

flashed, "hasn't any one a right to see the president? you mean to say that he will not see a woman in trouble? then all these pretty stories i hear of him are false. they are made up by the yankees!" poor captain lige! he had some notion of the multitude of calls upon mr. lincoln, especially at that time, but he could not, he dared not, remind her of the principal reason for this, lee's surrender and the approaching end of the war. and then the captain had never seen mr. lincoln. in the distant valley of the mississippi he had only heard of the president very conflicting things. he had heard him criticised and reviled and praised, just as is every man who goes to the white house, be he saint or sinner. and, during an administration, no man at a distance may come at a president's true character and worth. the captain had seen lincoln caricatured vilely. and again he had read and heard the pleasant anecdotes of which virginia had spoken, until he did not know what to believe. as for virginia, he knew her partisanship to, and undying love for, the south; he knew the class prejudice which was bound to assert itself, and he had seen enough in the girl's demeanor to fear that she was going to demand rather than implore. she did not come of a race that was wont to bend the knee. "well, well," he said despairingly, "you must eat some breakfast first, jinny." she waited with an ominous calmness until it was brought in, and then she took a part of a roll and some coffee. "this won't do," exclaimed the captain. "why, why, that won't get you halfway to mr. lincoln." she shook her head, half smiling. "you must eat enough, lige," she said. he was finished in an incredibly short time, and amid the protestations of lizbeth and the yellow butler they got into the carriage again, and splashed and rattled toward the white house. once virginia glanced out, and catching sight of the bedraggled flags on the houses in honor of lee's surrender, a look of pain crossed her face. the captain could not repress a note of warning. "jinny," said he, "i have an idea that you'll find the president a good deal of a man. now if you're allowed to see him, don't get him mad, jinny, whatever you do." virginia stared straight ahead. "if he is something of a man, lige, he will not lose his temper with a woman." captain lige subsided. and just then they came in sight of the house of the presidents, with its beautiful portico and its broad wings. and they turned in under the dripping trees of the grounds. a carriage with a black coachman and footman was ahead of them, and they saw two stately gentlemen descend from it and pass the guard at the door. then their turn came. the captain helped her out in his best manner, and gave some money to the driver. "i reckon he needn't wait for us this time, jinny," said be. she shook her head and went in, he following, and they were directed to the anteroom of the president's office on the second floor. there were many people in the corridors, and one or two young officers in blue who stared at her. she passed them with her head high. but her spirits sank when they came to the anteroom. it was full of all sorts of people. politicians, both prosperous and seedy, full faced and keen faced, seeking office; women, officers, and a onearmed soldier sitting in the corner. he was among the men who offered virginia their seats, and the only one whom she thanked. but she walked directly to the doorkeeper at the end of the room. captain lige was beside her. "can we see the president?" he asked. "have you got an appointment?" said the old man. "no." "then you'll have to wait your turn, sir," he said, shaking his head and looking at virginia. and he added. "it's slow work waiting your turn, there's so many governors and generals and senators, although the session's over. it's a busy time, miss." virginia went very close to him. "oh, can't you do something?" she said. and added, with an inspiration, "i must see him. it's a matter of life and death." she saw instantly, with a woman's instinct, that these words had had their effect. the old man glanced at her again, as if demurring. "you're sure, miss, it's life and death?" he said. "oh, why should i say so if it were not?" she cried. "the orders are very strict," he said. "but the president told me to give precedence to cases when a life is in question. just you wait a minute, miss, until governor doddridge comes out, and i'll see what i can do for you. give me your name, please, miss." she remained standing where she was. in a little while the heavy door opened, and a portly, rubicund man came out with a smile on his face. he broke into a laugh, when halfway across the room, as if the memory of what he had heard were too much for his gravity. the doorkeeper slipped into the room, and there was a silent, anxious interval. then he came out again. "the president will see you, miss." captain lige started forward with her, but she restrained him. "wait for me here, lige," she said. she swept in alone, and the door closed softly after her. the room was a big one, and there were maps on the table, with pins sticking in them. she saw that much, and then! could this fantastically tall, stooping figure before her be that of the president of the united states? she stopped, as from the shock he gave her. the lean, yellow face with the masklike lines all up and down, the unkempt, tousled hair, the beard why, he was a hundred times more ridiculous than his caricatures. he might have stood for many of the poor white trash farmers she had seen in kentucky save for the long black coat. "is it this mr. lincoln?" she asked, her breath taken away. he bowed and smiled down at her. somehow that smile changed his face a little. "i guess i'll have to own up," he answered. "my name is virginia carvel," she said. "i have come all the way from st. louis to see you." "miss carvel," said the president, looking at her intently, "i have rarely been so flattered in my life. i hope i have not disappointed you." virginia was justly angry. "oh, you haven't," she cried, her eyes flashing, "because i am what you would call a rebel." the mirth in the dark corners of his eyes disturbed her more and more. and then she saw that the president was laughing. "and have you a better name for it, miss carvel?" he asked. "because i am searching for a better name just now." she was silent sternly silent. and she tapped her foot on the carpet. what manner of man was this? "won't you sit down?" said the president, kindly. "you must be tired after your journey." and he put forth a chair. "no, thank you," said virginia, "i think that i can say what i have come to say better standing." "well," said mr. lincoln, "that's not strange. i'm that way, too. the words seem to come out better. that reminds me of a story they tell about general buck tanner. ever heard of buck, miss carvel? no? well, buck was a character. he got his title in the mormon