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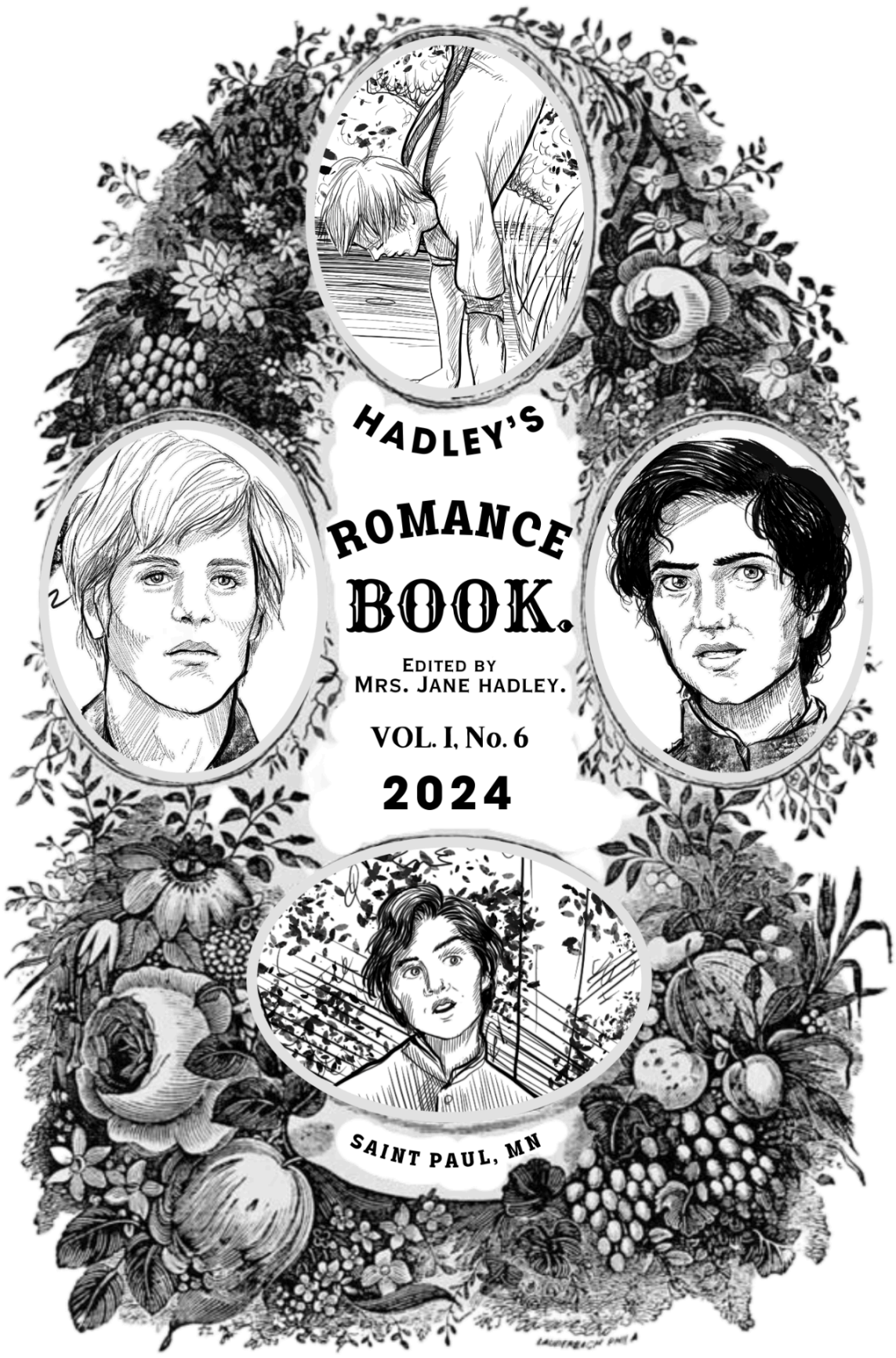
**ROMANCE
BOOK.**

EDITED BY
MRS. JANE HADLEY.

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SAINT PAUL, MN



LAUBERACH PHILA

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HADLEY'S Romance Book

A JOURNAL TO STIR THE MIGHTY PASSIONS

VOL. I, No. 6

FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 2024.

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA.

A FINE LOOKING SOLDIER

BY JANE HADLEY.

XII

*Fort Snelling, Minnesota
Sunday, August 11, 1861*

“ARTICLE 1: Every officer now in the army of the United States shall, in six months from the passing of this act, and every officer who shall hereafter be appointed shall, before he enters on the duties of his office, subscribe these rules and regulations.”¹

Henry stood at attention with the rest of Company K as the Captain read off the Articles of War again for the benefit of fifty new recruits who mustered in that day. The rest of the troops had heard these before, when their squad underwent the inspection, but it was pertinent to read it again as the magistrate was on the premises and ready to administer their oaths. A collection of civilians, including Jacob's fiancée, were gathered on the Round Bastion to observe.

“Article 2: It is earnestly recommended to all officers and soldiers diligently to attend divine service...”

It was very difficult to track Captain Noah's droning recitation of the articles among so many contingencies and addendums. Especially when it had to do with religious practices Henry had no use for. His eyes lingered over his comrades in ranks in front of him. Charley Smith stood directly before him. Henry briefly entertained the idea of flicking him in the neck, just to torture him. He'd been absolutely unbearable the last few days. Henry liked to think it was because he knew his days of lurking about were numbered, but he conceded it was more likely because Smith was upset that they'd brought themselves off together the other night.

Smith struck Henry as one of those uptight Grahamites, who never drank and only ate certain foods and thought going off like that as a form of self-abuse.² It certainly would explain why he was such an asshole. And while the Turners were in some ways equally as obsessed with physical health as the Grahamites, they approached the body with more curiosity than control. Men had desires that needed, from time to time, to be dealt with. It certainly didn't threaten their health, that was for certain (Henry would know by now if it did...).

A niggling part of his mind reminded him that while it was certainly not unusual to overhear a man bring himself off in a barracks, it was perhaps a bit indecorous to work at it at the same time ... but he'd be damned if he was going to defer to Smith at the expense of his own release. He'd been fairly far along by the time he'd noticed the little muted huffs above him, and he wasn't ashamed to admit it gave him a certain amount of gratification, knowing Smith was not deterred but perhaps even driven on by the whole thing. It was satisfying to imagine the arrogant bastard prostrate and vulnerable for once.

“Article 5: Any officer or soldier who shall use contemptuous or disrespectful words against the President of the United States, against the Vice-President thereof, against the Congress of the United States, or against the Chief Magistrate or Legislature of any of the United States, in which he may be quartered, if a commissioned officer, shall be cashiered, or otherwise punished, as a court-martial shall direct; if a non-commissioned officer or soldier, he shall suffer such punishment as shall be inflicted on him by the sentence of a court-martial.”

Henry blinked. Whoever had written these articles had very much liked the sound of his own words. Henry gave up trying and allowed his mind to spin the puzzle of Smith's treachery from every angle instead. In addition to Smith's horrific attitude in the past week, he'd been sneaking off even more often, sometimes with scarcely an attempt at an excuse. Yesterday, Sergeant Osborn had tried to order the boy off to the hospital, assuming he was sick if he had to beg off for personal privilege so often, but Smith had deferentially refused, insisting he was fine.

Henry rolled his eyes. If he was so fine, he wouldn't need a privy every few hours. Were there such a thing as divine justice, dysentery would be the perfect punishment for the little turd. Except that Henry didn't believe it was a call of nature at all. That couldn't explain why Smith was sneaking around the Steele farm or why he had stolen that musket. Henry was certain he was up to something more sinister. He couldn't understand why Sergeant Osborn wasn't similarly suspicious.

"Article 6: Any officer or soldier who shall behave himself with contempt or disrespect toward his commanding officer, shall be punished..."

He wondered if there was anything in the oath about behaving with contempt or disrespect toward fellow soldiers. Because if that was the case, Smith was going to need a year's worth of guard duty for all the vitriol he spewed.

"Article 7: Any officer or soldier who shall begin, excite, cause, or join in, any mutiny or sedition, in any troop or company in the service of the United States, or in any party, post, detachment, or guard, shall suffer death, or such other punishment as by a court-martial shall be inflicted."

Henry's eyes narrowed. That word again. Sedition.

The other day, he'd picked up a copy of the *Chatfield Democrat* in the mess hall, and having nowhere to be until his next guard duty, he'd taken to browsing. Generally, he abhorred American Democrats, though not as much as the Know Nothing party that had terrorized Cincinnati's German neighborhood six years ago and sent his mother halfway to a nervous collapse.³ But there was something to be said for knowing the mind of one's opposition — even if one found it contained nothing.

There had been an article about the Alien and Sedition Acts, and the federal government shutting down several papers in New York as seditious. He'd noticed it in particular because he hadn't been familiar with the word. The author, in true journalist form, bristled at the proposition of the papers being suppressed, touting free speech and free press as he simultaneously threatened insurrection against "Uncle Abe"

for making his will law.⁴ Henry had asked Tom Webster in passing what it meant and he'd said treason or rebellion. Wilbur Krüger had been in the barracks at the time too and together the three of them collected a number of expressions in both English and German that sufficiently addressed Henry's confusion.

Sedition was why they were at war. The Confederate states had chosen rebellion over recognizing Lincoln's presidential victory. Henry's eyes bored into the back of Smith's head as he turned over a suspicion he had not previously considered before. The theft of a gun, the sneaking around, the inexplicable anger after being passed over for the corporal promotion ... was it possible that Smith was some sort of Southern Democrat spy? That he was doing some sort of work to undermine the military and defense of the union?

"Article 8: Any officer, non-commissioned officer, or soldier, who, being present at any mutiny or sedition, does not use his utmost endeavor to suppress the same, or coming to the knowledge of any intended mutiny, does not, without delay, give information thereof to his commanding officer, shall be punished by the sentence of a court-martial with death, or otherwise, according to the nature of his offense."

Henry was listening now. He'd decided to keep quiet, to wait until he had more evidence before going to Command with an accusation. He was certain Smith was up to no good, but he wasn't entirely sure what that "no good" was. But if he kept quiet and something happened, apparently he could be held culpable for knowing something was amiss and not reporting it. Henry grimaced. His accusations were tenuous at best — that was why he wanted to wait for something more conclusive. But if even tacit knowledge was an offense worthy of a court-martial, that put a real damper on his timeline.

He screwed his eyes shut and tried again to think over all the evidence he had collected. He was unabashedly tuned out from the Articles reading now, but his realization struck him with a tangible sense of urgency. Based on what he had heard about the man, Franklin Steele was an opportunistic Democrat who had acquired the fort through some sort of cronyism with the former Governor and Senator Rice. Senator Rice ... wasn't he the one who had all but said that the South was perfectly within their rights to secede from the Union?⁵ Was Smith somehow in league with Rice and other Southern sympathizers through Steele?

He wracked his brain for all the things he'd caught Smith doing thus far. Sneaking around when he should be on guard duty — that he'd caught him at several times. Rendezvousing at Steele's farm. Stealing the musket, of course. That lady's

chemise was always an outlier. The most logical conclusion was that Smith was having some sort of liaison with a woman when he was supposed to be on guard duty, but there was something off about that explanation. For one thing, the shift was so filthy, he couldn't imagine any woman wearing such a thing willingly. No level of destitution could account for a garment being so in want of a wash. Unless...

Cate listened attentively to the Articles of War, trying to ignore how the sun beat down on the dusty parade ground. It was hot enough to be uncomfortable, but not quite hot enough to sweat. It was consistent with how this week had been going.

To her great distress, she had been reassigned to guard duty at the post barn this week, which was nice in its quiet seclusion outside the gates of the fort, but not nearly as convenient as the ferry landings for washing and drying guard-napkins. She'd ended up pilfering water from the horses to wash with. It was less than ideal, but she'd managed. Now that the heaviest of her blood was done, as well as that awful slog of guard duty, she was feeling awash in relief and decidedly more optimistic than ever before. Their platoon was drilling quite well, and new recruits had arrived. Soon, their regiment would be full, and they'd be off to the front to do some real fighting. After the cowardice of the volunteers at the Battle of Bull Run, she was eager to prove her own courage and provide yet another example as to why men weren't nearly as hard nor strong, nor women as weak and emotional, as everyone seemed to believe.

The Articles of War thus read in their entirety, in as dreary a fashion as Captain Noah could muster, the Magistrate approached and smiled upon the men of Company K.

"Greetings, soldiers!" he called, his voice booming. "I am most honored to administer to you this day Sunday, August 11 in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and sixty one, the oath of allegiance as soldiers defending the United States of America. Rather than pontificate as to the glory of your position and the bravery you are about to display, I shall leave those words to more able men and perform my duty under the law. Please, honorable gentlemen, repeat after me..."

Cate felt her heart in her throat, her eyes wide and eager as her tongue formed the words quietly. Under the hum of the voices of her company, she was quite sure that her honor-bound use of her legal name would go undetected.

"I, Catherine Stowell, do solemnly swear that I will bear true allegiance to the United States of America, and that I will serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies or

opposers whatsoever; and observe and obey the orders of the President of the United States, and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the Rules and Articles for the government of the armies of the United States."

When the recitation was complete, Cate felt a sense of immense satisfaction blossom in her breast as the civilian onlookers cheered for them. She straightened in her makeshift uniform and enjoyed the way her body fell into the soldier's position so naturally.

The captain ordered the sergeants to break ranks for the afternoon meal, and Cate strode happily towards the mess hall when Sergeant Osborn's voice called her to attention.

"Squad Seven, front and center!" the Sergeant called. She joined the other boys and noticed Henry Schaefer once again staring her down like some sort of cat stalking his prey. She refused to dignify his nonsense with a glance and was pleased with how easily she was able to let it roll off her back. After letting herself indulge in his quiet show of self-pleasure a few nights ago, she'd been certain something would change between them, having shared this vulnerable moment. But he'd been colder toward her, if that was even possible. The unspoken whatever-it-was that had affected them both stayed silent, and it made her angrier than ever that his stupid defective personality had to be housed inside such an alluring package. So it was to her great relief that she could honestly say she didn't care what he thought at present, so high was her mood.

"Gentlemen, the time has come for us to accommodate our lodgings for the new recruits," Sergeant Osborn said once they had all gathered to hear him. "As we were told when we first formed our squad, the barracks you occupy will now be needed to house three squads."

Cate's high spirits sank quicker than that damn musket had sunk to the bottom of the river. Three squads in that tiny room?? That could only mean sharing bunks. She had completely forgotten about that. She pressed firmly down on the panic that tightened her chest.

"In order to prevent in-fighting," Osborn gave a pointed glare to Henry and Charles, "I have taken the liberty of assigning you bunk-mates."

The men all grumbled. Cate stood still and quiet, not trusting herself to make any other response. Goddammit Schaefer — he was still glaring at her. It was unnerving.

"Our squad will occupy the first berth. Hower will join me in the orderly room while the rest of you will share in the following formation."

"Permission to speak, sir?" Jacob piped up, his face tight with anticipation.

"I'm not taking requests," Osborn replied preemptively. Jacob scowled but did not continue.

"The bottom-most bunk will be occupied by Krüger and Williamson."

Krüger shrugged and Williamson deflated. The skinny younger boy was the only logical choice since Krüger was large and would leave no additional space on the 6 foot by 3 foot pallet.

"The middle will be Webster and Robinson."

They looked sullen but given they could have been assigned to Krüger, not terribly disappointed. Cate felt like she was going to choke as she deduced her own bed-partner.

"And up top, we'll have Schaefer and Smith," Osborn concluded, a severe warning look on his face. Cate didn't heed it.

"But sir," she interjected. "Certainly it would not be wise to—"

Osborn cut her off with a stern glare. "I'll brook no argument. I have taken careful consideration of this plan, and it is my fervent hope that you will all stop with this ridiculous in-fighting and learn to work together. We'll see the front in a matter of months. There is no room for feuds when lives are on the line."

"But sir—"

"No. Now, you are dismissed to your meal. Move your effects to your assigned areas, and clean the remaining beds in preparation for the new squads to join you before drills."

And that was that. The rest of the squad walked away. Cate wasn't terribly aware of how poorly she was hiding her displeasure until Robinson passed by and patted her on the shoulder. She couldn't quite find a way to make her legs work. Not only was she going to have to share with one of the other men, bringing the ever present threat of being found out literally into her bed, but it just had to be the one who simultaneously made her want to fondle and strangle him.

Schaefer sauntered over to her with a smarmy smirk on his lips. "You won't see any trouble from me as long as you're playing by the rules."

Cate watched him incredulously as he strolled off to the mess on those *damnable* thighs. What was that supposed to mean? He'd caught her in a couple of unfortunate situations, of course, but she hadn't done anything that she hadn't paid her due for. She was on dish duty every day this week for the musket. Surely he'd accept the simplest explanation was the

most logical; she was just a dumb kid with a big ego who kept sticking his foot in it.

She couldn't shake the twitchy feeling of imminent dread, though. He'd found her chemise — and hid it somewhere, she wasn't sure where. He had one piece of solid evidence to reveal her. She was pretty certain he'd seen her at the Steele's farm, too. Perhaps he'd realized what she was doing. Could he have put it together?

Cate scarcely tasted the food she was served in the mess. Afterwards, she wandered listlessly into the barracks, where the rest of the squad was already working to move their effects and clean the space (if what they did could constitute cleaning; Cate would scarcely dignify it as tidying).

She paused in the doorway. The top-most bunk was a good five feet up. She would be well and truly trapped up there, especially if Schaefer slept on the outside. She stared at the bunk, her hands limp at her sides. What if he tried to bring himself off again, but this time right next to her? She wasn't sure anyone had the self control to look the other way and feign sleep in that tight of quarters. The thought, which would have excited her a few days ago, now made her feel sick to her stomach.

The boys were gathering up their things, stowing extra shirts and hats into satchels that would hang off the end of the scaffolds on old hooks. Letters, cards, *carte de visites* of loved ones, all of it got transferred over.

"At least we'll have two blankets when it gets colder," Robinson said encouragingly. Williamson glared at him before regarding Krüger's hulking form.

"This is humbug," Williamson muttered as he came to stand next to Cate. "We're grown men, we can choose for ourselves who to bunk with."

Cate crossed her arms. "Agreed."

Williamson groaned. "I might as well sleep on a matchbook for how much room I'm gonna have."

Cate sighed in solidarity. Schaefer crossed the room with a bundle of his things in his arms, watching her with unveiled contempt and suspicion. She was up shit creek without a paddle. She needed to come up with a plan quickly, because if he was as close to suspecting her secret as she thought he was, he could collect the proof quite easily as she slept. And once reported, it would be a quick strip search with the surgeon before she was tossed out the door and back into the arms of her more-than-likely outraged husband. If it was between exposure or throwing Schaefer on the rails first, she was more than willing to sacrifice him. She'd sworn to protect the Union

with her life. She had no intention of breaking that oath — not without a fight.

XIII

LOW clouds had rolled in over the fort, teasing the dry prairie with the threat of rain. The barometric pressure fell tantalizingly slow as the swath of gray hovered over the large drill ground. They were in company dress parade that afternoon, modeling formations for the new recruits who stood observing atop the Round Bastion with their sergeants. Other new fellows were serving on marker detail for the more experienced troops to use as landmarks as the company marched through the formations. The adjutant rode around the mass of men, barking instructions that were becoming increasingly more difficult to make out as the wind picked up.⁷

Henry had an unloaded musket rifle to practice with this time. He wielded it with some conceit, as Smith was the only one in their squad still relegated to practicing with a stick. Served him right. But they were new at the company formations and that, mixed with the inability to hear the captain's directives for the wind, led to more than one drill ending in chaotic confusion. He could understand why the Battle of Bull Run had gone so poorly if the troops were as green as this.

The bugle for supper came not a moment too soon, and the men piled into the mess to inhale an army's worth of boiled potatoes and cold beef as the clouds began to release their rain. Henry listened to the conversation only halfway. It wasn't that Elias' gossip about the new squads they were bunking with was uninteresting. It was that he could not stop turning over his theory about Smith in his mind, checking it from all angles. It seemed outrageous, but it also made perfect sense. It was the only way he could come up with to explain all of Smith's unusual behavior. When it came down to it, he would rather speak up and be wrong than be silent and court-martialed.

So when Smith excused himself to begin another round of dish duty, Henry leaned in close to Elias and Jacob and hissed, "Fellas — I think Smith is up to no good."

Elias and Jacob exchanged weary glances.

"Why Henry, I could never have guessed you felt that way," Elias deadpanned.

Henry rolled his eyes and carried on. "Obviously we can all see that he's a sonofabitch, but I mean something more nefarious, possibly even ... sedition."

As quiet as he was trying to be, that got the attention of Webster and Krüger.

Elias regarded him with high eyebrows. "That's a serious accusation, Henry."

"Are you sure you aren't just trying to find reasons to hate him?" Jacob said patronizingly. "I mean, he apologized for landing us in guard duty. He's terse, sure, but I'm not sure I would even qualify him as a 'sonofabitch' anymore, much less a traitor."

Williamson slid down the bench to join the conversation and shrugged. "At least not this week, in any case."

Henry gritted his teeth. "No, I'm very certain that it's more than personal dislike. I have been tracking his movements since he lost that musket, and he's up to something. I've got a pretty good hunch on what it is too."

The boys leaned in to listen. Elias pressed his lips together. "Right, but before you begin, just know that because I'm an officer now, I'll have to kick these accusations up the chain. At least, I will if there's any merit to them."

Henry glowered at Elias' sardonic expression.

"This is serious, Elias," Henry intoned. "You see, the night that Smith supposedly dropped the musket in the river, he wasn't there when I came to the post to relieve him. This is a 2 am guard duty, mind you. I looked all around, called for him. Nothing. Nothing, that is, except a *lady's chemise*."

The boys all exchanged glances, and Williamson laughed in the way only a teenage boy with lady's underwear on the mind can.

"Smith? I didn't know he had it in him," Webster remarked, crossing his arms and nodding appreciatively.

Henry frowned. "I know what you're thinking, but I don't think that's what was going on. As I was going back up to the fort to wake Sergeant Osborn, Smith showed up. He was nervous, clearly trying to convince me that nothing was amiss."

Jacob shrugged. "That sounds pretty consistent with what Webster implied. It's not anything to write home about."

"I thought that at first, too, but I didn't even realize it was a lady's chemise right away, because it was *filthy*." The boys waggled their eyebrows at each other. Henry huffed in frustration. "I mean, it was rank. It stank ... like a man."

Elias' eyebrows furrowed together. The rest of the boys mirrored him. Jacob looked more confused than anything.

"Are you trying to imply that Smith was wearing a lady's unmentionables?" he asked. Webster snorted and Krüger veritably guffawed.

"Oh, Heinrich," Krüger snickered in German. "I knew you Turners hold the Greeks in high regard, but this is taking *Phaedrus* a little too literally."

Henry's eyes snapped on him and he scowled.

"What did he say?" Williamson asked.

Jacob shrugged, and Elias' nose scrunched as he ventured, "Not sure, but I think it was something about the Turners."

"What's a Turner?" Williamson pressed.

Jacob's face alighted like some sort of devil, and Henry glowered firmly at Krüger before he said, "Enough, that's all beside the point. What I'm trying to say is that I think Smith is using lady's clothes to disguise himself and gather information to pass on to the Democrats, maybe even the Confederacy."

The boys laughed even more heartily. Webster regarded him like he might one of his children. "A Confederate spy? This far northwest? That doesn't make any sense. Besides, even the Democrats in the state house have conceded their skepticism to support the war effort."

"Why shouldn't it?" Henry retorted. "We were the first state to offer up men to President Lincoln after Fort Sumter. Even in the Bull Run disaster, the First Minnesota performed well. Our men pose just as much of a threat to the Southern cause as soldiers from New York or Pennsylvania. Certainly distance alone can't protect us — not when the Rebs are so eager to capitalize on their advantage and the Mississippi provides an easy path straight to our doorstep."

"But a woman?" Jacob asked, stuck on the previous point. "When would he be performing this charade?"

"I think that's what he's up to when he's disappearing," Henry asserted. "He's young enough to pull off the illusion, and he can move undetected. Civilians come in and out of the fort with impunity. He could don a disguise, lurk around and listen for secrets from command to pass on to the Rebs."

"And who is he passing this information to, then?" Elias asked, his fingers steepled as he looked down his nose at Henry.

"Franklin Steele," Henry retorted.

His friends exchanged dubious looks. Williamson looked utterly confused. "You mean the sutler?"

Henry nodded. "Hear me out. Steele is the sutler, but he also owns the land the fort is on. When the army occupied it, he lost out on his investment."

"I dunno, I heard he's charging the army rent," Webster chuckled.

"He's *also* a friend of Senator Rice and Henry Sibley, both of whom are prominent Democrats and have voiced sympathy to the Confederate cause."

Elias rolled his eyes. "Rhetorical posturing after Fort Sumter does not a Confederate sympathizer make. Those men must find opposition to the Republicans in order to set

themselves up for reelection. They're anti-Lincoln, not anti-Union."

Henry let out a frustrated growl. "Just because they have later back-pedalled doesn't mean they have changed their sentiments. Steele is at the very least war-profiteering. Whatever he's up to, Smith is in league with him."

"And how do you know that?" Elias retorted, crossing his arms.

"I saw Smith sneaking into the Steele's farm-yard when he was supposed to be on guard duty," Henry shot back, his ability to provide conclusive evidence in response catching Elias off-guard.

Webster gasped. "What if Smith is having an affair with one of Steele's daughters?"

The jaws of both Jacob and Williamson dropped in salacious delight.

"Or his *wife!*" Williamson escalated, grinning. The boys laughed, and Henry rubbed his forehead in exasperation. Why couldn't they see what he saw? Smith wasn't just a hard case. He was *hiding* something. And Henry was almost positive, despite his friends' skepticism, that he was right.

"Trust me," Henry assured, "Smith is *not* having an affair. I was right behind him during the oath today. I did not hear him say it. He was just moving his lips."

"Sneaking off during guard duty? Leaving lady's unmentionables lying around? Climbing fences of the lady in question's house? Sounds a lot like an affair to me," Webster said, smiling knowingly. "I once climbed the trellis of my wife's parents house to steal a kiss in the middle of the night. It's a lot more likely than masquerading as a woman to spy for the Confederates, is all."

Henry had to concede that it probably was, but he *knew* better. It couldn't be an affair. If Smith was slaking his lust with a woman, why would he bring himself off in the middle of the night? But he couldn't tell them that. "Then how do you explain the missing musket?"

Krüger snickered, tucking his heavy head to his chest.

"Oh, Schaefer, don't be jealous," he simpered, this time in English. "No matter who Smith is fooling around with, it's your bed he'll be coming back to each night."

The boys exploded in laughter. Henry felt his face turn red as he gripped his fists tight. Not only were they refusing to take his accusations seriously, but they were actively mocking him. He thought these fellows were his friends, but clearly he was nothing more than the butt of a joke, just like he'd always been. Little Heinie, always good for a laugh. Henry swallowed around his frustration and glared them all down.

"Fine, don't believe me," he said, gathering up his fork and tin plate as he stood. "That's just fine. I'm going to prove this is more than just some affair. Smith is hiding something big, and I'm going to find out what it is. When I prove it, you're all going to eat your words."

He made a point to glare at them all in turn, even as he distantly understood he was coming off more crazed than intimidating. They all smirked and exchanged glances. Henry heard one of them whistle as he stalked off.

When he looked over his shoulder as he exited the hall, they were all talking merrily again. It was as if he didn't even exist.

Cate cast a furtive glance over her shoulder as she sloshed her guard-napkins in the river, scrubbing them with her new bar of soap as quickly as she could.⁸ The river valley was bathed in shadows as dusk fell, the rain from earlier scudding towards the edge of the rapidly darkening sky. The last ferries had departed back to Mendota and St. Paul for the night, but even so, Cate stayed well away from the landings, manned as they were with a twenty-four-hour guard. She walked alongside St. Peter's stream to the Minnesota River, where she washed and rinsed her rags in the low, silty water. If she was going to share a bed with Schaefer, she was going to need to take as many precautions as she could manage.

After some consideration, she decided not to try to wash her corded stays again. She'd tried when she was stationed in the post barn, washing in a bucket of horse water, but it had been difficult. And now that she knew she'd be sharing a bed with another man, she wanted to make sure she had as much armor as possible to obscure her softer parts. If Schaefer were to reach around her, she didn't want anything to appear amiss. The thought of it made her swallow hard.

Once she'd scrubbed the rags as well as she could, she decided to make her way along St. Peter's stream for a cleaner rinse than the Minnesota could provide. She made her way down the path, soapy rags bundled in her hands, until she came to a clearing with access to the riverbank, about halfway back to the fort's incline road.

As she turned into the clearing, she stopped dead in her tracks. Someone was already there. And he looked like he was ... dancing?

Cate stepped back behind a tree and peeked out. Maybe it wasn't dancing. It looked a bit more like calisthenics, perhaps. Fast, vigorous calisthenics. The man was bent with his back to her, reaching down and easily grasping his right foot, bringing

himself upright, and then bending for his left foot. Back and forth, rhythmically. It was mesmerizing.⁹

It took a moment for Cate to realize she knew the shape of that backside. The color of the hair. The curve of those shoulders and thighs. God damn it to hell, it was Henry Schaefer. Of course it was. Of course.

All of a sudden, he dropped down into a crouch, his knees splayed wide, and he set his hands squarely on the ground. Then, in a fluid motion, he turned himself upside down, pushing his legs up with unexpected grace to stand on his hands. Cate's mouth dropped open.¹⁰

In this position, he faced her. She flinched, trying to conceal herself behind the tree, but she had seen the flash of recognition in his eyes before she ducked back.

"Smith!" he shouted. "Stop sneaking around!"

She stepped out from behind the tree, her hands with the rags behind her back, and tried to lift a sardonic brow, but she really couldn't manage it. Schaefer was on his feet again, dusting off his hands and glaring hard at her.

"Uh ... sorry," she muttered, her eyes flickering up and down his form against her better judgement. She was too surprised to reign herself in.

Schaefer stalked a few steps toward her, and it took her a long moment to stop staring at him and realize that he was looking for a fight.

"I'm not anymore pleased with the new bunk arrangement than you are, but maybe try to give a man a little privacy before he loses all of it completely," he snarled, marginally more aggressive than the situation really warranted.

"I beg your pardon, good *sir*," she said sarcastically, making a little bow. Schaefer's eyes flashed. His hands shot out and seized her tight by the shirt and her heart slammed in her throat. She looked up at him with irrepressible alarm. His brow was angry, but his eyes widened a bit and his lips softened slightly. Holy God, what was happening?

Cate's hands were waylaid holding the rags and she didn't want to bring his attention to them, so she merely glanced down at his hands gripping her overshirt. She looked up at him again and opened her mouth to say something, but nothing came out. Schaefer's lip curled in a way that should have read as angry, but she thought she saw threads of something else in his blue eyes, something indulgent, eager, maybe even hungry. Her knees wobbled.

"So, uh," she said, then licked her lips because her mouth had suddenly gone quite dry. "Is this how you keep yourself so hulking?"



Sarcasm was a tricky thing. She didn't mean it to be sarcastic or biting — truly, it was an honest question — but it was immediately evident that he heard it as some sort of insult. His nostrils flared, and he shoved her away as he shouted, “Get the HELL away from me!”

Cate stumbled backwards and then, not to be outdone, shouted back, “HAVE IT YOUR WAY!”

She turned on her heel and stalked off, the stupid wet rags in her hands for all to see, goddamn the consequences. She glanced over her shoulder, half-convinced she'd see him charging at her with fists raised, but he didn't. He glared at her, pulling one arm across his body in another calisthenics-style stretch as he paced around the edge of the clearing. He disappeared behind the trees as Cate hastened away, presumably to resume whatever ridiculous fitness regime he'd been doing.

By the time she reached the incline road, she was swallowing hard against a strange amalgamation of anger and arousal. She'd nearly forgotten about the guard napkins in her hands that she still needed to rinse in the stream. Doubling back, she picked her way to the shore between the two ferry landings, somewhat out of the view of both guards, and rinsed her rags in the gently flowing water.

“What in the world have I done to deserve this,” she muttered to herself as the soap made small bubbles dance on the surface of the water. “First bunk-mates, now this? God,” she looked up at the darkening sky shot with pink, “are you trying to punish me?”

This was what she got for breaking her marriage vows. For lying. For being such a shameless lecher in the barracks. For being endlessly contrary. She was full of vice. She wouldn't put it past the heavens to punish her for it. If society knew, they certainly would.

She wrung her napkins out as well as she could, then stuck them in her pockets. She would hang them under her overshirt on her hook. Hopefully they would dry out and nothing would cause them to fall out into the view of everyone. If God were indeed out to punish her, they probably would.

After washing her hands in the stream, she splashed water on her face. She was going to share Schaefer's bed tonight. She needed to keep her wits about her. As enticing as he was, he was also smarter than she'd given him credit for. And he had it in for Charles Smith.

FOOTNOTES

1. “An Act For Establishing Rules And Articles For The Government Of The Armies Of The United States.” Enacted April

10, 1810, United States Congress. Accessed on Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, suvcw.org/articles-of-war.

2. Lobel, Cindy. “Sylvester Graham and Antebellum Diet Reform.” AP US History Study Guide, gilderlehrman.org.

3. “Election Riots and Frauds in Cincinnati.” [Fremont journal. 13 April 1855. Page 1, Column 4. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress](http://Fremontjournal.13April1855.Page1,Column4.ChroniclingAmerica:HistoricAmericanNewspapers.Lib.ofCongress). The Know-Nothing party was a xenophobic populist movement in the 1840s and 1850s that pulled from both the Democratic and Whig parties. When the Whig party collapsed after the passage of the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Know-Nothing or “American” party assumed a middle ground between slavery-complicit Democrats and anti-slavery Republicans. It's important to note that the Democratic and Republican parties were completely different in terms of platform and alignment on a conservative/liberal scale, so divest yourself of any preconceived notions as to what these parties mean or any desire to align them with their “modern equivalents”. The American party, as the Know-Nothings became, collapsed after they failed to adopt an anti-slavery plank in 1855 and the party divided over that issue, the anti-slavery set to the Republicans and the free-soilers who opposed the spread of slavery to new territories to the Democrats.

4. “Whether We are Drifting.” [Chatfield democrat. Pub. Date August 31, 1861](http://Chatfielddemocrat.Pub.DateAugust31,1861). Page 2, Column 2.

5. Meshbesh, Samuel. “Rice, Henry Mower (1816-1894).” *MNOpedia*, Minnesota Historical Society, March 14, 2019.

6. Bunk and bed-sharing was extremely common in this period. Children often grew up sharing a bed with their siblings. It was common to share beds with strangers, too, at roadside inns and boarding houses to save a dollar. Bed-sharing was almost always done with people of the same gender. Bed-sharing and emotional intimacy were also correlated, with sisters sharing secrets after lights out and young men admitting their darkest fears to their best friends. None of this behavior was viewed socially as unusual, and in fact, romantic friendship was common and accepted among young men and women of any age. The army benefitted from bunk-sharing as a means to save space and resources and also to build comradery. Rotundo, Anthony. “Romantic Friendship: Male Intimacy and Middle-Class Youth in the Northern United States 1800-1900.” *Journal of Social History*, Autumn, 1989, Vol. 23, No. 1. Pages 1-25.

7. Osman, Stephen. *Fort Snelling and the Civil War*. Ramsey County Historical Society, 2017. Page 96.

8. Frydman, Tess. “America's Bloody History: Menstruation Management in the Mid-19th Century.” University of Delaware thesis in Master of the Arts in American Material Culture, Spring 2018.

9. “A look back at Gymnastics during the Paris 1924 Olympics” The Olympics, Jun. 20, 2012. YouTube.

10. Jahn, Friedrich Ludwig. *A Treatise on Gymnastics*. Translator Charles Butler. Northampton, Mass.: S. Butler, 1828. Accessed on Internet Archive.

NOVELTIES FOR MARCH

ENIGMA

I am not now what I have been,
But still I yet exist;
Though I am not as once I'd been
If absent — sadly missed:

Still I exist — and still I am
A reflect of the age,
And show to mortals what is man,
His grief — his love — his rage.

Answer to previous: Misgiving

RECEIPTS &c.

WORTH KNOWING — Boil three or four onions in a pint of water. Then with a gilding brush do over your glasses and frames, and rest assured that the flies will not light on the articles washed. This may be used without apprehension, as it will not do the least injury to the frames.

FASHION

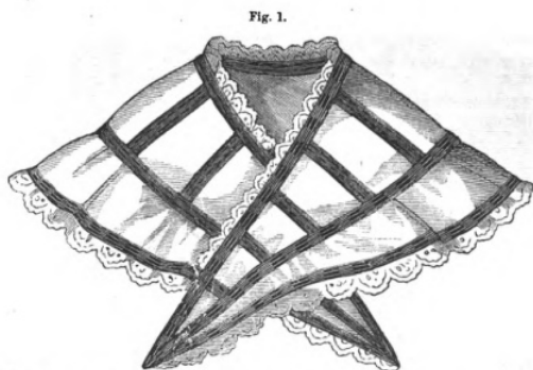


Fig. 1 — Fichu for dinner-dress; an entirely new and excellent shape. The material is Swiss muslin, and the embroidered edge is wrought on the same. The trimming is of black velvet ribbon, figured in blocks and stripes.

LITERARY NOTICES

COZY! TENDER! TRANS-JOY!

THE CRAFT OF LOVE

By E.E. OTTOMAN.

BENJAMIN Lewis has created a life for himself as one of the most respected silversmiths and engravers in New York City. For Benjamin, his work is his passion and he has never

sought out companionship beyond the close ties of family. Stumbling across dresses sew by his late mother, however, reawakens painful memories from his past. Now he is determined to forge something beautiful from the remains of the life and identity he left behind. In the process, he discovers stunning and fiercely intelligent Miss Quincy who might just have the power to tempt him out of his quiet isolation.

Remembrance Quincy's talent is as undeniable as her needlework is exquisite. She has made a name for herself crafting quilts and embroidery pieces for all the wealthiest ladies in the city. When soft-spoken yet charming Mr. Lewis comes to her with a particular project in mind she is intrigued both by his artistic design and by the man himself. He treats her like an equal, values her work and makes her smile, but Remembrance already gave her heart away once, now can she risk doing it again?

SPIES! INTRIGUE! RIVALS TO LOVERS!

AN EXTRAORDINARY UNION

By ALYSSA COLE.

AS the Civil War rages between the states, a courageous pair of spies plunge fearlessly into a maelstrom of ignorance, deceit, and danger, combining their unique skills to alter the course of history and break the chains of the past . . .

Elle Burns is a former slave with a passion for justice and an eidetic memory. Trading in her life of freedom in Massachusetts, she returns to the indignity of slavery in the South—to spy for the Union Army.

Malcolm McCall is a detective for Pinkerton's Secret Service. Subterfuge is his calling, but he's facing his deadliest mission yet—risking his life to infiltrate a Rebel enclave in Virginia.

Two undercover agents who share a common cause—and an undeniable attraction—Malcolm and Elle join forces when they discover a plot that could turn the tide of the war in the Confederacy's favor. Caught in a tightening web of wartime intrigue, and fighting a fiery and forbidden love, Malcolm and Elle must make their boldest move to preserve the Union at any cost—even if it means losing each other . . .

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