me go on, Miss Gail——"

"Wait!"

He looked up at her, dumbly.

She said: "I hear that you are celebrated for your sentimental affairs, Captain Gailliard. And now I am inclined to believe that you really are the gaily reckless and eternal beau that people say you are. Please rise and defend yourself."

He got up, red, inarticulate, his hurt eyes fixed on her.

"They say you are a very headlong young man with a record full of careless courtships and heedless heart affairs," she said. . . . "I don't believe you know what it is to be really in love."

She awaited some comment from him concerning her accusation, coolly regarding the flushed misery of his youthful face.

"Ma'am," he said huskily, "I do know, now, what it means to fall in love. I know I should not have told you what I did. I know I should have asked permission to court you. But—in these days, ma'am, love comes in the morning, and death in the afternoon. . . . I know I should have waited to address your parents, Miss Loveless."

"That would have been the honourable way," she said.

"Yes, ma'am. But you looked at me, and love blazed up. And I do not know how long God means to let me live. . . . Any man who leads my life could tell you very honestly that it is not worth ten cents' insurance——"

"Why? You are a soldier. Are you anything else, Captain Gailliard?"

"I haven't the chances of a soldier, ma'am," he said simply.

"I don't understand."

"I can't say more, Miss Gail."

"Do you mean that your business is more dangerous than a soldier's?" she inquired.

"Perhaps not. . . . We all do the best we can for our country. . . . But—would you let me go away with a little—a very little mite of hope?"

"You mean will I consent to add another triumph to your long list of sentimental experiences? No, I won't——"

But Miss Loveless was looking at him with flushed inquiry, and she laughed uncertainly when she said it.

"Maybe," she said, "you wouldn't remain in love with me if you knew more about me——"

The passionate avowal that burst from the boy silenced and frightened her a little; and to her hot consternation he caught her to him in an embrace of steel.

"There w-was one other g-girl," he stuttered. "I reckon I'm plumb crazy, but there *is* something of her in you—though I must be mad—wild to say it!"

"Who w-was she?" stammered Operator 13, placing both hands against him to keep him away in his overwhelming passion. But her imprisoned body was yielding and he drew her closer till their lips touched.

"All a lifetime in a day," he whispered fiercely—"love and death, within the hour. Gail, will you love me?"

Their lips clung a moment, then with a supple twist of her body she wrenched herself free and, turning her back, covered her face with trembling hands.

This was poor acting in such a rôle; but the girl had been so overwhelmed with reality that she had, for the moment, no further concern with legitimate drama, good acting, and other matters.

She wept, silently, because she was involved in love and knew it, and was afraid for him in that darkly devious maze to which she knew he was addressed.

She dared not tell him so; she dared not warn him. He, and she herself must go on in their appointed tasks until at last The Thing happened to them which would end it all or liberate them for ever from this madhouse where millions swirled in the maelstrom and which was known as the Seat of War.

He said: "My orders are coming. I must go."

In tearful silence the girl turned and came slowly to him, and took her leave of him, simply, passionately.

"For God's sake be careful," she whispered.

"There will be little danger, I think——"

"This is an awful thing God does to us," she whimpered. "This is too c-cruel——"

"Ask your parents if we may be engaged," he interrupted excitedly, gazing into her tear-wet eyes. "Write and tell me, Miss Gail. A letter to Jeb Stuart's Headquarters will always find me. But where should a letter go to you, ma'am? To Blythedale House?"

"No. Write to me in care of the Baltimore post office, g-general d-delivery," she sobbed. "But—where—where are you going, now? Please tell me——"

"I can't. Good-bye——" He laughed in his happy excitement, looked gaily at his watch, then gathered her closely against his breast and kissed and kissed her.

"They'll be here in five minutes," he said, "and you must not be seen with me. Good-bye, Miss Gail, ma'am—darling—darling—honey-sweet——"

When she had walked a little way on into the oakwood along the stream she stopped to staunch the flowing tears and turned around to see what he was about. And saw what she had expected to see—Antonia Ford on horseback, talking eagerly to the man to whom she had just pledged herself.

Then she saw him take something from Miss Ford, vault gaily to his saddle; saw them ride away together at an easy canter, and disappear across the meadow.

Beyond it flowed that fatal river which so many, many gay young men had crossed cheering fiercely for North or South. But only their young souls had crossed and ridden on into the white and blinding mystery men call death.

By the stream among the oak trees an old Negro, bare-headed, sat upon the bank fishing for green bass and bream. When Operator 13 drew near him he peered up at her, sideways, pulled the grizzled kinky forelock on his wrinkled forehead:

"Howdy, ma'am," he said smilingly.

"Good afternoon, uncle," replied the girl, naïvely wiping the tears from her eyes with a small, damp handkerchief. "Do grapevines grow along this creek?"

"Yaas'm, lady, yaas'm," he chuckled, "right smart o' grapevines 'long o' dis hyah crick."

Operator 13 waited.

"Is yuh did yuh stent, lady?" inquired the old man slyly. He removed the cover of a battered basket and held it up for her to see the mass of glistening wet bass and bream lying there. As she leaned over to look she was carelessly rearranging a rebellious strand of hair which had sagged down over her right ear. The little tortoiseshell side-comb, entangled, fell from it into the basket; and the old man reaching for it, slipped it down the throat of a green bass.

"Ole big-mouf done swaller yoh comb, missy," he whispered, chuckling. "What I gwine do now, lady?"

"Sell your fish at Hazel River Tavern."

"Yaas'm. Who all gwine buy'm, lady?"

"The tavern keeper will offer you *one dollar and six cents* for your basket of fish. Sell them to him and to nobody else."

"Yaas'm."

He drew in his line, examined the bait, chuckling, cast it out again toward a submerged log where a turtle sat.

The turtle slid overboard. Operator 13, also, had disappeared when the old man looked around.

After a little while he got up, rheumatically, pulled up his line, wound it around the crooked pole, and trudged away with his basket of bass and bream.

There was a dance that evening at Blythedale House and a cavalry band for the dancers. But four of the gayest among the guests were missing. For the Culpeper court martial had been postponed, and Stuart and Pelham had gone back by rail. And Jack Gailliard also had gone away—nobody asked where—and Antonia Ford, it was said, had been invited for a day or two to Fairfax Court House to visit a school friend, and had ridden horseback thither, leaving her valise to be sent on by wagon.

They danced late—the girls at Blythedale—with the lively youngsters from Fitz Lee's regiments who footed it airily in their shabby uniforms; and were adored the more desperately for the beloved rags.

Operator 13 left a proposal half spoken on the stairs and retired precipitately with a flurry of panicky and filmy skirts to the safety of her chamber.

She slept badly, listening, even in her restless dreams, for the startling voice she dreaded and expected.

It sounded, late the next morning, outside her locked door—the frightened voice of Elizabeth Shackleford as she beat with agonized hands on the heavy panels:

"Gail! Gail! Colonel Moseley rode into Fairfax Court House last night and caught a Yankee general in bed and galloped off with him, and the Yankee Provost has arrested Antonia Ford at Hazelhurst!"

Gail Loveless got out of bed, trembling a little, and opened her door to little Miss Shackleford fully dressed in riding clothes, deathly pale, and all a-trembling from her gallop in the morning chill.

"Will the Yankees hang Antonia?" gasped the girl. "They can't, can they? They can't do such a horrible thing to Antonia——"

The girl from Charleston appeared at the door in her nightdress, hotly flushed, fiery with wrath and scorn for the "Northern scum."

"Major Blythe says they have sent Antonia to the Old Capitol Prison," she exclaimed in a raging voice. "Our scouts have just ridden into Culpeper with the news. Oh, I hope Colonel Moseley will hang that wretched Yankee General* if they do any harm to Antonia!"

Rosalie Blythe came to the door, wide-eyed, fearful: "Mr. Shackleford says the Yankees have captured a Confederate spy," she announced. "It just *can't* be Jack Gailliard!"

Amid wailing, patriotic execration and feminine lamentation,

* General Stoughton.

Gail Loveless managed to bathe and dress, but her long, ivory-pale limbs and body continued to shake in spite of her, so terrible the fear that was growing in her frightened heart.

And when at length she appeared at the breakfast table, Rosalie Blythe behind the coffee urn hailed her in tearful triumph and exultation, saying that Jack Gailliard had led Moseley and his thirty rangers into the very heart of a sleeping Yankee camp, and had yanked the Yankee general out of bed in his nightshirt from the very middle of his snoring Yankee soldiers.

The old veteran Major Blythe, however, spoke gravely of Jack Gailliard and of Antonia.

" Fortunately," he added, " she was within our lines and not in disguise, when the Yankee Provost arrested her. But they may send the child to a fortress. They are capable of it, I suppose."

A horrified silence, then said Gail Loveless in a faint voice: " Did the Yankees catch any more of our people, sir ? "

" I don't know, ma'am. John Moseley got cl'ar away with his prisoner, they say. And I certainly hope Jack Gailliard did too. . . . Give Miss Gail some hot coffee, Rosalie——"

But Operator 13 could not touch her breakfast, and presently, pleading headache, returned to her room to lie on her bed and tremble and remember that man she had seen hanging on a hayrick, and that three thousand sabres were coming to Culpeper as soon as Colonel Sharpe had read the message of her little tortoiseshell comb and had signalled to Stoneman that the ford was clear for his eager horsemen.

No further news came that day.

It was a dull week at Blythedale that followed. Repeated attempts to communicate with Antonia proved useless. The Federal authorities were in a boiling rage over the kidnapping of a Union general from the middle of his own brigade. Baltimore newspapers gloomily chronicled the arrest of a Miss Antonia Ford and reported that she had been suspected of espionage for a long while and was now locked up in the Old Capitol and hedged with bayonets that were likely to keep her out of mischief for a while.

Jeb Stuart sent telegram after telegram inquiring about her. John Pelham, in his love letters to little Miss Shackleford, always begged news of Miss Ford.

Finally both Stuart and Pelham arrived at Culpeper by train again—the postponed court martial having been called for March thirteenth.

But again, on the twelfth, an old and grizzled Negro had sold another basketful of fish at Hazel River Tavern to a man who paid exactly one dollar and six cents for the lot.

The man was John C. Babcock, Federal Secret Service Operator Number 106. And on Wednesday, March thirteenth, he delivered one more tortoiseshell side-comb to Colonel Sharpe, Chief of the United States Secret Service.

On Thursday, March fourteenth, General Averell, with three thousand Union cavalry and some horse guns, set out secretly, cautiously, and slowly for Kelly's Ford, with orders to destroy the brigade of General Fitzhugh Lee at Culpeper Court House.

All that day Fitz Lee's scouts and vedettes, always active north of the river, reported no sign of Yankee activity excepting the classic and frantic clowning of Colonel Wyndham's cavalry rushing around in circles in pursuit of Moseley and his angry prisoner; which chase was as futile as trying to catch a sunbeam in a fish net.

In consequence there was some revival of gaiety at Blythedale House; officers of Fitz Lee came laughingly to exult and to play croquet and drink a dish of tea; the Military Court was now in session; little Miss Shackleford's father received John Pelham in his own house and gave his solemn consent to the betrothal; and little Miss Shackleford and her golden young god walked in the box garden at Blythedale under the March moon's creamy lustre.

So Jeb Stuart, as usual, had his fill of dancing, singing, candy-pulling, and story-telling with the youngsters, and was unusually gay and optimistic concerning Antonia Ford against whom, so far, nothing serious had been proven by the Federal authorities who had about made up their minds to let her go with a last warning.

On the fifteenth the court martial at Culpeper ended.

Operator 13 was sitting on the veranda when Jeb Stuart and John Pelham came riding up for a last cup of tea. Stuart had been teasing Pelham about the boy's wishing to remain at Culpeper over Sunday; and all the girls on the veranda took their cues and began to tease and torment the blushing young man, begging to know just why he desired to remain in Culpeper after the court had risen.

Said Stuart, twinkling at them: "I am utterly unable to understand why the gallant Pelham desires to stay here in this peaceful spot when he may be missing a first rate battle over yonder——"

He checked himself, still laughing, and took a telegram from a dusty cavalryman who had just arrived at speed.

"Ladies," said Jeb Stuart, gaily, "may I crave your indulgence a moment——"

He read the dispatch at a glance, laughed delightedly, and turned to John Pelham:

"You are right as usual, John," he said. "Fitz Lee has word from general Headquarters that a very heavy body of Yankee horse is moving north of the river."

Major Blythe pricked up his veteran ears: "It may mean nothing, General," he remarked. "Who commands them?"

"Averell, it is supposed."

There was a silence. Gail Loveless' dark eyes had been fixed on Stuart and her heart was beating violently.

Stuart said: "Fitz Lee has made all proper preparations. I hope Averell comes to Culpeper."

He turned to John Pelham.

"Well, then, John, suppose we do remain here over Sunday and see whatever is to be seen. Shall we? . . . Not that I think Averell will really venture to cross the river——"

The boy gave him a shy and grateful look. A little later he rose, carelessly, and sauntered away in the general direction of the box-wood garden.

"I imagine, sir," said Major Blythe to Stuart, "that Fitz Lee can take care of General Averell if he rides this way."

Stuart's intense blue eyes sparkled: "I am sure of it," he replied; "and I propose to remain here on that chance and see for myself how Fitz Lee is going to do it."

That night, at supper, Rosalie Blythe made music for them at the piano; and there was a great deal of patriotic and sentimental singing by the young ladies. But Stuart had gone to Fitz Lee's Headquarters with John Pelham, and only Major Blythe's quavering old voice furnished the bass relief to the fresh-voiced youthful chorus.

Toward nine o'clock there resounded a trample of cavalry—details from the 2nd Virginia riding down to Kelly's Ford. The Charleston girl ran out to the gate to speak to a young officer and to watch them out of sight as they rode off into the spring mist.

Everybody retired early. But wax candles burned late in the bedroom of Operator 13, where she sat huddled up, writing on thin sheets of jeweller's tissue with colourless ink which left no mark—only a faint aromatic odour in the air of her curtained chamber.

It was not yet daylight on Sunday morning when Operator 13, fully dressed, pulled a chair to her open bedroom window and,

resting her chin on both clasped hands, listened intently for what she knew was coming.

Not a sound broke the darkness. The battle-battered hills and valleys slept peacefully. Only the fatal river moaned in chilly slumber.

After a long time a wild bird awoke and sang a peevish, fitful note or two. Star after star faded in the grey chill. Suddenly the silence rang with a shower of mockingbird music as dawn revealed the foggy woods and fields.

From very far away, softened by fog, came a gun shot. And, as though she had been struck by the same bullet, Operator 13 sprang to her feet, one pale hand clenched over her heart which had leaped with her and was running wild.

The deadened banging of carbines filled her ears like the rolling of muffled drums—lost now in the thunderous racket of horsemen passing the house on a frantic gallop.

A clanging alarm of bugles broke out; more horsemen galloping and shouting; a lamp gleamed like a star from the Shackleford house; lights sparkled in the village; black servants, half dressed, with candle flames streaming, hurried whimpering through Blythedale halls and corridors.

At the Shackleford house a loud knocking and John Pelham's quiet young voice: "Good-bye, Elizabeth! The Yankees have rushed Kelly's Ford and we're off to see the fight!"

The girl, in slippers and cloak, reached the garden gate too late; but Pelham, riding on beside Jeb Stuart, looked back and saw her white arm lifted in farewell. He waved his cap gaily. At that moment the first sunbeam struck Culpeper and Elizabeth Shackleford's eyes, blinding them so that all she could see was her transfigured lover riding straight into the golden flames of morning.

There was a frightful rush of horses, guns, and yelling men in blue jackets as Averell's horsemen churned the waters of Kelly's Ford into a mass of foam that splashed them from spur to chinstrap and left their naked sabres dripping.

Down went Fitzhugh Lee's grey-jackets; the 2nd Virginia pickets were sabred or overwhelmed, and their supporting Company scattered and chased toward Culpeper. The crash of gunfire at the ford rose to a sustained roar.

Operator 13 had run downstairs and out through the trees to the main camp road. Past her thundered Breathed's horse artillery; the drivers swung their long lashes, gun and limber

bounding and clanking after the straining horses. But it was heavy going, and the grey-jacketed regiments were gaining on the guns at a swinging trot. Stuart rode by with Pelham—gay and laughing volunteer spectators of Fitz Lee's developing fight. They bowed in their saddles to Operator 13 as they cantered past, the 3rd Virginia thundering on their heels followed by Rosser's command cheering hoarsely, their scarlet battle flags passing like whistling jets of flame.

For two long hours the blue-jacketed horsemen and gunners had been crossing Kelly's Ford; and now the 3rd grey-jackets struck them a mile inland, followed by the yelling 5th. Into these galloped two Pennsylvania regiments, tearing a bloody way toward their fighting Rhode Island and Maine comrades. There came a hellish dazzle of flashing sabre-strokes and a deafening burst of carbine fire.

John Pelham, revelling in the uproar, turned to call out reassuringly to the 3rd Virginia, which seemed to be in some confusion. Then a gun in a Yankee horse-battery flashed, and a shell, bursting in the mud, tore the boy out of his saddle and ripped his big black mare to bloody shreds.

All day long the cavalry battled along the road to Kelly's Ford with crimsoned sabres and spitting carbines fired at such close range that the muzzle flames set the troopers' jackets afire. Again and again the grey-jackets gallop yelling into the Yankee squadrons that savagely fight back, shot for shot and blow for blow.

At dusk their massive formations, now nearly two miles inland on the Culpeper road, sagged sullenly to their bugles' warning and began to retrace that road to the fatal river.

Up at Blythedale they heard the cannonading and the rippling roar of volley firing become duller and more distant.

Old Major Blythe, grey and grim, sat motionless on his veranda, listening to the receding roar of a Yankee raid that had failed. As all other Yankee raids had failed—after the awful damage they had done. . . . Ashley yesterday, John Pelham to-day.

The boy lay at the Shacklefords' house. Beside him, her eyes blinded by tears, the girl he had loved was sewing on his shroud. . . .

Somebody—a black servant—searching for Miss Loveless, discovered her, weeping, on a bench in the box garden.

"Miss Gail, ma'am," quavered the Negro maid, "dare's a old

black nigger at de back do', say how he-all gotta git dollah six cents fo' de fish yuh done buy off him dis mawnin', ma'am."

A stab of fright pierced the girl. Then she rose quietly and followed the maid to the quarters where, at the kitchen door, a shadowy figure stood leaning upon a crooked stick.

"Evenin', ma'am," quavered the old man, "I done come fo' de fish money, lady."

Operator 13 looked stealthily about her in the lantern-lit darkness. The quarters were deserted.

"What message?" she whispered with mildly beating heart.

"Young master wif two hosses at de fishin' hole ax yuh kindly hurry quick, kaze de Fairfax Provost on he way to ketch yuh, lady."

The girl gave a last frightened glance around her in the starlight, then, gathering up her poplin skirts in both hands, sped away among the fruit trees where, in the meadow, the little pond lay glittering, set with trembling stars.

VIII

AD ASTRA

Jack Babcock, United States Secret Service Agent Number 106, led his mud-splashed horse, Gimlet, into Headquarters.

Astride Gimlet sat a young girl in a pink poplin dress. Ruffled flounces hung in flowery tatters above her knees, revealing a pair of slender legs in brier-torn stockings. On her dangling feet prunella pumps dripped swamp ooze. She had lost her small, round hat trimmed with pink roses; cat-briers had scratched the plump white skin above her stocking-tops.

In one thorn-torn hand she still clutched a revolver with chilled and stiffened fingers.

The cavalry sentry at Colonel Sharpe's quarters halted them in the lantern light; the girl straightened up, rubbed her heavy eyes in a bewildered way, and pulled down the ragged flounces over her naked knees.

Chilled to the bone she was scarcely able to unclose her cramped fingers and push the revolver back into her saddle holster.

She could hear somebody's nasal voice announcing: "Two spies reporting from Culpeper Court House, sir."

A platoon of cavalry rode up leading five officers' horses. The troopers stared solemnly at the two scouts. They took the girl in the pink rags for a rebel spy and were sorry for her.

Presently three Zouave officers of the 55th and 146th New York regiments in red, black, and gold, a captain of the 6th Lancers, and a blue Dragoon major came clanking out of Colonel Sharpe's big wall-tent and mounted their horses, casting curious glances at the two spies.

Colonel Sharpe followed them, a tall, handsome figure in the glaring lantern light.

When he caught sight of the girl on Gimlet he came forward courteously.

"Are you hurt, ma'am!" he asked in his pleasant voice. She tried to speak. Then he coolly passed one gold-embroidered arm

around her waist, lifted her out of the wet saddle, and set her on her feet.

But Operator 13 couldn't stand; so the tall Colonel, summoning John Babcock with a nod, carried her into his warm, lamplit quarters and placed her deep in a padded arm-chair before the glowing stove.

An orderly brought her a cup of something aromatic and steaming hot. She held it to her lips with both scared and trembling hands.

Colonel Sharpe whispered to Babcock: "Is she wounded?"

"No, sir. They shot her hat off when we were swimming Gimlet across the river above. She's just tired and cold."

The spiced eggnog laced with brandy sent a reviving flame through her chilled body. Colonel Sharpe wrapped her in a great travelling rug; Babcock pulled off her soaked prunella pumps and lifted her feet to a hassock in the glow of the camp stove.

The girl's lips were blue and quivering; tears began to steal down her dirty cheeks.

Colonel Sharpe seated himself on a camp chair and motioned John Babcock to do the same.

To the orderly he said: "Look after that horse at once." To the scout he added quietly: "What's your story, Jack?"

"Well, sir," said the scout, "I've remained in touch with Operator 13 as you directed. You've had her reports from Culpeper through me. Then the unexpected happened—as usual:

"On the night of the eighth Moseley's Rangers slipped through General Stoneman's pickets near Chantilly and nabbed General Stoughton in his bed at Fairfax Court House."

Colonel Sharpe nodded pleasantly. He almost smiled.

"Operator 13," continued the scout, "sent me a warning that Miss Antonia Ford had ridden out of Culpeper with a Confederate Secret Service officer and that something probably was brewing along the river.

"But General Averell's and Colonel Wyndham's pickets noticed nothing; and, as for Moseley, he was in and out of Fairfax and away before Colonel Wyndham guessed what had happened.

"Then, sir, it was helter-skelter everywhere, with Wyndham's cavalry riding the river like crazy folk; and Stanton wild with rage. But I kept on after Antonia Ford and Gaston's chief scout, Captain Gailliard.

"Well, sir, a Federal detective finally located Miss Ford and arrested her, and telegraphed for me. But she already had managed

to send a grapevine telegram to Fitzhugh Lee warning him that General Averell had started up the river, and that there must be a Yankee spy somewhere in Culpeper."

"How did she guess that?" interrupted Colonel Sharpe.

"Pure accident, sir. It's always some accident that finally hangs us. You see, sir, a picket of the 2nd Virginia cavalry down at Rappahannock Station stole a basket of fish from an old Negro and started to clean and fry them. They discovered a lady's comb inside a big green bass. One of the teeth of the comb broke off. It was hollow; and in it was a roll of tissue with no writing on it. But these rebel troopers had heard of Yankee tricks. They sent the comb and tissue paper to Gaston's expert chemist, Captain Gailliard, at Warenton. He'd gone on to Aldie, but Miss Ford was there, and she took the tissue and treated it and read it; and then she sent the grapevine message to Fitz Lee to look for a spy in his own camp. All this Miss Ford triumphantly admitted, and defied us to do anything about it. So we sent her to Washington—but you know, sir, how the President is. And I guess she knows he won't let her be harmed.

"Well, anyway, those gay and clever johnnies at Rappahannock Station had let the old Negro go after robbing him of his fish. I found him hobbling along near Culpeper, and sent him in to Blythedale to bring Miss Loveless to me. That is how it all happened, sir."

"And you put her on your horse and led her all the way from Culpeper oakwood into the camp?" asked Colonel Sharpe quietly.

"Yes, sir. I had to."

Colonel Sharpe leaned over and shook the scout's dirty hand.

"The honour of the Secret Service Corps is very safe in your keeping, John Babcock," he said.

The eggnog and the warmth of the stove was making Operator 13 drowsy again. Colonel Sharpe turned to her and said: "You were sent out to catch Miss Ford. She's been caught. General Stoneman acted on your further information; and why General Averell didn't go on to Culpeper and destroy Fitz Lee, God only knows. You did your part, ma'am; Jack Babcock did his; I have tried to do mine. *Our* records are clean."

He rose, picked up Operator 13, shawl and all, and, holding her cradled in his muscular arms, walked through the tented corridor into a log cabin where a large, fat Negress was soaping clothes in a wash tub.

"Aunty," said he, "here's a tired and very sore young lady who

would enjoy a hot soaping, some arnica, some clean blankets, a hot supper and a warm bed. Because she must be well rested and all ready to do some very important business for me by to-morrow. See that she is fit and ready."

He looked down at his burden, smilingly, and his burden looked up at him out of wide and velvety eyes.

"You heard what I said, ma'am?"

"Yes, sir. I shall be fit and ready."

"I'm glad to hear you say so. . . . Aunty Chloe, you are the best doctor and the best nurse in camp. I leave Miss Loveless to you."

Still smiling, he placed the girl upon a camp chair, bade her sleep well, and walked back to his own quarters.

John Babcock rose stiffly as the Chief of the Secret Service entered his tented quarters.

"John," said the Colonel, "at last we've got Antonia Ford. A dangerous young woman. But there'a a far more dangerous man loose. We must catch him and catch quickly."

"You mean Captain Gailliard, sir?"

"I do. I do indeed."

"Very well, sir. I'm quite ready——"

"No. I'm going to send another operator."

John Babcock betrayed both worry and chagrin by his silence.

"I'll tell you something you don't know," continued Colonel Sharpe quietly. "Jack Gailliard is now inside our lines and on his way north."

"Do you know why he is travelling north, sir?"

"I do. And I have every Secret Service agent and detective in Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Boston watching for him. The trouble is I have no description of him. But I have an agent who knows him personally; and I'm going to send her after him."

"A woman, sir?"

"I am going to send Miss Loveless after him," said Colonel Sharpe pleasantly.

John Babcock looked at his chief.

"I don't much care how I get Jack Gailliard," added Colonel Sharpe, "but I have positive and instant orders from the President to arrest him. And I believe I know how to do it."

He laid a kindly hand on the young scout's arm. "Now, John, go to your quarters and eat and sleep. I count on you. I need you right here with me. There is serious trouble brewing for

the Union in the North. And God knows we're in trouble here.

"That cold swift river, yonder, has been a ghastly River Styx for thousands of us. And thousands more are doomed to cross it. Because General Hooker is taking the field to win or lose everything as soon as the rebel cavalry and ours have fought it out along this tragic river.

"You have done well. You always do well. You have very gallantly upheld every tradition of this corps. A sound and refreshing sleep to you, John."

Miss Loveless slept all night long and all the following day until nearly three o'clock in the afternoon. When she awoke she saw her camp trunk and valises standing beside her army cot, and her own fresh underwear laid out beside her pretty travelling gown, pork-pie hat, parasol, and kid gloves. Spring sunshine filled the log hut. Robins chirped and chirked outside.

"Aunty Chloe," she called, sitting up in her blankets to free her eyes of the thick curly hair.

"Yath'm, yath'm," replied Aunt Chloe, waddling in from somewhere in the outer sunshine.

Operator 13 yawned and looked up sleepily at the merry, fat, black countenance a-flash with snowy teeth. "Please give me another bath and rub," she begged.

"Yath'm, ma'am. I'se gwine curry yuh an rub yuh lak yuh wuz de prize filly at de fair! I'se gwine pat yuh an' scrub yuh an' soap yuh, an' shine yuh an' twis' yuh mos' in two twill yuh ahms an' laigs is jes' a-kickin' tuh dance de Pea-vine!"

"Oh dear," yawned Operator 13, "I'm sore all over."

But when she stepped into the steaming washtub and sank down with a contented sigh, her stiffness and soreness left her like magic under Aunt Chloe's massage, and youth and health and the excitement of impending a new adventure did the rest.

Dressed at last, the girl was quite ready to dance the "Pea-vine" or to follow the devious and secret "grapevine" from root to the uttermost convolution of its mysterious tendrils.

She wore a light brown travelling gown, full but without flounces, and latched with turquoise at the waist and where the smart little zouave jacket closed below the cambric collar framing her soft young throat. Her rakish little pork-pie hat was edged with tiny turquoise blossoms; her parasol had two gold and turquoise tassels; her short, neatly fitting kid gloves were a golden tan.

Aunt Chloe, beaming with pride at her handiwork, cooked bacon

and eggs and made beaten biscuit; and Operator 13 ate with appetite unimpaired by her experiences of the day before.

She really was quite lovely to look upon; and she left Aunt Chloe mesmerized, standing in an admiring daze as an ambulance drove up for the girl's luggage.

Colonel Sharpe was very busy in his quarters, but not too busy to welcome Operator 13; and he had his big wall-tent cleared to receive her and set double sentries to keep everybody else at a distance.

At first glimpse of the radiant young girl he became perfectly certain that she was exactly the person he needed.

"You look very charming, ma'am," he said pleasantly, rising and placing a rocking chair for her by a table. Then he pulled his own camp-chair up in front of the table, drew some papers from his inside pocket and spread them before her. "Miss Loveless," he said, "did you ever hear of the Sons of Liberty?"

"No, sir."

"Then you are going to hear about them now."

He laid aside his cigar, dropped one booted leg over the other. and leaned back in his chair, his pleasant, penetrating gaze on her.

"The league called the Sons of Liberty," he explained, "is a military and secret organization formed in the North by Southern sympathizers. Its object is to attack and destroy the Union by armed force.

"There are in the North nearly half a million members of this secret military society plotting to ruin the United States. One more smashing Confederate victory will be their signal to start another and terrible rebellion in the North. Our Secret Service has discovered that there are between eighty and ninety thousand armed members of the Sons of Liberty in the State of Illinois alone. There are, we believe, forty thousand or more in Ohio; in Indiana, fifty or sixty thousand; and, in New York, Missouri, and Pennsylvania, unnumbered thousands, all organized and armed.

"Their supreme leader, known as 'Grand Commander,' is a well-known Copperhead named C. L. Vallandigham.

"What they plot to do is to mobilize under Confederate officers and rise simultaneously, led by these selected leaders; seize the loyal states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri, and proclaim a new nation to be called the Northwest Confederacy.

"Split into three parts, the Union could not survive a second rebellion. The South eventually would whip us out of our boots;

the Northwest would dictate its own terms to us. Miss Loveless, we must end this menace or it will put a final end to us."

The girl was scarcely breathing now, so intent was she upon what this quiet, polite man was saying to her; and her dark eyes were brilliant with the excitement of intelligent comprehension, and of all that such a situation might mean to her.

Colonel Sharpe watched her thoughtfully for a while. Then, sinking his voice almost to a whisper:

"I have told nobody, so far, something else that I now am going to admit to you. I tell you because I've got to tell somebody who has brain enough to understand."

"Don't you trust me, sir?" she asked naïvely.

"I've got to do that too. And this is what I have to say to you: General Lee is a better general than is General Hooker. He knows it, too; Hooker doesn't. But I think our unhappy President guesses it. Lee is perfectly certain that he is going to force Hooker into a disastrous battle and ruin him. And so utterly convinced is Lee of Hooker's impending destruction, that the Confederate commissioners and Mr. Gaston have already sent northward a Confederate Secret Service agent to the grand commander of the Sons of Liberty with orders to mobilize immediately; seize the five Northern States, and burn the cities of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia."

He picked up his unlighted cigar, looked at it, carefully laid it aside again with caution, as though it had been something explosive.

"This agent," he continued calmly, "who has started north to give these orders, is a captain in the Confederate Secret Service. His name is John Gailliard. And I don't care whether he is killed or captured or driven across the Canadian border. But he carries on his person detailed plans for this new rebellion, and he must never deliver them."

He looked her straight in the eyes.

"You know Captain Gailliard, I believe."

Shock left her inarticulate, but she managed to nod.

"Miss Loveless," he continued, "I believe you are the *only* Secret Service agent in our employment who can recognize this man at sight."

Again the girl inclined her head. Her face had become so white that Colonel Sharpe asked her whether she felt quite rested after her Blythedale experience.

"Quite," she replied in a ghost of a voice.

He regarded her narrowly and she smiled.

He smiled, too. "I know," he said, "that you are not afraid to go."

"No, sir—not afraid."

"I am told," continued Colonel Sharpe, "that this man Gailliard does not hesitate to shoot."

She looked up at him in amused silence.

"Therefore, in any emergency, I do not expect you to hesitate, either," he added.

"Where am I to find him, sir?"

"I don't know. Our agents in New York will make contact with you. Superintendent Kennedy of the Metropolitan Police will help you. I have telegraphed full instructions to all authorities, military and civil. All the New York rail-road stations, docks, ferries, and hotels are being watched. The trouble is we have no description of Captain Gailliard. That is where you will be helpful. And, Miss Loveless, don't forget that he is one of the cleverest and most dangerous spies in the rebel service. Take no chances with such a man."

"My mission is to identify him, then?"

"Yes. I want his papers. And I want *him*, dead or alive."

She nodded.

"I don't know," continued Colonel Sharpe, "which of our operators will make contact with you. You know how to recognize them, of course?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. And please remember that trapped men shoot."

"Will Captain Gailliard have others with him?"

"I don't know. Probably. Anyway our agents are instructed to make a complete job of it. And I warn you, once more, keep out of range of any shooting."

"If Captain Gailliard should surrender, would he be court martialled and hanged?" she inquired calmly.

"No doubt at all, ma'am."

She said: "I thought you were opposed to the execution of spies, sir."

"I am. It's both foolish and cruel. But you and I have nothing to say in that matter."

She was thinking very swiftly now.

In the confusion of mental anguish she tried to imagine some way to find her lover and save him, without betraying the cause she served.

Colonel Sharpe rose, bade her remain where she was, and walked through the tented corridor toward a telegraph operator who appeared with a sheaf of telegrams.

The terrifying drama of it all was overwhelming the girl. Yet, even amid the chaos of clashing emotions, her ruling passion persisted. And she became agonizingly aware that never, never before had any woman been offered so stupendous a rôle to play before so vast an audience! Her stage the huge theatre of war; the North and South her audience; all Europe looking on from the Nigger's Heaven—Napoleon and Victoria. She giggled hysterically.

Fascinated yet terrified, bewildered, instinct urged her to seize the opportunity and accept everything it offered—every peril, every pang—even the bony embrace of Death itself.

Her face was hotly flushed now; her eyes sparkled like dark, liquid jewels; and a flame burned and waned in her parted lips.

Comedy, melodrama, or tragedy—what did it matter if she were to play the supreme rôle of the century—the heroine of heroines, beset by half a million secret enemies, and fighting to save her country and, at the same time, the One Man who ever had mattered seriously to her in all her light-minded, light-hearted, light-footed life!

She saw herself in tragedy, dying by his bullet, forgiving *him*, asking his pardon of the President as her last reward.

She saw herself triumphantly possessed of his fatal papers, paroling him once more, bidding him go to Canada and live there harmlessly until the war ended and she could marry him.

But first and last and always paramount was her mind's loyal cry: "God save the United States!"—though she and he and millions more went down to stormy deaths amid the final cataclysm.

"Oh Heaven," she whimpered to herself, "what a rôle and what a death!—with the whole world applauding through its tears!"

Then, amid the chaotic excitement dislocating her mind she began to realize that Colonel Sharpe had returned and was speaking to her again:

"A telegram has just arrived from two of my operators—Harry Dodd, Operator 39, and James Cammock, Operator 70. They have contrived to join the Sons of Liberty in New York City. They will make contact with you at the St. Dennis Hotel. I have telegraphed them to expect you there by Monday."

He handed her the memorandum; she folded it as in a dream and placed it inside the scented glove on her left hand.

He had the railroad tickets and baggage checks, too, and an ambulance to drive her to the station.

He was offering her his arm; she rested her slim, gloved fingers on it very lightly, and lightly walked beside him, her exalted face lifted to the cloudless vault above.

"Don't forget that our new passwords are '*Ad astra*,'" he warned her.

"*Ad astra*," she murmured, "the way to the stars leads through the night."

He turned to look at her out of kind, grave eyes. Her enraptured gaze saw things beyond him.

"*Si diis placet*," she sighed. "I have watched the stars too long to fear the night."

The words were spontaneous. It was only afterward she realized their theatrical value as a final exit. Some day, if she survived, she would write a play for herself—a sad, sad play—and those very words should end it. . . . Even angels and cherubim above should weep.

As Colonel Sharpe handed her into the Headquarters' spring-wagon known as "the ambulance" and drawn by six frisky mules, the 146th Zouaves were passing, their band leading with a joyously deafening tumult of cymbals, brass, and drums.

She stood up in the wagon to wave her handkerchief. There was only a battalion of them left. The remainder lay dead below Marye's Heights.

Beyond them on another road she saw an entire division of blue-jacketed cavalry and lancers, in columns of fours, headed north west.

It was Stoneman once more preparing to force the fords of the fatal river.

Her train seemed to arrive on time.

Every official, every officer, soldier, and civilian aboard tried to make the long journey comfortable for her. But it was an irksome and almost endless journey by day and night and day through Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia to the flat, sprawling metropolis squeezed in between its three rivers and dominated only by a few church spires, fire towers, shot-towers and flagpoles with the National emblem fluttering high in the pale spring sky.

Over New York, when she arrived at sunset, were symbols of the mighty war clouds piling up to the southward—slow, storm shapes gathering, towering above the Hudson, spreading over the

city a vast and thunderous gloom. Before she went to bed, lightning glimmered.

From her bedroom in the St. Dennis Hotel, when she awoke next morning, she could hear the roar of traffic below her lace-curtained windows where iron-shod hoof and iron-rimmed wheel and the unbroken shuffle of passing feet never ceased by day, and merely grew less noisy through the sombre gas-lit shadows of the night. The racket of drums of passing regiments marching downtown to transports or to cars, the wearying clang and screech and discordant jangle of horse-cars crossing the great artery at right-angles, east and west, the interminable iron grinding; clatter of stages, trucks, and drays up and down Broadway combined into a kind of perpetual, unaccented dissonance, to which, after a while, her hearing adjusted itself, and her tired mind submitted.

She breakfasted in Taylor's Saloon downstairs, and now was back in her corner suite again. Her bed had been made up in her bedroom; her sitting room had been dusted.

She went to the window and looked out through the lace curtains.

Across Eleventh Street was a marble building full of dry-goods, its windows brilliant with sky-blue shades. Opposite, on the other side of Broadway where that great thoroughfare bends westward, rose the beautiful gothic tower of Grace Church amid its trees. Here, along these blocks, was the centre of the city's hotel and theatrical life concentrated between Bleecker and Fourteenth Street.

Here the blue Fifth Avenue stages with landscapes painted in oval panels on their sides, and the yellow Madison Avenue stages moved slowly as ships in a heavy sea, through the perpetual traffic jam of carriages, hacks, delivery wagons and cross-town cars.

Here commerce crowded and fashion strolled; newsboys yelled, stage drivers and teamsters jibed, taunted, and swore at one another all day long; and the police were ever pushing through to clear the way for departing regiments.

With dusk, lamp-lighters carrying torches and little ladders came shuffling to set the gas jets of Broadway burning.

Hotels, saloons, restaurants, theatres blazed out in lights which illuminated uneven sidewalks and cobbled streets.

The yellow radiance sparkled on women's jewels and officers' gold-laced uniforms; on swells' monocles, carriage lamps, policemen's buttons, and on the ribbed helmets of red-shirted firemen.

Broadway, dirty, smelling of horse manure and leaking gas; redolent of restaurants odorous with gusts from open doors of saloons!

Broadway, spiced with aroma of cigar and pipe; with faint, warm scent from ladies' gloves and gowns and hair; smelling of passing and perfumed fops; rank with musk and patchouli wafted in skunklike whiffs from loitering nymphs of the gas-lit night! And always the raucous clamour of newsboys, ominous of disaster.

And, almost unnoticed amid the reek, there stirred, at times, a breath of budding trees in Union Square; and, from the distant bay, and out of illimitable upper space where high stars spangled a sky already delicate with the annunciation of April's advent, a faint and spring-like freshness brooded.

About three o'clock in the afternoon a page brought a card to her little sitting-room where she had lunched, and where now she sat on the sofa, thinking.

She read the names on the card—Harry Dodd, written in ink. Under it, in pencil, another name: James Cammock.

"Ask the gentlemen to come up," she said. She rose to get her pistol and to close her bedroom door. Then she returned to the sofa in her sitting room.

Presently there came a cautious knock; and, obeying her summons, two serious looking young men came in, their hats dangling from their sunburned fists.

They looked somewhat alike; both had thin, grave features and deep-set eyes.

She said something in a low voice, and they both replied almost inaudibly.

Again she spoke, and their reply was a whisper.

Then she said quietly: "*where is the path?*" And they replied in unison: "*Sic itur ad astra.*"

"Your numbers?" she demanded.

"Thirty-nine," said one. "Seventy," said the other.

"Operator 13," murmured the girl. "Won't you be seated, gentlemen?"

They named themselves, shyly; Dodd it was who wore the very hairy beard; Cammock a sparser one; and his sunken eyes were melancholy and sea-blue.

When they were seated, and the door had been locked and the window-shades had been lowered so that the room was bathed in a subdued and amber light, Harry Dodd displayed their credentials—commissions and other soiled papers identifying them.

Cammock said: "We don't know for certain that Captain Gailliard is here, ma'am; but we believe he may be the young man who registered at this hotel late last night and who has not left his room since he arrived."

"What room?" said the girl, startled.

"Across the hall from your door, ma'am. Room 23."

"Under what name is he registered?"

"John Halyard of New Castle, Delaware."

Her heart was beating so violently that she couldn't articulate for a moment or two. Then she managed to ask Cammock whether anybody was watching the door of Room 23. The spy motioned her to open her own door and look out.

She rose, unlocked her door, and peered into the carpeted corridor, and saw a shadowy figure in overcoat and soft hat standing at the farther end of the hallway.

Operator 13 closed and locked her door again and turned to Cammock. Her pale lips formed a voiceless inquiry; and the spy replied: "He's Operator 00. George Galt. I have the housekeeper's pass-key." He showed it to her. "We can enter the room at once."

The girl took the key from Cammock. She had become frightfully pale, but her manner and voice were composed.

She said: "I am in charge of this investigation, Mr. Cammock."

"Yes ma'am, we understand that."

"Please remember it."

She began to pace the rose-flowered carpet, as though considering the situation. When her hard-beating heart beat more quietly and her mind a little cleared of terror, and when her voice was once more under control:

"Has anybody a description of this man in room 23?" she inquired.

"Galt gave us his description. He got it from the hotel night clerk," said Cammock respectfully.

"Very well," said she, "let us ask Mr. Galt."

She opened her door again; Dodd and Cammock started to follow her into the corridor and down it toward the figure standing in a shadowy angle of the wall; but she motioned them to remain in her room and went on alone.

He was a burly young man with a scarred face. He kept his hands in his overcoat pockets and his hat on his head while she was approaching him.

When she was still a little distance away he stepped in front of her.

"One moment, Miss," he said; "*do you know the path?*"

It was the first phrase, again, of the United States Secret Service challenge; and she answered, as prescribed:

"*There is only one path.*"

"*Where does it lead?*"

"*To the stars.*"

"*Where is the path?*"

"*Sic itur ad astra.*"

"Your number, ma'am?"

"Operator 13. Yours?"

"Double Zero. George Galt."

He withdrew his right hand from his overcoat pocket but it still bulged with a heavy weapon.

She said calmly: "Tell me about this man in room 23."

"Registered at three o'clock this morning as John Halyard of New Castle, Delaware. One valise; no trunk. The night clerk who notified us describes him as a smart-looking young man, darkish eyes and hair, small dark moustache, slim figure, about five feet nine, with a polite manner and the voice of a Southern gentleman."

"Any other information?" she inquired faintly.

"No, ma'am."

"Have you a warrant for Captain Gailliard's arrest?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Have you also a search warrant?"

"No, ma'am——"

She said: "I am here to identify Captain Gailliard. But I have my own plan of procedure. You understand that I am in full charge of this matter, Mr. Galt?"

"Yes, ma'am, I do."

"Very well. Go down to the lobby and wait there until I send for you."

The detective seemed surprised. He looked sharply at her for a moment, then touched his hat with a jerky salute and walked off toward the broad, railed stairway leading down to the lobby below.

When the girl returned to her rooms the two Secret Service agents were peeping through the crack of the partly closed door, their eyes fixed on the door of room 23.

"How many entrances are there to this hotel?" she asked.

"Two, ma'am," replied Dodd; "one on Broadway, the other on Eleventh Street."

"Then will you please stand watch outside the Broadway entrance; and Mr. Cammock, will you please take your station outside the Eleventh Street door? And remain there until further orders."

They walked away together down the long, dim corridor. The girl watched them until they had disappeared.

She trembled slightly at moments. There was unutterable anguish in her colourless face and the twisting fingers of her clasped hands.

From the street outside her windows came an increasing roar of vehicles and voices. Newsboys were shouting that a great battle was expected to begin; that the Union cavalry were already fighting along the river, and that Joe Hooker was forming line of battle near a Southern mansion known as "Chancellorsville".

The drums of a marching regiment redoubled the din in the streets—Fire Zouaves—a blaze of scarlet along Broadway as far as the eye could reach. They were recruits on their way to a transport at the foot of Cortlandt Street.

The brazen racket of their drums, cymbals, and trombones made her head swim. And all the while her tortured heart and blinded brain were struggling, throbbing with her problem.

As she stood there trembling, leaning against her doorway in an agony of fear and indecision, she heard the sound of a key turning; the door of room 23 opened; a man stepped out across the carpeted threshold, and caught sight of her at the same instant.

"Gail!" he said, astonished.

Her horrified amazement was genuine enough, for she had hoped it might not be he and that she might have more time.

"Gail," he repeated incredulously, "it *is* you, isn't it?"

He came swiftly to her, took both her hands and kissed them. Kissed them again, joyously; would have kissed the tense, drawn mouth.

"What are you doing in New York?" she faltered, avoiding him.

He laughed, mischievously, and drew her into his arms. But the girl shrank away and stepped back into her doorway. Her white face and frightened eyes checked and sobered him.

"Why do you look at me so strangely?" he asked in a low voice.

Her restless eyes swept the dim corridor; and, when she was sure that nobody had seen them, she motioned him to enter, then locked her door and leaned against it, trying to clear her mind of terror.

"What the devil——" he began.

She felt his arms imprisoning her again, freed herself with a convulsive movement.

"Can't you let me have a moment to—to think?" she stammered.

He possessed himself of her hand, again, but she jerked her fingers free of his.

"For God's sake don't touch me," she whimpered, sinking down upon the sofa. And lay back looking at him.

"What is the matter?" he asked. "What is frightening you?"

"I'll tell you in a moment. Only don't touch me——"

He stood there flushed and troubled, looking down at her out of perplexed eyes while the girl, her pale face rigid, sat listening and looking at the locked door.

He said again: "What on earth troubles you, dearest? You look like death."

"Death?" she repeated dully.

She lifted her frightened eyes to his without any hope at all. And, suddenly, hope glimmered out through mental chaos—as though somewhere a door had opened out of thick darkness showing her the way out.

And instantly she felt once more that odd thrill of pleasurable excitement in deadly peril. A vivid colour suffused her face and warmed her chilled veins.

When she rose from the sofa she was still trembling slightly. Very lovely to look at, now. Lovelier still as she abandoned her slim, white hands to her lover; and presently her lips.

For a while the terrifying reality of life had frightened her out of her art. Now she was mistress of her mind once more; and again the actress, charming, convincing to tips of her exquisite little fingers so cool against his lips.

And she was all tremulous repentance and youthful shyness and feminine fragrance in his arms, striving naïvely to express her shame at having doubted him.

He did not comprehend her at first.

"I couldn't understand your being here in New York," she explained. "Will you ever forgive me?"

"Did you suppose I had turned traitor to the South?" he demanded.

She hid her face against his shoulders, holding closely to him while he laughed and laughed and kissed her hair and neck and the delicate curve of one flushed cheek, and the small, close-set ear beside it.

"Darling," he said, "it seems too wonderful that I should encounter you on a business trip to New York! With whom are you travelling, Gail?"

She instantly invented an Aunt Sarah who was at that moment supposed to be awaiting her in the restaurant downstairs.

"Wonderful," he repeated. "I arrived late last night, and I slept late. Some friends of mine are coming to see me, later, on business. But, after that, you and I can have the rest of the day together, can't we?"

"Oh darling, Aunt Sarah is a rabid Yankee!"

"What of it!" he rejoined, gaily; "I'm passing as a rabid Yankee myself——"

"But I must dress for the afternoon and join my aunt for tea at Taylor's——"

"When?"

"Now. She's waiting. And we're going shopping afterward——"

"Can't you say you have a headache?"

"But I haven't one!"

"Can't you arrange it somehow?"

"No. I'm late now——" Still busy with her hat and curly hair.

"Gail," he pleaded, "I'm obliged to leave for Montreal at six o'clock to-night. Can't you manage to shed your worthy Aunt Sarah and devote the rest of the day to me?"

Operator 13 giggled.

"Shall I put on my hat and shawl and run downstairs to Taylor's and tell my aunt that I have a splitting headache?" she asked naïvely.

His mischievous, delighted eyes answered her. She adjusted her small flowered hat, pinned her shawl, seized her purse from the table and took a last look at the pier glass.

"Will you wait here for me?" she asked, breathlessly radiant.

"I'd better wait for you in my own room across the hall——"

"No! Promise to wait for me here? If you don't I won't go. Promise!"

"All right," he said, "but if you miss your redoubtable aunt and she comes looking for you here, we'll have to marry before I leave for Montreal!"

At that their laughter rang out unrestrained; then the girl, pretending to distrust him, slipped out of her door and locked him in. And stood for a moment in the corridor, rigid and mirthless, desperate.

The deeply carpeted corridor was silent and dim. She could see nobody in it; hear no movement.

In her purse was the housekeeper's pass-key which she had taken from Operator Cammock.

She looked up and down the corridor again, then crossing swiftly to room 23, she fitted the pass-key to the lock and opened the door.

On the bed lay a locked valise.

From a leather belt under her dress she drew the long, keen-edged knife and, pressing down the valise with one hand and knee, slashed and hacked a long slit in the leather.

Through this she pulled out shirts, collars, underclothing; and then a packet of papers, taped and sealed.

From this she ripped wax and tape, and tore open every envelope.

Here was his commission! Here were lists of men's names and addresses in northern cities. Here was a letter from C. A. Gaston to C. L. Vallandigham. It had to do with a depot of hidden war material in Chicago, and a plan for seizing the U.S. gunboat *Michigan*.

Here was another letter to Vallandigham, signed by Clement C. Clay; another to John Porterfield from Judah P. Benjamin. These latter concerned a financial plot to disorganize Federal finances and withdraw gold from circulation.

There was a letter from Jacob Thompson to a Colonel Robert Martin concerning seven other Confederate officers who had made their way into northern cities to lead the Sons of Liberty in the impending revolution.

There was one more letter in cipher, directed to Vallandigham —no doubt the formal order to begin operations by seizing the States of Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio.

Gathering all these papers into a bundle, she left the room and sped down the corridor to the stairway.

Operator Galt sat in the lobby, smoking. When he caught sight of her descending the stairs he got up from his armchair and went to meet her.

"The man is gone," she whispered, "but I've got his papers."

"Was it Captain Gailliard, ma'am?"

"Yes. Find Dodd and bring him to the Eleventh Street side door."

She went on into the passageway and found Cammock at his post. Almost immediately Dodd and Galt came hurrying down Eleventh Street.

"Captain Gailliard was not in his room," she said, "but I found these papers in his valise.

"Gentlemen, you will be good enough to carry these papers to the office of the Provost Marshal, examine them, telegraph their contents to Colonel Sharpe, and await further orders from him."

"Where did Captain Gailliard go?" asked Galt, bewildered.

"I think I know where he is going," said Operator 13. "And I am going to follow him."

"You'd better take one of us, ma'am——" began Cammock, but she interrupted coldly: "Do I have to remind you again that I am in charge here, Mr. Cammock?"

The spy reddened: "I can't understand how he got out of this hotel," he muttered.

Galt, deeply chagrined, said to Dodd: "Well, I guess we better hurry along to the Provost and start our telegraphing."

Dodd said to her admiringly: "This is a fine piece of work you have done, ma'am. Will you keep in touch with us?"

"Perhaps," she said quietly. "Be very careful of those papers. I shall hold you three gentlemen responsible for them."

They touched their hats to her. Galt carried the papers. His overcoat bulged with the revolver he clutched in his big, red fist. Dodd and Cammock walked on either side of him like a pair of gaunt, watchful hounds.

A key rattled in the door where John Gailliard sat awaiting the return of his lady love. The girl came in breathless, radiant, excited.

"I sent my aunt about her business," she said. "I'm free! What shall we do, darling?"

A swift embrace, passionate clinging for a moment, then a laughing escape and a further adjustment of her hat before the mirror.

"I'm expecting some friends," he said. "They won't keep me long, Gail. I'll step across to my room a moment——"

"Are you really going to Montreal?" she asked dolefully.

"Yes, I am obliged to go——"

"When?"

"At six to-night. I'm sorry, darling——"

"Are you going all alone?"

"With a friend——"

"Couldn't you possibly postpone your journey?" she asked wistfully.

"I'm sorry. I already have his tickets and mine——"

"Oh dear——" her voice broke childishly.

He looked at her face in the mirror, saw her mouth quiver; and came up behind her and touched the nape of her neck with his lips. "I must serve my country," he said tenderly.

She turned from the glass, caught him by both shoulders and whispered excitedly in his ear: "Is your friend a Confederate officer?"

"Not an officer——"

"Do I know him?"

"You never even heard of him, dear. His name is Harrison, and he's General Longstreet's chief spy."

"Ooh, darling, be careful!——"

"You needn't worry, honey-sweet. I left word at the office for him to come upstairs and knock. So I'll just step across to my room a moment and call up the office——"

"There's a speaking-tube near the door. You can use that," she motioned.

So he went over and set his smiling lips to the rim of the wall-tube; blew into it a whistling blast, and, when the desk clerk answered:

"This is John Halyard, room 23, speaking. I am expecting a Mr. Harrison from Baltimore. Has he arrived?"

"Mr. Harrison has just gone up to your room, sir."

Gailliard turned to Operator 13: "He's here. I won't be long. Wait for me, honey-bun, and we'll have the rest of the day together——"

He opened her door and went out. But there was nobody in the corridor. He waited a moment, peering down the dim passage-way, then stepped across the hall and fitted his key to his door-lock.

As he did so the door opened in his face and a man came out in a hurry, colliding with him in the dusk.

From the shock of encounter both men sprang back, their pistols half drawn.

A silence of recognition; and Gailliard whispered: "Was my door open?"

"Yes. They've got your papers. We'd better get out of the city!"

Through the partly open door Gailliard could see the slashed and gutted valise and the tumbled bed littered with underwear.

He turned a white and desperate visage to the other, who nodded back grimly:

"Yaas, suh; thar's like to be a right smart o' hangin' in these parts. Yuh reckon yuh kin make Montreal?"

"I've got to try. And you?"

"Baltimore—or the hangman's jig for me, suh. And I reckon I'll be on my way——"

He pulled his heavy pistol free of his hip pocket, cocked it, and, still clutching it, thrust his hand into his coat pocket.

Then, moving swiftly and close along the wall, he passed like a shadow along the corridor and disappeared around the distant turn where the staircase descended to the lobby.

Operator 13, coquettishly hatted and gloved, stood by the window, looking down at Broadway, when the door behind opened and she heard her lover come in.

For a brief moment she dared not turn her head. Then summoning her courage and self-control she looked around at him over her shoulder with a reproachful little shrug:

"Really," she said, "you've been away so long that there isn't very much of the afternoon left for us, Jack."

He said quietly: "There is no time left for us at all."

His clever, boyish face was sunken and colourless, and pallid shadows sharpened temples and cheek-bones where these had been smooth, youthful contours before.

"Matters have gone very wrong with me," he said. "I must say good-bye. I am going now."

"Going!" she repeated.

"I must."

"To Montreal?"

"Yes."

"Is your friend waiting?"

"No; I go alone."

She came to him and rested her clasped hands against his breast:

"Do you believe that you are in any danger?" she whispered.

"I don't know. You are not to worry, darling. Good-bye——"

She avoided his lips and took his arm with pretty decision:

"If you are going to the railroad station," she said, "I'll say good-bye to you there."

"I'd rather you didn't go——"

"I'm going!"

"Darling, it might not be safe for you to be seen in my company——"

"Do you think you may be arrested?" she asked calmly.

"In that event you ought not to be seen with me——"

"Tell me," she interrupted, "have you paid your hotel bill?"

"I paid for my room last night——"

"Very well then. I will meet you aboard the train and go with you to the first stop at Harlem. We can have that much time together!"

"Darling, you'd better keep rather clear of me——"

"No! Give me your friend's ticket! There's no danger in my sitting in the same seat with you as far as Spuyten Duyvil."

He was still reluctant, but she had her way with him, and when he finally yielded the extra ticket to her she tucked it gaily into her glove, took his arm, and marched him out and into a corridor which terminated in a narrow flight of stairs in the rear of Taylor's Saloon at the Eleventh Street door of the hotel.

Here were hacks waiting. He signalled to one of the drivers, and she pressed his arm and whispered that she would join him on the train.

When he had been rattled away in his rickety old hack, the girl, instead of returning to her rooms, walked back to the hotel lobby, paid her bill at the desk, displayed her railroad ticket to the head porter, and told him to come for her baggage in a quarter of an hour.

Then she went up to room 23, tried the door and found it open, and discovered the chambermaid had been inside and had done her work and left.

The contents of the ripped valise lay neatly piled on the bed and the valise stood on a chair. Through the slit in its side she packed it with its proper contents and lugged it across the hall to her own quarters.

Over one of her valises there was a brown alpaca cover. This she removed and fitted over his valise and buttoned and strapped it tightly.

She had just finished her own packing when the porter came for her baggage. She placed the duplicate checks in her pocketbook along with the railroad ticket and, taking a last excited look

in the mirror, went lightly out and down to the waiting hack.

As she set her foot on the carriage step, a Federal detective, lounging near, gave her a secret signal of recognition, and she beckoned to him.

"Is there any news?" she whispered.

"Yes, ma'am. We're raiding these here Sons of Liberty. We've nabbed better than three hundred o' them already. Are you leaving us, ma'am?"

"Yes, I'm going to Montreal with another secret Service Operator named Halyard."

"Good enough, ma'am. I hope you catch Vallandigham. I hear he's skedaddled that way."

"I'll do my best," she smiled. "Keep an eye on your hotels. There are rebel spies here waiting for an opportunity to set them afire." *

She gave him a friendly, warning nod and stepped into the battered old carriage which rattled away over the stones swaying like a water-logged barge in a gale.

In the throng of people filling the station policemen were numerous, busily watching the arriving and departing crowds. In fact the whole place swarmed with metropolitan police and municipal and Federal detectives. Soldiers, too, were standing with fixed bayonets beside all entrances and exits to train platforms; and there was an air of excitement and tense expectancy everywhere among railway officials and police.

The girl had secured a porter to carry her lover's valise and her own. She had ten minutes to wait before the gates to the Montreal Express were opened, and she took up a position where she could see all arriving passengers.

Near the gate she noticed Operators Dodd and Cammock chatting with two soldiers on guard; and when she caught Cammock's restless eye, she summoned him with a slight movement of her pretty head.

"Any news, ma'am?" he asked respectfully, touching his hat as he came up.

"Yes, I'm going to Montreal with a Secret Service Operator whom you don't know. He'll be here in a few moments. You are not to notice him or me when we go through the gates. Tell that to Mr. Dodd. And see that those soldiers on guard don't stop us."

* Nineteen hotels and two theatres were set on fire later.

"Very well, ma'am. I hope to God you catch that fellow Gailliard short of the Canada line!"

"I shall try to put an end to Captain Gailliard's mischievous activities," she said, smilingly.

A moment later she caught sight of her lover in the surging crowd, and made her way to him and gaily took his arm.

"The gates are just opening," she said. "Don't notice those soldiers when we show our tickets. Here, take mine, too, and let us look as married as we can!"

"You shouldn't have done this, Gail," he said to her under his breath.

"You'll be safer with me on your arm," she insisted. "Try to look like a husband, darling——"

She was laughing as they reached the gates. He displayed the two tickets with amiable carelessness; their ragged Negro porter followed them, whistling "The Battle Cry of Freedom" as he shuffled along at their heels.

Their sleeping car already glimmered feebly with oil lamps.

As they climbed aboard, followed by their musical porter, Gailliard noticed the valises; and, when they were seated together, he asked the girl why she had brought them.

"In one of mine," she said, "are sandwiches and cake and a bottle of champagne."

He looked at her incredulously.

"And," she continued, "I took your valise from your room and packed your things into it, and put on an alpaca cover so your shirts and collars wouldn't spill out. . . . Who slit your valise open, darling?" she inquired innocently.

"I don't know. . . . You are a very wonderful girl; do you know it?"

"I don't know whether I am. . . . I'm tired; I know that much."

She lay back in her seat and closed her eyes; and remained so even after the train started.

After a little while, however, she opened her eyes and looked at her fellow travellers. There were not many of them. She could see them all without sitting upright or turning her head. His hand sought hers and her own nestled into it.

"Spuyten Duyvil is not very far away," he said.

"I know. . . . Suppose I go on to Montreal with you?"

He forced a smile at that—a troubled one.

"Besides our food my other valise is fully packed," she remarked.

His smile faded and he looked at her uneasily; and she looked back at him out of level eyes.

"You couldn't venture to do that," he said.

"Why? Wouldn't you marry me?" she inquired naïvely.

"Darling, what are you talking about——"

"Marriage. Don't you want to?"

He said grimly: "If ever I get out of this I'll want to, and you know it, Gail."

"Are you afraid you'll be arrested on this train?"

"I haven't any means of knowing. . . . You saw my valise, yonder. Papers were taken from it to-day that make my situation very serious. . . . And that is why I didn't want you to come. . . . And that is why I shall be relieved when you get off at Spuyten Duyvil."

"I'm not going to get off at Spuyten Duyvil."

For ten minutes he talked to her very plainly, explaining that she could be of no further use to him if he were arrested, and begging her to leave him at the next stop.

"After all," said the girl lightly, "love is love. I am capable of two kinds of it. You are one kind." She smiled at him. "The other," she added, "is love of country."

"Yes," he said, "our country first and last."

Their train whistled for Spuyten Duyvil.

"You must go, darling," he whispered.

"If I do you'll never reach Canada," she said. "And never live to marry me. Perhaps you won't wish to in another minute."

"What do you mean?"

The train came to a stop, and the girl leaned toward him, her hand crushing his convulsively:

"You can't get through unless I take you," she whispered. "If anybody comes aboard and speaks to me, keep silent!"

At the same instant two men walked into the car, scanning the people seated. One of them caught the girl's eye and, recognizing her, made a slight motion with his left hand.

She nodded; and, as they passed, they paused beside her, glancing sharply at her companion.

"Anything for us, ma'am?" inquired one of the men, politely.

"Nothing."

They glanced again at John Gailliard, nodded slightly, and passed on.

It was only when the train moved out of Spuyten Duyvil on its long journey northward that the girl dared look at her lover.

His face was quietly white.

" You see," she said, " I can get you through."

His visage remained without expression.

" Once," she said in a low voice, " you gave me your parole. I would have had to shoot you if you hadn't."

He gave her a bewildered look ; then he sat upright with a stiff jerk, his boyish visage surging in colour.

She said : " I am letting you go, once more, on your parole of honour. And that ends your mischief for all time. . . . Ends it as utterly as the gallows would end it. . . . I am in love with you and you know it. But you cannot count on that. . . . I could survive your death. . . . I could love again, in time. You see I know myself. Life is all before me ; and my art ; and *you*—if you will let me love you. . . . Will you ? "

His face was aflame, now, scarlet with chagrin, with angry shame.

" Yes," she said, " I am that nigger laundress, too ; and the ragged boy in the hayloft. And I am the girl whose heart you won at Blythedale. And I am in love with you.

" But I was in love with you when I left that scar on your face in Martinsburg. . . . There is no treachery in me, John Gailliard."

He moistened his dry lips : " No," he said, " I understand that."

" There is no chance for you unless I vouch for you," she went on. " Operators of our service will continue to board and search this train as long as we are in the United States. . . ." She bent her head close to his ear : " Darling," she whispered, " I shall not let you leave this car or this seat unless you give me your parole. . . . And if you hope to jump from the train—and unless you give me your word of honour that you will attempt no further mischief against the United States, I shall not lift a finger to prevent your arrest when detectives board our train at Albany."

He remained silent for a long while. She gently withdrew her cramped fingers from his, and he let them go.

Reaction from the tense strain left her deathly tired ; she knew no better way to sleep than to lay her cheek against his shoulder and pass her left arm through his. She wound her arm so tightly around his, and took so firm a hold of his hand that she knew he could not move without awaking her. Besides she always slept lightly.

For two hours she slumbered on his shoulder, unstirring until some movement he made awoke her.

" Where are we, darling ? " she inquired sleepily.

" I think we are passing West Point."

She lifted her head from his shoulder and leaned sideways pressing her nose against the dark window. And saw the lights of the old fortress glimmering across the river.

" I wish," she murmured, " you'd give me your parole and let us both go to sleep. Will you, dear ? "

He remained silent.

" Aren't you going to ? " she asked. " You would if you loved me."

" If you loved me," he said in a low voice, " you'd let me go."

" Go where, darling ? "

" Back to my own people."

" How ? "

" The first time the train slows down I could drop off. There is nobody in this car, now."

" Is that what is in your mind, darling ? "

" You know it, don't you ? "

She sat up and bent forward to peer at him closely. Only one smoky lamp remained burning in the car, and the expiring flame gave scarcely any light.

She could barely distinguish his shadowy features in the swaying obscurity of the rushing train. Suddenly she felt afraid.

" If I let you go," she whispered, " you will forget me."

" I will love you as long as I am alive. And you know that, too."

The girl dropped her head back on his shoulder with a faint sigh.

" After all," she thought, "the way to the stars is hard to follow."

"Operator 13," he whispered, " are you still a little in love with me ? "

" Yes, so far I am," she said in a sleepy voice.

The locomotive, thundering on through darkness, whistled derisively.

" When the train slows down will you let me take my chances ? "

On the girl's lips there was a ghost of a smile. It faded to tremor.

" Do you think that love—that *love* pardons everything, darling ? " she faltered.

" Everything."

She moved her head on his shoulder and looked up at him, beginning to whimper a little and to reach into the pocket of her gown for her handkerchief.

He could see the glimmer of tears in her eyes; feel the convulsive tightening of her fingers on his. She lifted the handkerchief to her face, but he was already kissing the tears from her eyes.

"Dearest—dearest," she breathed, "I want you to wear this b-bracelet in m-memory of our pledge——"

There came a muffled click on his left wrist, followed by another; and his lips recoiled from hers as though she had stung him. He had started to rise at the same instant but dropped back into his seat beside her, his right wrist limp and relaxed handcuffed to her left one.

"You made me do it," she said breathlessly. "My orders are to kill you or drive you across the border. I'm trying to do my duty and save you, too; and you try to make a traitor of me. . . . *Now* will you give me your parole?"

He made her no reply. She could feel the swelling muscles in his clenched right hand where the steel band held it against her own. She could feel his whole supple, powerful body throbbing with rage and terrible despair.

"I do love you, but you forced me to choose," she whispered fiercely; "—and I care more for the United States than I do for you!"

In the frightening darkness the locomotive whistled again. A lantern glimmered as a rush of air and cinders swept through the car from an opening door; and the conductor passed along the aisle, his lantern shining on rows of empty seats.

He moved on slowly into the car ahead. The train whistle sounded again and again; brakes began to check the speed of the cars; a signal lamp flashed by; another light glided past more slowly; others more slowly still.

Suddenly, young Gailliard jerked her handcuffed left wrist behind her back, pinned it there, clasping her waist with his manacled right arm.

She snatched at the pistol in her dress pocket, but he passed his free left hand under her knees and sprang to his feet, cradling her while she struggled venomously to get at her pistol.

He was already at the open door and out on the platform with her before fright unsealed her writhing lips.

"Don't jump!" she panted, "you kill us both! Have you gone crazy?" Striking and tearing at his face with terrified fist: "Oh, darling, don't kill me——"

"Will you let me go?"

"Oh, wait—a moment——"

"Will you let me go?"

With all her strength she struck him in the face, dazing him.

Then, half blinded, he jumped out into darkness where stars glimmered on shrouded water.

He also had watched the stars too long to fear the night.

IX

REVOLT!

Confederate Secret Service Operator Captain John Gailliard, with United States Secret Service Operator 13 still fighting fiercely in his arms, jumped from the slowly moving train toward a glimmer of water shimmering below in darkness.

But it seemed that the classic road to the stars did not pass through starry waters. There was no splash when they landed, merely a violent shock.

For that agile young man, gripping his writhing victim, had landed on a barrack of marsh hay; and the girl, falling on top of him, knocked the breath out of his body and the five wits out of her own noddle.

When at last he was able to breath again he gasped out an inquiry regarding her bodily welfare. But had no reply of her.

For, when those two fighting youngsters landed, their heads had rapped together like a pair of cocoanuts, dazing him and knocking the five wits clean out of her; and now she lay senseless and inert across him, her slender left arm still manacled to his right arm, and doubled under her body.

Somehow or other he contrived to flounder upright, buried to the knees in the mouldy marsh hay. Then he seated himself, drew her left arm from under her and let her sink back against his shoulder.

As soon as he had satisfied himself that the fall had not broken her neck or her wrist or dislocated her shoulder, he groped for the pockets in her disordered clothing, found her pistol and pocket-book and fished out of the latter a small bunch of keys.

The second key he tried unlocked the handcuffs; and, detaching it and leaving it sticking in the lock, he tossed the handcuffs into the swampy sheet of water at the foot of the stack of marsh hay.

Her revolver, box of caps, and ammunition he prudently pocketed.

She had, in another pocket deep in her voluminous skirts a thin packet of papers. He took these, also, professionally.

The girl was still unconscious when he lifted her once more and slid from the slippery mound of half-rotted, unfragrant marsh hay.

When he had climbed up the embankment to the railroad tracks above he caught sight of the lights of the station only a little way down the track; and, what interested him still more, saw the rear lamps burning on a standing train.

This must be their own train, still held at the station. Their own car, too, which was the last one. No other train had passed. He was certain of that.

Now, lugging her in his tired arms, he hurried over the cinder-bedded sleepers toward the station.

He could see a man in a cap and railroad uniform loitering on the dimly lit platform. A lantern dangled from his hand. There was another man there, too, seated on a bench. Both were gazing northward along the track to where the drumhead stack of the locomotive made soft, panting noises and breathed out wood smoke reddened by fires below.

The rear platform of the sleeping car overlapped the station platform. He went around to the river side of the car, climbed up with his senseless burden, opened the rear door, and stepped into the dim, empty car which smelled of oil and smoke.

There were their three valises, just as they had left them. But the Negro porter had made up both berths of their section, and the baggage stood in the aisle by the curtained lower berth.

Where the Negro supposed they had gone is impossible to guess, but the workings of that African mind—if it worked at all—no doubt vaguely associated the girl with the toilet, and the man with the smoking-car ahead.

John Gailliard laid Operator 13 on the grey blankets of the lower berth and placed a pillow under her head which still wore the saucy little hat with its tiny blue blossoms.

There was only one thing to do with such a dangerous youngster, unless he left her at once without knowing how seriously she had been hurt. But he couldn't bear to do that.

He hesitated; and his boyish face was very red and his hands unsteady and clumsy as he drew off her shoes, her garters, her stockings, her hat and her jacket full of burrs and hay.

But he had become, by this time, thoroughly afraid of this resourceful and extremely dangerous young woman; and he determined to undress her, with the prudent view of making any immediate pursuit of himself impossible when she revived.

At last, horribly embarrassed, he contrived to accomplish the

business in hand, pull sheets and blankets over her; and place her piled clothing in the upper berth out of reach. Then he drew from her pocketbook a tiny, flat crystal flask of hartshorn which he had noticed there, and which now he thrust under her pretty and pathetic nose.

The girl's reaction was so prompt and so violent that it scared him; for she gave a terrific sneeze and sat bolt upright, regarding him with a wild surmise.

It was, however, nearly a minute before she fully realized where she was and in what outrageous condition. He had been trying, politely, to pull up the blankets around her throat, and was making soothing and timid inquiries, when suddenly the full purport of what had happened overwhelmed the girl; and he saw hell flaming in her eyes.

"I—I had to do it," he faltered.

Impotent fury bowed her head with its towsled curls, and she buried her scarlet and raging face in both desperate hands.

"Here are b-both tickets, darling," he stammered, casting them on the blanket. "I had to do it, Gail. Please don't hate me too bitterly——"

"As long as I live—as long as I live!" she wailed, "I shall remember you and despise you!"

"Don't" he protested miserably, picking up his valise: "I had to do it. Gail darling——"

"You have repaid kindness with wickedness!" she stormed. "The world will laugh at me and I shall die of it—murdered by ridicule and by you!"

"Do you suppose I'd ever tell——"

"Yes, I do! You are wicked enough. Treacherous enough. . . . You never cared for me. You are a rebel Judas!" she sobbed.

"And you are a Yankee Judith—betraying me with a kiss!" he retorted, stung to anger by her abuse.

Outside the dark windows opposite them a lantern began to swing; a distant voice in the darkness was calling: "All aboard!"

"Good-bye," he said timidly. She lifted her tear-wet face from her hands and glared at him.

That he was escaping infuriated her anew, and she crouched in her blankets like something lithe and agile, ambushed and gathering for a spring. Then consciousness of her naked body under the bedclothes utterly overwhelmed her, and again she buried her stormy face in clutching fingers, and sobbed and sobbed.

He lingered a moment longer, looking miserably at her, then

carrying his valise, stepped swiftly to the rear platform and dropped off on the river side where the cutoff track ran along the edge of the water.

Fortunately there was just room enough for the express from the north which rushed thundering by ; but the wind of it nearly hurled him out into the Hudson.

When it had passed, followed by a whirlwind of smoke and cinders, the northbound train had already begun to move out of the station. A brakeman was busy on the rear platform ; the conductor was there, also, fussing with two lanterns.

Standing on the wave-washed shore he watched the red glow of the lantern receding through the night until it became a tiny distant spark and vanished in misty obscurity.

Then, lugging his valise, he turned away southward along the track.

In the fury of her humiliation the girl in the lower berth had given way to a very passion of tears. It had been a long while since she had used this natural safety valve and the pressure, recently, had been terrific.

Rage at the escape of her prisoner transcended all grief for the loss of her lover. Her failure, with its threat of future ridicule should the circumstances ever become public, had left her almost hysterical.

Yet, outside of the sentimental merits and defects of the artist that she was, there really existed no fundamental weakness in the girl's character. The storm convulsing her reached its peak and quickly subsided.

There was something to be done and she was striving to think what it might be and how to do it.

Probably the first thing to do was to find her clothes and dress. She found them, presently, closed the curtains, and dressed herself, snivelling and sniffing and full of deadly purpose.

As soon as she had dressed her impulse was to pull the bell-rope and stop the train. But, if the train stopped in some uninhabited section of the track, what would be the use ?

As well as she could she effaced from her person and clothing all traces of conflict and tears ; and went off to find the porter who was snoring in one of the remoter seats forward.

The Negro seemed to know where they were at the moment of inquiry.

Together they consulted a time table which he produced. It was plain enough that Fishkill, opposite Newburgh, would be the

next stop. She told him she would get off, there; and returned to her section—or, rather to the seat behind it.

Combat and emotion—or maybe it was only youth and health—had made her hungry.

The porter fetched her a tumbler and some lumps of ice and uncorked the bottle of champagne she pulled out of her valise.

And there in the semi-darkness of the rattling, lurching car, she ate chicken sandwiches and drank her champagne, her mind busy with the peril of the situation and instant needs of the moment.

Lesser and petty emotions, hurt pride, chagrin, bruised modesty, sentimental grief—all these selfish personal reactions died out in the deeper anxiety for the city in danger.

Because she was perfectly convinced that John Gailliard would now return to New York and carry out as well as he could the terrible orders which had sent him thither at the risk of his neck.

Once Colonel Sharpe, speaking of John Gailliard, had said to her, "I want him dead or alive."

But also he had ordered her either to destroy the man or to drive him across the Canadian border.

Therefore it would appear that the girl might take her choice. She was no executioner, anyway.

But how in God's name could she suppose that this young man was desperate enough to leap from a moving train while handcuffed to his captor? She never had supposed anything like that could happen except on the stage. . . . That belonged to the footlights—all that sort of melodrama—like "Mazeppa."

And he had done that spectacular thing at risk of killing himself and her, too. . . . After all it was rather magnificent. . . . What a climax to a third act! . . . What a brute of a man! . . . After all she had been in love with him. . . . Perhaps still was. . . . What a beast he had been to undress her! . . . But how devilishly clever of him! What a scoundrel! . . . Oh no, he wasn't exactly that, either. But it was a shameless, unprincipled thing to do. Horrible. Revolting. . . . Yet, after all, he had to do what he could for himself. . . . Only she had supposed that he loved and respected her.

Yes, perhaps. . . . But after all she had just informed him that she loved the United States better than she loved him. . . . And now there seemed to be little doubt that this young man cared more for the South than he did for her.

"What a brute!"

There were fresh tears in her eyes and she sniffed as she lifted her glass of iced champagne to her lips.

"Nevertheless," she snivelled, "God keep him from the Provost's gallows. . . . I drink to his escape—but I'm going after him."

When the locomotive whistled for Fishkill and the brakemen were grinding down brakes on every car, the porter trundled her two valises out on to the platform and carried them down the car steps to the station.

An Albany train bound for New York steamed in a few minutes later. There was no sleeper; Operator 13 and her baggage was stowed aboard in a day coach full of marines and sailors asleep, and on their way to the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

The girl slept all the way to New York, and arrived at the St. Dennis Hotel, where she had left her trunk, so sleepy that she merely scribbled a brief telegram and then went to bed and slept till the April sun in her face awakened her.

The telegram she had sent read: "Papers secured but man escaped. Will telegraph later using Departmental cipher. Operator 13."

When she had bathed and had dressed in fresh clothing from her trunk, she discovered the loss of her own papers.

This intensely annoyed her but did not alarm her because all the papers were in cipher and the Confederate Government had not, so far, deciphered any of the codes in use.

Beside, her own code book was in her trunk.

After she had breakfasted in her own room she got it out, sent to the desk for telegraph blanks, and settled down behind her locked door to hold telegraphic converse with Colonel Sharpe, in Departmental cipher, and as follows:

Operator 13 to Colonel Sharpe:

Papers taken from John Gailliard's valise yesterday sent to Provost Marshal in custody of S.S. Operators 70, 39, and 00, with orders to transmit contents to you in Dept. cipher No. 3.

Gailliard escaped. I have little doubt he is in this city.

I await further orders.

OPERATOR 13.

Colonel George H. Sharpe, Chief of Bureau of Military Information, to Operator 13:

Contents of Gailliard's papers received in Dept. cipher at these H.Q.

Remember that you are the only S.S. operator who knows this spy by sight. I want this man arrested or destroyed, or driven across the border. Do you believe you can find him and do something to rid the country of him ?

Operator 13 *to Colonel Sharpe*:
I am most anxious to try. May I ?

Colonel Sharpe to Operator 13:
You are detailed for the purpose mentioned in my last telegram.

All scouts, couriers, agents and Federal detectives are instructed to co-operate with you.

The local assistant Provost-Marshal-General, Colonel Nugent; Police Superintendent Kennedy; Police Commissioner Acton; Major General Wood commanding the military district; Major General Sandford commanding the State militia; Mr. Wakeman, the City Postmaster; Mr. Sloan, President of the Hudson River Railroad all promise co-operation. Another telegram follows.

Colonel Sharpe to Operator 13, *using Departmental Cipher No.* 7:
There is likely to be a great battle here.

If the result is disastrous to the Union, the Confederate army may move on to Washington and Philadelphia, beginning a general invasion of the North.

There is another danger threatening us: the new Draft Law provides for compulsory military service. This may be resisted.

Hundreds of thousands of Confederate sympathizers are watching us. Thousands of Confederate spies throng our Northern cities organizing riot, revolt, and rebellion, and awaiting only the right moment to seize or burn cities, arsenals, forts, and shipping and start a general conflagration which might possibly consume the Union.

This is the reason that such Confederate Secret Service agents as Captain Gailliard are in New York. This is why the Confederate Government has ordered north certain military officers of the regular Confederate army to organize and lead a possible insurrection. *This is positive* !

You will always bear in mind that all rebel officers acting as spies—and particularly Captain Gailliard—are fearless, desperate, dangerous men, who are risking their necks every second. Heed this warning.

Use Departmental Cipher No. 7 in emergency; otherwise No.

3. Mr. Crowley, chief of the Telegraph corps of the Metropolitan Police, has been entrusted with our codes, and is prepared to encipher emergency messages. Otherwise communicate as usual through the Provost Marshal's office.

The first thing Operator 13 attended to, following her arrival in New York and her telegraphic confab with her chief, was to find a proper domicile for herself.

Between Third and Fourth Avenues, just before Thirteenth Street becomes St. George's Place, she found a very small furnished house. This she rented for a month, with privilege of monthly renewals. The widow of policeman Dick Sullivan, formerly attached to the 18 Precinct Station, owned it but boarded elsewhere; and was very willing to come by the day and do housework, laundry, and cooking.

So with Mrs. Sullivan in the kitchen, herself snugly established in the second floor front, a backyard full of washing, ailanthus trees, and cats, and a heart bursting with excited determination, Operator 13 prepared to hunt up John Gailliard and chase him into Canada to save his graceless neck from a Federal gallows. And, some day, she promised herself that she would marry this wayward young man and lead him a lively life.

Also what fascinated her in regard to her mission was its histrionic appeal. For it would require good acting, many character rôles, and many disguises.

The recent raid by Colonel Sharpe's agents on the local Sons of Liberty had proved premature. Not many had been arrested, and only a few lodges of that rebel secret society had been broken up.

Even after the terrific beating administered to the Union army at Chancellorsville on May fifth there seemed to be no particular reaction in the city.

A gloomy haze spread over the sunny skies of early summer; Copperheads rejoiced; those opposed to continuing the war by conscription, including the kindly Governor of New York, continued to putter and muddle; the Confederacy cheered its victorious armies along the fords of the fatal river.

The wearisome war months succeeded one another, plodding on doggedly day by day toward the bloody total of another battle year; troops arrived in the city and troops departed with noisy clamour of drums and blaring bands. Blatant Broadway, bull-like, roared unceasingly by day and night; the sun of June rose on full foliage in square, park, and flowery suburb, and set over an

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azure bay and three silvery blue rivers unvexed by Southern tempests. And if there were thousands of rebel spies and sympathizers in the city, and if they were mischievously busy, they seemed to be extremely quiet about it.

As for the Draft, nobody believed that there ever really would be any forcible recruiting for the Union armies which, so far, had been filled entirely by volunteers.

So nobody even thought about the matter excepting a few clever people like Colonel George Sharpe. He thought about it—in a long telegram. As follows:

Circular telegram to all Secret Service Agents. June 7th, 1863. By Dept. cipher No. 7:

There is little doubt that General Lee's army is preparing to invade the North.

Possibly the Confederate Government is timing a northward movement to coincide with the Draft.

Nobody in New York City believes this.

But, in the Division of Military Intelligence, we know what are the chances of such a revolution.

New York City is a smouldering volcano.

A northern invasion by Confederate armies might start hidden forces boiling over; a Confederate victory, particularly while the Draft is being enforced, may set New York City aflame. Many rebel military officers have been sent North to encourage disloyalty, revolt, and resistance to the conscription law when it comes to be enforced next month.

Enclosed is a list of some of these Confederate spies and agents now believed to be in New York City. Do what you can to discover, observe, and, at the right moment, arrest them—particularly Captain Gailliard.

There followed a list of spies suspected to be operating inside the Union lines; and a short list of the most dangerous Confederate agents supposed to be now in New York City:

Captain John Gailliard, C.S.S.

Harrison (General Longstreet's chief spy and courier. A small, wiry, thin fellow. Mild and shy)

Miss Claire Quilter (Courier and spy. She counts departing troops. A young, pretty blonde)

Mrs. Augustus Morris (Comrade of the late Lady Greensleeves. Fashionable. Frequents hotels)

Captain Charles H. Cote (of Forrest's cavalry)

Captain John Y. Beall (Confederate Navy)
Colonel Robert M. Martin (Morgan's cavalry)
Captain John W. Headley, C.S.A.
Lieutenant Harrington, C.S.A.
Lieutenant Ashbrook, C.S.A.
Captain T. H. Hines (Morgan's cavalry)
Captain Kennedy, C.S.A.
John Porterfield (Business man. High in council of the Sons of Liberty)
Jessica West (Suspected courier. Boards at 123 Clinton Place. Should be watched)

During April and May and early June Operator 13 had been a very busy young woman. But she did not find John Gailliard.

The weather was beautiful, squares and parks in full foliage and fragrant with flowers. The gloom following Hooker's disaster at Chancellorsville early in May had been dispelled, and people were eagerly watching a general named Grant who seemed to be grubbing away rather successfully at the western foundations of the Confederacy.

Operator 13 always read the *Tribune* and *Herald*, and the Copperhead sheets, but her mind was troubled with other matters. She had found no slightest trace of John Gailliard or of anybody named in Colonel Sharpe's telegrams.

Sometimes she sallied forth as a fashionable young lady exquisitely gowned, hatted and gloved, to mingle with other fashionables in shops, theatres, concert halls, restaurants. Her rôle was to observe and to keep her small close-set ears open.

Sometimes, dressed as a respectable shop girl, she haunted the avenues of the East and West Sides, mingling with others like herself at the luncheon hour, and, on Saturdays and Sundays, frequenting the cheaper theatres, summer gardens, and suburban picnic resorts.

Also, more than once, painted, piquant, and flamboyant, she loitered in the gaslight along Broadway between Grand and Fourteenth Streets with saucy young face unabashed, and entirely able to take care of herself and return the quips and bantering admiration voiced by lounging and gilded youth.

Curiously enough it was on one of the occasions when she was painted, equipped, and accoutred as a wanton dryad of the metropolitan purlieus, that Operator 13 chanced upon her first valuable information.

A young Virginian named Clive Andrews picked her up. He had been watching " The Revels " at Niblo's and had been drinking too many brandy toddies. His companions had vainly attempted to silence him in the theatre. Now, outside during the intermission he was becoming noisy again.

Operator 13, loitering in the lobby, caught the purport of their wrangling, and heard the young fellow making free with the name of Claire Quilter. About that time he noticed Operator 13.

She returned his killing ogle with a demure glance and walked on; and presently became aware that the boy had started to follow her.

Streets and avenues were crowded that night in June. At the Broadway Theatre, at the Olympia and Burton's the first pieces were finishing, and the audiences were lounging on the sidewalks. And in and out between shadow and gaslight the girl led the boy a devious dance along swarming sidewalks through thronged cross-streets and crowded avenues. Twice he tried to speak to her but she tossed her head and would have none of him; and he tagged along at her French heels, evidently badly smitten. To the very verge of the ghastly glare from the Drummond Light on the American Museum she led him, which was rather a long walk for anybody but a love-struck calf and a Federal spy.

Considering him sufficiently inflamed by this time, and rather afraid he might give up in discouragement and go into Bassford's or the Irving opposite Florence's for a game of bowls or billiards to solace himself, the girl gave him a swift incendiary glance, which rekindled him into active combustion.

Newsboys were shouting: " Here's yer *Sunday Herald, Dispatch, Coorier, Mercury, Times*! Turrible cavalry battle at Brandy Station! Great Union victory! "

When the girl paused and bought a paper, the Virginian was at her elbow.

She said to the newsboy: " I hope it's another Confederate victory, and I don't care who hears me say so! " And she was not severe with Andrews when he warmly approved her sentiments and paid for her newspaper.

They walked on together, she trying to read the news by gaslight. But there was no fresh news, merely a rehash of morning dispatches regarding the terrific cavalry battle at the fords of that fatal river where ten thousand horsemen fought with sabres hilt to hilt. But there were no lists, so far, of the dead and wounded.

" I don't believe it was a Yankee victory," said the girl, nose in the air; and she cast the paper into the gutter.

The boy wanted her to have oysters and champagne with him at the St. Nicholas; but she snubbed him with a reminder that May oysters are uneatable.

"You might as well ask me to Butter-cake Dick's or Pat Lyon's place," she remarked scornfully, "or to see the show at the Chatham or the Bowery. What kind of girl do you think I am?"

"A pretty one, ma'am, and a good rebel; and I don't care whether you come from the Old Brewery or Cow Bay or the Golden Gate, or Dicken's Place——"

"Maybe you'd like to take me to see Chanfrau play 'Mose,'" she said disdainfully, "or to the Franklin or Magers. Let me illuminate your innocent mind, young sir; the Astor Place Opera is the only theatre where I care to be seen."

This was so delightfully impudent that they both laughed—she, of course, in character.

"Well, no," she said, "I've had enough of back rooms. I'm heartily tired of the Apollo, Minerva, and the Chinese Assembly. Can't you think of something new?"

"Castle Hastings?" he inquired cautiously.

"And Empress Kate and the Marchioness D'Orsay and Princess Jenny? No, thanks. But I see you're a high flyer, young sir, so I'll wish you good night——"

"Don't chuck me out like that!" he pleaded. "I'll go wherever you say——"

"No; I'm a quiet girl and I don't drink. . . . I like to talk and eat ice cream, sometimes."

"We can go to that Steam Ice Creamery then——"

"Too far. There's an Ice Creamery on Broadway near Tenth Street."

They went thither. She took his arm, and they chatted sociably and amiably and exchanged names. Hers was Mary Dale of Fairfax.

In the Ice Creamery they found a table. The place was full of respectable people. She had a chicken sandwich, some chocolate and vanilla ice cream. And by this time she had led the conversation into channels which interested her and made him uneasy.

"When you were coming out of Niblo's," she said, "I heard you mention Claire Quilter, a girl I used to know. Can you tell me where she lives?"

"No, I can't," said Andrews hastily; "I don't know her at all."

"If you don't know her how did you happen to mention her?" inquired Operator 13.

Andrews muttered something indistinctly.

"You spoke of Claire Quilter," insisted the girl. "Do you know where she is living?"

The boy gave her a scared glance. "What are you anyway?" he asked.

"You picked me up; you ought to know," she replied.

"Well I *don't* know, and I'm beginning to wonder which of us did the picking up."

She laughed. "What do you mean?"

"Maybe you know what I mean."

"I don't."

"You're very innocent. To look at."

"Are you trying to be disagreeable, Mr. Andrews?"

"I'm trying not to be a fool," said the boy. "This city is full of innocent looking ladies and gentlemen in the pay of the Federal Government. And anybody who talks too much goes to Fort Lafayette. *I* don't want to go there."

"Are you trying to scare me because I'm a rebel?"

"You say you are."

After a silence: "I'm wondering," she said, "whether you are a Federal detective."

"I'm wondering about you too," he retorted, reddening.

"Very well," said she; "You heard me say I hoped for a Confederate victory. And I do. So make the most of it—if you're a Yankee detective."

His eyes never left hers.

"Well," she added impudently, "why don't you arrest me?"

He said nothing.

"Three cheers for the Bonnie Blue Flag!" she continued. "What are you going to do about *that*!"

"Look here," he said, "you're supposed to be a street walker, but I believe you're a Federal spy!"

She said coolly: "Tell that to my friend Jack Gailliard and see what he'll do to you, Mr. Andrews."

"I'll tell Jack Gailliard and Claire Quilter too!" he blurted out. "And when you finish your ice cream I'll let you run home, my pretty little stool pigeon!"

"Then I'll run along now," said the girl, rising. "Good night and thank you."

Before he could detain her she had whisked past him and was out of the door and gone.

Not far. There was a city hack standing on the opposite side of

the street. She sped across and climbed in; and, to the driver who came around to the window to ask her pleasure: "Wait here. When I tell you to follow somebody, follow. Your tip will be five dollars."

"All correct, lady. Is it a gal or a swell?"

"A swell. I'll point him out. There he is, now!——" as her late cavalier emerged, looked up and down Broadway—rather wistfully she thought—lit a cigar, still shrewdly observant, and slowly walked away westward through Tenth Street.

The hack followed, horses walking. Several times young Mr. Andrews turned around as though to see whether he was being dogged; then continued on down the dusky street to University Place, and south to Eighth Street and Clinton Place.

At number 123 he mounted the steps. It was a boarding house. He let himself in by a latchkey. Operator 13 saw him no more that night.

The next morning a shabby, grey-haired maiden lady in spectacles who said she was a school-teacher from Princess Anne, driven out by war, and that her name was Miss Lydia Warfield Trimble, called at 123 Clinton Place to inquire timidly about lodgings.

There were none to be had, it appeared, but Miss Trimble might take her meals there.

This from a breezy young lady in a bewitching "polka" or monkey jacket cut tight to back and shoulders with full skirted dress swelling voluptuously below, and fitting the figure of the plump, healthy, elastic-limbed girl like her own blonde skin.

"I'm Miss Claire Quilter," she said, smiling; "I board here; and I know there's no room except at table. I'm truly sorry, ma'am."

"Oh, dear," said Operator 13 in gentle perplexity behind her spectacles.

"The meals are very nice," remarked Miss Quilter. "It's real Southern cooking."

"I've had none recently," said the shabby school-teacher wistfully.

There was always a little quaver in her voice due to timidity and age and the peering expression of her near-sighted eyes through the spectacles was painful in its earnestness.

"Breakfast is ready now," suggested Miss Quilter; "lay off your shawl and bunnit and try Mrs. Dorn's fried mush."

So Operator 13, arm in arm with Claire Quilter, descended to the basement dining room and was made ceremoniously acquainted

with several other boarders, and with the pallid landlady, a thin, fretful Virginia gentlewoman named Mrs. Carter Dorn, who, perhaps, had fallen a victim to genuine Southern cooking, for she ate nothing and complained of indigestion.

It was a lavish breakfast and a fried one. But what interested the grey-haired school-teacher from Princess Anne was Mr. Clive Andrews opposite her, eating fried mush, bacon, eggs, and chicken à la Maryland.

It did not take long for the quiet, well-behaved little company to detect in Miss Lydia Warfield Trimble of Princess Anne another pathetic victim of Yankee barbarity. Operator 13 attended to that.

It was nicely done on their part; no vulgar snooping or impudent curiosity; and, on Operator 13's part, merely a hint of pale and patient resignation and a trace of pinched suffering on a Virginia school-teacher's gentle, sensitive face. Pauline Cushman would have been proud of her. She never overplayed her part or tried to " fatten " it.

Before breakfast ended, conversation became less guarded, though never careless. Somebody mentioned Chancellorsville, and there were quiet smiles, and a young lady said " hurrah " in a subdued tone.

But timid Miss Trimble ventured to inquire tremulously: " Was Chancellorsville worth the cost? First Ashley died, then young Pelham; and now Jackson is gone—three armed archangels fighting God's own war. And Lee and Stuart alone are left us."

The impression made was painful. But presently an old lady said cheerfully: " I reckon Marse Robert won't like the scrapple in Philadelphia."

" The cookery isn't any better in New York and Boston, either," remarked Mr. Andrews. Tension relaxed.

Claire Quilter giggled delightfully and looked at Operator 13. Her responsive smile was brave but pale with memory of recent wrongs.

After breakfast, very softly at the piano, Mr. Andrews played and sang:

" The tyrant's foot is on thy shore——" Then he lighted a cheroot and went away. He had business down town, he said.

The other boarders, too, assumed hats or " bunnits " and went their several ways—excepting only Claire Quilter—she of the exuberant, elastic body and lively blue eyes—who remained to chat sympathetically with the faded school-teacher from Princess

Anne who had taught school in Berkeley until the Federal authorities decided she was teaching sedition also, and sent her packing.

She and Claire discovered mutual friends in Princess Anne, and also in Culpeper. And it was then Operator 13 learned that Antonia Ford was going to marry the Yankee Provost officer who had arrested her.

"How can she!" protested Miss Trimble, horrified.

"Ornery Yankee," murmured Claire Quilter, clasping her plump white fingers under her knees and rocking a shapely foot. "I declare I can't understand it!"

"I've a nephew in Norfolk," quavered poor Miss Trimble. "He'd send me money to live on if he knew where I am. But the Yankees opened all the letters I wrote him, and they threaten to arrest me if I write any more."

"Well," said Claire, "I am going to Norfolk—*on business.* I could take a letter for you!"

"But one has to have a pass——"

"I have a pass. I go and come as I choose—every two or three weeks."

The school-teacher marvelled.

"Oh," said the girl, "I go as Mrs. Andrews. Clive Andrews—you saw him at breakfast—passes as my husband. The only trouble is he's a saucy fellow and is always trying to make love." She laughed.

"Does he go to Norfolk with you?"

"No; he has *business here*——" the girl laid a warning finger across her full, red lips and smiled as young Mr. Andrews re-entered the parlour. He looked politely but intently at poor Miss Trimble.

"Oh," said Claire, "you needn't be suspicious, Clive. She is one of the Princess Anne Trimbles, and is intimate with the Fords and Blythes and Shacklefords of Culpeper."

Andrews bowed very nicely.

"I was not suspicious, ma'am. But we are a very united though unrelated family here at 123. And a strange face—you know——"

"Why did you come back?" asked Claire coldly.

"I forgot my walking stick——"

"Forgot your grandmother," rejoined that slangy young lady. "Did you assume I was born yesterday, Clive?"

"You are young enough and——"

"My eye and Betty Martin," said she more slangily still; "go and tell Jack Gailliard what happened last evening——" She turned to poor, bewildered Miss Trimble, who seemed a little

shocked: "Mr. Andrews met a flibbity-jibbity girl last evening—I don't know where—who pretended to be acquainted with me and with Captain Gailliard; and it has frightened poor Mr. Andrews nearly to death——"

Andrews turned fiery red. "I suppose you are joking, ma'am——"

"Well, yes, I am, Clive. Nobody doubts your courage; and I really do agree with you that this creature—whoever she may be—is a Yankee spy. So run away and warn Captain Gailliard; and don't flirt with any more strange ladies."

He was very much put out but he took polite leave of them.

Miss Trimble also rose to make her adieux, promising to take her meals at 123 in future; and Miss Quilter kissed her good-bye.

When she descended the steps, young Mr. Andrews was just turning the corner toward Washington Square.

Operator 13 dared not hurry. She was barely in time to see him turn eastward again toward Broadway; and she mended her pace as much as she dared.

If only there were a hack in sight! But there was none. And at Broadway and Eighth Street the boy had vanished in the crowd.

And Operator 13 went back to St. George's Place to wash off the make-up and remove spectacles and wig and Paisley shawl and rusty skirt and prunellas, and dress her prettiest for a hired carriage drive in Central Park where, it was understood, many young bucks of Southern ancestry, took their morning exercise a-horse.

But none among them that she ever trailed showed any suspicious activities; and she never yet had seen John Gailliard there a-riding at his ease and pleasure.

And every day thereafter she took dinner and supper at 123 Clinton Place; and never learned any more than she had learned the first day she set foot there.

Late in June it was rumoured that Lee had started north; and all the militia regiments in New York City departed with their music playing to help repel the rebel invaders. On Friday, June twenty-sixth, Lee was in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. The invasion had begun. On June thirtieth the Union and Confederate armies rolled toward each other like two huge storm clouds. At eight o'clock in the morning of the first of July came the first flash of lightning and the first reverberation of thunder. Then the great storm of battle broke, shaking the civilized world.

That stifling night of July first the New York newsboys made darkness hideous with their goblin yelps. Operator 13, already

abed, got out of it and went down to the front door in her bare feet and nightgown to buy a paper from the howling crew. It was the first day of the battle of Gettysburg. The end of everything was beginning with Union disaster once more.

All night long the ghoul-like screeching of the newsboys distracted the dark streets; all night long the girl lay abed, sleeping fitfully until the nightmare racket aroused her to lie staring awake in the darkness.

On Thursday the North knew that the great battle was continuing.

Hooker was gone; Meade commanded. His 1st and 11th Army Corps had been cut to pieces in Wednesday's fighting. And, by Thursday night, the newsboys were bawling disaster again, and New York knew that the 2nd, 3rd and 5th Corps of the Army of the Potomac were crumbling and that the orchards, wheatfields, and woods of Gettysburg were blue with Union dead. Only the 6th and 12th Army Corps remained intact along with the cavalry and guns.

At 123 Clinton Place quiet excitement reigned, cautiously controlled.

Poor Miss Trimble smiled palely through her tears—the professional tears to order of Operator 13 were the despair of other Thespians!—but joined tremulously in the subdued cheering when extra editions of hysterical afternoon papers described the loosened fury of Jeb Stuart's cavalry and the terrific horsemen's battle which began with a gay shout from ginger-haired, fox-faced general of cavalry, Kilpatrick: "Little blue bugler, blow your horn! All right, boys! Come on!"

Claire Quilter told Miss Trimble that Chambersburg was burning. "Maybe," she said, "the Yankees will understand now what a town afire looks like."

Operator 13 dared make no inquiries regarding John Gailliard; for, except that first day, his name was never mentioned. Nor did he ever come to 123, as far as she could learn.

But on Friday evening, when she came to supper, the latest newspapers had prepared her for the altered looks and deep gloom which reigned at the table at 123 Clinton Place.

For on that day, when the sun was going down, the last blow for victory had been struck by Wade Hampton's furious sabres. But George Pickett had already made his immortal charge, and his red battle flags were in the dust.

Claire Quilter whispered tearfully, dabbing at her eyes with a

wet handkerchief. "Dick Garnett fell dead; Armistead died; Kemper is gone. You were right when you spoke of Ashley, Pelham, and Jackson; our paladins of the South are dying fast, dear Miss Trimble, and very soon we may all hear the melancholy horn of Roland quavering over the death-field of a Nation."

"What will happen," said Clive Andrews savagely, "is that our armies will tie up their wounds and march on Philadelphia. . . . And by God, we must continue busy and get ready for them when they come!"

"What does Jack Gailliard say?" whispered Mrs. Dorn.

"I am quoting him, ma'am. And I agree with him that we remain unbeaten and unterrified; and that the Yankees, war-weary and choked with their own blood, will sicken of this butchery, and demand peace. Half the North are of that mind already. A battalion of Stuart's cavalry could take this city. And," he added hotly, "the city will be ready to get rid of its tyrants very soon, I expect——"

"Oh, hush," murmured Mrs. Dorn with a scared look at the boy.

"Modulate your voice," added Claire. "If you go around talking about such things you'll hang Jack Gailliard and every one of us. I always thought you were too darned impetuous, and I never have understood why our Commissioners sent you here."

"Nobody could hear me——"

"You don't know who may be listening outside the window in the dark," retorted Claire Quilter. "Do you suppose I wish to sit in Fort Lafayette just because you can't hold your tongue?"

"Have you seen Captain Gailliard?" asked Mrs. Dorn in a guarded voice.

"I have, and everything is all right," replied the boy, sullenly. "You'll see for yourself before very long."

Miss Trimble rose from the table, took leave of the boarders in her stiff, quaint, timid way, gratefully but tremulously declined escort, and went out like a mouse in her "bunnit," mitts, rusty gown, and noiseless, heel-less, prunella shoes.

Not far away, in the dusk, a hack awaited her; she got into it in silence, and she and the driver—Secret Service Operator Harry Simms, No. 143—waited and watched until young Mr. Andrews emerged from the boarding house.

But once more they trailed him in vain through the gas-light, for he went to Burton's.

At a gallop the hack deposited Operator 13 in St. George's Place

where she swiftly transformed herself into a swaggering lad of the incipient, red-shirted b'hoy variety, stinking of cheap perfume and hair oil.

Back at a gallop and into theatre alley where she slipped out of the hack and around to Burton's; and, for fifteen cents, found herself in the Nigger's Heaven with the glowing stage below her and "Pocahontas" proceeding in its hilarious course with Burton on the stage.

That great master of burlesque, in the character of Captain John Smith, was singing his parody on the popular sentimental song, "O Summer Night!"

Sang Mr. Burton:

Oh some 'r' right—
POWHATAN *and* INDIANS: Why Smith! Why Smith!
And some r'r wrong—
POWHATAN *and* INDIANS: Why Smith! Why Smith!
And some get tight—
POWHATAN *and* INDIANS: Why Smith! Why Smith!
And sing this song
The whole day long!

CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH, POWHATAN, POCAHONTAS, *and* INDIANS:

Oh, right or wrong,
Oh, get me tight
And sing the song
O Summer Night,
For only when I'm tight I long,
To sing that sentimental song!

And gallery and Nigger's Heaven were chanting with the chorus amid the subdued wave of laughter from box to pit.

But Operator 13 was no longer listening or looking at the stage, for there, in a stage box, sat Clive Andrews with Claire Quilter, and, standing alone, and partly in shadow behind them, stood a figure in evening dress that set every nerve and drop of blood throbbing in the youthful body of Operator 13.

How to get at her lover she had no remotest idea. It was probable that he was there for a few moments only for he remained standing, his top hat in his gloved hand and an opera cloak over his left arm.

The girl scarcely dared take her eyes from him; somehow

she must follow him and discover where he was going.

All around her was a din of yelling and laughter as she rose and made her way out to the steep stairway and hurried down it to the gallery entrance.

There was no opportunity to call in No. 143; she might miss John Gailliard by running around to the theatre alley.

Even now the first act was over and the audience swarming out to lobby and sidewalk.

Dressed like a young tough of Grand Street, she skulked along the curb trying to catch sight of her lover in the milling crowds where, with the throng of wayfarers, a very maelstrom was formed in front of the theatre.

At that instant she saw him opening the door of a handsome private carriage. In utter desperation of losing him she shoved forward through the crowd like an impudent young ruffian hoping to stage a row sufficient to bring a policeman to arrest them both; and she jostled him so violently that he stumbled and nearly fell. Instantly she swore at him and showed fight.

"Who yer shovin', bully boy with the glass eye?" she demanded with her best Five Point leer. "D'yer want yer swell hat bashed? Aw right! Come on then! Put up yer dukes!" And she squared off and danced up to him.

But there was no row. John Gailliard gave her one amazed look, then took her by the shirt collar and the seat of her fancy pants and threw her halfway across the street.

As she picked herself up, confused by the swift shock of painful impact and the unfeeling laughter of the crowd, Gailliard stepped calmly into his waiting carriage and drove away up town. He, too, was smiling; and it maddened her.

But when she ran to a hack and offered the grinning hackman a ten-dollar tip, begging him to follow the carriage, he told her to hire a balloon; and added that he'd like to "punch her goddam snoot till it looked like a Cow Bay nigger's."

It was a painful and mortifying episode for her, but she did not see how she very well could have done any better under the circumstances. And, although for a day or two it hurt her to sit down, her main anxiety was to find this outrageous ex-lover of hers, save his neck from the hangman's noose in spite of himself, and preserve the rest of him for a future life of married misery.

"Because," she thought tearfully, "it's a long war and going to be longer; and is sure to get him if I don't."

On the Fourth of July Vicksburg surrendered to a young general

named Grant. Three cheers, said the newspapers. But Meade had not yet moved south after the retreating Lee.

On the eighth of July Port Hudson surrendered. Three more cheers. But Lee had run away to live to fight another day.

On July eleventh the Draft Law went into operation and the first compulsory enlistment for the armies in the field began.

The next day was Sunday and there was no Draft.

War weariness was paralysing the Peace Party of the North. The blood of its young men dead was suffocating it.

While the unburied dead still littered the meadows of Gettysburg the Peace Party was holding a huge meeting at the Academy of Music with bands and cheers and Governor Seymour dispensing sweetness and compromise, and shuddering at the shadow of martial law. And there Mr. Ellsworth of Connecticut was preaching that the states came voluntarily into the Union and cannot be compelled to remain in it by force of arms. And banners waved inscribed with " Peace and Compromise ! "

And so the Peace Democracy, fatuously oblivious of the conspirators who were planning to ruin the Union, demanded the recall of the armies that were dying in the field to maintain it, and invoked a political solution of the bloody problem.

If John Gailliard was at the Academy of Music that day, Operator 13 could not discover him.

On Monday morning, the thirteenth of July, Operator 13, bewitchingly gowned and hatted, was driving uptown in her pretty barouche, with S.S. Operator Simms, Number 143, in smart livery on the box, still hoping to encounter John Gailliard a-horse in Central Park.

They drove up Third Avenue, intending to cross at Fifty-ninth Street ; but a marching crowd of people blocked the streets at Forty-sixth Street, and Simms pulled up his horses.

The marching crowd followed a man who was beating a copper pan ; they were whooping, howling, cursing ; they brandished guns, pistols, hatchets, knives, crowbars, bludgeons ; they were yelling : " Down with the Draft ! Down with the police ! "

Just across the street at 677 Third Avenue was the Provost Marshal's office where the Draft had begun last Saturday and where the great lottery wheels were turning out the fatal numbers for recruitment.

Twelve hundred and thirty-six names had been drawn, nearly completing the quota of the third sub-division of the ninth congressional district.

At the enrolment office there were a police sergeant and a dozen policemen, but no soldiers; and the huge crowd already had pressed them back into the Provost's office from which an angry roar rose.

Already the mob outside was stopping all street cars on Second and Third Avenues and, with hatchets and axes, were felling telegraph poles and hacking the wires.

Simms turned his head coolly and said to Operator 13: "This is a riot. We'd better get out of it."

But the barouche was so hemmed in that it was impossible to turn the horses.

At that moment Captain Porter, from the East Fifty-ninth Street Station, came ploughing his way to the Marshal's office with sixty Metropolitan policemen. There was no clubbing. The men marched into the office building; the mob, now increased to surging thousands, roared disapproval.

Simms was trying his best to disengage his horses; menacing yells from the mob greeted his efforts.

It was exactly half-past ten in the morning when the great riot began; and it began with a pistol shot followed by a volley of cobblestones; and the next instant Captain Porter and seventy policemen were fighting for their lives.

Hanging on to his terrified, plunging horses, Simms attempted to back out; but at that moment a company of infantry of the Invalid Corps came marching up Third Avenue.

Then the mob flew at them; the troops fired; and hell broke loose on Third Avenue.

Simms stood up and lashed his highly strung horses straight into Forty-sixth Street and through and over the screaming, cursing mob.

Operator 13 caught a glimpse of the police clubbing their way out with the Draft officials in their midst; of soldiers being stabbed and pounded to death; of riotous firemen of Engine 33 joining the mob that was wrecking the Provost's office and setting it afire.

Suddenly she saw Clive Andrews. He was on horseback, and was shouting: "Down with the Draft! Stop the war! Take the city! All the troops are at Gettysburg and you can do it! Take the government into your own hands, fellow citizens, and stop this hellish war! Drive the police out of town! Drive out the politicians who are sending you South to be murdered on the battlefield!"

A ferocious roar of acclaim answered the wildly shouting boy.

"March on the City Hall!" he shouted, standing up in his

stirrups. "Pull down the newspaper offices! Drive out Old Greeley and Mayor Opdycke. Now is your opportunity to let the nation know that you're through with this cursed war and the nigger-loving government forever——"

A pistol cracked and Clive Andrews rolled out of his saddle.

Then, pale as a corpse, Secret Service Operator 143, his smoking pistol and his reins in his left fist, flogged his crazed horses to a gallop through Forty-sixth Street; and Operator 13, amid a volley of pistol shots and brickbats, knelt on the rear seat of the lurching barouche and fired right and left into the shrieking demons in pursuit.

X

JOHN GAILLIARD RIDES

On Wednesday morning, July 15th, 1863, the City of New York was on fire.

Two million dollars' worth of building had been burned or were burning; millions' and millions' worth of property was being looted and destroyed.

No breath of air stirred that hot July morning. Even a light breeze would have swept the flames over the entire city. Under a pall of smoke the Metropolitan police, and the few soldiers home on leave, had battled day and night with the mob. They were fewer than twenty-five hundred, and the rioters swarmed in tens of thousands.

Street cars and omnibus lines had ceased to run. Shops were closed. Except for the police and the mob the city was silent and deserted.

The streets stank of burning rags and of murder. The murdered lay everywhere befouled, oozing mud and blood; or hung from shattered lamp posts and fire-scorched trees, mutilated, dripping red. There was a reek of gunpowder everywhere.

Three offices of the Provost Marshal were afire or in ashes.

The Provost's office on Third Avenue was a pit of glowing coals, adjoining buildings were aflame, and the entire square on Forty-seventh Street was burning fiercely.

The mob sacked and burned the 18th Precinct Police Station, the building at the corner of Broadway and Twenty-ninth Street; an entire block on Lexington Avenue; some handsome private residences on Forty-sixth Street; the Orphan Asylum on Fifth Avenue between Forty-third and Forty-fourth Streets; the Armoury at Twenty-first Street and Second Avenue; the dwellings of the Provost Marshal, Colonel Nugent, and of Mr. Wakeman, the Postmaster; the Provost office No. 429 Grand Street; Washington Hall; McCombs Dam Bridge; the planing mill; the block on Second Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street; Allerton's Hotel;

the Union Steam Works; the entire block on Second Avenue between Thirty-fourth and Thirty-fifth Streets; the shops on Third Avenue near Fortieth Street; Brooks Brothers Clothing Store; an entire block on York Street; the block at Thirty-sixth Street and Seventh Avenue; the gas-works at Forty-second Street and North River, together with the ferry house; all of Second Avenue and Thirty-third Street; the government stores in Greenwich Street; the row of houses on Thirty-second Street, between Sixth and Seventh Avenues; the dwellings along Twenty-eighth Street and Second Avenue.

The mob had murdered policemen, soldiers, citizens, and all Negroes they could catch; Superintendent of Police Kennedy had been battered to a pulp, Colonel O'Brien, horribly tortured and mutilated, died hard; the superb police, shot, slashed, stoned, strangled, overwhelmed, always came back again, battering through the screaming, murderous masses with their heavy locust clubs.

The few platoons of military remaining in the city fired volleys into the mob and raked it with grapeshot; and were decimated.

All day and night the dull roar of the fighting filled the city punctuated by cannon shots and shrill, wolflike howling where murderous packs were chasing, burning, hanging, or battering their victims to death in the streets.

And everywhere in the city, upon these screaming, wolfish mobs, the exhausted police hurled themselves hour after hour.

Captain Mount's policemen of the 11th Precinct drove a ferocious mob into the houses, fought them from floor to floor, and clubbed them from the housetops into the yawning streets below.

The mob caught Sergeant Ellison and were hanging him when Captain De Camp of the 8th Precinct and his policemen tore into the rioters, swinging their terrible locusts, smashing skulls and arms and ribs, beating a way out with the half-dead sergeant.

Captain Bryan's men of the 5th Precinct charged the mob at Brooks' and at Lord and Taylor's, and killed or crippled hundreds of ruffians, littering the streets with their senseless bodies.

Captain Greer and his men from the Chambers Street station house clubbed the murdering masses so mercilessly that they jumped to death from the housetops to escape the flailing locust-clubs; and brave Captain Warlow's bleeding, gasping men of the 1st Precinct, led by him and by Inspector Carpenter—just a few score against many infuriated thousands—stormed the rookeries from which the mob was shooting Negro women and little children, and battered them so terribly that the screaming, cursing wretches

leaped down to self-destruction from balcony, window-ledge, and roof.

Operator 13, at Police Headquarters, sat huddled up at the long desk beside Commissioner Acton where the police telegraphers were sending out telegraphic orders and receiving reports from every precinct police station on Manhattan Island.

She wore the plain dark dress and hat of a shop-girl—for to venture out upon the streets of New York well dressed was to invite immediate death.

Because, from the beginning, whatever Southern agents had had a hand in this uprising had lost control of it at once.

This was no strategic revolt; no revolution devised by honest desperation; no furious protest against continuing the war or against the Draft.

It was a vast upheaval of the city's underworld expressing deathless hatred for civilization and all its works and symbols and authority.

It was a determination to plunder and exterminate those better off, better educated, more fortunate; and the menace of compulsory military service by destroying all who enforced it—police, military, municipal officials, newspapers, and the hated rich and respectable—and, particularly, to burn the enrolment offices and massacre the Negro population—men, women, and children—for whose freedom they believed the war was being fought.

If ever any Confederate agents, agitators, spies—if ever the secret rebel organizations of the Knights of the Golden Circle, or the Sons of Liberty—had had a hand in this revolt, they had lost all control of it from the beginning.

And, if any among them were attempting to regain control, that possibility was now the particular business of such United States Secret Service Agents as remained in the distracted city and who kept up telegraphic communication with the War Department in Washington and with Colonel Sharpe at Headquarters in the field.

One among these Federal agents was Operator 13.

She had passed through two fearful days and nights. Only her modest garb had saved her in the swarming, yelling crowds hunting for victims where scores had been killed and robbed on the streets merely because they were respectably clothed.

From the moment that the Federal detective with her had shot Clive Andrews, she had been in the thick of it.

With Secret Service Agents she had arrested Claire Quilter, Jessica West, and Mrs. Dorn and had escorted them aboard the Governor's Island tugboat on their journey to the squatty fort in the Narrows.

" I'm sorry," she said to the astonished Miss Quilter with tears in her eyes, " but you are a Confederate courier yourself, and you understand that I had to do it. And I'm sure they will be very kind and polite to you at Castle William and Fort Lafayette."

Claire Quilter wept, too; and, on the dock, kissed her melancholy captor good-bye. But Mrs. Dorn turned up her anæmic nose and Jessica West swore at her.

Clive Andrews was dead; but Captain Gailliard remained at large; and no wholesale arrests among Knights of the Golden Circle or Sons of Liberty had included that agile and slippery young man, so far. And now, at 300 Mulberry Street, Operator 13 crouched over the desk beside Commissioner Acton, waiting for further telegraphic instructions from Colonel Sharpe or for reports from Federal agents or from the police, which might throw light on the activities and whereabouts of John Gailliard.

The girl was very tired and nervous. There were dark circles under her eyes and shadows in the pinched, white features. She had just finished a cup of coffee and a ham sandwich—which included everything she had eaten in twenty-four hours.

Through the continuous clicking of the telegraph instruments, receiving and sending messages fraught with life and death, she could hear cannon shots at intervals and the far high-pitched fury of surging masses in Printing House Square; and, rarely, a light volley of musketry where the handful of soldiery were battling for their lives.

Wires from the Central Office radiated to every one of the thirty-two Precinct police stations, excepting those that had been burned down. The Sanitary Police under Inspector Dilks and Captain Lord were at Headquarters.

Commissioner Thomas C. Acton, cool and composed, seated beside his colleague, General H. Brown who was in command of the few troops available, were in evident anxiety concerning the safety of the Navy Yard, and particularly regarding the great, iron-clad ram, *Dunderberg*,[1] not yet launched.

" The trouble is," said Acton to Operator 13, " General Brown can spare only a small armed guard for the *Dunderberg*. I'm expecting to hear from them at any moment. You'd better remain here until I do."

" Yes, sir, I shall," said the girl, nervously.

[1] Then building at Webb's shipyard for the United States Government. She was given the Dutch name for one of the Catskill Mountains, which means Thunder Mountain.

The Brigadier smiled reassuringly at the pallid, slender youngster in black who had been desperately absorbed in preparing a telegram to Colonel Sharpe in No. 7 cipher.

Now having finished enciphering, she handed it over to an expert military telegrapher from the Provost's office; and in a second or two it had started over the wire. Deciphered it read:

The mob is in full possession of the city. There are only two thousand Metropolitan police and five hundred soldiers here, including those on furlough and invalids. All the New York and Brooklyn militia regiments are at Gettysburg. Urge the War Department to send them home.

Thousands of people here have been killed; the city is afire in fifty different places, and, if a wind rises, Manhattan Island will burn to bedrock.

Some of the battalions of the fire department have sided with the mob; some are passively disloyal. But the engine companies under Decker are fearless and devoted.

All ships of war under repair and building are in grave danger of destruction.

It is impossible to say exactly how this terrible riot began. No doubt Southern agents aided it. One of them, Confederate Secret Service Agent Clive Andrews, was shot and killed by one of our operators. Claire Quilter, courier and spy, Jessica West, rebel agent, and a Mrs. Dorn, suspected, are under arrest. I sent them to Fort Hamilton en route to Fort Lafayette. There is no trace at all in this conspiracy of Captain Gailliard, so far. I await further orders from you.

OPERATOR 13.

In an incredibly short time a telegram in answer, came in clickity-click from Colonel Sharpe:

Glad you got Andrews. Turn Mrs. Dorn loose and send Miss Quilter and Miss West to the Old Capitol Prison.

Keep after Gailliard. There is another dangerous spy with him named Gordon Cleburne—a Confederate Naval lieutenant—who is likely to attempt to destroy the shipping. Try your best to arrest or kill these two Confederate Secret Service Agents.

All the New York City regiments have now been ordered to New York, and are already on the cars. The 7th Infantry should arrive to-night. Inform the local authorities.

SHARPE.

This was an open telegram. The girl handed it to Commissioner Acton. The Brigadier also read it over his shoulder.

"I wish the Seventh Regiment would hurry," he said quietly. "If the mob starts for the Navy Yard we can't stop them."

"They can burn the river front and all the commercial shipping, also," said Acton—"even if we turn the guns of Governor's Island on them. Only—they don't seem to know it."

"Some fellow like this rebel naval officer, Cleburne, will start them pretty soon," remarked the Brigadier.

At that moment a message came from the 29th Precinct Police Station:

"They are turning Negroes out of their houses in Thirty-second Street."

Acton replied: "Is there much trouble?"

"Yes," came the telegraphed answer, "they are hanging a Negro to a tree in Thirty-second Street. Send us aid."

Acton said: "Here, General, see what you can do for us."

A few minutes later Captain Mott with a section of regular artillery galloped to the scene of riot and let go a few bushels of grape, which settled the matter—twenty-five rioters falling at the first discharge.

The 20th Precinct then telegraphed: "Mob torturing and hanging Negroes. Send help. Hurry!"

Then the 21st Precinct wired: "Has the 18th Precinct station house been burned?" And Acton answered: "Yes. Look out for the gashouse in Fourteenth Street."

Back came a telegram:

"Captain Reynolds and detachment, U. S. infantry, surrounded on Fifth Avenue, fighting for their lives!"

"General?" said Acton calmly; and the Brigadier wired instructions to General Sandford at the Arsenal.

Another telegram: "A huge mob is marching down town through Union Square. Their object is the twenty thousand muskets in storage at 56 Greenwich Street. I have no reserves to cope with them."

Another dispatch followed from the 29th Precinct: "The mob is firing buildings in Second Avenue near Twenty-eighth Street, and sacking houses at Twenty-seventh Street and Seventh Avenue. No force here to send out."

Acton inquired, then, of the 21st Precinct, Captain Palmer: "How goes it in your precinct?"

"Very bad," replied Palmer; "the mob overruns Thirty-fifth Street and Third Avenue."

"What is going on?" inquired Acton.

"The mob is hanging five or six poor coloured people. Help us quick if possible."

The 29th Precinct wired: "Mob on Seventh Avenue has just killed a Negro and is setting several houses afire. I have no men left for this job."

"Nor can I send you any," replied Acton; "do the best you can."

"Riot at Pier 4, North River," telegraphed the 1st Precinct, Captain Warlow; "mob murdering coloured people."

The 20th Precinct wired: "Body of a cavalry officer reported lying at Thirty-second Street and Second Avenue."

"Get it," replied Acton grimly.

Then, from Captain Walling, 20th Precinct: "Captain Hadden, 16th Precinct, telegraphs that a disciplined mob on Fifth Avenue is gathering under leadership of men who are supposed to be Confederate officers. They have two field pieces, muskets and pistols. They have taken a hundred horses from the Red Bird omnibus-line stables and are mounting rioters as cavalry.

"It is believed that they are going to destroy the ironclad, *Dunderberg*. A Secret Service Agent should get into touch with them and report their destination to Headquarters."

"Well, ma'am?" said Acton, quietly, handing her the scribbled message passed up by a police telegrapher.

The girl read it, paled a little, but rose immediately.

General Brown remarked: "This 'disciplined mob' they speak of begins to look like Cleburne's and John Gailliard's work."

"Yes," said Acton. "Telegraph me from the 16th Precinct, ma'am; and I'll put the police force there at your disposal. I want this Captain Gailliard, dead or alive, before he, and others like him, recover control of the mob and start them toward the shipping, Navy Yard, and forts."

Operator 13 was examining her revolver. The Brigadier watched her reload it.

"Be very careful not to do or say anything to annoy the mob or arouse its suspicions," he cautioned the girl. "Mingle with the rioters and get your information; then go to the 16th Precinct and telegraph Police Headquarters."

"I can send you in a city hack as far as Grace Church," added Acton.

So Operator 13 went out into the glaring sunshine of Mulberry Street and got into a waiting hack.

The driver dared take her no farther northward than Tenth Street; so she left the hack there, crossed Fourteenth Street into Broadway, and walked north to Twenty-third Street—once the very heart and centre of swarming life and activity in the noisy city.

It was noon, but all the shops were closed; the streets deserted; not a living soul stirring. In the terrifying silence the noon sun poured down on the pavements through a foul haze of smoke. Streets and square reeked with it.

The girl looked fearfully around her; and, for the first time, saw men lying on the pavement across Twenty-third Street. The whole square was littered with them, sprawled everywhere as though drunk or asleep. For a moment she did not realize they were dead.

Then, gradually she became aware that the stillness was only comparative. From every direction came the distant crash and rattle of firing, and the vast, mournful monotone of the mob, rising and falling, swelling to a sustained howl, then subsiding to a ghostly murmur.

Now, from far up Broadway, she saw a crowd coming. It was led by half-grown boys and women, whooping, yelling, cursing, howling. They seemed, mostly, to be foreigners.

Behind them, jamming Broadway from curb to curb, trampled men with fire-blackened hands and faces, reeking of riot and murder. They were armed with axes, pitchforks, bludgeons, burning torches, pistols, and muskets. They had a red flannel flag and they were bawling: "Down with the rich! Down with the police! Down with property! Down with the war! Kill the niggers; kill the rich; burn everything!"

Clattering in their wake came an uncouth company mounted on clumsy omnibus horses and flourishing swords and pistols.

And, behind these, and keeping ranks with a grotesque semblance of discipline, marched masses of sweating, dirty, desperate-looking men with shouldered muskets, dragging two iron cannon by long, tarry ropes.

The shrilling, roaring tumult nearly deafened the girl; yelling men, boys, and women, pushing along the sidewalks, swarmed past her, shouldering her ahead with them.

"Where are we going?" she gasped out, clutching the sleeve of a gaunt fellow smeared with blood and cinders.

"We're going to blow up the Navy Yard and burn the ironclad,"

he said hoarsely. " God," he added, " I got that nigger's blood and brains all over me. Did yeh see us burning him ? "

The man stank so that she felt nauseated. There came a sudden halt in the procession ; the omnibus cavalry began to gallop heavily to and fro, shouting and disputing with some of the mob that wished to go to Ninth Avenue and start nigger-killing before they destroyed the ironclad.

Shouting and haranguing, their leaders—some mounted and others afoot—argued and cursed and raged until the disorder, spreading, became a fierce mutiny. All semblance of discipline now disappeared ; and the wrangling ranks began pushing and fighting striving to force the bulk of the mob away from the Negro districts and the pleasures of torturing and hanging ; start them downtown toward the Navy Yard and docks.

Then Operator 13 saw a young man with military bearing, evidently a gentleman, although wearing overalls and red flannel shirt, ride up on a handsome horse and urge the mob to continue its march to the waterfront and destroy the ironclad and the shipping.

In the yelling confusion the girl slipped away into Twentieth Street and hurried across Sixth Avenue to the 16th Precinct Police station where Captain Hedden and Inspector Dilks had just arrived from a terrific fight at Twenty-second Street and Second Avenue.

The station house was full of mounted policemen when Operator 13 entered. Inspector Dilks caught sight of her and recognized her ; she asked him to listen while she dictated a telegram to Mulberry Street. Captain Hedden also came to the telegrapher's desk and listened.

To Commissioner Acton [she began, breathlessly] A mob numbering several thousand is at Broadway and Twenty-first Street. Their avowed intention is to destroy the ironclad and the government and commercial shipping. They have two iron cannon, and many muskets. There are perhaps fifty of them mounted on omnibus horses. A kind of discipline was maintained among them until a dispute arose regarding a proposed raid into a Negro district on the West side.

I think the Confederate spy Cleburne is in command. I think I saw him.

If you could send a body of troops and a hundred policemen to the 16th Precinct, Captain Hedden and Inspector Dilks will join them with the force here.

OPERATOR 13.

" Yes, ma'am, we will," said Inspector Dilks coolly.

In a few minutes the telegraphic reply came back:

Four hundred ex-soldiers of New York Guard regiments, under Colonel Nevers, will march to Webb's Shipyard. I have no police to send you. Captain Hedden will support Colonel Nevers if required to protect the big ironclad. Tell Inspector Dilks to arrest or kill Cleburne if possible. Is Captain Gailliard with that mob?

" I did not see him," replied Operator 13. She dictated in a steady voice but her entire body was shivering in the July heat.

Captain Hedden brought her a sandwich and a cup of coffee. She tried to eat but couldn't; and went to help the police surgeon who was patching up the wounded Metropolitans—big, careless Irishmen, mostly, with the glint of battle still brilliant in their gay, blue eyes.

Police Scouts, in touch with the mob, reported it still halted and undecided while several men of a superior class were haranguing the rioters and imploring them to settle the *Dunderberg* matter, and fire the docks and shipping.

Sergeant Wright in ragged disguise, arrived to report. He appeared to be convinced that Confederate agents were in command of this particular mob. They were preaching a Northern revolution, not a local riot. One of them—a fair-haired, white-skinned, graceful youth had a small Confederate battle flag in his hand, and he was demanding that it should replace the red flannel rag tied to a rioter's rusty bayonet.

A moment later another police scout in plain clothes—Officer Warner—ran into the station house to report that part of the mob had gone west to chase Negroes, and that about a thousand of them were marching to attack the 16th Precinct Police station.

" You'd better go, ma'am," said Inspector Dilks to Operator 13.

But the girl shook her head saying that she preferred to remain in telegraphic touch with Police Headquarters.

Already the roar of the coming mob filled Twentieth Street. Captain Hedden was coolly giving his orders; the Metropolitans —even the wounded ones—fell into disciplined ranks, loaded their revolvers, drew their long, dangerous locust-clubs, and marched out into Twentieth Street to do battle.

Into the street surged the mob from both Sixth and Seventh Avenues; and into them tore the police, their locusts swinging like flails, their revolvers darting flame. And beside them, loading

and firing her revolver, stood Operator 13 as pale as death, deafened by the gunshots and the yelling, and almost strangled by the smoke.

Then, through the nauseating battle-mist, in the thick of the mob, she saw a young man on horseback. He wore around his neck a Confederate battle flag; he was shooting right and left with his revolver and shouting encouragement to the screaming mob which had recoiled before the police toward a spiked iron railing flanking the station house.

The youth exhibited great courage amid his comrades who were retreating under the terrific battering from the locusts.

Operator 13 fired at him. He saw her do it, laughed, and took off his hat to her. At that instant a policeman fired and shot him through the body.

The boy was dying when he turned his horse to escape. But he was unable to keep his saddle; he fell, head first on the iron fence, and one of the pickets pierced his throat, penetrating to the roof of his mouth. And there, impaled, his body stretched out, he died under the sickened eyes of Operator 13.

The police were driving the mob toward Sixth Avenue when a police surgeon and Operator 13 lifted the dead youth from his shocking position and laid him on the sidewalk.

The boy had delicately moulded features and fine white skin under the red shirt and overalls of a workman. Under these, also, he was dressed in a brand-new Confederate naval uniform and in fine linen shirt, silk socks and underwear; and, on a handkerchief in his pocket was embroidered G. C. Gordon Cleburne.

Operator 13, feeling ill, went into the station house for a glass of water. The police telegrapher was busy, coolly telegraphing the immediate news to Mulberry Street. He smiled at her cheerily.

"Say to Mr. Acton that the rebel spy Cleburne has been killed," she said faintly.

Clickity-click, the message was on its way. Just in time, too, because the wire was cut a few minutes afterward and Police Chief Telegrapher Crowly went out, disguised as usual, but quite alone, to find the severed wires and splice them.

Sergeant Wright and Policeman Warren were carried into the station, wounded. Back marched their comrades, also, and formed double lines of battle facing east and west toward the two avenues where the defeated mobs were vociferating and threatening another assault.

From 300 Mulberry Street came the order: "Well done, 16th! Go ahead and drive them; then start for Pier 4 North River!"

Police Telegrapher Chapin, Chief of Detectives John Young, and Detectives Bennett and Radford, all in disguise, came into the station and joined the outward march of the 16th Police toward Sixth Avenue; but when the mob saw them coming it fled.

The police matron who, through the entire battle, had been calmly knitting and watching the episode from an upper window, now came and led Operator 13 into her own quarters and made the girl lie down.

For forty-eight hours she had not slept. She slept now on the matron's bed; and the veteran station-house cat, named Harold, curled up and took a cat nap beside her, purring placidly at intervals when the racket of distant musketry awakened him.

About five o'clock in the evening the matron awoke the girl, saying there was a message for her from Mulberry Street. The police telegrapher on duty, John Duvall, handed her the slip:

"Sorry to wake you, ma'am," he said politely.

Operator 13, yawning frightfully, read the pencilled message:

We have reason to believe that the notorious Confederate agent, Captain Gailliard, has organized a body of Confederate sympathizers, who are determined to destroy the great ironclad *Dunderberg* at Webb's Shipyard.

Colonel Nevers' regiment of veteran ex-service men is now ready at the Seventh Regiment Armory to intercept this mob. The Colonel is under particular orders to arrest or kill Gailliard. You will report to Colonel Nevers in order to accompany the regiment and point out the spy, Gailliard, or, if he be among the dead or the prisoners, to identify him.

ACTON.

The girl sat down beside the telegrapher and began to cry. He put a fatherly arm around her and went on with his telegraphing for a while.

Presently he asked her what reply she had to make to the Police Commissioner.

She wiped her eyes with her black sleeve, sniffling.

"Tell him," she said in a choked voice, "that his order shall b-be obeyed."

The message went. Drillmaster Copeland reloaded her revolver and filled her pocket with ammunition while she straightened her plain little hat before the looking glass, wiped her face with a cold, wet towel, and drew on her black gloves.

"Better not look too decent, ma'am," said the drill-sergeant doubtfully.

That made her laugh, and she felt better. Indeed she was glad to go, knowing well enough that nobody in authority in New York City would save John Gailliard unless she did. She still had authority from Colonel Sharpe to drive him into Canada. If she only could get hold of him again she'd do it.

As she was on the point of leaving the station house, a detective named Kelso and a policeman in plain clothes from the Sanitary company of Captain Lord, named McTaggart, came in from the Central Office.

They had just encountered a battalion of a newly organized regiment of ex-service men. The troops were leaving the Seventh Regiment Armory and marching eastward, they said; and offered to help her find them.

So Operator 13 went off with them through the deserted, smoky streets, lurid with the red glare of the westering sun. From every direction came the distant roaring of murdering mobs and the incessant rattle of pistol fire and musketry.

And about six o'clock they found the battalion they were looking for—but it was the wrong regiment and in the wrong quarter of the city—a sinister district on Eighteenth Street near First Avenue.

The girl and her policemen were involved in trouble before they could extricate themselves; the soldiers and two howitzers were firing into a dense mob which fired back at them; and from windows and rooftops on either side of the street, ambushed ruffians hurled down bricks and paving blocks upon the troops.

The mob numbered thousands; the troops, under Colonels Winslow and Jardine, a hundred and fifty.

Ten rapid rounds of grape and canister from Jardine's guns tore lanes through the massed mob two blocks long. The slaughter was horrible. But the troops were being overwhelmed by the terrible rain of missiles from the housetops. Colonel Jardine fell; a captain and lieutenant of Zouaves were killed; every tenth man of the command was down and others were dropping fast when the decimated command began its retreat, leaving its dead and concealing its wounded in private residences where it was hoped they would be safe from the bestial creatures searching for them.

Detective Kelso was hurt, but both he and Policeman McTaggart managed to keep on their feet and shoulder a way into Nineteenth Street with Operator 13 between them. There were two bullet holes in her skirt, and a razor-edged sheet of slate had sheared the

hat from her head, nicking her neck and left ear enough to cover her face and throat with blood. Somebody had hurled a burning stick at her, also, and her skirt had been on fire sufficiently to show the hoop in places and one shapely, slender leg caged inside.

This had infuriated her and she had mounted a stoop and emptied her pistol at the dodging shapes on the roofs silhouetted against the western sky.

And here, no doubt, the mob would have caught and murdered her had not her faithful policemen seized her and hustled her off in the retreating column.

But, for the first time in the war, the fighting blood of Operator 13 was boiling. Bloody, dishevelled, ragged, hatless, she marched along with the gunners, lending a hand on the ropes when some exhausted cannoneer faltered, menacing every head that peered down from a window with lifted pistol.

On the way down town to the Central Office they were met by Inspector Leonard with a hundred policemen who escorted what remained of the battalion to Mulberry Street. And it was there, outside the police and military cordon guarding citizen refugees, white and black, that the girl saw Captain Helme of the Cedar Street Station, who told her that Colonel Nevers' regiment was marching to intercept the mob threatening to destroy the ironclad, and that Commissioner Acton expected her to go with that command.

Operator 13 was deathly weary. Somebody sponged the blood from her face and neck, and a frightened Negro girl gave her some pins for her torn skirt and a bright scarlet bandanna to bind her hair.

Captain Thorne who had just escorted to safety three mortally wounded policemen—Hill, Rice, and Dipple * of the Broadway squad—went out again with Operator 13 to find Nevers' regiment.

At nine o'clock at night they found it by the crash and glare of its volley firing and the flaring torches of the mob.

It was a small, compact, dangerous, disciplined mob, about a thousand strong, armed with new muskets, using them like soldiers, and firing by platoons into Nevers' regiment.

And instantly through the infernal flame of the torches, the girl saw John Gailliard, in full Confederate uniform. And she almost screamed at sight of him where he sat his horse, firing his revolver at the troops, and urging his men to the charge.

"Damn you!" he shouted, "drive those troops back and get on to the ironclad! That's why you're here! That's what you're after! Charge them for God's sake and go after the *Dunderberg*!"

* Dipple alone died.

But already, in Nevers' regiment, bugles were sounding the charge, and the troops, cheering, dropped their bayonets to a glittering level and plunged ahead, sweeping the girl with them almost under the hoofs of John Gailliard's plunging horse.

She caught his stirrup, climbed like a wildcat to his saddle, and, as he twisted around to shoot her, she clasped him around the body; and he recognized her.

The horse, frantic among the bayonets, reared and kicked himself on to the sidewalk, and, pricked by a bayonet and beside himself with pain and terror, pirouetted on hind legs and tore into the mêlée, bolting through the disordered ranks into Greenwich Street. And in the saddle reeled John Gailliard, striving to check and control the maddened animal, while, with a grip like death itself, a white-faced girl, with closed eyes and clenched teeth, clung desperately to his swaying body.

The crazed horse hit a tree in the darkness at the corner of Greenwich and Charlton Streets and collapsed in the gutter with a broken neck.

John Gailliard rolled over and over until a shattered railing stopped him; and he scrambled to his feet and staggered back to where Operator 13 lay with her right leg under the dead horse, trying to free herself.

"Is your leg broken?" he demanded as she looked up at him impudently in the wavering gas-light, ragged, bleeding, and dishevelled.

"My leg isn't broken," she gasped, "but my heart is. Take me under the shoulders and pull, please."

He managed to drag her free of the dead creature.

Greenwich Street was deserted and silent in the dim gas-light. There had been a battle there; empty looted shops, stores, and dwellings gaped wide open; Charlton Street was littered with battered hats, clothing, and broken weapons. A dead sergeant of cavalry lay on the sidewalk still clutching a revolver. Scores of corpses—mostly of rioters—were scattered in the street as far as the eye could see. Near a charred house on Charlton Street a broken-down fire engine stood with dead men around it.

The girl leaned against the shattered tree box wiping her dirty face with a dirtier handkerchief.

"I suppose," she said tremulously, "you won't consider yourself my prisoner."

He stared at her; went over and felt of her person in silence; and found her to be unarmed.

"Well then," she said wearily, "what are you going to do?"

"Come into one of these empty houses," he said coolly. "If your police find us here they'll shoot us both."

He took hold of her arm; she made no resistance; and they mounted the steps of one of those old Dutch houses on Charlton Street and went in at the open door.

A gas jet in the hallway was still burning.

The whole interior of the house had been stripped, looted, and torn to pieces.

"I suppose," she said, "you are going to knock me senseless and escape. You've done it once before."

She could see him redden. "I am going to escape," he said quietly.

There was the remnant of a rosewood sofa in the parlour. The girl sat down on it; then extended her trembling body and rested her head on her clasped hands.

"I feel sick," she said. "I am going to be nauseated. Would you please go out of the room, darling——"

He went out to the front steps. On the sidewalk, below, lay the dead cavalryman in his smart uniform.

While his lady love was being pitiably sick in the parlour, John Gailliard went down to the sidewalk, drew the dead horseman into the area, stripped him of his uniform, stripped off his own Confederate regimentals and dressed himself in the dead man's spurred boots, pants, and jacket with its yellow welts and chevrons.

When again he came into the parlour, the girl was dimly visible in the flickering hall gas jet. She was lying on the wrecked sofa, face downward.

"Have you been injured by your fall?" he asked gently.

"No; it's nerves. I feel better." She turned over and looked up at him.

"Oh," she said, "you were wise to do that——" touching his chevroned sleeve with a trembling finger.

"Yes," he said, "I must get out if I can. There's nothing to be done in New York, now. The city regiments will be here to-night."

"Can you get away?"

"How much law will you give me?" he asked harshly.

"Not a minute."

"I thought you wouldn't."

"I won't. But if you give me your word of honour that you'll go to Canada, I'll help you go."

" I can't do that," he said.

" I supposed you wouldn't," she whimpered. " This damn war is going to kill us both. I'd rather it did. I'm tired of everything—deathly tired. . . . Once I was guilty of a dishonourable thing; I caught you and let you go. I was new in the business, and the shock of seeing that spy hanged unnerved me. . . . But I won't let you go again, darling; no, not if you hang for it. . . . And if you do get away, this time, for God's sake remain in your own country."

" Remain in yours, too," he said sullenly. He examined the revolver he had taken from the dead cavalryman, reloaded it and shoved it into the belted holster.

" I'm not going to leave you here," he said.

" I'm safe. I look like one of the mob," she remarked. But she rose from the wrecked sofa and let him draw her arm through his.

" There are hacks by Trinity and St. Paul's," he said briefly.

But she was soon at the end of her strength and her legs refused to support her. So he picked her up and, cradling her in his arms, walked southward through the silent street hoping that no mob would encounter him in his hated uniform. A moment later he saw the shattered green lamps of the burned 28th Precinct Police station near Vandam Street.

The girl was a dead weight in his arms, now, her blood-smeared face deathly white, her head with its disordered curls and sagging bandanna rolling helplessly on his shoulder at every stride.

The station house had been burned to the ground. Nobody guarded the ruins. But there was a light in the adjacent tower where the bell ringer kept watch beside his fire bell.

Gailliard shouted up to him and he looked over into the street and came down presently.

" What are ye up to down here, sergeant ? " he demanded. " Is this young thing dead ? "

" No, exhausted. Where can I take her ? "

" Cameron's men are burrned out," said the bell ringer. " They're barracked in the Cinthral Office. But can ye walk that far with the poor child in yer arrms ? "

" Is there a hack to be had ? "

" Sure Danny Whaley has a hack at Dominick and Hudson. Tell him th' ould bell ringer of Greenwich Street sent ye."

At Dominick and Hudson Streets lived Mr. Whaley. He had just driven in from Trinity with his ancient hack, and was about to stable the still more ancient nag, when John Gailliard appeared

and hailed him in the name of " th' ould bell ringer of Greenwich Street."

" Sure, that mesilf," purred the old Irishman. " An' where will I be drivin' ye wid th' poor lass in yere arrms, sor ? "

" Drive," said the Confederate spy, " to the New Police Headquarters, 300 Mulberry Street."

As the hack drove up to the Central Station, and John Gailliard got out with Operator 13 asleep in his arms, Commissioner Acton who was just coming out glanced at the burden that this seeming cavalry sergeant was carrying.

" Is this child dead ? " he asked. Then, recognizing the girl, " What has happened to her, sergeant ? "

" I don't know, sir," replied Gailliard coolly ; " is there room for her here ? "

" Certainly." He told the clerk, who was following, to get a police sedan and bearers to carry the young lady to the matron's quarters. " And send a doctor up at once ! " he called after him. And, to Gailliard, again : " She isn't wounded, is she ? "

" No, sir. Just exhausted I reck—I guess."

" Where did you find her, sergeant ? "

" Near the ruins of the 18th Precinct station, sir. She was with the military and tried to arrest a notorious rebel named Gailliard, I understand. He got away from her in Greenwich Street ; when I found her she was too exhausted to tell me more than this."

Two policemen came with a sedan ; Gailliard placed the girl in it. Then he calmly stooped and kissed her on the mouth.

" Goodness me," said Mr. Acton, " is she a relative ? "

" Ask her, sir, when she wakes up," said the boy with a grin and dazzling flash of teeth.

The next instant there came an outcrash of drums, and he saluted and was gone, engulfed by the excited and cheering crowds that were frantically greeting the arrival of the first Guard regiment back from Gettysburg.

But Operator 13 slept on.

At midnight, amid the flames of the burning city, rattle of musketry and roar of mobs, one of the New York city regiments—the famous 7th—arrived from Pennsylvania, landed at the foot of Canal Street and marched immediately for Broadway.

Two other regiments had preceded it by an hour or two, the 74th Guard Infantry and the 65th Buffalo. Other regiments

followed—the 69th Guard; the 26th Michigan; the 152nd N. Y. Volunteers, the 8th Artillery, and some regulars and marines.

A little after midnight John Gailliard mailed a letter at the Pennsylvania Station across the North River. It was directed to Operator 13.

Mr. Gailliard seemed to be in excellent spirits. He wore fashionable citizen's clothing, carried two valises, and was reading a *Tribune* extra when the train left the station bound south.

"Extra," he read, smilingly, "the 7th is here! The city is safe! Terrible fighting during the day! Death of the notorious rebel spy, Captain John Gailliard——"

"Poor fellow," he murmured, laying the paper aside as the coloured porter came to inquire whether he wished anything.

"Yes," he said, pleasantly. "I wish the war were over, for one thing."

"Anything else, suh?" asked the porter, laughing.

"Only a glass of water. And pleasant dreams."

At 300 Mulberry Street, the girl he hoped to dream about was sleeping the sleep of absolute exhaustion.

Not even the perpetual racket of musketry, the shocking detonation of field artillery, and the brazen drums of constantly arriving regiments marching through darkness could arouse her from her deathlike sleep.

In the dark of dawn a regiment arrived marching through the thick obscurity with its band playing and the men singing an old time children's song:

"The stars so bright
Are candles' light
So angels white
Can see
To sit all night
Till morning light
A-watching by you and me.

"All night,
All night
The angels are watching by me;
All night,
All night
The angels are guarding me!"

The men stopped singing when passing a burning house where a little coloured girl lay in the gutter with her throat cut.

It was Thursday noon when the matron awoke Operator 13, gave her a bath and breakfast, and sent a hack to St. George's Place for her baggage.

She was sitting by the window, in her station house nightdress, and wearing the matron's ample wrapper and slippers, when Inspector Carpenter came in with a telegram and a letter.

"Are you quite recovered, ma'am?" he inquired politely.

"Quite, thank you."

He bowed and went out, and she opened the telegram:

Your record is excellent, with Miss Quilter and Miss West in jail, and Andrews and Cleburne dead. Keep after Gailliard.

SHARPE.

She opened the letter:

A line would reach me through Gaston at Richmond. Just a line, please, to say you are well and that, in future, you are going to remain on your own side of Dixie.

J. G.

By two o'clock her baggage had arrived. She dressed in a bewitching summer gown of pink organdie and a small straw hat, trimmed with wild roses, slanting coquettishly over one ear. She carried a pink handkerchief, pocket book, and parasol to match. Her cheeks were pink also.

She was standing by an open window looking down at the thousands of poor refugees—old people, women, children—swarming in yard and street below, who had fled to the Central Office to escape violence and death.

She could hear the distant sound of fire bells, of musketry, of cannon. The tender blue sky was still befouled by smoke, and the outer air stank of it.

Commissioner Acton came in presently, haggard but polite. He had had no sleep for seventy-two hours, and would have none for another twenty-four.

"No ill effects, ma'am?" he inquired.

"None, thank you. But how did I get here, Mr. Acton?"

"Why," he said, smilingly, "your—relative, I presume—brought you in."

The girl's inquiring eyes, lingering on the kindly face, sought the outer sunshine. A slight blush glowed in her cheeks.

"My lover," she said naïvely.

"Really, ma'am! I hope he may be in no danger to-day."

"I hope not."

The Commissioner said pleasantly: "Our Metropolitans and the soldiers are getting the better of the mob. I expect it will all be over by to-morrow. But I advise you not to go out doors so charmingly dressed, ma'am."

"Could I drive to the ferry, Mr. Acton? I must go to Baltimore at once."

"Well, yes," he replied; "we could send some cavalry with you."

So it happened; and at two o'clock Operator 13, in her pale pink dress and hat, and carrying her pink parasol and pocket book, drove across to the ferry surrounded by a company of clattering blue-jacketed cavalry. And, before the cars left, she telegraphed to Colonel Sharpe:

He is on his way south and I'm after him.

OPERATOR 13.

When the Negro porter came to her to announce that she had half an hour for supper in the Philadelphia Railway Station restaurant, her pretty pink handkerchief was all crumpled up and wet with tears.

XI

BLONDE AND BLACK

To Colonel Sharpe, Chief of the Department of Military Information, Secret Service Operator 13 was making a clean breast of everything. Except that she was in love.

The July heat in Virginia was terrific, and the Colonel was not sure whether perspiration or tears bedewed the flushed cheeks of the fair penitent.

She told him how—under Major Allen's régime—she had made prisoners of John Gailliard and Vespasian Chancellor, and how, horrified by the execution of a spy before her very eyes, she had let them go.

"I never had seen anybody die," she said; "I was new in the Secret Service and did not clearly understand the nature of my oath."

Then she told him about her attempt to force John Gailliard across the Canadian border.

"I bungled it," she said. "I suppose any other Secret Service agent would have shot him. But, after all, sir, you gave me the choice, and I did try to drive him into Canada."

Colonel Sharpe, lounging in his camp chair, continued to twist his cavalry moustache and gaze at the slim, pretty girl in her pale blue muslin dress and tiny blue hat which was slightly tilted toward one of her beautiful, dark eyes.

"I hate myself," she said.

"Nobody else does," he remarked.

"Don't you?"

"No."

"But you'll have me dismissed from the service, won't you?"

"No, ma'am."

"I deserve to be," she sniffed, close to tears. "Anyway, you'll never trust me again."

"You're mistaken, ma'am."

For a while he sat in silence, one leg crossed over the other and the spurred boot swinging gently to and fro.

Finally he said :

" Let that affair of Chancellor and Gailliard go. The information you brought in—and Jeb Stuart's two blooded horses—balance the backsliding. If there really was any.

" You record for daring and devotion is very clear, ma'am. Lady Green-sleeves has been eliminated, and that lovely siren's Washington residence at Thirteenth and I Streets is empty of conspirators and Federal fools.

" Mrs. Morris is in prison ; Miss Ford "—he smiled—" has married her Yankee jailer, and that settles her. You caught Miss Quilter and Miss West. When they have had a dose of fortress life, they will be liberated and sent south with a warning. I hope their mothers spank them.

" Through your tireless persistence Clive Andrews and the spy, Cleburne, were destroyed red-handed. You hunted Gailliard out of New York and helped to save the ironclad, *Dunderberg*.

" Of the list I gave you of Confederate spies in New York, Captain Kennedy and Captain Beall [1] are being patiently trailed by your two New York agents, and are very certain to be arrested, sooner or later. I am sorry for them. So are you. But it wouldn't do to let them go. And, after all, you are taking the same chances with the same penalty for capture. Who, in the South, would sentimentalize over you ? "

He relighted his cigar and gazed at it apprehensively. Maybe it was a poor one. He always seemed to be a little afraid of his cigars.

" Could you become a blonde, ma'am ? " he inquired abruptly.

" I suppose so," she said, startled.

" Can you wear a blond wig—er—persuasively ? "

She laughed : " I'd rather dye my hair and eyebrows. And eyelashes too, if you like. I tried it once. It gives me a kind of piglike look."

" Do it your own way, ma'am."

There ensued another silence. Finally he said :

" It's Richmond, ma'am."

She gave him a scared smile.

" Do you mind going ? "

" No, sir."

His cigar had gone out again and he seemed afraid to relight it and laid it gingerly in a cracked saucer.

" General Meade wants information," he said. " Every bit you

[1] Both were arrested, court-martialled, and hanged.

can send him. He'd like to know what's in Lee's mind—if you can find out. And what is happening in Richmond. And what Mr. Davis really is thinking about. So you'd better go as a well-bred lady. Don't you think so, ma'am ?"

"I think so."

He opened and handed to her a gold locket. It contained a miniature, painted on ivory, of a dark-eyed girl with yellow hair.

"You'd look like her if you were blond," he remarked. "Her eyes are a little piggish but very fetching."

The resemblance to herself was striking, even to her.

"This is the sister of the spy, Cleburne," he said. "It would be a very safe impersonation for you ; she sailed for England last week on a blockade runner out of Wilmington. She'll not be in Richmond to confront you. This locket was found on Cleburne's body."

He handed her another packet :

"Here are all Cleburne's papers, and also a full history of Miss Cleburne and of her relatives and friends."

"It's like a part in a play, with cues," she said, "and I am cast for a rôle in it and am to familiarize myself with the part."

He nodded : "Only there'll be no rehearsals."

"I never have really needed any."

"So I have been informed."

"By whom ?"

"By your friend and sister-actress, the clever Pauline Cushman."

"She's a generous creature," said the girl. "I never knew her to be jealous of any other actress."

"She's a great favourite in the Western Army," he remarked ; "Major Pauline, they call her. Well then, ma'am, does the new play and the part in it please you ?"

"I shall play it anyway."

"That answer," said he, "explains why I consider you one of the best operators in the United States Secret Service."

The girl blushed brightly ; but like others of her ilk, became inarticulate under genuine emotion.

No doubt he understood, for he rose and bowed, terminating the interview, and sent an orderly for his cipher telegrapher, a shrewd-faced young man with slanting eyes and fixed smile.

August had become September, and September had ripened into October, and Colonel Sharpe had sent no word to Operator 13 that it was time to dye her hair yellow, and start for Richmond.

Secret Service Headquarters in the field always moved as the

commanding general moved, so the girl saw Colonel Sharpe nearly every day. He always was polite to her, exchanging an amiable word with her en passant; but she began to worry about having no assignment to duty.

Lack of employment the girl never had been able to endure for very long; and now, detesting her idleness, she sent north for copies of a dozen or more popular comedies and dramas, and learned the leads in all of them. Also, in her baggage, she carried a tiny edition of Shakespeare. It was poor print, but she pored over it by sunlight and candlelight, always trying to understand and discover fresh interpretations for her favourites, Portia and Juliet, and Perdita and Miranda.

In November Colonel Sharpe sent her into Baltimore to locate "grapevine," or as many tendrils and roots of it as she could discover, sever, and dig up.

The girl operated between Baltimore, Norfolk, and Washington, passing as a Mrs. Flasher, widow of an extinct race-track follower.

It was dull, uninspiring dingy work involving all sorts of humble characters—Negroes, oystermen, small farmers, shabby folk who made cheap hats and gowns, deserters, bounty-jumpers, sutlers' wives, and assorted saloon keepers and bar-room loafers. And, although she did all that was asked of her, and more, and—from a dramatic point of view—the cleverest character work she ever had done on the stage or off it—something was lacking.

And that something was excitement induced by danger and the exquisite thrill of deadly peril.

Only one other thrill could be comparable—and she never had experienced it—and that would be to play a great rôle in a great drama before a vast and critical audience in New York; and to sway and dominate that audience across the footlights by intellect, charm, and the incomparable artistry of sheer genius.

It was a dream familiar to her pillowed head as she lay awake weary from a drab day's doings in dingy Baltimore.

She had written to Captain Gailliard, as he had asked her to, in care of Mr. Gaston in Richmond.

One day, in the Baltimore post office, through general delivery, she had a letter from him:

GAIL DARLING,

You're such a gallant, cheerful child that I feel I ought to have surrendered and let a Yankee court-martial hang me, just so Colonel Sharpe could tell you how clever you are.

But, after all, think how much fun you'd miss chasing me. Because I suppose you're still doing it, or are planning to.

Since last I saw you I've been in Baltimore and Washington several times. Tell Colonel Sharpe. You will anyway, I suppose.

What are you doing in Baltimore? Tinkering with the grapevine? Never mind; tell me all about it after we are married.

Those words, alas, take all the levity out of me. I have little to jest about.

I wish to God I'd got that ironclad. But the entire revolt was a premature and horrible mistake; we had a hell full of devils in our hands—a baker's dozen of us alone in a pit with ten thousand raging wild beasts!

As for Valandigham, he ran away. A thing you never do, darling.

Poor Cleburne! What a ghastly end! He was only twenty.

Poor Andrews! He acted like a jackass. So did I when I organized that Red Bird cavalry! Oh Falstaff!

Well, God was good to you and me, and only my poor horse broke his neck. Are you as sick of war as I am?

Now, honey-sweet, I am ending my love letter. Letter paper is scarce.

I wish you'd tell your generals and their armies to go home and let us alone.

Your lover and future husband.

J. G.

She laughed and wept over it many a night on her pillow in her grubby Baltimore boarding house.

It was a miserable winter and spring for North and South and for all the armies of warring brethren.

Great souls died and little souls survived. A great cause was dying, too, imperceptibly.

The western general, Grant, had been taking everything he could lay his stubborn hands on.

Nobody else, besides the Great Admiral, bounty-jumpers, politicians, and contractors were taking anything.

Ashby was dead, and Stonewall Jackson and the golden Pelham.

And an old bundle of bones galloped his pale horse alongside Jeb Stuart. But nobody noticed it until a hasty pistol shot sent him to join the three other immortals in Valhalla.

Reynolds died at Gettysburg and Phil Kearny at Chantilly.

And a pallid phantom stooped above the jocund Sedgewick in his midnight tent. But none marked it.

In March that western general, Grant, took over all the armies of the United States.

In May all the armies of the United States were in line of battle and moving south. And the frightful fighting in the Wilderness began.

One day in early June Colonel Sharpe telegraphed Operator 13 a single word: "Ready!"

A few days later the girl was sitting in her tent near Secret Service Headquarters, happy, excited, lovely to look upon.

One of the military telegraphers had left a banjo on a tree stump near her abode; and that morning the girl was strumming it blithely and singing away in her tent like a bird in a sunny cage:

"I had a honey,
She wouldn't stay,
Ac' kinda funny,
Cry all day,
Tuk all de money,
Done run away,
Runaway Ann am de debbil tuh pay!

"Runaway Ann,
Whar yuh a-runnin' tuh!
Runaway Ann,
Got a new man!
Runaway Ann,
Debbil boun' ter foller yuh,
Kotch yuh an' swaller yuh,
Runaway Ann!"

Glancing up through the open tent-flap she espied Colonel Sharpe, booted and spurred, sauntering toward her, carefully carrying a cold cigar.

"You'll lack no credentials in Richmond if you'll sing that to them," he said, smiling.

"Am I really going, then?"

"To-night, ma'am."

Excitement deepened the lovely flush in her cheeks, and, quite unconsciously, she clasped her hands under her chin and fairly wriggled like a delighted child.

"Are you letter-perfect in your rôle of Miss Anne Cleburne?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes, sir——"

"All her family history and all her relations and everything and everybody connected with her own life, present and past?"

"Yes, Colonel Sharpe."

"Very well. None of the other Cleburnes is living to make trouble for you; and this Anne Cleburne is still in England. Of course," he added gravely, "we must risk her coming back on a blockade runner."

"Yes," said the girl, "we must risk that."

After a brief silence: "Your couriers will be Billy Dix, No. 28, and John Babcock——"

"I am glad," she exclaimed, enchanted.

"Keep to yourself," he said—"I mean as far as other Union spies in Richmond are concerned. Keep clear, particularly, of No. 33. His name is Bayard Mannix. He is a brave man and has been invaluable to us. But some of the Treasury scouts and couriers through whom he maintains contact with us are fools. I've warned him repeatedly."

"I understand, sir."

"See that you don't forget. I hope nothing will happen to him. I've ordered him home. But I can get no word from him."

He began to pace the tent, glancing now and then with deep suspicion upon his extinct cigar.

"You might as well share one of my worries," he said to the girl.

"I should be happy to. Is it your cigar, sir?"

He looked at her mischievous face, then laughed and relit his cigar. But his face sobered again. He said:

"Not hearing from Mannix makes me think of how Major Allen worried over Timothy Webster and those two pitiable poltroons whose stupidity sent Webster to a Richmond gallows—I mean Price Lewis and John Scully. They went blundering into Richmond, knowing that Mrs. Phillips might be in that city and that she was a rebel counter-spy and perfectly able to identify Price Lewis on sight. And they knew that the Mortons might be in Richmond.

"The rebel counter-spy, George Cluckner, with Chase Morton, caught that pair of stupid birds; and they went to pieces and involved and betrayed Webster to save their worthless necks.

"But Mrs. Lawton stood nobly by him till the tragic end.* I have more respect for Belle Starr than I have for Scully and Price Lewis. And to poor Carrie Lawton I give all my admiration and homage. I never forgive a coward," he added.

He began to pace the tent again. Operator 13 meekly offered him a tin plate for his cigar and he placed it upon it without a smile.

He said: "I wish the War Department wouldn't meddle with the detectives of the Departments of the Treasury and Interior. I can work with the Post Office Department but not with the others."

He looked her quietly in the eyes: "As for you," he added, "keep away from them. They're not to be depended upon in a crisis. They lose their heads and get caught and hanged. Or confess and involve others. I warned Mannix not to trust either their common sense or—at a pinch—their courage. So stick to your own couriers and your own contacts. I'd rather have no news at all from you than news of your arrest inside the Confederate lines."

The girl was a little surprised at this calm and temperate man's emotion. There was merely a slight trace of it, but it was a great deal for Colonel Sharpe.

"Very well," he said, "turn yourself into a blonde this afternoon. And when you're as blond as Venus and Lydia Thompson," he added humorously, "remain invisible until darkness comes and the ambulance arrives to convey you and your baggage."

"How am I to travel to Richmond, sir?"

"All your papers are in order, ma'am. You go in under this week's flag of truce along with about a dozen *other* lady Copperheads from New York, Baltimore, and Washington who have been arrested and expelled by our brutal Government."

Operator 13 laughed.

"When, where and for what was I supposed to have been arrested, sir?"

"Why not at the New York Hotel? That's where all Southerners go when they're in New York. Time: last July. Charge: intercepted and treasonable letters to Fernando Wood."

"What were they about?"

* The executioner fumbled the job very horribly. Webster died undaunted. Except John Scobell he was, perhaps, as Alan Pinkerton described him, "the greatest secret agent of modern times." It was he who enabled the Federal spy, George Curtis, and Mary Harcourt, to escape from Virginia.

"What was Fancy Fernando about?"

They both laughed.

"Be ready by sunset," said Colonel Sharpe, retrieving his cigar and walking cautiously away with it.

The girl was in highest spirits. She danced across the rough pine flooring of her tent to close the tent-flap, humming gaily to herself:

"Vallandigham is very sick,
Fernando's got the measles;
Wrap them up in the Stars and Bars,
Pop goes the weasel!"

As she was fastening the flap she saw the slant-eyed telegrapher with the fixed smile hanging around Headquarters.

"How did you acquire that smart grin, sonny?" she inquired flippantly.

"Telegraphing obituaries," he retorted. "Want me to send condolences to your beau?"

His macabre impudence gave her an unpleasant sensation. However, Colonel Sharpe's confidential expert cipher operator would have to know where she was going.

She had noonday dinner, cooking the army rations herself and ending with a sutler's peach tart and cheese.

The remainder of the afternoon she devoted to turning herself into a blonde, thoroughly, from head to foot. She was a little startled at the effect her golden eyelashes gave to her eyes which looked more like two velvet-dark orchids than ever.

"My light eyelashes give me almost a piglike expression," she thought. Indeed there was a kind of furtive provocation in them, now—almost a slyness—which seemed certain to trouble men.

She dared take no papers with her. For everything necessary in her complicated impersonation she must depend upon a memory which never yet had betrayed her.

The sun set, and she lighted her candles and waited.

Darkness was long in coming; in the western sky a clear lemon-yellow light still outlined the woods, when she heard horses coming.

Two "Jessie Scouts" in their grey uniforms rode up beside a covered spring wagon driven by a Negro. In it was her baggage.

In a few moments Colonel Sharpe spoke in a guarded voice outside her tent. She told him to come in.

He appeared surprised by so complete a transformation; the girl's blond-gold hair, and the way she wore it, seemed to make

her face plumper; the golden eyelashes utterly changed her physiognomy and expression, lending to the mouth a hint of humour and enhancing the provocation in the strangely beautiful eyes.

"Do I suit you?" she inquired, demurely conscious of her triumph.

"Yes. You are entirely another person."

"I've been troubled a little," she ventured, "about John Gailliard."

"You needn't be troubled, ma'am. God himself would not recognize you."

Which language from Colonel Sharpe was astonishing.

"My particular danger from him," she explained, "would be my voice and intonation. But I can alter both to one of those husky-sweet contraltos. Really—I don't mean to brag—but I can do almost anything with my face and voice."

"Yes," he said; "I realize that."

"I am wondering, also," she went on, "whether Vespasian Chancellor might be suspicious if I encounter him. I really am afraid of that man."

"I am too," said Colonel Sharpe, simply.

Operator 13 put on her travelling hat and ivory-coloured Paisley shawl with its jewel-like central medallion.

"Good-bye," she said, extending her pretty hand.

"Good-bye."

That was all. She went out, leaning lightly upon his gold-laced arm; the reckless "Jessie Scouts" saluted; the aged black driver touched his battered hat; the six mules pricked up their ears.

A moment later the cavalcade was clattering away through June starlight.

Her train left at midnight. There was no sleeping car.

Dawn was breaking when she left the train and took her place in one of six mule-drawn army wagons which were loaded down with exiled ladies and their luggage, and drove off immediately toward the Confederate lines.

Three mounted men rode out ahead of the wagons; a sergeant of cavalry, carrying a white flag on his lance; a boyish looking trumpeter. A smart major of cavalry led the procession at a lively trot. West Point was written all over him.

Operator 13 stole a glance at the other women in her wagon. She knew none among them and was thankful.

When, at last, Confederate pickets challenged and halted them

wild birds, everywhere, were singing lustily, and early June sunlight lay rosy and golden across fields of dewy clover.

While the ceremony and details of the cartel were occupying Federal and Confederate officers, and a good-natured conversation was going on between the pickets and the Yankee troopers, Operator 13 kept her eyes busy.

She could see a train with steam up, standing about half a mile away on an embankment flanked by field fortifications. This must be the Richmond train.

There were some rickety Confederate army wagons awaiting them in a near field.

She leaned out a little and looked at her misguided brethren, the rebel pickets.

They didn't appear to think they were misguided, or starved, or ragged as they leaned jauntily upon their bayoneted muskets and exchanged chaff with the sleek, well-uniformed Yankee troopers.

"Reckon yuh all better git outen that thar Wilderness," they said, grinning. "'Tain't no place fo' nice, clean, hog-fatted Yanks."

"Aw' right; go ahead and put us out," jeered the trumpeter.

One of the pickets desired to know which was the "fightin'est" regiment in the Yankee army. He'd like to make a betting-match between it and any South Carolina regiment they cared to pick.

Everybody was entirely good-natured about it all. The Federal flag-of-truce bearer fished out of his haversack a small bag of real coffee, a loaf of soft bread, and three days' ration of boiled beef.

"Here," he said, handing it down, "you Johnnies get outside of that and pass me a plug of ginuine Virginia."

The ragged fellows pretended to hesitate, but their bony fingers trembled as they clutched the soft wheat bread and coffee.

They had not touched the food when, finally, the caravan was signalled to proceed: they had no intention of letting a Yankee see how hungry they were.

Toward the middle of the afternoon Operator 13 caught sight of the spires of Richmond, and of the foaming rapids of the river.

For a long while they had been driving through fortifications, rifle-pits, covered ways, masked batteries, signal towers, squads at work, regiments at exercise, picketed houses, and horses at pasture, tents, shanties, parks of artillery, lines of freight cars, ammunition dumps, wagon trains.

The soldier-driver pointed out where Kilpatrick's cavalry had

charged; where Ulric Dahlgren had died; and where the poor, bewildered Negro, who misguided the cavalry, had been hanged.

Not long after this drawling lecture, the wagons rumbled across the bridge into Richmond; and Operator 13 registered at the Spottswood, took a bath and a nap, and then leisurely unpacked to dress for dinner.

Of the numerous resident and mobile Federal spies assigned to Richmond, Operator 13 had knowledge of very few, and these had belonged to Webster's group. Of them, Webster had been hanged; Price Lewis was in Henrico Jail, and Scully in a Confederate military prison. The Harcourts, W. H. Scott, David Graham, and Hugh Lawton had vanished into the country toward Glendale; Mrs. Baker and plucky Carolyn Lawton, one jump ahead of the hangman, reached Baltimore and remained there as counter-spies. Of that group only the brave Negro, John Scobell, remained in Richmond; and, unless he made himself known to her as somebody's coloured cook, or as a common labourer, or perhaps as a peddlar, Operator 13 would not know him. Nor, for that matter, would she know where to find her own couriers, Jack Babcock and Billy Dix, until they made contact with her.

The first thing the girl did was to report herself to the Provost Marshal's office where a polite officer, Captain McCallum, begged her to be seated until General Winder, who had gone to the Exchange Hotel, could do himself the honour of waiting upon her. He introduced her to another amazingly courteous officer in beautiful grey and gold uniform—a Major Beale—who overwhelmed her with Chesterfieldian bows, and made out for her a pass with permission for residence and travel, which he signed with flourishing empressment.

It was becoming plain to Operator 13 that the supposed sister of the late Captain Cleburne was somebody in the South. She was certain of it when old General John Winder came in and, glancing at her, and then at her papers and her pass which Major Beale handed to him, made her a magnificent Maryland bow, which the girl matched with her most carefully rehearsed Virginia curtsey.

She looked smilingly at this formidable ex-West-Pointer, who had once been breveted for gallantry at Contreras and Cherubusco, and saw a sturdy gentleman, grey and smooth shaven, with a pair of wise, keen, ironic eyes regarding her under the ambush of frowning brows.

In quaint, courtly fashion he offered his arm and led her into his

private office where, comfortable in an armchair, she was quite ready for cross-examination.

But if General Winder had any lurking suspicions of Miss Anne Cleburne, they were not noticeable.

He spoke of the two Cleburne families which, he supposed, were unrelated, asking her if she had ever met General Pat Cleburne. She was primed for that; explained that through the Romeynes, they were related; that both were of Irish origin; that her own name was Anne Romeyne Cleburne.

Evidently this grey old man with ironic eyes knew all that; he was, in fact, an amazing repository of genealogical information, and it was well for Operator 13 that she had read widely concerning the family she was impersonating.

"Well, Miss Cleburne," said he, noticing her half-mourning, "your brother died as gallantly in New York streets, last year, as though he had fallen at the head of Stonewall's brigade; and all Richmond knows it. Do you mean to live at the Spottswood?"

"I'd like to take a small furnished house, General."

"You'll find plenty, ma'am. And many ladies to call on you I have no doubt. And more than many eager cavaliers——" He regarded her grimly. "Our young men in Richmond are as impetuous in gallantry as they are on the battlefield. There are many good and beautiful women in Richmond, too; but none lovelier than Miss Cleburne."

That settled her security and her status at the Confederate capital. There was, evidently, not a breath of suspicion regarding her advent or herself. Prudence, common sense, and that delicate sensitiveness to danger which she, of all Federal operatives, possessed, promised to see her through the perils confronting her. It was not herself she feared; it was some careless or over-confident or cowardly fool who might endanger her slender neck.

That same morning, examining the columns of the *Enquirer*, she checked up on furnished dwellings to rent, and found a pretty two-storey little house of red brick with limestone pillared portico on Franklin Street, not far from the residence of General Lee.

It was ready for use, full of comfortable Victorian furniture with a few older Georgian mahogany pieces so black that they looked like rosewood.

Here she installed herself; and the same afternoon came the brave Negro spy, John Scobell, to apply for a position. He had been watching for her arrival in Richmond and he came immediately

in guise of a stable groom out of a job, and identified himself beyond any doubts.

Here was an invaluable aid. He knew everything there was to be known about the geography of the city and about its inhabitants —that is as much as could be learned in kitchens and stables, and from working with pick and shovel on fortifications.

Through him to Jack Babcock at Wilcox's wharf by way of Glendale went her first cipher dispatch: "Hoke's division ordered to Petersburg." But "Beast" Butler in his "bottle", merely squirted hideously across the two rivers, a lump of static incompetence; and the troops he sent made no serious attack.

Through Scobell she soon gathered her modest staff of Negro servants: Rosie, her personal mulatto maid; Nikka, waitress and general maid; and Jilly-Lou, a lazy but competent cook.

Scobell found for her a nice little victoria and horse for which she paid $4,000 Confederate. Understanding horses as he did, having served apprenticeship as a slave under his Scotch Mississippi master whose name he now bore after being made free, he drove as coachman for the beautiful Miss Cleburne or, when she rode, followed her as groom.

Thus, thanks to him, the little household on Franklin Street was launched without delay; there were no counter-spies in it; and the name of its mistress and its locality guaranteed its respectability.

It was in a strange, bewildered, nervous, crowded city that Operator 13 had taken up her residence—a city that had been for years within hearing of the enemy's guns; around which battles had raged not ten miles away; a city constantly beleaguered and besieged behind its vast system of fortifications and the armies guarding it.

Scarcely a week passed without the startling clamour of the alarm bells and galloping of cavalry and artillery through midnight streets.

But the girl discovered it to be a desperately gay town in its tragic determination to keep going. Half of the inhabitants were in mourning; the place was full of sick and wounded; around the public bulletins a frightened vortex of people gathered every day as details of the constant fighting were posted.

The Confederate White House was a sad home for the President and Mrs. Davis, deep in mourning for the accidental death of their little son, Joe.

But Richmond was a brave city of gallant folk who resolutely

tried to ignore the gathering gloom and journeyed forth to foregather with their friends. For to brood at home was unendurable; there was terror in the drawn curtains, anguish in the midnight pillow, and death heavy in the June weather where flowers reeked of funerals, and the river dashing among the rocks a ceaseless requiem.

It was known immediately that another beautiful woman was in that town of beautiful women—a Miss Cleburne.

The Cleburne name, and the first glimpse of her in church, that Sunday, set the aristocracy a-twitter.

It did not take long. Mrs. Preston spoke to her; she visited Mrs. Webb's hospital in the afternoon and met there Preston Hampton, Mrs. Lee, Mrs. Breckinridge, and Constance Cary.

Mrs. Howell and Burton Harrison came in. Then Mrs. Semmes and the Misses Preston. It was very easy, now.

At evening service there were in church generals enough to officer an army corps—Hoke, Clingman, Elzey—and many youngsters and their families, wives, and sweethearts.

Major Venable and a lovely Preston girl they called "Buck," and a lame general—golden hair and beard and Viking eyes in his long, sad young face—these took charge of her. And she drove home in Mrs. Davis' carriage with the lame general whom they all called Sam, and who turned out to be the simple-minded, headlong John Hood.

Then a lovely Miss Haxall, a Mrs. Stannard, and a Colonel and Mrs. Ives took her to Mrs. Webb's where was supper of oysters, partridges, and champagne; and where every gown except her own had been turned, though many a necklace of pearls and diamond glimmered in the gaslight.

Veiled slyly by the golden lashes, the dark eyes and golden hair had done their devastating work among the youth of the feverish Southern city.

To all charities, all hospitals, nursing circles, sewing circles Operator 13 was bidden. Everywhere the sister of young Cleburne was welcomed; to tea in the shadowy White House; to a seat among the ladies at the Capitol; to a gallop along the River James as far as it was prudent to ride; to a picnic-inspection of the fortifications with the lively, lovely battalion of beauty; to the Tredegar Iron Works to view the deadly war machines preparing against the North. And always, everywhere around her, young men in grey and gold—many of them lame or bandaged—gay, romantic, handsome, jesting

lads who already had learned their "*Vita brevis*" and who, breathlessly, made the most of arrowy hours and a world aflame, hurtling toward destruction.

If the girl's beauty turned their heads, those same heads already had been turned every day and sometimes several times a day.

Courtships were swift with Death sitting in the prompter's box and the vast curtain trembling toward descent.

A courtship, a love affair, an engagement—that was the happy portion of the fair in those piping days of war and death when suddenly all the church bells went mad of a sunny morning and shouting cavalry and artillery rode through Richmond streets.

Mrs. Ould and the Colonel, Commissary of Prisoners, gave a tea for the beautiful Miss Cleburne.

The Webbs gave a ball. There was venison, quail, or partridges, as they were called in Richmond, claret, Burgundy, and champagne. A proposal in the flirtation room from a big, blond boy on crutches. Another on the stairs; a middle-aged major this time, and very fiery; and very desperate when bearded Mr. Benjamin interrupted—clever, bland Mr. Benjamin who perceived nothing and took the beautiful Miss Cleburne out for another glass of champagne.

They all were quite mad about her, the Kentucky contingent, Tennessee, the Carolinas, Georgia, Virginia. She was not as beautiful as Hetty Cary, nor as tall as Connie or "Buck" Preston.

At the Ives' theatricals, where Mrs. Clay played Mrs. Malaprop and Constance Cary made a lovely Lydia Languish, the sad-faced obvious Hood whispered his discovery in her ear: "I believe that fellow Acres is a coward!" And Breckinridge nearly died of suppressed mirth.

In the farce which followed, Operator 13 was cast for the lead, and her professional dancing and singing astounded everybody.

Amid a tempest of cheers and clapping she responded to the curtain call, but they wanted her to sing or do something; and a Colonel of Cavalry passed a banjo to her across the footlights, not knowing whether she could play it.

So, adjusting the ribbon-sling across her shoulders, and still standing, the girl sang the Negro "Christmas Day" spiritual for them:

"Big star shinin' in de sky,
Chris'mus Day,
Chris'mus Day,
Mary she come runnin' by;

'Whar de manger?' Mary say,
'Laws-a-mercy, los' mah way!'
Mary wuz in pain.
Baby born on Chris'mus Day
Jesus wuz his name.
Angels sing an' angels pray
In de manger Chris'mus Day!
A-a-ll day
Chris'mus Day!"

They didn't want to let her go; but Hood's body servant, Cy, came to whisper to the lame general, who got up immediately; and, in the sudden silence, the sound of cannonading shook the chandeliers till the prisms tinkled.

Her reports to Colonel Sharpe were clear, unhurried, concise, all written in Number 7 cipher.

Sometimes Scobell took them to Glendale for Jack Babcock; sometimes Billy Dix in crusted boots and ragged dress of a farmer boy peddling vegetables and eggs drove his bony mule and cart across from Drury's Bluff and always sold Scobell something at the kitchen door; and took the dispatches back to that blood-drenched territory near Cold Harbour.

One day she saw a huge, wounded officer in St. Paul's Church, Major von Borcke, and experienced a tiny pang of fright. But the big cavalryman could have no recollection of the little mulatto laundress at Jeb Stuart's quarters, nor could detect in her any possible resemblance.

The only real anxiety that the girl had was dread of the real Miss Cleburne's sudden return when some blockade runner slipped into Wilmington.

With this ever-threatening death warrant in mind, she went about her pleasures and her duties in a rôle so perfectly befitting her that, insensibly, the tragedy of it invaded her that she—whose business was their betrayal—should be so welcomed, trusted, and beloved among these gentle folk in their doomed Virginia city.

But General Grant, hammering at Lee, smashing his gory way toward Petersburg, wanted information.

Bragg, with his tactless temper, had gone. Few mourned him. Wily Joe Johnston had gone, also, replaced by a Texan, sad-faced Hood, ordered to find and fall upon Sherman—he of the garrulous tongue and the scrubby red head and beard and fists.

"Beast" Butler poked his grotesque features out of his den and

was pounced upon and beaten up by Beauregard. And the cannonade became perpetual before Petersburg.

"We want to know," wrote Colonel Sharpe, "whether Lee means to throw any more troops into Petersburg."

John Scobell took the answer of Operator 13 to the Glendale tavern, from whence Jack Babcock and his wiry horse, Gimlet, flew northward with it, dodging his way through, though how they did it only God and that matchless scout could tell.

All went smoothly for Operator 13. The most difficult part of her business was anonymously to send food and necessaries to that awful * prison at Twentieth and Cary Streets which still bore the sign: "William Libby & Son, Ship Chandlers," and to do the same for her wretched countrymen at Belle Isle, while Grant's guns thundered at Castle Thunder.

From the Capitol in Richmond the girl could look across and see the shanties and tattered dog tents of the Union prisoners on Belle Isle; and the sight sickened her.

More sickening still were the gory fruits of the three assaults on Petersburg, cramming all hospitals and camps, darkening the crape-hung city with deeper mourning. But there was no whining in the Confederacy; and odd and grim respect for this iron-fisted, impassive man, Grant, rendered their embitterment endurable. For the rebel armies had administered many a battering; but the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbour, Petersburg were the first real batterings they ever had had to suffer; and they knew, now, that the onrush of the North was as inexorable as the mounting sea, and that God alone had ever subdued it.

But, so far, the dikes were still standing. Butler bobbed up; Beauregard banged him. He was a political general, this Butler, like Floyd; and no better; and had been theatrically decreed an outlaw by the South. Which should have left him unnoticed as a grotesquerie, and reserved anathema for Hunter, who showed the beast in every feature of his cruel face. There were not so many of these. There were Quantrell and Wirz, though. All wars have them. The spitting women of New Orleans cannot excuse the Butler decree, Floyd's desertion of poor, brave Buckner, the destruction of Columbia—none of these ever can be palliated any more than can the hanging of Mrs. Surratt, the existence of Andersonville, and the indifference of Bedford Forrest at Fort Pillow. And

* The military prisons were bad, North and South. The awful record of mortality included such sink-holes as Camp Douglas in Chicago where ten per cent. of Confederate prisoners died in a single month.

yet every one of these offences can be paralleled in the Revolution, in the War of 1812, and in the Mexican War. And doubtless will be in wars to come—even to Quantrell and Belle Starr astride her frantic horse, and the "*sic semper*" of the cheapest murderer of the age.

On June 18th the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery lost seventy per cent. of its men in seven minutes. In a week the Vermonters lost sixteen hundred out of two thousand. In the 5th Georgia, fifty-four per cent. fell in one fight; sixty-eight per cent. were lost to the 8th Tennessee. And now to the beautiful Capitol on the hill the end of all things was approaching—invisible as yet—moving just beyond the smoke fringe across the river; and the concussion of its awful tread shook all the world.

On that beautiful June morning the beautiful Miss Cleburne chose to ride her beautiful horse, wearing her beautiful English riding habit which, moulded to her as elastically as her own delicately beautiful skin, displayed beautiful horsemanship and her utterly beautiful proportions for the benefit of heaven and earth alike.

John Scobell, immaculate in his groom's brass-buttoned, skirted coat, breeches and boots, ambled along behind his radiant young mistress.

Cherokee rose hedges were in snowy glory; mocking birds sang in China trees; orioles in elms; cardinals in magnolias and mighty oaks; and the James rushed dashing between its tumbled rocks.

She encountered and saluted the charming Carys, riding with the young secretary Burton Harrison; met and saluted Mary Preston and the charming Sally Preston known as "Buck"—all a-horse, attended by a cavalcade of youthful blue-bloods in grey and gold. Free of these she proceeded slowly along the river because so many demoiselles and gallants hailed or detailed her with gossip gay or grave, so that she was some little distance from the city before the road became clear and solitary, and the red dust from passing hoofs had settled along the weedy ditches.

She was thinking of nothing in particular. Letters and notes and messages required by social usage had been answered and dispatched, laundry and marketing checked up; household inspected and orders given; bankbook balanced; Confederate money in strong-box counted; servants paid; shopped at the Bee Store; flowers, wine, fruit, books, daily papers sent to hospitals together with the harvest of the last lint-picking. . . . Two pounds of tea,

forty pounds of coffee, sixty pounds of sugar—$800 Confederate. Not so bad!

That sunny tranquillity, resultant, possessed the girl with the superior feeling that she was prepared for anything the day might offer her.

She was mistaken.

There came into view, lounging and laughing in their saddles, the light brigade—handsome Mrs. Penn; Maria Lewis, who was Maria Freeland; Betty Miles, who was Betty Bierne; Dr. Le Conte of the powder factory; Captain Ashmore; Major von Borcke, and another and younger officer whose careless saddle-suppleness galvanized the girl's brain cells of recognition and touched with exquisite fright the sensitive nerve of fear.

At a distance, even, she knew him for a certainty, though he wore the Confederate grey and scarlet of the artillery and the triply twisted trefoils arabesquing nearly to his shoulders.

She drew bridle and said to John Scobell without turning her head: "The artillery officer is John Gailliard"; and a moment later they confronted her with uplifted riding whips and wide-swept hats and caps.

"Where do you ride, my pretty maid?" called out Betty Miles. "Come back with us to juleps, pompano, and iced Chablis!"

"Seasoned with Dr. Le Conte's best powder," added Mrs. Penn, making her superb horse do some impromptu dance steps.

Mrs. Lewis presented Captain Gailliard. When the boy recovered from his profound bow he still carried his gold-laced forage cap in his gloved hand.

Operator 13 looked him straight in the eyes.

That he had not the slightest suspicion concerning her was certain; that he had been hard hit at first sight by flower-dark eyes with golden lashes gave her a strange little pang—those provocative pig-eyes veiled slyly with silky gold.

And in that balanced moment, weighted so delicately with life and death, the girl was aware of the stealing heat flushing her cheeks with growing wrath.

There was a moment's gathering on restive horses for a hasty dish of gossip; a clatter of parting hoofs, gay voices calling back reminders of promises and rendezvous; and Operator 13 galloped on along the river with John Scobell at groom-distance behind.

Where oaks thickened and the road twisted through the sunny green dusk of foliage, the girl signalled slightly, and the Negro galloped within earshot behind her.

Walking their horses, she said in a low voice, not turning her head: "Was it all right, John?"

"Yaas'm. Cap'm Gailliard ain't never knowed yuh."

"No; he didn't. I'm not afraid of him. But I hope that Vespasian Chancellor is not in Richmond."

"I gwine find out, ma'am; ax Mars Gaston's nigger, Long Dick."

"Yes, find out. . . . There's something about the man Chancellor—I don't mean he frightens me; but I don't like him. He brings bad luck, somehow——"

"Mighty smart spy, dis hyar Chance'ler, ma'am. Give me a bullet in de laig one night."

"When?" asked the girl nervously.

"Night after they-all chase Mis' Lawton. See me a-skulkin' 'long Cary Street. Done holler at me. Me, I tuk de water, ma'am, an' de bullet done smack mah laig when I'se a-divin'."

"He's a dangerous man," said the girl calmly. "Once I could have killed him, or had him killed. Sometimes I wish I had."

"Yaas'm?"

"Not that I wish to kill anybody—or anything alive. I hate death."

"*Me* too, ma'am. But yuh gotta shoot to live, sometimes."

They rode on at a canter and turned their horses this side of Glendale and the Inn, because, the Negro warned her, it was becoming a rendezvous for Confederate spies, and Chancellor might be lounging there if indeed he were in Richmond at all.

"Yuh boun' to find de Secesh spies a-loafin' 'long o' dis hyar river, ma'am," said Scobell as they turned toward the city. "All de way dis side Wilcox's Wharf clar to Glendale an' de Bluff. 'Spec dis hyar Chance'ler hangin' roun' de wharf less'n de gunboats done scare him."

"Try to learn whether he is here," murmured Operator 13; and let out her horse for a hard gallop—perhaps to ease the intermittent wrath that heated her cheeks when she thought of John Gailliard, and of her golden eyelashes, and of the perfidy of man.

When she arrived home and had her bath, and her maid had massaged the nervousness out of her satin-smooth limbs and body, she drew on her rose-tinted China silk boudoir robe and, lying deep in her armchair behind the lateen blinds, looked at her breakfast of oranges, strawberries, and Suchong. And thought about John Gailliard.

What was that low instinct in men—even in men already in love—

which made them prick up their ears and look receptive whenever a pretty woman passed through their orbits ? Like dogs ever ready to wag. And wag hard if encouraged.

It was the animal in them. And it seemed to be latent in every one of them.

She lifted a hand-mirror and took a furtive look at her pig-eyes and the golden-veiled provocation lurking in their dusky depths.

What the deuce was it in men that provoked their sensuality ? Novelty ! The male instinct for it seemed to be insatiable. And here it was, full flowered, lurking in her baffling eyes. She recognized it, but she was hurt and resentful because he had responded.

For there was no mistaking when a man was hit. A girl always knows it. Operator 13 knew it now and it angered her. It alarmed her, too. Because this wretched young man had been bowled over by her when she was disguised as a quadroon laundress in Jeb Stuart's camp at Bower House. And also he had been passionately swept off his philandering feet when first he saw her white skin at Blythedale. And now—the same thing again—damn him !——

Restless and upset she sulkily sampled the fruit, pushed it aside and lay watching the sunbeams playing hide and seek through the blinds.

But the sullen phase passed ; youth, health, the tingling stimulation of incessant danger are tonics for hurt hearts. Also, for the first time, the humour of it faintly appealed to the girl.

But she couldn't lie here and sulk and speculate ; her days were full of busy moments.

First she wrote her news for Colonel Sharpe, using the code printed microscopically on inflammably impregnated jeweller's tissue—the only incriminating evidence of her profession which she had dared to bring with her, and which a candle flame could instantly convert into a flash and puff of smoke.

Billy Dix, the " vegetable boy," was already waiting at the back door, ostensibly to be paid for the breakfast strawberries and other " truck " ; so she drew slippers over her bare feet, belted her robe with a sash, and went down and paid him. And, with the Confederate bills went the dangerous memorandum.

Now she was ready to dress and do her shopping on Main Street ; and she put on her little primrose yellow straw hat with its tightly rolled up brim, her primrose gown with its smart, *bouffant* skirts and elbow sleeves displaying the fine under-sleeves of puffed cambric tightly banded at the slender wrists.

Her pretty victoria was waiting with Scobell on the box ; and she drove immediately to the shops.

Certain necessaries were not to be had, and it was useless asking for them; but she did find some muslin and print for her servant, and a cake or two of French soap brought in by a recent blockade runner.

Then, with what flowers and fruits and bottles of wine and newspapers she could find she made the rounds of her charities and hospitals.

The streets were much obstructed by troops and army-wagons, continuing the movement about which she already had written Colonel Sharpe. They were a ragged lot, these marching men of Ewell's corps headed for the Shenandoah Valley with guns, wagons, and general impedimenta—ragged and cheerful and full of jests, song, and boyish impudences.

To Operator 13 there was always something very touching and tragically appealing in these American brethren of hers so gaily addressed to the realm of Death; and now she could not resist the impulse to stop her carriage and give to the passing men everything she had purchased for the hospitals and poor.

"That's the cheese, lady!" they cried, stuffing their haversacks with her offered gifts; "bully for you, ma'am; we're very thankful, and so is old Jube Early and Peg-leg, tuh!"

They meant Ewell, and without the slightest disrespect; and, as their drums and fifes and bugles struck up, they burst into song:

"Ain't got a Honey
Kaze ah ain't got money
An' ah don't own nothin' but mah shirt an' pants!
Quit yore laughin' at me, sonny,
Kaze it shore ain't funny
When yuh can't take yore Honey whar the Honey-gals dance!"

"Moseyin' along,
Moseyin' along,
H'it don't seem right an' ah reckon h'it's wrong,
So ah'l ketch me a Yank an' ah'l wear his pants
An' take mah Honey whar the Honey-gals dance!"

Operator 13 brushed the laughing tears from her eyes and drove back to Main Street to replenish her hospital supplies.

On the way home she encountered crusty, demoted old Bragg with fifteen hundred garrison cavalry. He'd come to that; and most people wished he'd come to less—this quarrelsome old gunner whose reputation had been builded on a whiff of grape.

So it was late when the girl returned home and dressed for calling.

She called at the picturesque and silent White House brooding sadly in shadow under its fluted pillars; she made a call or two on Cary Street; drank a dish of tea with the Prestons and a glass of ancient sherry with Mrs. Penn; stopped to read the bulletin on her way home, and finally arrived there only to throw off her clothes and bathe and prepare for the theatricals in aid of all hospitals which were to take place at the Lee Stanfields'.

Premonition, feminine intuition, clairvoyance, whatever it was that made her shiver now and then while her maid dressed her, she was convinced that she would meet John Gailliard at the Stanfields'.

And she did.

He was one of the very first men she encountered; and perhaps it was anger as well as the shock of fulfilment that flushed her cheeks when she saw that fatuous look in his eyes that she had seen in the infatuated gaze of other men.

Her recognition of him was cool. They sat far apart at dinner, but she knew his eyes were constantly drifting toward her in conversation with others, and she hated it and longed to punish him, though deep in her mind and heart she was certain that he loved the girl she really was.

After dinner the theatricals and charades were rather tame for her because they already had been given in aid of the Orphanage, and she had sung the same banjo songs and danced the same dances, and had posed in the tableaux, in veil and wimple, as Saint Cecilia playing a *piano*!

Later, the charming old ballroom was given over to dancing. She danced with one-armed young heroes; with bandaged boys; with lame lads, slowly and gently. Dr. Le Conte hopped absent-mindedly about with her; tall Prestons and Lees led her through elaborate lancers and mazurkas. And all the while she was perfectly aware that her perfidious lover was hanging about within range of her breezy, perfumed skirts; and never even glanced at him.

But he got her after a while, and they danced—the girl angrily thrilling at the contact—flushed, uncommunicative, reluctant under emotion.

She desired neither food nor champagne, it seemed, but went with him sullenly to the omnipresent "flirtation room" which gave from the veranda and was poorly illuminated.

The boy was inclined to flattery and to subjects romantic, but

she drily sidetracked him with inquiries military; and got nothing except the explanation of why General James Longstreet was familiarly called Peter Longstreet or Slow Peter, and why General John Bell Hood was known to his intimates only as Sam.

That low, husky-sweet voice which she had prepared to employ with him, did not seem necessary, so absolutely unconscious was he of her identity.

"It's the pig-eyes," she thought, "and the damned mop of yellow hair."

He told her that he had known her brother, and she betrayed enough well-bred sensibility at mention of his name.

"Once," said the boy, "he showed me a beautiful miniature of you, Miss Cleburne; and I declare it is a perfect likeness."

"Oh, do you think so?"

"Perfect, ma'am. I would have recognized you anywhere."

"Probably," she said, "you are very clever at recognizing people—even in disguise."

She seemed unable to restrain her propensity for flirting with destruction. She had done it before with this same man who always seemed to excite the reckless devilry in her.

"Why do you say that?" he asked.

"Aren't you one of Mr. Gaston's bright young gentlemen?"

The careless raillery made him wince; and, for the first time, he became conscious of a hostility in her bright, blonde beauty.

"You seem to know, ma'am," he rejoined.

"Yes," she said flippantly, "I know one when I see one. General Winder's office is swarming with secret agents, detectives, and the Provost Guard; and, in my opinion, they all look alike as so many Chinamen."

"And you think I resemble the others?" he asked, turning red but trying to speak lightly.

"Do you know," she said, "that I am about to say something that will shock and surprise you?"

"What may that be, ma'am?" he asked uneasily.

"That I don't know what you do look like."

He was painfully flushed when he said very quietly: "I am sorry I seem to have offended you, Miss Cleburne, but I don't know how I did it."

She smiled. "I'll probably forgive you, whatever it is. Will you tell me a pretty story to amuse me? I mean a real story."

"Aren't there too many of those in the newspapers?"

"You know what I mean. Tell me a story about yourself, Captain Gailliard. You've had adventures."

"Nothing to mention, ma'am."

"You mustn't dodge. You have lived many an exciting story, I am sure."

"Why are you so sure?"

"You look it. You have a reckless face."

"You said you did not know what I looked like."

At that she laughed outright.

"Well, I do then. Your features were imprinted upon my—mind—the moment I met you on the river road. Probably you considered this the confession of a sentimental and too impressionable girl. Do you?"

"I wish I dared."

"Aren't all Mr. Gaston's young gentlemen rash and daring? Courage, Captain Gailliard; faint heart never yet pressed a pretty hand. And this is the Stanfields' flirtation room, you know."

Her outrageous provocation bewildered the boy. He was afraid of her irony, too.

"I thought," she said, "that flirtation always is the first inclination of a spirited young gentleman."

"It is," he said.

"But you don't seem to do anything about it. Maybe you are married. But is that a sensible reason?"

She could see he was not able to stand much more.

"Or," said she in a silky voice, "perhaps you are already in love."

After a moment: "He shall pay for that silence," she said to herself; but she masked her inward rage with an enchanting smile out of those furtive, golden-veiled eyes, provocative and sly as a little pig's at bay in the tall grass.

"Well," she said with a little sigh, "any girl can love a number of men; and I thought men could, too. . . . Shall we stroll on the veranda. It's darker there."

They rose and she took his arm. On the gallery the scent of roses filled the night. There was nobody else there. In the silvery star-dusk he drew her waist within his arm and kissed her before she could avoid him.

"That," he said, "is for your strangely lovely eyes."

The girl untwisted herself from his arm and stood with small fists whitely clenched and lips parted for the breathless blast of words to overwhelm him.

None came. He moved toward her, two steps: she took two more; took his lips again, trembling.

In the intoxication of the throbbing moments the girl clung to him, satisfying her long thirst for him with quivering mouth and cheeks wet with tears.

Nothing else mattered, not even that he did not know whom he kissed. Vaguely she thought of that—but that was man—God pardon him!——

That was all; there was no word exchanged; she gave him one supreme instant as though her very soul were passing through her clinging mouth; and left him dazed, unsteady, gazing after a receding phantom dissolving in starlight and the scent of roses.

That night the girl slept badly, doing considerable crying, happily and otherwise; and was wild to have a real chance at him because she knew, in her deepest mind of a woman, that she could hold him if she chose.

"Oh Lord," she whimpered, sitting up on her pillow, both knees clasped in her white arms, "Oh Lord, oh Lord——"

Artillery jolting interminably through Franklin Street wearied her at last, and to the jarring clank of it she finally fell asleep.

Billy Dix and his "mewl" were at the back door with tomatoes and new corn, her maid informed her after breakfast in her room next morning.

She went down stairs, careful not to seem to hurry, and cautious of what she did and said, because Nikka and the cook were within earshot. So she decided to go out to the alley where Billy's cart and gigantic mule stood, and pick over his down-river produce for herself.

Handling the fresh ears of corn and plump tomatoes she took the memorandum which he smuggled into her hand and listened to the boy's whispered description of Sheridan's advance:

"Thirteen miles of cavalry in column, ma'am," he said under his breath, shifting and hauling and pulling about crates and boxes and sacks. "And later I saw five brigades of them coming on in line of battle, brigade front, regiments in parallel columns of squadrons, their bands playing—just one huge trampling sea of glittering sabres. . . . Stuart's dead, and it can't be very long now, ma'am, can it?"

Operator 13 nodded carelessly as Nikka shuffled by; "Yes," she said, "I'll take the corn and tomatoes and three heads of that French lettuce, and the cherries, too—" She glanced after the

lazily moving Negress—"How is it before Petersburg?" she whispered.

"Awful, ma'am. A stinking, filthy shambles—just one endless mess of blood ten miles long. Our ships can't get up the river. No gunboat could live five minutes under their heavy batteries. . . . It's all Bullfrog Butler's doings—if he'd had the sense to come out!—there were only two thousand Johnnies in Petersburg——"

"Hush. Be careful. These coloured servants are unsafe."

Jilly-Lou and Nikka approached with baskets; the mule nipped at them: "Quit dat lippin' me, yuh ole 'pokkalips ripottermus!" remonstrated the cook.

Nikka laughed: "Wha' dat yuh call dis hyah mewl?" she inquired.

"Dat ain't no mewl," retorted Jilly-Lou, "dassa ripottermus!"

"Whazza ripottermus?" demanded Nikka, piling green corn into her basket.

"Go ax de 'pokkalips, woman," said Jilly-Lou. "Bible—bees' mo'n 'leben cubits high, bite yoh haid off!"

Amid mellow shouts of African laughter the conversation and spoliation of the mule-cart continued; and Operator 13 went indoors about her business.

Which, first of all, was to copy the map which Billy Dix had slipped into her hand with plans of new Confederate gun emplacements along the river—a new masked battery south of Batting Dantzler, another at Trent's Reach. It was easier to write with vanishing ink than it was to make maps with it, and the task took her some time. She had then to make her report, mentioning the arrival of John Gailliard in Richmond.

She was not going to ride that day. Scobell had told her the week before that there was a rumour a blockade runner had slipped through the Federal guard fleet.

Every woman of her acquaintance in Richmond very soon heard about it and hoped that the ship had brought in such necessities as women's shoes, thread, bed and table linen, and dress goods. As for Operator 13, she hoped that the blockade runner had not brought the young lady whom she was impersonating.

When John Scobell arrived for orders that morning she had told him to bring around the victoria after lunch. She was at lunch, now, in her boudoir when Rosie came to say that Scobell was below and wished to speak to her about the carriage which needed a new rear wheel.

Wheel trouble was the signal agreed upon between the girl and

Scobell in case the latter found it necessary to see her privately. So she told Rosie to send Scobell to her and take away the tray.

He came, wearing his livery of a groom instead of coachman.

"Done fotch de hosses, ma'am," he said cheerfully, "kaze de off hind wheel am bus'." But, when Rosie, carrying the luncheon tray, had vanished kitchenward: "Reckon we-all better ride, ma'am," he said quietly. "Train comin' in to-day. Tole me at de station dey's folks an' goods aboard from de blockade runner, *Sea Spray*."

An odd little pang of premonition left her silent, waiting for the Negro to continue.

"De ship done slip into Wilmington," he said.

"Is she British, John?"

"Yaas'm."

The girl rose, unlocked a drawer in her desk, handed Scobell a miniature painted on ivory.

"Reckon it's yuh, ma'am," he said.

"It resembles me, doesn't it?"

"Yaas'm. Look lak yuh-all wuz twins."

"It's a picture of that Miss Cleburne I'm impersonating. If—and God forbid it!—she's on that British ship, and on the train that's coming in, I've got to leave Richmond, and leave quickly . . . I don't imagine there would be any danger to you if you remain."

"I ain't quittin' yuh, ma'am," he said coolly.

"You needn't risk yourself, John——"

"De kunnel done say, bring mah lady home safe."

"Colonel Sharpe said that?"

"Yaas'm. An' I'se gwine do it."

"Thank you, John." She smiled, laid the miniature away. "Of course," she said lightly, "there's always the chance that Miss Cleburne may return. But I doubt it. However, in case of trouble, do you think I'd better ride by Glendale and try to reach Wilcox Wharf?"

"No, ma'am. We-all gotta ride by Mountcastle."

"Do our passes take us out that road? It's a terrible road."

"Yaas'm. We gotta git to de York. Gotta go dat-a-way, ma'am."

"What time is the train expected?"

"To-night. She ve'y slow train. Reckon cars git in 'bout nine o'clock. Is yuh did yoh map an' all, ma'am?"

"Yes." She remained thoughtful for a moment: "That's not true about the carriage wheel, is it?"

" No'm," he smiled.

" Very well; I'll put on my habit and we'll ride out toward Malvern. Nobody goes that way and we can talk over matters."

Scobell returned to his waiting horses; Operator 13 went about her dressing, singing blithely, although that odd premonition and subtle sense of impending trouble made her careless gaiety an effort.

" That's strange," she thought, while Rosie helped fasten and drape her and handed her whip and gloves.

John Scobell put her up, mounted his own nag, and followed her sedate pace through Franklin Street under the spreading foliage.

The terrific fighting around Petersburg drew great crowds to the bulletins. Otherwise the city was deathly still in the hot sunshine.

Halfway to Glendale they turned south toward Malvern where, in a weedy field, Operator 13 jumped her lively horse to and fro over an ancient snake fence, and, tiring of this, cantered on down a rutty red road until she came in sight of the old Henrico Tavern.

The aged inn was closed; a riot of briars, jasmine, honeysuckle, and roses nearly buried the weather-worn veranda now occupied by several squirrels.

" In case of trouble," she remarked to Scobell, " that is a good hiding place."

" Yaas'm, so 'tis," he said quietly. " An' jus' soon as I done hear yuh wuz a-comin' to Richmond I traipse out hyah, an' I fix de well an' de do' an' I hid me a bucket an' a sack o' grain an' hard rations an' ammunition."

" Why, John ? " she asked, amused.

" Kaze I reckon we all gwine skedaddle some day."

" You're a good scout," she said. " I've heard all about what you've done. You're really wonderful——"

" No'm, I ain't so much," he said modestly.

However it appeared that he had been watching affairs more closely and more intelligently than had she. For she now learned that the Glendale road was heavily patrolled by Provost cavalry at night, and that Glendale Tavern swarmed with Confederate military police and agents, watching all comers from Harrison's Landing direction and from Wilcox Wharf.

" You really are a jewel," said the girl gratefully. " If I'd had to skedaddle I'd certainly have gone that way, and run my neck straight into the hangman's noose! Are our nearest pickets at Mountcastle ? "

" Yaas'm."

"Well, John, I don't expect we'll have any reason to run—not for a long while, anyway—maybe not before the war is over. . . . All the same, thank you for taking such good care of me."

She turned horse, put him to a canter.

When again they rode into Richmond she had not yet shaken off that curious apprehension of threatened evil.

She did not go out that afternoon, pleaded headache to all callers, and kept her boudoir behind locked doors and lowered lateen blinds.

Again and again, sitting there with nothing on but her China silk chamber robe in the afternoon heat, she wondered at her own uneasiness and silly apprehension. It was not like her to submit to such senseless nervousness. And yet, deep in mental depths occult, some vague intuition remained unsatisfied—as though her own ghostly soul were alert and watching.

Into the girl's strange young mind came, gradually, a slight sensation of fear. She clasped her sensitive fingers beneath her chin and stared at the lateen blinds, as though, beyond them, danger lurked.

And so powerful became the menace of imaginary peril that she rose, barefooted, and peeped through the blinds into the sun-drenched street below.

And saw Vespasian Chancellor looking at the house.

She never had fainted. A sudden mist seemed to possess her eyes and mind, blinding both. Then, instantly, both cleared, and she looked down at the man of whom in all the world she was most afraid.

He was roughly dressed, his shirt collarless, his spurred boots dusty. He wore an old felt hat.

He stood near a large tree, leaning lightly against it, his piercing eyes wandering along the house-fronts but seeming particularly interested in the curtained windows and drawn blinds of her own small dwelling.

After what seemed years to her he scratched a match on his boot sole, lighted a twisted cheroot and walked away past General Lee's house and on up the deserted street.

When he had disappeared the girl unlocked her door, rang for Rosie, and sent her to the stable to fetch John Scobell and both horses.

She then lighted a candle, set it on the hearth inside the chimney fireplace, and touched her flimsy code-book to the flame. It vanished like a puff of guncotton. The map of Billy Dix went the same way.

Now she dressed swiftly in her riding habit, pocketed what gold she had, and all the Confederate bills; lifted her skirt and buckled her revolver to her left leg above the knee.

This was the end of Richmond for her: she knew it though she did not understand it. But she did know that when the brilliant, slitted eyes of Vespasian Chancellor lingered on any house that harboured a Federal spy, that same Federal would do well to disappear.

But what, in God's name, had aroused his suspicions and brought him into Richmond? What on earth could have gone wrong?

She looked through the lattice again and saw John Scobell ride up, leading her horse. There seemed to be absolutely nobody else on Franklin Street in the withering glare of the July sun.

"If anybody calls," she said to Rosie at the front door, "you may say that I am riding out Chesterfield way to supper, and expect to return very late to-night."

"A hour ago," remarked Rosie, "strange man done come to de back do'. Ax is Miss Cleburne to home."

"What did he want?"

"Dunno, ma'am."

"Did he give any name?"

"No'm. Say, ax yuh kin'ly ef you'd see him."

"You said I was not at home?"

"Yaas'm."

"What did he say?"

"Ax me when yuh wuz 'spected. Tole him I dunn'o."

Very coolly Operator 13 described Vespasian Chancellor, collarless shirt, dusty spurred boots, and all.

"Yaas'm, dat de man. Reckon he jess no 'count trash."

The girl nodded carelessly, stepped across the sidewalk to the mounting block and swung herself unaided into the saddle.

As Scobell adjusted her skirt and stirrup she whispered, "We've got to go quick, now. Vespasian Chancellor is watching the house."

Not a muscle of the Negro's grave face moved. He gave the girl her bridle, mounted his own horse, and followed her down the street under the shade of the great trees.

As long as they were on the Glendale river road she dared not speak to him. As soon as they turned into Malvern road she reined in; he rode up at her elbow, and she told him what had happened and asked his opinion.

"Yaas'm," he said quietly, "we-all gotta skedaddle right smart."

"Now?"

"Dunno, ma'am. I gwine fix yuh up at de ole Henrico Inn; ax yuh kin'ly wait t'will I run by de Provost an' find out whar de trouble gwine start."

"You are going back to Richmond, John?"

"Yaas'm."

"Then you turn right here and go immediately; and I'll ride on alone to Henrico Tavern. Shall I take my horse into the stable there?"

"Yaas'm. Nobody dar. Nobody gwine go dar. Yuh ain't git skeered none ef I bide till dark?"

"No; I'll wait." She smiled. "I don't 'git skeered,' John. Not badly anyway."

"Is yuh burn yuh code-book, ma'am?"

"Yes, and Billy Dix's map. There's nothing left."

He touched his hat, swung his horse and galloped away westward; and Operator 13 cantered her nag tranquilly toward Henrico Tavern along the unused, overgrown and rutty road which had become merely a lane. Except for a covey of quail or two, and a convention of squirrels on the weather-worn veranda, the old hostelry with its sagging gallery and closed shutters was steeped in solitude.

The girl rode around to the stables where twittering swallows soared and dipped and huge bees plundered the thistles and blossoming burdocks.

The stable door was merely latched and she led her horse inside.

Here she discovered the bucket and the shelled corn that the Negro scout had mentioned; and she watered and fed her horse and wandered about the dim place trying to curb her rising excitement and think out a plausible reason to account for the sudden and sinister appearance of Chancellor.

She thought about John Gailliard, too, wondering whether Chancellor had consulted him. But that seemed impossible; John Gailliard would have come to the house himself had any question of her identity been raised by Chancellor.

What on earth had put that human bloodhound on her trail again? Where had he chanced to cross it and recognize the trail as hers? Certainly not at the Provost's office, for had he voiced any suspicions there to General Winder, she would have seen him accompanied by a squad of Provost cavalry instead of lounging against a sycamore tree across the street.

The girl was really not alarmed. But she had seen a red lamp

glimmer in the distance to remind her that her right of way might not be entirely clear.

She had seated herself in the dim, cool stable to wait. It was tiresome. She went into a box stall, lay down on a heap of brittle hay, but could not sleep.

Nobody passed on the road, and she expected nobody where there were no fields or pastures, only woods on either hand.

As the sun sank lower the swamp frogs started their oratorio. By the time she had saddled up again and had led out her horse, it was very dusky outside, and mist blotted the bushy swamps and shrouded the tall woods with an ashen belt halfway up to the tree tops.

The ghostlike widow bird's husky call came from along the darkening road; the night swarmed with grey moth-shapes among the vines. After the moon glittered out the first cat owl whooped and howled with goblin laughter.

The path of the road was the path of the moon, and in its brilliant light she could see shadowy rabbits sporting in elf-like ecstasy.

It was now late enough for her to expect the Negro scout; and very soon she heard a horse galloping.

She had mounted and had drawn and cocked her pistol when John Scobell galloped up and called to her in a guarded voice; and she rode out of the tavern yard and joined him.

The scout did not mince matters. The train, he told her, came in at eight o'clock. From it descended the young lady whose miniature he had seen earlier that afternoon. And, as she set foot upon the station platform, Vespasian Chancellor arrested her.

Operator 13 moistened her dry lips with her tongue, but her low voice was under cool control.

"They'll find out who she is very quickly," she said.

Then Scobell informed her that Vespasian Chancellor had been on the same train with the real Miss Cleburne; that, learning her name, he had become suspicious; had left the cars at Courtleigh, hired a fast horse, and had ridden across country to Richmond to consult the Provost's office.

Apparently General Winder had no slightest doubt that Operator 13 was the real Miss Cleburne; and he gave his orders accordingly.

So Chancellor met the train when it arrived in Richmond and placed the indignant young lady under arrest.

That explained the mystery to Operator 13—and accounted for

the prowling of Chancellor around the pretty little dwelling on Franklin Street.

"I've got to leave, of course," she said quietly. "I couldn't go back and face it out. They'd trip me somewhere."

The scout agreed that they ought to ride on immediately, but with great caution, because, he told her, he had learned that all police patrols had been doubled in the district and there might even be watchers already along this very road.

"You needn't go with me, John," she said.

"I ain't never quit nobody, ma'am," he replied simply.

"Well, then, it is Mountcastle?"

"Yaas'm."

They put their horses to a canter along the moonlit road. There was not a sound in the foggy woods—silence everywhere in this silvery moonlit world of mist and shadow, broken only by the thudding of their horses' hooves on the soft red earth.

They had been cantering their horses for half an hour, perhaps, when Scobell rode up beside her to whisper that there was another tavern ahead—the Red Bird Inn—and that they must pass it because the Mountcastle road crossed there and the swamps on either side were impossible to penetrate.

Even as he was speaking they saw lights ahead.

"Ma'am," said the scout, "I reckon we gotta run our hosses or git ketched. I see two pickets mounted an' more a-settin' on the veranda. Cock yoh pistol, ma'am, an' ride over them! Now, ma'am!"

As they rushed spurring out of the night into the lantern glare ahead, the girl saw Vespasian Chancellor spring to his feet on the veranda and run for his haltered horse—mere glimpse of his never-to-be-forgotten face—then Scobell's horse hit a mounted man and knocked horse and rider halfway across the road; another rider jerked his mount out of the way and dodged her as she hurled her galloping horse straight at him.

Darkness swallowed them before the first pistol shot flashed behind them.

They had a long ride before them to the Federal pickets at Mountcastle, but probably the road was clear of patrols.

One serious question, however, remained to be answered: Could they outride the men who would surely follow them?

They settled down to do it. And, for a long time they heard no sound of pursuit.

It was a flat, misty, moonlit country, forest-set and with few

cultivated fields and fewer houses. Alternate patches of moonlight and darkest shade checkered the road which was a fair one and had not been cut to pieces by artillery and wagons.

But farther on the land became more uneven and rolling, with fewer woods and more cultivated stretches; and it was when they drew bridle on one of these low ridges that they heard the gallop of pursuit; and it was startlingly close at hand.

And now Operator 13 and John Scobell really began to ride. Both were expert in the saddle and knew how to get out of a horse what the horse had to give. But the state of the road began to worry them now, for it became much rougher; and rain had gullied it into dangerous shape for horses.

So near, now, was the pursuit, that those who followed them fired on them now and then, and they could hear one or two of the horsemen yelling shrilly in the moonlight.

Now they were galloping in the path of the moon again, along a narrow, sunken road with high grassy banks on either side; and Scobell called out to her that Mountcastle was two miles ahead.

As he spoke his horse stumbled and fell, and the Negro rolled free of the kicking creature, sprang up, and tried to catch his bridle; but the horse wheeled and galloped straight back toward the pursuers.

When the coloured scout fell, Operator 13 pulled in her horse and turned to aid him.

"Get up behind me, John!" she called out breathlessly.

"No, ma'am," he panted; "if yuh gwine help me, ride on to de Union picket line!"

"I'm not going to leave you——"

"Fo' Gawd's sake ride, ma'am! I kin hold 'em!"

"No," she said, "I'll stay."

Now through the moonlight came five riders running their horses full speed; and John Scobell's pistol spat flame. Operator 13 fired at the same time; and down crashed two horses together, blocking the narrow road.

Into this kicking obstacle galloped the three other horsemen, unable to pull in and avoid the impact; and Scobell, firing coolly, knocked two more from their rearing horses. The other rider, managing to keep his stirrups and extricate himself, whirled his frantic animal and fled.

Operator 13 reloaded her revolver and the Negro scout reloaded his.

There were three dead young men lying there in the moonlight,

and two dead horses, and another horse in the ditch with a broken leg. The fourth man, who wore a new grey uniform, lay near the suffering animal. He was seated in the ditch and he kept passing his bleeding hands across his forehead as though dazed, smearing blood all over his pallid face.

John Scobell walked toward him and shot the wretched horse dead. Then he looked at the wounded man who looked at him out of sickened eyes.

Operator 13 had now dismounted; and she also drew nearer to look at the wounded man, who looked dumbly back at her.

The man was John Gailliard.

Scobell, now, was kneeling beside him. The girl took a canteen from a dead man and, with the water in it, wiped her lover's face. But he made no effort to drink from it; and whether or not he recognized her, she couldn't tell.

"John Gailliard!" she said.

He merely looked at her. After a moment Scobell struck a match and held it close to Gailliard's open eyes. The fixed pupils of the eyes remained dilated.

They lifted him between them, carried him to her horse, got him into the saddle, and, walking on either side, held him there.

The Negro scout said that there was a house about half a mile ahead.

"Who was the man who escaped?" she asked.

"Chancellor, ma'am."

They walked on through the moonlight and, about half a mile ahead came to a cabin which was dark, but a dog barked at them and they managed to arouse a white man who came carrying a lighted lantern to the door and stood blinking at them in his bare feet and ragged trousers.

"Here," said the girl, "is a Confederate officer who has been hurt."

The man pointed to his own bed; and they laid John Gailliard upon it and looked at him in the lantern light.

"Reckon he ain't bad hurt," said the man. "Looks lak he had a tumble."

"Have you a good horse?" asked the girl.

"Yaas'm, lady."

"How many?"

"Jess one hoss an' a mewl, ma'am. Ole mewl travel right smart."

"How much do you want for the horse?"

" Ah ain't cravin' to trade, ma'am."

" You'd better. The cavalry will take him anyway. Better sell him to us."

" Just lak yuh say, ma'am," he replied with humble resignation.

" What is your name ? "

" Colford Brexton."

" How much do you ask for your horse ? "

" Three thousand he's wuth, an' mo', ma'am."

She pulled from her pocket a handful of almost useless Confederate bills. From these she took six one thousand dollar notes and handed them to the man.

Then she produced pencil and paper, and, by the vague lantern light, wrote quickly :

General Winder,
Provost-Marshal-General, Richmond—

Captain John Gailliard of the Confederate Secret Service has been hurt, and is suffering from a slight concussion of the brain. Send an ambulance for him to Colford Brexton's house fifteen miles out on the Mountcastle road. Ask Vespasian Chancellor to show the ambulance driver the way, and tell him, also, that Miss Cleburne sends him her compliments and hopes he is in health.

She handed the note to the poor white who seemed pathetically honest, for he was trying to give back to her the extra three thousand which were worth about a hundred dollars silver.

" No," she said, " they are to pay you for saddling your mule and taking this letter to General Winder in Richmond. Will you do it at once ? "

" Yaas'm, lady. An' I thank yuh kindly an' feel beholden——"

Tears filled his eyes and he looked at John Scobell who had discovered the horse and the saddle and rope bridle, and stirrups, and was equipping the beast in the stable shed adjoining the shanty.

Now he and the girl were ready to ride the few miles remaining between them and the first Union pickets. And it was rash to remain longer, with Vespasian Chancellor riding like a damned man toward Richmond.

Operator 13 bent over in the lantern light and looked down into John Gailliard's eyes which were open. He could have heard every word that had been said, if his battered senses permitted him to understand.

She was wondering, now, just how much he had understood. His gaze remained placid and expressionless.

" Good-bye, darling," she murmured and bent down and kissed him.

Into his pale, boyish face came a flicker of amusement. He said in a perfectly distinct voice: " You can't be too many kinds of people to suit me, you know, because I fall in love with every damn one of them."

XII

END OF THE WORLD

Grey rain ; grey weather.

Masses of men in grey sloshing along ; a silvery grey world crawling alive with them. Ahead, all alone, a grey old man on a wet horse.

Slop, slop, slop over sodden, dull red roads trudged the weary rebel infantry : slap-squash-slap across soggy fields, trampled the tired cavalry.

Cased colours, guidons, battle flags aslant in the slanting rain.

Slip-splash, another horse down. His team-mate falling atop of him. Both dying ; indifferent.

" Clar away yore swing-team thar ! " officers were calling to drenched gunners. Crash ! another wagon collapsed. Wet men dragging débris toward the brimming ditch where a drowned corpse lay, naked feet protruding.

" All clar forward ? "

A far thin cry in the rain : " All clar ! "

" March ! March ! " in whispering, wheezy voices hoarse with coughing. A green and white guidon, uncased ; a square red battle flag, both soaked black ; then greyness and rain.

When the 44th Virginia battalion of the Provost Guard had passed, a trooper in the rear turned his jaded horse, drew his revolver and swung out into the roadside woods, shouting : " I see you-all malingerin' an' skulkin' thar ! Git up an' quit yore hidin' out on me ! "

" If yuh can't catch 'em shoot 'em ! " croaked an officer, forcing his muddy horse through quicksands which yesterday had been a ploughed field.

He spurred forward through the rain ; the grey-jacketed Provost trooper rode straight on into the woods, menacing unseen stragglers with the wrath of his poised pistol.

A long swale choked with cat briers, where a perfume of jasmine lingered, barred his way.

He rode around this, turned his horse to the right, and suddenly spurred him up a rocky slope where bushes, tipped with green, dotted the more open woods.

Here somebody in the thickets called out: "Campbell! Campbell!" and the trooper answered cautiously: "All safe, Thirteen. Where are you?"

Operator 13 of the United States Secret Service came through the drenched bushes leading two lively horses, one of which was saddled.

She was dressed in a short cavalry jacket welted with bright yellow braid and wore the spurred boots and breeches of a Union trooper. Over one ear a blue forage cap was cocked, the chin strap of which she had taken between her white, restless teeth.

"Well," he said, "it looks like the Johnnies are breaking."

"Campbell," she said excitedly, "I have my bundle of news all tied up tight! Let's get on to H.Q.!"

"Have those rebel scouts passed through us?" he demanded.

"No. Two horses have been through to Gravelly Run full speed, and have returned. You can see their hoof tracks and judge their speed for yourself. Over there on the wood-road. Here's a lively horse for you, Campbell. Come on!"

Campbell, Sheridan's chief scout, got off the tired, mud-plastered Confederate mount he bestrode and set about transferring the saddle and bridle to this fresh, alert mount which the girl had brought to him.

"Gosh," he grunted, "I've been starving to death with the rebel Provost Guard. Forty-fourth Virginia battalion; just got clear o' them. . . . I guess the hoof marks you saw were made by those fast horses that Chancellor and John Gailliard are riding——" He puffed and grunted, cinching his saddle, talking all the while. "I've been trying to catch those fellows alone—so's I'd stand a chance of getting away—afterwards——"

"What do you mean?" she asked nervously.

"So's I could shoot 'em and get away——"

"Shoot them!" she repeated. "You had no such orders, Campbell!"

"What do you know about my orders? Your Colonel isn't my boss——"

"Sheridan gave you no such orders," she repeated.

"Sheridan told me to stop the West to them——"

"They didn't try to break through!"

"Well," he grunted, "it's healthy for them—and for me too—

that they didn't. Becuz I made up my mind to shoot and hang before I'd let 'em through to Joe Johnston and Kirby Smith. You'd have done it yourself, ma'am; and I guess we ain't neither of us hunting for the hangman."

The girl, who had turned quite pale, watched him lengthen his stirrups in silence.

"The next time Gailliard and Chancellor take the White Oak road," he said, "they'll run into Sheridan. And by God they'll learn then that there's no road out of Petersburg and Richmond for Lee's army."

"Have the Petersburg lines broken?"

"Bending back, ma'am. Cracking up. Giving way. That was Early's corps I've been travelling with. Me, a rebel policeman! Can you see me? They're dead on their feet, too. You watch Phil Sheridan stop 'em! No more running away, now. No galloping off to old Joe Johnston! They gotta stay and be gobbled."

He climbed into his soaked saddle, swearing at the split rawhide; tested the girth, fussed with both stirrups while his new Yankee horse danced under him.

"Yes, ma'am," he said, "that's what Gailliard and Chancellor are up to. Looking for a clear road to the West for Lee through Gravelly Run. Soon's I get to Sheridan there won't be any clear road. No more skedaddling. The rebel army stays right here in Virginia and takes its medicine!"

He was ready to go, now. He thanked her politely for making the dangerous contact.

She said: "If they leave Petersburg it's going to be a foot race to the West between our army and theirs."

"My God," he exclaimed, "if you'd only seen the division I travelled with you'd know which army is bound to win a foot race. They're starving, I tell you; they're dead on their feet; thirty thousand galvanized dead men marching. . . . You know, ma'am, they're really a damn fine lot. Why not? They're Americans. Same's you and me. . . . Well, I can see the end of the world a-comin'. They'll see it, too, on the White Oak road, I guess."

He gathered bridle, glanced gloomily at the bony nag they were abandoning, and which now was browsing on tender April bushes.

Then he looked around at the girl and noticed a hole in her left sleeve.

"Been shot at, ma'am?"

She nodded.

"Chasing Gailliard and Chancellor?"

"Yes. They stopped at Mrs. Butler's house on the Boydton Road. I had news of them there and took the short cut by the mill on the Vaughan road near Hatcher's Run, to head them. They didn't go west; they went back to Fitzhugh Lee; and his vedettes took a shot at me."

"You got plenty of grit, young lady, trying to stop two desperate devils like that. Well, that's your reputation, in the army, ma'am. Shall we be starting?"

She fished a bacon sandwich out of her haversack and passed it across to him; produced another for herself. They turned their horses, eating as they rode. The poor, deserted nag looked after them until they disappeared in the woods.

When they had finished their hardtack sandwiches the girl produced two rather withered winter apples.

"You certainly are a ministering angel, ma'am," said the grateful scout, walking his mettlesome horse beside hers. "You oughta seen those poor rebel devils I travelled with—eating slivers of raw, stinking meat cut off dead horses. Me, I couldn't. Made me vomit. I cut a bit off my canteen strap and chewed that. Jesus!" he added without irreverence.

Noticing his Confederate uniform, she asked him if he were a "Jessie Scout," but he shook his head. "None o' those hangman's pets for me, ma'am."

"Don't we all belong to the hangman's brood?" she remarked carelessly.

"God—I guess we do at that."

On the Vaughan road Sheridan's disguised scout bade the girl a hearty good-bye, swallowed the apple core, and spurred away in quest of his fiery master whose misunderstanding with brave, noisy General Warren was beginning to puzzle and irritate him.

Operator 13, slim and straight and supple as an Academy cadet in her saddle, tightened her cheek-strap, set her cap firmly on her short, curly hair, put her horse to a gallop, and pounded away on the plank road toward General Headquarters, near which Colonel Sharpe's Secret Service division was sure to be found.

One thing she had not told Campbell; the Confederate lines around Petersburg had not only *already* given way, but Lee's army was leaving. She knew it for a certainty because she had robbed a Confederate courier, and his dispatches to Joe Johnston were in her pocket to prove it.

Toward evening, in pouring rain, vedettes around Gravelly Run

stopped her, held her a few moments, then let her through, grinning wetly. The whole region was blue with Union cavalry arriving.

She began to talk excitedly to Colonel Sharpe the moment she was admitted to his tent: "I've had such good luck," she said breathlessly; "I was taking Campbell's horse to him as you directed me and at three o'clock this morning a rebel courier's horse fell dead where the road from Sidney's meets the White Oak road, and here are his dispatches, sir——"

"Whose dispatches?" inquired Colonel Sharpe, smiling.

"His—the rebel courier's——"

"Oh, did you shoot him?"

"Yes, sir. He caught my horse by the head——"

"It isn't quite clear to me yet, ma'am."

"Well, I saw a dead horse on the crossroad; and this man suddenly came up to me in the dark and took hold of my led horse. So I shot him in the legs."

"Oh, I understand," said Sharpe. He opened the dispatches. They were not in Confederate cipher—which would have made no difference except in time, because the Federal military telegraph cipher operators deciphered every Confederate message.

"Sit down, ma'am," he murmured.

Operator 13 seated herself, still flushed with triumph and excitement.

Colonel Sharpe wrote rapidly and sent the message by orderly to the Lieutenant-General in supreme command of all the armies of the United States who, not very far away, was talking to General Meade.

Then Colonel Sharpe turned to Operator 13: "So you made contact with Campbell?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where did he go?"

"To General Sheridan."

"Did he see Gailliard?"

"Yes, sir. He meant to shoot Captain Gailliard and Vespasian Chancellor but couldn't find them far enough away to give him a chance to escape."

"Did they get through to the westward?"

"No, sir."

"You attended to that?"

"I tried to."

"Well, they'll be back to try it again," he said, "unless Sheridan's cavalry stops the roads. That's why Lee sent them—to

find him a clear road to Joe Johnston and Kirby Smith. . . . I'll step over to see General Grant. You'd better go to bed."

They rose; he came to her and took both her hands—the first sign of emotion in this man that she ever had noticed.

"Well done, Operator 13," he said; and left the girl on the verge of nervous tears.

She slept poorly—was almost ill about midnight; reaction, perhaps, from being fired upon by Fitzhugh Lee's vedettes; for she really had been badly frightened by the fusillade.

Also, her nearness to John Gailliard was making her extremely nervous; and what Campbell said to her had scared her. Besides, her shooting of the Confederate courier had terribly upset her—the poor crippled devil scrabbling in the mud there, beside his dead horse, and moaning while she ripped his jacket open and pulled out his dispatches. Two of Mrs. Butler's Negroes went to bring him in; but the affair made her sick all the same.

All night long she heard through troubled slumbers the wallowing trample of Sheridan's cavalry moving out to the westward beyond Gravelly Run Church. She wondered where her lover might be, and Vespasian Chancellor—the only man of whom she really was afraid.

She was deathly sick of war. All the glittering drama of it—all the exciting mystery had vanished. There remained only hunger, dirt, vermin, bestial violence, the horror of bloody dying things.

A little more than that, perhaps: the strange, inexplicable passionate clinging to a bit of red, white and blue bunting.

Something else had come into her mind and heart, also; the first, ghostly stirring of spiritual wistfulness and need. Although, in her timid mind, the words and face of God continued to be confused with the words and visage of the President.

Reveille left her still asleep. The roar of cannon shaking her tent aroused her. Colonel Sharpe had sent her some good coffee, eggs, soft bread and an orange. Headquarters' laundress, black as ebony and weighing three hundred, gave her a bath and scrubbing.

Sharpe sent for her about noon.

General Grant was there, his hands shoved deep in his pockets, a short, square, icy-eyed man, smoking a cigar.

The Lieutenant-General of all the armies of the United States was briefly, silently polite.

"General Grant," said Colonel Sharpe, "wishes you to go to

General Custer's command. You will take as many orderlies and scouts as you desire to employ. The object is to keep any and all rebel couriers from slipping around to the westward while cavalry fighting is going on. General Sheridan has asked for you. You know this network of by-roads and trails along the Appomattox. Our maps don't show them all, but you have scouted them during the autumn and winter, and I suppose you know every one of them. Don't you ? "

" Yes, Colonel."

" Also you know, personally, the two rebel spies we are extremely afraid of. I mean Captain John Gailliard and Vespasian Chancellor."

" I do, sir."

" *They are not to get through,*" remarked Grant quietly.

" Y-yes, General."

He lifted his stiff-brimmed campaign hat to her, resumed his cigar and walked slowly away followed by Colonel Sharpe.

Since she had been awakened by the guns, carbine firing also had been audible very far away to the westward. Now, as an orderly brought around her horse the noise of the rather ragged fusillade had increased. It sounded, to her, like Spencer-carbine fire ; and the scout, Babcock, who came cantering up on his celebrated horse, Gimlet, said that it was Sheridan's cavalry carbines making all that racket.

" It's going to be a fight or a foot race," he said gaily. " God help them ; if they run they're done for."

The weather was still sour and lowering with brief gusts of rain.

Babcock rode with her a little way and along the White Oak road. But that was no place for them, they discovered, when presently they were shot at ; and they whirled their horses and ran them hard through the woods to the Dinwiddie road, and then westward all the way to Mrs. Gilliam's house. Here the fields, meadows, thickets and woods swarmed with dismounted Union cavalry deploying to the northward. Their yellow-welted jackets made a moving tide of blue spreading over the wet, brown world ; the rattle of their Spencer carbines was incessant.

Babcock galloped over to join a knot of Colonel Sharpe's scouts and couriers ; Operator 13 watched Devin's and Pennington's dismounted troopers behaving like infantry and doing it extremely well.

Boyish General Merritt and his staff, mounted, were out in the

cleared land near a brook, and she rode over to report her presence and mission and ask for General Custer.

Merritt, young, smooth-shaven, very courteous, was much interested, and he questioned her minutely and turned in his saddle to look back at Babcock's scouts.

"General Custer," he said, "is facing the rebel cavalry of W. H. F. Lee, Pegram's guns, and the infantry of Corse and Mayo along the White Oak road. It's rather desperate for us unless Warren's 5th Corps moves up."

"They are under orders, sir. Shall I go to General Custer at once, or wait?"

"You'd better go, ma'am, and explain about the importance of stopping any rebel attempt to rush through. Say that I understand it thoroughly. I'll send Campbell as liaison."

"Very well, sir."

She turned and signalled to Babcock with her gloved hand, and he put his company of scouts in motion.

Merritt returned her quaint salute with smiling elegance, and she cantered her horse forward, made him jump the brook, and spurred ahead into the woods where she could see the red and white guidons of Union cavalry, mounted in line of battle.

Overhead, the rebel shells were tearing through naked tree tops, raining down bark and splintered branches. She halted Babcock and his scouts behind a tobacco barn at the wood's edge, then cantered her horse toward the headwaters of another brook where she could see mounted officers looking northward through field glasses.

One of these was an extraordinarily-looking and very young general officer dressed in a new uniform, almost solidly overlaid and embroidered with gold. He had red-gold hair and a golden yellow moustache, a long, thin, clever nose, and a pair of deep-set eyes of fighting blue. Or they could be melancholy with brooding mystery; or dangerous as a watching wild thing at bay.

At the moment young George Custer was feeling boyishly gay, humorous, mischievous.

"You belong on Fifth Avenue and in silk petticoats, ma'am," he said to Operator 13. "Pray tell me what you are doing out in the Virginia backwoods?"

They both laughed; she discharged her mission briefly; the boy general understood.

"I don't think they'll rush us," he said, "—though Fitz Lee is in front of us and there's no knowing. If they try it we'll just have

to hold them until Warren goes in. If they come at us, and some squirm through, point out those two men you want me to attend to —if you can. Of course I'll have them chased till we run them down, anyway, but show us those two scouts if you recognize them."

"I have John Babcock and some of Colonel Sharpe's scouts over there by the tobacco barn," she ventured. "I thought I'd better have them here under the circumstances you mention."

"That's the thing to do, ma'am. But there'll be no rushing at us to-day, nor after dark, either. I expect to have a good sleep at Boisseau's house. You'd better, too. I'll turn out anybody but General Sheridan for you," he added, laughing mischievously in the uproar of the cannon.

But she thought it better for her and her scouts to remain at the extreme western end of the line of battle; and she told him, smilingly, that the tobacco barn promised palatial quarters.

One of his regiments had now dismounted, and the racket of their carbine volleys became deafening.

"It's nothing," explained Custer in pantomime; "there'll be no real sport to-day."

All that lowering afternoon in the rain-squalls, and cannon smoke, Operator 13, bridle in hand, sat on a log near the tobacco barn and listened to the rattling, cackling, shrilling cavalry battle in the woods. There were short, ugly charges and sudden halts; bursts of scrambling, galloping horses that suddenly ended in a dull trample and the light notes of a bugle.

Dark came early, sullenly, making visible red reflections of the cannonade on the low ceiling of sagging clouds.

When the drenched world around her had grown entirely dark the firing ceased. Eastward, lanterns of the ambulances glimmered. Now and then a rocket soared hissing wetly into the fog.

The girl slept, bridle in hand, huddled wretchedly on her log. Later an orderly cared for her horse. She ate her ration, uncooked, and lay down in the tobacco barn among the scouts. All night long from an infinite distance came the booming of great guns, slowly timing the solemn funeral cortège of a dying Confederacy.

Merry flurry of bugle and trumpet peal before dawn. On the Crump road, Custer, glittering like a golden lizard of the tropics, joyous amid his jesting staff; east of him, boyish Wesley Merritt in grave confab with Devin. A sudden banging from rebel field batteries; shells, shrieking high again—very high—as though to

sweep through Warren if he were already on the march. He was not.

A saucy staff officer said to Operator 13 while she was washing her face in the brook: "Richmond is taken, ma'am!"

"Really," said the girl; and added; "I'm sorry to-day is April first; aren't you?"

The April Fool rode off, abashed, and the lounging scouts laughed at him.

But Babcock said: "It might have been true if Warren had come up last night. I saw Campbell a few moments ago. He says Sheridan is in a rage with Warren, and damning and cursing around. He's coming out here, too. You'll see fur fly to-day, ma'am."

About seven in the morning, blue overcoated infantry began to arrive on the Five Forks road, and there was a great outburst of band music everywhere.

Campbell, cantering up, said to Operator 13 who was just getting into her saddle:

"All of Custer's cavalry bands are playing. He believes in music. Grand, ain't it, ma'am?"

At that moment Custer's line of battle swept into view magnificently, with all its brigade bands mounted on grey horses—trombones, trumpets, clarions, key bugles, hautboys, cymbals, and kettledrums—playing "Nellie Bly". Both men and horses appeared electrified by the stirring, stimulating music.

It was a superb sight, Sheridan's line of battle, stretching from Boisseau's house eastward as far as the eye could see. Above them their forked colours, regimental standards and red and white guidons fluttered in the April wind; the polished brass instruments of every mounted band glittered and flashed; thousands of beautiful horses tossed impatient heads; thousands of blue-jacketed horsemen, carbines poised, moved slowly, steadily northward.

There came a roar of rebel musketry in front. The cavalry rode slowly on amid a deafening racket of firing and the wild music of their own mounted bands.

The bandmasters rode ahead, conducting and guiding with glittering sabres.

Operator 13 saw a cornetist fling up both arms and roll out of his saddle; saw a kettledrummer slump down across his nigh drum, oozing brains and blood all over the parchment.

She was riding a little behind and to the right of Custer's bugler. Custer noticed her and motioned her to fall back. As a colour

guard trotted past her, a boy carrying the swallow-tailed flag was hit by three bullets in succession. He pulled the lance staff from his stirrup bucket and passed the flag to the sergeant next him, saying: "I can't stand it any longer——" And fell forward stone dead.

About that time the line of battle crossed the White Oak road and halted.

The rebel infantry were gone.

Ahead, somewhere in the smoke, lay the unseen enemy intrenchments crammed with desperate men at bay. To the right, whither Sheridan had galloped, the battle roared along the forest like surf along a far receding shore, thundering diminuendo to the horizon.

The sudden stillness on Custer's line of battle was frightening.

After an hour the regiments dismounted and stood to horse. Custer's deep blue eyes glittered. It nearly killed him to mark time.

Campbell, leading his horse, called across to Jack Babcock as he passed: "That's Pickett ahead of us. There'll be hell when Sheridan arrives."

Sheridan arrived at four o'clock, tearing along Custer's battle line as usual—a slim little red-faced man with a closely clipped, bullet head, swinging his campaign hat as he galloped.

"Come on!" he shouted; "go for them! If you don't catch them in five minutes they'll get away from you!"

A thundering roar of cheers; the halted line of battle, startled, electrified, broke into a clumsy run.

"Where's my battle flag!" shouted Sheridan; and snatched it from a colour-sergeant. "Come on! Go for them!" he cried, standing up in his stirrups. "Ayres, start your infantry over there! Take them over those earthworks! Hurry, men, and we'll catch every one of them——"

His voice was drowned out in the terrific clash of collision; a vast blue wave dashed over the hidden earthworks.

As Operator 13 put her horse to the low mound of raw earth in front of her, and went up and over, she caught a glimpse of rebel infantry in swarms holding up their hands, palms outward, and a colour bearer who stood with flag and staff held horizontally high above his head. Amid deafening cheering the Union cavalry rode on, their mounted bands still astride their grey horses and madly playing "Nellie Bly".

Babcock plucked Operator 13 by her sleeve, saying that his men had all the western exits closed and that nobody had escaped.

Campbell galloped up to tell them that there were thousands of prisoners and several batteries taken.

It had been Operator 13's first experience in line of battle.

It seemed odd to her how perfectly she understood what was going on; stranger yet to realize that she had felt no slightest tremor of fear. But now, when it was over, the powder stench and the glimpses of dead and wounded men and horses filled her with a kind of sickened fright.

Sheridan, riding by, called to Campbell and sent him galloping to Grant at Gravelly Run. But staff officers from Grant to Sheridan were crossing this messenger already, with news that the rebel army was leaving its works around Petersburg and Richmond; that all batteries should open at once; and that each corps commander was to attack in his own manner and according to his own judgment, at four the next morning.

To Operator 13 came a courier from Colonel Sharpe, named Wayland, with a dispatch:

"*Now* look out! Lee is leaving! If Gailliard and Chancellor have found a clear road westward for him, *you* find it, too; and tell Sheridan.

"See to it that every avenue of escape—whether cowpath or highway—is picketed. Ride the region yourself! I depend upon you, Operator 13. Do your best and God bless you!"

But it was already written that this night was the beginning of the end. Regiments were cheering and singing; cavalry and infantry bands were playing noisily in the gathering darkness.

All night long with her maps and cowled lantern and her scouts and couriers, Operator 13 rode the western flank of the army.

Wherever she rode she found everybody in good humour—even humorous—as when, riding up to Nottoway Station, she asked a torchlit general and his staff who were crossing the railroad, whether this was a way station; and had the jesting reply: "Nott-a-way Station, ma'am."

By morning the "foot race" was on; the rebel army had left Petersburg and was hot-footing it into the West; and Sheridan, in advance, thundered along beside it with his matchless cavalry.

For four terrible days Operator 13 was in the saddle day and night, galloping ahead with Custer's vanguard, during which journey battles were fought behind her and Richmond was on fire, and Petersburg lay stunned and desolate amid a horror of earthworks

and ruined houses that made around her a vast and stinking desert.

Out of the burning Confederate capital galloped General Gary with his grey-jackets—through Cary Street and down Fourteenth Street to Mayo's Bridge where Captain Sulivane stood waiting to blow it up.

Gary saluted him: "All over," he said; "good-bye; blow her to hell," and trotted his horse and his horsemen across the last remaining bridge.

Behind them, the loosened mob bellowed, roared, cursed and fought, plundering the burning city; and the first company of Union cavalry was already galloping into Main Street.

On the fifth day of her tireless scouting, a courier from Sharpe found her and Jack Babcock at Burkeville; and bade her watch the Appomattox. She sent back word that Johnston's army was not there; that no Confederate troops from Petersburg had passed through; that Sheridan had covered the whole west with one vast screen of cavalry which nobody could penetrate; and that she would ride at once to the river he mentioned and patrol it with Jack Babcock's scouts.

A day or two later one of the scouts came in, slightly wounded and reported that Lee's whole army were crossing the little river Appomattox at High Bridge; and that he had seen Vespasian Chancellor and another scout galloping ahead toward the Blue Ridge Mountains.

The girl was deathly weary, but she took Billy Dix and rode out to see for herself what was going on across Appomattox River.

Others had already discovered it—two "Jessie Scouts" and some of Custer's advanced vedettes. These had three prisoners—cavalrymen of Fitzhugh Lee—who admitted freely that the retreating army was making for the Peaks of Otter.

When Operator 13 clearly understood, she sent Billy Dix galloping to the nearest field-telegrapher beyond Farmville with a message to Colonel Sharpe at G. H. Q.:

Rebel cavalry have crossed Appomattox River at High Bridge heading for Blue Ridge. Their infantry and wagons now crossing. Will notify General Sheridan. Chancellor and probably Gailliard are with Lee's advance, scouting out back roads to the mountains. Will try to stop and capture them.

OPERATOR 13.

And to Sheridan she sent Babcock with a note: "Rebel army now crossing High Bridge and reported making for the Peaks of

Otter or White's Gap. Colonel Ives' 1st Connecticut Cavalry scouts observing and following movement."

That night she noticed fires burning in the village of Farmville and thought she heard military music and cheering; and sent a scout to learn more about it.

He came back very much excited saying that those were bonfires and that General Grant was there.

All night long the trample of Ranald Mackenzie's passing cavalry disturbed her rest. She had gloomy dreams, too, of fires on the Peaks of Otter and of death in White's Gap where she had murdered her own lover with her pistol, while Vespasian Chancellor shot her heart to pieces with phantom bullets she could not feel.

Dix awoke her in her chilly blanket, bringing a lantern and a note from Colonel Sharpe at Farmville:

I hear there is a corduroy forest road somewhere between Appomattox Court House and the Lynchburg highway. If this is true it is not shown on any of our military maps. Take some scouts and investigate.

Twenty minutes later she had swallowed some scalding coffee and was riding north by west with Jack Babcock, Billy Dix, and Sheridan's chief scout, Campbell, followed by half a dozen Headquarter's scouts and couriers who had been watching the Richmond and Danville and South Side railroads between Burkeville and Farmville.

The rain had ceased but the low lying country had become a vast lake, with all creeks out of their banks and forests flooded.

Only the Appomattox River road seemed practicable, and very soon a company of advanced Confederate cavalry fired upon Operator 13 and her scouts and drove them away from that vicinity helter-skelter.

But beyond, against the silvery streak in the east, Operator 13 had caught a glimpse of Confederate baggage wagons parking in a tobacco field, and, as she and Dix were riding hard to get out of bullet range, she called to him to bear to the right where a low ridge, thickly wooded, ran parallel with the river. Up this their horses bounded, and on top, came suddenly into an old corduroy road obstructed by rotted logs, brush, ferns, and windfalls.

Two hundred yards to the eastward, straight away down this ancient lumber road, they saw two horsemen picking their way toward them, and a company of grey-jacketed cavalry and some

engineers in distant perspective, evidently clearing the road of the heavier fallen timber.

Jack Babcock cantered up to join them, followed presently by Campbell and all the scouts.

"By Jingo!" exclaimed Campbell, "there *is* a road, and here it is! I'm off to little Phil!"

As he whirled his horse Jack Babcock said to him: "Tell them we'll try to stop these fellows for a few minutes!"

"You ride, too," called out Operator 13 excitedly; "they may catch Campbell!"

Babcock swung his horse Gimlet and scuttled away through the brush like a rat in a hayrick.

Where a big white oak tree had crashed down across the corduroy and lay buried in ferns amid its rotting abattis, Operator 13 led her scouts, dismounted them, and detailed a man to every four horses.

She said quite calmly to Dix: "There's no particular reason in killing any more of them if we can scare them back. The Petersburg and Richmond armies are fast in a trap. This is the end of the world for them."

The scouts standing with drawn revolvers behind the fallen giant and other standing trees, looked at the girl with perplexed and doubtful grins, but Billy Dix said loudly: "You're right, ma'am; let the poor, starving devils run home. They're all in the same box, now."

A scout named Hammond inquired, respectfully, what he should do if the rebels, yonder, rode at them.

"We'll keep ahead of them, just out of range," she replied.

"Sure, ma'am; they'll take it for an ambush."

"Anyway," she said, "if they fire on us I'll talk to them."

"A parley," remarked Dix, "is better than a volley just now. Here they come, ma'am. Watch out they don't gobble us!"

She sent scouts out into the woods on either flank and, when they were posted, she wriggled through the fallen branches, levelled her pistol, and fired five shots high over the heads of the two Confederate horsemen who now had advanced almost within range.

The effect on them and on the startled troopers and engineers beyond them was instantaneous; the two horsemen spurred into the woods; the cavalry—a company only—came cantering forward, halted, and fired from their saddles.

"Fire high!" cried Operator 13 excitedly; and the scouts around her sent a volley of pistol shots into the tree tops.

Far away down the road the engineers' axes ceased to flash and

whack; the grey-jacketed horsemen dismounted, deployed, and came creeping toward the fallen oak-tree.

Operator 13, holding her white handkerchief fluttering above her head, stepped outside the windfall and walked a little way down the road, knee-deep in ferns. And she had not taken a dozen steps before two horsemen jumped their horses out of the roadside thicket and landed on the rotten corduroy not more than thirty yards from her.

One of the riders was Vespasian Chancellor; the other Captain John Gailliard.

They looked thin and sick and shabby, but the girl recognized them instantly, though it was evident they thought they had to do with some boyish Federal cavalryman.

"What do yuh want, sonny?" called Chancellor in his drawling voice.

"It's no good you coming up this road," said the girl earnestly. "I walked out here to tell you."

The ragged, hawk-faced scout laughed.

"Little boy," he said, "yuh run home to yoh daddy an' leave this hyah war to old folks lak we-all." He continued to urge his bony horse forward, and Gailliard rode beside him, both looking over her head at the abattis beyond.

Operator 13, the handkerchief dangling from her right hand, spread her arms wide as though to bar their progress.

Chancellor good humouredly turned his horse aside to pass her; and she caught the animal by the head, checking it so that it reared.

"Take yoh hands off'n that bridle!" said Chancellor fiercely, stooping and making a swoop at her with his big gaunt fingers.

As he caught her by the collar to jerk her aside she looked up into his dark, haggard face. Then he recognized her.

"Mr. Chancellor," she said breathlessly, "take Captain Gailliard and go back. All Sheridan's cavalry are ahead of you. Upon my honour this road is not open. There is *no* road open. What's the good of being killed here in the woods!"

Chancellor's grasp relaxed; she jerked herself free and turned to Gailliard who stared at her in silent amazement.

"I am not lying," she said tremulously. "There's no use going on to be killed. I suppose you won't believe that it's all over. But it is. This is the end of it, gentlemen. Go back and tell your generals. There's no way out for you along the Appomattox——"

Even as she spoke the woods behind her swarmed with blue-jacketed cavalry. The scouts near the oak-tree abattis were yelling

at her now: "Hey! Lay down in the ditch! We're going to fire!"

Then a Spencer carbine cracked out five times; another went bang! bang! bang!

"Jack, for God's sake, ride!" cried the girl excitedly, pulling and pushing at his horse to turn the animal. Then a singing bullet flicked its quivering ear and it reared up, plunged, and went bucketing about amid the increasing storm of lead rattling through the trees until Gailliard's nervously driven spurs sent it tearing away over the wood road. And beside him galloped Chancellor, his slouch hat shot off his head, his black hair in the wind, and blood running down his cheek and jaw.

Operator 13, who had rolled over into the ditch and was lying flat among the ferns, could see them trying to check and control their frantic horses where the Confederate pioneers had been clearing the road.

But that road, now, was grey with advancing rebel cavalry; and, in the woods, north and south of the road, the girl could see grey swarms of infantry trudging up, their scarlet battle flags unfurled, their mounted officers forward, picking a way westward through brier swamp and bushy tangle.

All around her the woods began to quiver as the ground shook under the thunderous concussions of a cannonade. She saw the loosened lightning lash out from unseen guns, and the woods fill with clouds. She heard the high-pitched rebel yell split into hysteric falsetto as blue jackets and grey clashed hilt to hilt and spur to spur when suddenly the misty forest itself was marching like Burnam Wood and the hellish prophecy was being fulfilled under her frightened eyes.

She ran back along the ditch to the abattis where a scout fetched up her horse; and she climbed into her saddle and turned to look behind her.

A world of Union horsemen stretched a wavering blue barrier north and south across forest and field as far as the eye could see.

Everywhere the bright swallowtail standards of the Northern horsemen rippled in the April wind; at brigade intervals the mounted cavalry bands, all astride strong, grey horses, their bandmasters conducting with naked sabres circling, stabbing, flashing, beating time, played their regiments forward to the cadenced diapason of the cannon.

Crack, crackle, crash! went the Spencers of the dismounted regiments deploying to the north and east; and above the wall of

smoke glimmered a ragged rebel battle flag or two, gallantly riding the approaching cataclysm.

On came the grey infantry of the Confederacy, starving, half naked, cheering, prepared with musketry and bayonets to tear their way through the cavalry confronting them.

Then, suddenly, dramatically, the vast tragedy unfolded itself; the endless blue curtain of Northern horsemen sagged back and drew slowly aside, disclosing behind them, regiment massed on regiment, brigade on brigade, division on division, corps on corps, a solid, immovable wall of Northern infantry, closing the west for ever to the army of Robert Lee.

Operator 13, riding to find her chief at Secret Service Headquarters, came wearily into the lines of the 6th Pennsylvania Cavalry—old friends of the 6th Lancers, but now deprived of those picturesque weapons and armed with sabre and carbine.

They gave her something to eat and told her that General Grant and his staff had ridden out toward the Court House to meet General Lee.

Even while she was feeding her horse, the racket of musketry died away; and presently the last dropping cannon shots came booming from the westward.

The girl was very tired; but she cared for her horse before she ate. After that she sat for a while on the ground, her weary back resting against an oak tree.

An officer said to her that if Lee surrendered they'd know it by the cheering of the Union regiments.

One of her scouts found her sitting at the foot of the tree and told her that he could not find Headquarters. She begged a ration for him and sent him out again.

Later she got into her saddle and started out to find Colonel Sharpe. It seemed quite evident that no surrender had been made because there was no cheering and no movement of troops, only a sudden and hurried trotting out of military equipages—wagon masters galloping, teams on a brisk trot.

A muddy courier whom she stopped in the road told her that scores of orderlies were riding in every direction with orders forbidding all cheering or any noisy demonstration which might humiliate the surrendered rebel army.

"Has Lee surrendered?" she asked incredulously.

"Yes, ma'am. Grant is sending twenty-five thousand rations to the starving Johnnies."

" Is this positive ? " she insisted.

" Yes, ma'am. Grant and Lee fixed it all up and Lee has gone back to his army. Old Grant tells 'em to keep their horses and start spring ploughing. There's a couple of brigades of 'em over there in that meadow where you can see their empty wagons. Go over and look for yourself."

A Federal wagon train occupied the road, unescorted. Riding beside it the girl encountered John Babcock on Gimlet. When he saw her he lifted his hat and swung it above his head in silent triumph.

" Grant gobbled 'em ! " he said joyously. " I met Lee. He rode out of Appomattox like a dead man upright in his saddle who saw nothing. I took off my hat. I swear to you, ma'am, the sunshine grew grey in the presence of such noble grief. It was like the twilight of the Gods. . . . I drew two days' ration for you——"

He fished them out of his haversack and, leaning wide from his saddle, shoved them into her haversack.

" Where is Colonel Sharpe ? " she asked.

But Babcock was hunting for him, too ; they rode on together to where a line of Federal provision wagons had halted in a meadow.

Here was a strange scene ; blue-jacketed cavalry were riding into the meadow which was occupied by a Confederate brigade.

The ragged infantry had reversed their muskets ; colour bearers lifted Confederate flags above their heads, holding the staff horizontal with both fists ; there was a constant clinking and rattling of muskets and bayonets where companies, disarmed, were piling their arms on the soggy grass.

Whole companies of tired, unshaven, ragged fellows were already eating the rations sent to them from Federal commissary stores ; fires were burning, coffee cooking, bacon and hardtack sizzling.

One of Sheridan's staff officers recognized Operator 13 and spoke to her, confirming the rumour of a general surrender. The girl listened as though dazed. An immense weariness possessed her, as though the weight of the world were crushing her slender shoulders.

She looked around at the woods and fields swarming with men in ragged grey. The thin smoke of thousands of little cook fires made a haze everywhere.

Blue troopers and grey prisoners were on friendly terms already ; and it was : " Hey, Johnny, here's a hunk o' sutler's pie for you ! "

and "Thank yuh kindly, Yank. Hyah's a chaw of Virginia twist fo' yuh-all."

But voices were subdued; there was little badinage, no laughter; only the endless clatter of piling muskets, snapping of little cook fires, and a munching noise from hundreds of starved horses. The effect was a sort of restless silence—a weird stillness following the roar of battles—that irritated, disturbed, saddened.

John Babcock told her that the rebel regiments already were being paroled in the region through which he had ridden. "You know, I suppose," he added, "that Richmond has fallen."

"No," she said listlessly.

"Don't you feel well, ma'am?" he inquired.

"No. This is terrible."

"What is terrible, ma'am?"

"All this—all these rags and bones—all these shaggy, dirty heads and hobbling naked feet—all these sores and stenches. . . Those sick men. . . . Those rows of dead men, beyond, lying on the mud and wet grass. Why do their clothes grow too small for them when they're dead? Their clothes always get too small. . . . I'm sick—not nauseated—but sick in my head. It was different when there was fighting——"

"Ma'am, you're plumb tired out. You get off your horse and stay here until I find out where Headquarters is——"

"It's frightening, this kind of thing," she said—"this having nothing more to do. If only there was something to do. But everything has stopped. It's like the end of the world. I can't seem to understand it—or stand it——"

"You stay right here, ma'am," he repeated gently. "When I find Headquarters I'll come back and get you."

He put his horse into motion; she did not even look after him.

Patrolling officers, without escort, passed and repassed. A careless line of sentinels lounged along the gentle slope beyond; wagons creaked into the fields and departed creaking. To the westward along crests of hills, endless columns of blue cavalry rode slowly; but no dust arose from the wet roads for the whole country remained saturated to bedrock with all streams over their banks and all lowlands turned into swampy lakes.

She heard people saying that Mr. Davis had fled, that Mr. Lincoln was in Richmond, and that the war was ended.

She looked about her, gazing vacantly upon victory, not recognizing it in all this filth and stench and rags blurred by greasy smoke from green fires.

Not understanding it in the sick lying motionless, yonder, awaiting notice ; or in the patient dead sprawled in twisted windrows, ranged for burial.

She got off her horse, and, leading him, wandered down into a woodland a little way. The woods were full of Louisiana troops building cook fires.

On a dry knoll two men lay beside their horses on the fallen forest leaves, looking wistfully toward the distributors of rations who now were headed in their direction.

She was not surprised to recognize Vespasian Chancellor, whose face was swathed in a bloody bandage. Then she saw her lover, John Gailliard.

She came slowly up to them leading her horse. They got up when they saw her, hats in hand, and stood gaunt and ragged and silent when she stopped before them.

She did not know just what to do. She held out her hand, hesitatingly, to Chancellor. The tall, lean, hawk-faced fellow reddened, bowed with the grace of a cavalier, lifted her trembling hand and touched the fingers with his lips.

" I am sorry," she said in a kind of scared whisper.

" God orders everything, ma'am. We have done all we could, I reckon."

Then her lover took her into his arms ; and the long pent tears that congested her eyes and throat and all her head and slender body, began to choke her.

" You know," he said, " that your general permits us to retain our horses. It is the kindest act I ever heard of. . . . So if you will wait while I learn how to plough——"

The girl buried her face on his ragged shoulder.

Far away in the forest one of the Negro cavalry bands, with cymbals and kettledrums, began to play an old time spiritual :

When I'se fightin' foh de Lawd
Lyin' dyin' whar I lay,
Will de onliest Son o' Gawd
Come to meet me on de way ?
Whar de golden chariots rattle,
Will yuh meet me in de battle,
Will yuh meet me in de battle,
Will yuh meet me on that day ?

I will meet yuh on that day !

Will de shoutin' Angels greet me?
Will de shoutin' Angels pray?
Oh Lawd Jesus will yuh meet me,
Will yuh lif' me whar I lay?
Whar de golden chariots rattle,
Will yuh meet me in de battle,
Will yuh meet me in de battle?
Will yuh meet me on that day?

I will meet yuh on that day!

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