IN OLD NATCHEZ

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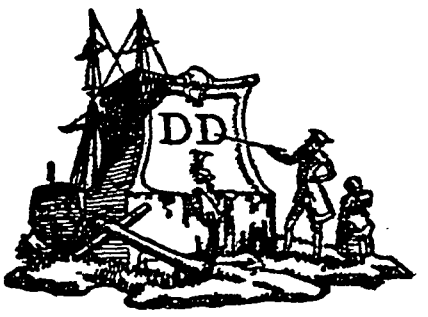
By

CATHARINE VAN COURT



GARDEN CITY NEW YORK

Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc.

MCMXXXVII

PRINTED AT THE *Country Life Press*, GARDEN CITY, N. Y., U. S. A.

FIRST EDITION

To those brave men and women
who came to America and built the houses of their
dreams at Natchez, and to their descendants,
many of whom still live in
these same houses.

Preface

THOUGH APPARENTLY SIMPLE, life in Natchez is complex. Only those who are born and reared in the town understand the strange paradoxes and contradictions that go to make up the native code of living. Here a transplanted aristocracy set up an ideal of spacious living, bringing with them ancient customs and creeds. The zenith of this civilization was reached before Appomattox and made the Natchez country the center of wealth and culture in the feudal old South. Then came the tragic reconstruction era from which the section has never recuperated.

Since Natchez lives always in her sunnier days, it is a gracious city of gentlefolk with old-world manners. A city where, though the food cupboards may be scantily supplied, the guest boards never lack cake and wine. The native code of standards is a thing apart. The

aristocratic cult, as a result of its sensitivity and its tragic persecution, has so drawn up within its borders as to act independently of the surrounding world. Although its members' codes are no different it would appear from the outside that the group is a law unto itself. They see no reason to announce their marriages abroad or in any way to explain their actions. There are many instances of the individual having gone to his or her deathbed under the opprobrium of an illicit relationship when there was a bona fide marriage license tucked away in the dresser drawer. The underlying reason of this secrecy may have been money, an old family feud, an instinctive dislike of having one's affairs discussed by those who had not the same background. Their friends understood the situation, and that was all that mattered. There, alone in contemporary America, emphasis is still placed upon beauty, bravery and courtesy. Money in Natchez does not make the man; neither does the lack of it unmake him. How much money one may possess is incidental.

After I grew up I was away from my native town for many years, and then, one glorious April day, I found myself on the way to a Natchez Pilgrimage Celebration. As my brother, David, and I raced along the old Natchez Trace we were apparently gay and happy though in both of our minds there was the thought of those who would not be there to greet us on our home-coming.

PREFACE

All the afternoon I had been amazed at the contour of the part of Mississippi through which we had been passing. I was beginning to believe I had been unappreciative of my surroundings when I lived there. I had not realized then the loveliness of the countryside. David slowed the car down a bit now; we were coming into the little town of Washington.

"It was here, in 1807," he said as he stopped beneath a venerable oak tree, "that Aaron Burr's preliminary trial was held."

History has it that during the trial of this illustrious man, because of the intense heat and crowded condition of the room, the court was adjourned to session under the shade of these same moss-draped branches.

It had grown dark when we stopped in front of the Natchez Hotel. The place appeared to be crowded—so many had come, from so many parts of the country, for Pilgrimage Week, but we were soon comfortably placed upon the fourth floor. After dinner we decided to walk out into the soft April night and take a look at our old house—the house in which many of our family had been born, and in which we had spent happy years.

As we passed the Britton and Kuntz bank David glanced down at the pink flagstones upon which we were walking.

"These," he said, "were shipped here as ballast back in the days of sailing vessels." The English and Bel-

gian slate, which is slightly purplish in cast and is used in Natchez so extensively, was brought there in the same way.

We had reached our old house now. It stands upon the southwest corner of Washington and Union streets and faces Washington. Before the street was lowered, it sat high above Union and was encircled by an immense brick wall except for about twenty feet directly in front of the entrance, where an iron fence and great gate completed the protection that in my childhood was considered necessary for one's property. The house, a three-story brick of nine rooms, with a rambling brick ell containing six rooms, is said to have been built by Señor Juan Guillermo, though he and his family lived in it for only a few months. He, his wife and five children died of yellow fever, leaving only Estavan, the oldest son, who was sent back to Spain to live with his father's family. My grandmother, Mrs Adaline Baker, bought the house from Mr Audley Britton who, with his family, had lived there for two generations.

Flanking Washington Street on the north are chinaberry trees growing to mythical height and beauty and laden in the spring with lacy purple blossoms. As David and I stood in their shadows, looking across at what had once been our house, my eyes filled with uncontrollable tears. Nostalgic memories we all have. Yours and mine may be of a different pattern, but they

are of the same insubstantial threads—laughter and love and sorrow. But David jerked me out of my mood with the reminder: "We're here on a pleasure trip!"

We had started toward the hotel and were in front of St Mary's Cathedral when the bell in the tower began to chime the hour of ten. We stood listening for a moment, then he told me of the prayer Princess Marie Torlonia had made the night this bell was cast.

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Tradition and Early History

CHAPTER I

Princess Marie Torlonia and the Bell of St Mary's

AMONG THE OLD INHABITANTS of Natchez you may still find those who cross themselves at the sound of St Mary's chimes. They will tell you that the guardian angel of the little town is Princess Marie Torlonia, and because of her prayer the people of many nations have for generations lived there in amity. In some mysterious way they think she is wedded to Natchez and causes peace and happiness to be the birthright of those fortunate enough to come into the world within the sound of the chimes of St Mary's.

In 1849, Prince Alex Torlonia of Rome decided to give a bell to his friend, Bishop Chanche, for the Catholic cathedral at Natchez. He commissioned Giovanni Lucenti to do the work. Its weight, he specified, must be at least three thousand pounds and the tone in keeping with the interior of St Mary's, where the

altars, the rails and the sanctuary floor were to be of Carrara marble.

As the story goes, on the night the bell was to be cast, Prince Alex, his wife Princess Marie, and a party of friends went to the foundry at midnight to witness the casting. As the princess gazed at the red-hot metal, she threw her wedding ring into the seething mass and straightway fell upon her knees. She prayed that Natchez, the future home of the bell, would always be a blessed place, where gentle folk of all nations would dwell together in peace and happiness. The entire assemblage prayed with her during the fusion.

Princess Marie's younger brother, some years before, had lost his life in the Natchez country and was buried there. Because of this, she took a peculiar interest in anything that concerned this faraway land and never seemed to tire of hearing tales of White Apple Village, Great Sun, the Chief of the Beard, Natchez-under-the-Hill and the Devil's Punch Bowl.

CHAPTER II

White Apple Village

THE HOME OF THE NATCHEZ INDIANS

THE NATCHEZ COUNTRY first appears in recorded history as the home of Great Sun, the chief of the Natchez Indians. We get our earliest glimpse of the country and nation from the *Relationes. A Fidalgo of Elvas,* based on the diary of Rodrigo Ranjel, private secretary to Hernando De Soto, says:

> This province was thickly peopled, and the inhabitants all desired to serve us. They offered De Soto skins, shawls and fish. It is a land abundant in subsistence. In the fields were many walnut trees, bearing tender-shelled nuts. All the trees, the year round, were green, and the woods were open.

White Apple Village was situated on Second Creek ten miles south of where the city of Natchez stands. Great Sun's wigwam stood on a spacious and commanding mound that was timbered with magnolia and white oak; on an opposite mound was the Temple of

the Sun where the sacred fire burned incessantly. Over by the white cliffs of St Catharine's, the Stinkards (common people) cultivated large fields of grain.

The Natchez Indians differed from other southern tribes in that they had an aristocratic, highly privileged class, a despotic form of government and retained the barbaric custom of human sacrifice to expiate the anger of an avenging god. They were also sun worshipers. Some of these characteristics point to a possible Peruvian origin and a descent of the ruling class from the Inca. Their skin was the color of light mahogany, their eyes and hair jet black, their features regular, and their expression intelligent and noble. They were tall—very few under six feet—and their bodies were unusually symmetrical.

The coming of De Soto and his men caused no change in the life of the Natchez Nation. For more than one hundred and thirty years thereafter the Mississippi Valley was neglected by the great powers. Then France awoke to its limitless potentialities and grandeur and sent La Salle and Tonti, who claimed for the French crown all of that vast country that is now Mississippi and Louisiana. While they placated the Indians with baubles they erected a column and a cross. To the column were affixed the arms of France with the inscription:

Louis Le Grand, Roy de France et de Nevarre, reigne le 9 Avril, 1682.

Great Sun now had a rival, though it was a long while before he realized the fact.

In May 1713 a French frigate arrived in Mobile Bay. Among the passengers were Cadillac, the governor-general, and his family. The regions along the coast and along the lower Mississippi were more subject to Indian attacks than those farther north. For this reason Cadillac determined to found a settlement in the Natchez country, hoping to make that locality the chief center of French influence south of the Illinois country.

Great Sun had been flattered that the paleface liked his country well enough to erect a column and cross. He and the Great Female Sun met the invaders with open arms and listened willingly to the French priests who told them of the meek and gentle Jesus who had died that they might live.

Even the building of Fort Rosalie did not cause the Indians to become suspicious. It was put upon a high hill and was named in honor of Madame la Duchesse de Pontchartrain. It was merely a plot twenty-five fathoms long by fifteen broad, inclosed with palisades without any bastion. Inside, near the gate, was the guardhouse, and three fathoms along the palisade ran the barracks for the soldiers. On either side, opposite the gate, a cabin was raised for the residence of the commanding officer, and on the right of the entrance was the powder magazine.

Indeed so pleased were the Indians with all of this that on the twenty-fifth of July 1716 thirty Yasous and six hundred Natchez, without arms, came to smoke the calumet before the fort. They wanted to show their joy at having the French established among them.

Charles Gayarre tells a legendary story of the death of the Natchez Chief of the Beard, who was executed by order of Bienville for the murder of three Frenchmen. According to Gayarre, he was delivered into Bienville's hands by Great Sun, as one of the men responsible for the death of the Frenchmen. Before his execution, the Chief of the Beard sang this war song:

"Let there be joy in the hearts of the Natchez! A child is born of the race of the Sun. A boy is born with a beard on his chin! I questioned my mother, and she said:

> "'*Son of the Chiefs of the Beard,*
> *Thou shalt know this mystery,*
> *Since, true to thy nature, with thy own blood,*
> *Thy black beard thou hast turned red.*'

"Let there be joy in the hearts of the Natchez! When the first Chief of the Beard trimmed the sacred fire in the temple, this voice was heard, 'As long as there lives a chief, of the race of the Suns, with a beard on his chin, no evil can happen to the Natchez Nation, but if the paleface should ever take his blood, woe, three times woe to the Natchez! Of them nothing will remain but the shadow of the name!'

"Ha! ha! ha! that was game worthy of the Chief of the Beard!
How lightly he danced! ho! ho! ho!
How gladly he shouted! ha! ha! ha!
Each time with French blood his black beard became red.

"Let there be sorrow in the hearts of the Natchez! The great hunter is no more! He was betrayed by his brother chiefs, who sold his blood. He is content to die, for he leaves behind none but the doomed, and he goes to revel with his brave ancestors!

"They will recognize their son in the Chief of the Beard!
They will welcome him to their glorious homestead,
When they see so many scalps at his girdle,
And his black beard with French blood painted red!"

The Indians had a high concept of justice; and as there grew upon them the realization that the white man was ravaging their country, they became inflamed with hate.

The tide of immigration set strongly toward the Natchez section now, and relations between the two races became more and more strained. While the Indians had declined in number and fighting strength, the French garrison was also weak; the prosperous French planters were scattered and their homes isolated. Soon after Chopart was appointed commandant of the post he began to pursue an overbearing course with the Indians. Peremptorily he ordered Great Sun,

the chief of the village of the White Apple, to vacate his land. He planned to establish here a settlement of his own countrymen. This outrage led eventually to the formation of a conspiracy by the Indians and the execution of a massacre.

The Natchez showed great cunning; they timed their attack when a number of richly laden boats were coming into port. Father le Petit, in the following account of the massacre, explains how they laid their plans:

First they divided themselves, and sent into the fort, into the village (the Grand Village of the Natchez) and into the two grants as many Indians as there were French in each of the places. They then feigned that they were going out for a hunt and undertook to trade with the French for guns, powder and ball, offering to pay them as much, and even more than was customary. In truth, as there was no reason to suspect their fidelity, they made, at that time, an exchange of their poultry and corn for arms and ammunition which they used advantageously against us. We had been on our guard against the Tchactas (Choctaws), but as for the Natchez, we never distrusted them. Having thus posted themselves in different houses, provided with arms obtained from us, they attacked at the same time, each his man, and in less than two hours they massacred more than two hundred of the French.

But eventually the Indians had to surrender, and their ultimate defeat was brought about because of

their altruistic nature—they repeatedly failed to recognize the hypocrisy and greed of the invaders. Time after time they were taken in. Hardly had a tentative peace been declared after the massacre when the French, in their cupidity, undertook to make slaves of this sun-worshiping nation. At first the Indians failed to understand the white man's plan, and when they did, though ravaged by syphilis which the French had introduced among them, they fought until practically exterminated. When Great Sun and a few warriors at last gave themselves up, they represented substantially all that remained of the once populous and powerful Natchez Nation.

The Indians now had been routed from their wigwams, and there were new faces in White Apple Village. But life was not easy for these settlers. That can be gathered from the records and letters of Sarah, the wife of the Rev. Jedediah Smith. She built her first house in the Natchez country on the mound where Great Sun had lived.

Jedediah Smith had been pastor of the Presbyterian church at Granville, Mass., until early in 1776, when he found himself hopelessly at odds with his congregation. His theological views were too broad—he wasn't sure that hell-fire and damnation awaited the happy-hearted. Then, too, his political views were unpopular. He was a royalist—the grandson of Lord Burleigh.

A friend of Jedediah's, Thaddeus Lyman, held, by title from the British government, a large tract of land in the Mississippi country. Thaddeus had been trying to persuade Jedediah to leave New England; they were both opposed to the Revolution and wanted to get away from a country that threatened the horrors of civil war. In July Jedediah received a letter from his brother, Elnathan Smith. Elnathan was living in the Mississippi country and gave a glowing account of his new home—a place, he said, where they would all become prosperous and happy. It did not take Jedediah long to make up his mind, and on April 1, 1776, he, his wife and eleven children set out for the Mississippi country.

Travel at that time was a venturesome undertaking. Though they made a good start they got no farther than Middletown before Thaddeus Lyman and Mr Whitmore, half owner of the vessel, were arrested. The authorities there were suspicious that British officers, who had been prisoners, were secreted in the vessel that was bringing out the emigrants. After some time Lyman was discharged, but Whitmore was tried and condemned to death.

The vessel finally left Middletown about the last of May and after a boisterous passage of two months arrived at the mouth of the Mississippi. In ten or twelve days more the voyagers reached New Orleans, only to find themselves in quarantine—prevented from

landing by the Spanish authorities who were battling with a smallpox epidemic.

The two families, the Lymans and Smiths, endured this lonesome quarantine until the middle of August, when they at last procured a small bateau in which to ascend the river to Natchez. This craft had made but a few miles up the river when a sudden wind threatened to upset her, and the party was forced to land.

They found shelter with an English gentleman who, strangely enough, bore the name of Warr. To his care Jedediah entrusted a part of his furniture, library and wearing apparel, on the theory that his boat had been too heavily laden. And again they set out.

The country, along the sides of the river, was sparsely settled, but even the wilderness was preferable to the uncertain reception the wanderers met in the villages. At Baton Rouge a measure of hospitality was shown, but at Point Coupee, Roman Catholic bigotry prevailed. The idea of a minister or priest being married and openly having a family of children was abhorrent to them. By these zealots the whole party was viewed with horror and considered heretics.

The weather was extremely hot, with showers two or three times a day. After fifteen days of such exposure they arrived at a place called Fort Adams, forty-five miles below Natchez. Here Jedediah heard of the death of his brother, Elnathan, which caused great sorrow to the whole party.

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As the careworn wanderers rounded the last bend of their river voyage Jedediah was suddenly stricken with a violent fever. The heat and dampness aggravated his disease until he became delirious. In a frenzy he left his cot and jumped into the river. He was rescued—only to live a few days longer. He died September 2, 1776, the day after he reached Natchez with his wife, eleven children and depleted cargo.

With the head of the family dead, distress and misfortune set upon Sarah and the children. Their furniture and books, which had been left with the Englishman near New Orleans, had been confiscated by the Spanish authorities, who considered him an alien and a foe. Aside from the dread of famine and disease, there was always the common fear of savagery.

At first, Sarah felt completely helpless. She thought of returning to Massachusetts. She was afraid the maintenance of a large family, in a new community, was more than she could undertake. Indeed, her problem became so acute that one day she was forced to trade her wedding ring to an Indian woman in return for corn wherewith to feed the children.

But she was fortunate in her children. Her eldest son, Philander, was especially devoted to her. One evening there was an alarm; it was feared that the Indians were going to give trouble. The settlers for miles around took refuge in Fort Rosalie. The place was

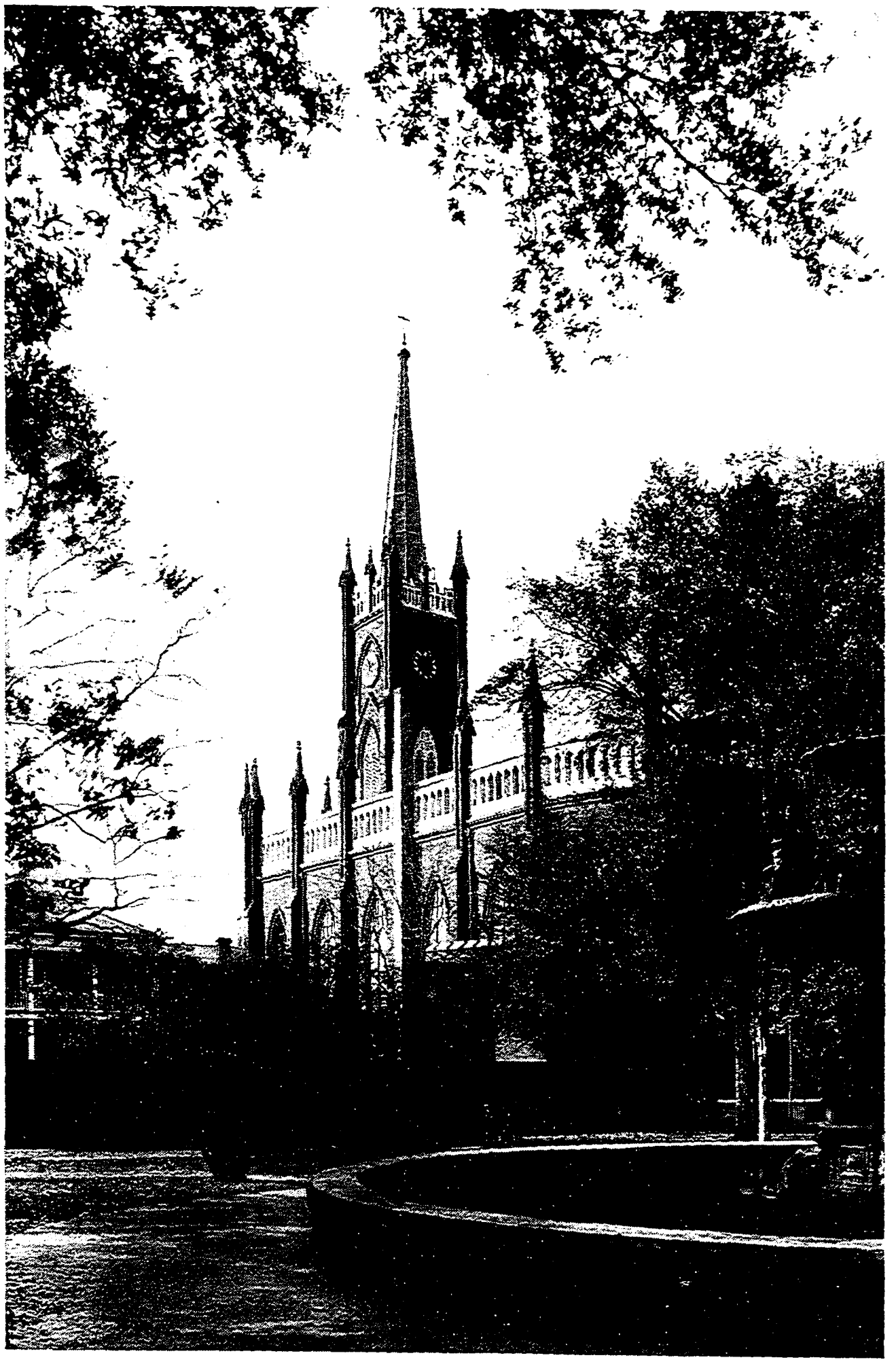
crowded, and Sarah, who was not well, was uncomfortable because she had no chair.

At bedtime Philander, then a boy of twelve, was not to be found. Sarah was frantic; she feared he had been captured by the Indians. But just before daylight he came in carrying a chair which he presented to her. The lad had for hours braved the darkness and danger that his mother might be made comfortable.

But this Indian uprising had been a false alarm; never again was the Natchez Nation to trouble the white invaders. The Indians were fast disappearing: even their name was being usurped, for the white man called his new home Natchez. White Apple Village was no more. In a few years now, Princess Marie Torlonia was to ask that peace and happiness be the portion of this settlement which had been founded upon conquest.

Jedediah did not live to enjoy his new home, but his high hopes were fulfilled in the lives of his children, for the family prospered and became one of the wealthiest and most respected in the Natchez country. Philander and Calvin built their respective houses on adjoining plantations in what is known as the Second Creek Neighborhood. This is reached by the Kingston road and is about ten miles out from Natchez. Philander called his place Burleigh, and Calvin named his Retirement because of its inaccessibility—it can only be reached through a narrow, deep-cut road that turns

to the left from the main highway. Burleigh was destroyed by fire many years ago, but the direct descendants of Calvin Smith still sit upon the broad gallery at Retirement and drink juleps from the same silver cups that Jedediah brought with him from New England in 1776.



ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL

HOPE FARM

CHAPTER III

Natchez-under-the-Hill

THE END OF THE NATCHEZ TRACE

NATCHEZ-UNDER-THE-HILL, during the Spanish regime, was respectable. It did not become notorious until after 1825. The Spaniards enforced the law with the utmost strictness, and a garrison of well-trained soldiers always upheld the governor's authority.

The first settlers were strong, forceful characters, full of the love of adventure, energy and initiative. It was a small landing then—an Indian trading station; later it was to become a world port. As it grew, slave traders, gamblers and criminals flocked there to prey upon the Indians, the backwoodsmen and the planters.

The name Natchez, at first, did not apply to any particular spot but included a large district consisting of what has since become several separate counties. Letters sent over the Natchez Trace were simply ad-

dressed to the Natchez country. Natchez on top of the hill did not exist as a town until the Spaniards laid it out, about the year 1790.

At this time, Natchez-under-the-Hill had three streets in tiers, running parallel with the river and forming loops at each end in order to make the ascent of the hill. Indians in gay blankets lounged about; trappers and hunters in fur caps and leather breeches, shopkeepers in bright smocks, priests with their dark robes, gentlemen wearing gay, velvet coats and soldiers in flamboyant uniforms and tricorns made an endless pageant-of-the-nations. The first street, following the curve of the river, was about one mile long. It was lined with rude wharfs and shacks jutting out over the water on one side and with buildings burrowing into the cliffs on the other. These first buildings were scantily crude because of the scarcity of lumber. (An enterprising settler would often purchase a flatboat or condemned barge for the lumber it contained.)

But the town grew by great leaps, and in the course of time the better elements of the population left, moving up the hill, so that by the end of the first quarter of the century only society's castaways remained on the river front. Main Street was lined with gambling houses, brothels and barrooms. After dark, the half-sunken walks of Silver Street would be blocked with foppish young men and tawdry women,

and behind doors were licentious orgies. This was Natchez-under-the-Hill in the eighteen-thirties.

Since then, much of the town has caved into the river. The race tracks, the lower streets and the battery are gone, and only a remnant of Silver Street remains. In the old buildings that once housed bold buccaneers harmless negroes now have a peaceful, though dirty and insecure, abode. For many years the Mississippi has been gradually encroaching on the Natchez bluffs, taking a little here and a little there. The time is not far distant when a legendary record will be all that is left of Natchez-under-the-Hill.

CHAPTER IV

Devil's Punch Bowl

ABOUT A MILE NORTH of Natchez there is a driveway walled in by steep embankments; the trees above it are matted with moss and tropical creepers. Their interlacing branches form a leafy roof over this road which leads to Clermont Plantation, from which place the Devil's Punch Bowl may be seen. This Bowl is one of nature's freaks and is similar in formation to the one on the Isle of Elba, where Napoleon was a prisoner. It, too, was called the Devil's Punch Bowl.

The Natchez Bowl is a gigantic, semicircular pit which looks as though it had been made by a tremendous, inverted cone that had burrowed into the bluffs. It covers many acres and slowly enlarges each year. The center seems to have dropped out of that portion of creation, but ancient forest trees cling to the Bowl's precipitous edges. The soil is rich loam, or silt, and is free from any form of stone.

More than a century ago a writer said of the hills just above the Bowl:

> They are properly the head or termination of the eastern highland of the United States . . . the antennae of the Alleghenies. The hypothesis that they were once promontories, with waves of the Mexican Gulf breaking at their feet, has the support of many scientists.

The earthquake of 1811 which destroyed New Madrid, Mo., and formed Reelfoot Lake in Tennessee, caused no perceptible change in the Punch Bowl; these hills must have been thrown over the primitive formation by some extraordinary upheaval or convulsion long before that time.

The Natchez Indians evidently made use of the Bowl, for their mounds are numerous near its mouth; vestiges of pottery and skeletons are there to tell the story.

On one of the highest points of the bluff, near Clermont Plantation, is the grave of the wife of Don José Vidal, a Spanish governor. Vandals have destroyed the iron railing that once enclosed this spot, and in the course of years several large trees have grown into the tomb that once held the form of the highborn lady from old Spain.

There are countless traditions connected with this uncanny spot. Some tell of river pirates, runaway slaves, buried treasure, romance and adventure. One story is that a great meteor containing radium and

other precious substances fell here and not only buried itself fathoms deep but took with it many acres of woodland. In support of this theory, river men assert, the magnetic compass is greatly disturbed at this point; some even say the needle spins completely around. Farfetched as this story may seem, many in the vicinity give it credence, while others advance the idea that hidden treasure in huge metal containers is buried there. Much vain digging for piratical gold has taken place in the basin of the great Bowl.

River pirates preyed upon the early settlers, many of whom came to this section in flatboats. Among the most dangerous of these pirates were the Harp brothers and the Mason gang. The Harps, Big Harp and Little Harp, had sworn enmity to the whole human race. They stationed men at all strategic points along the river and, on sighting a fleet of flatboats, usually hailed the boatmen, pretending they were tradesmen with fresh supplies. The travelers often ran low of necessities, and after some dickering the bandits would gain admission to the boats, murder the crew, take the cash and supplies and then sink the rafts. The Punch Bowl offered two advantages for the pirates: a marvelous view up and down the river and a safe hiding place for their men and boats. From the summit of the cliffs that bind the Bowl one can command a vast panorama of river and land; here and there can be caught a glimpse of water miles away, as the river bends and

loops in serpentine fashion on its way to the sea.

A well-authenticated story is that the town of L'Argent, across the river from Natchez, received its name from the disastrous sinking of a boat loaded with silver. The vessel was supposed to have been sunk by the Mason gang, early in the eighteenth century.

It is known that Murrell's gang used the Punch Bowl. Murrell was the most daring and the last of the old-time bandits around Natchez. He headed a conspiracy among the slaves—a general uprising among the negroes all over the South. Bob Coates says:

> It was a crazy scheme, but not so crazy then as it appears to be today. The towns were far apart, the citizenry scattered and the government distant. Murrell had a nucleus of some eighty officers and about three hundred lesser agents banded together . . . he planned a mystical confederacy and negro rebellion.

The date had been set—Christmas Day, 1835. The first place of attack was to be Natchez. A man by the name of Stewart had Murrell arrested for some minor infraction of the law. Fearing then that the truth might leak out, Murrell's agents decided to expedite matters; they moved the date of attack up to July 4. Toward the end of June the wife of a wealthy planter named Latham, living near Beattie's Bluff, stepped out upon the north gallery of her house and overheard what to her seemed a curious conversation between two negro slaves. One of these was a nursegirl, the other

a field hand. The girl was holding Mrs Latham's baby in her arms when she spoke:

"But this is such a pretty little baby! You-all ought to know, I never could kill this here child!"

Mrs Latham was aghast. The man was now arguing with the girl, urging her, persuading her, threatening her:

"Us got to kill 'em. Kill 'em all!" he said.

Mrs Latham rushed in to her husband who at once sent for the negress. The girl broke down and told about the conspiracy. In a few hours Mr Latham had aroused the countryside. Suspected negroes were dragged in and questioned. The plot grew thicker. Many whites were involved, but Mr Latham was unable to get at the bottom of the trouble until a black boy named Joe revealed what he knew. He told that the negroes were to rise and kill all the whites on the fourth of July, and that there were a number of white men in charge of the arrangements. The slaves, he said, on each plantation were to slaughter their masters and their masters' families, using farm implements or clubs. They were to sack and burn the houses and move from one place to another until the whole country became theirs. Joe further stated that though they had planned to kill all the whites they could, if they so desired, each man might claim one white woman for himself. The negroes were to have been used as a blind; the white leaders were to escape with the loot.

PART II

Historical Houses

CHAPTER V

King's Tavern, *or* the Bledsoe House

THIS HOUSE is probably the oldest building in Natchez, if not in the entire state. It dates back to the colorful days of the Natchez Trace, when it was known far and wide as King's Tavern. The structure is of brick, ship timber and cypress. It is provincial rather than Spanish in type, somewhat resembling a blockhouse of pre-Revolutionary days. Since the English made use of brick in the erection of their half-timber houses, it is not inconceivable that this quaint relic dates to their first occupation. In any event, it cannot be definitely classed as a Spanish building.

The living room has a low ceiling, and the wide fireplace holds an imported grate of unusual design—a rose, thistle and lion are there, emblematic of the united kingdoms of Ireland, Scotland and England. The sills and sleepers give unmistakable evidence of

having been formerly used in a ship. There are holes, rounded pegs and fittings that speak loudly of ropes and sails. The earliest record dealing with the place is written in Spanish and is a grant to Ricardo King, made May 31, 1789.

In 1823 the house belonged to Mrs Elizabeth Postlethwaite, who, before her death, deeded it to Miss Emily Postlethwaite and Mrs Mary Ann Bledsoe. Since then this landmark has been known as the Bledsoe House, and in the course of time six generations of that family have lived under its roof. A portrait of Samuel Postlethwaite, the third, hangs on the wall of the living room. It is the work of Benjamin West and shows a man with an intellectual cast of countenance in broadcloth and high stock.

Bledsoe House is not as handsome as the houses of a later period, but it is interesting. Aaron Burr had many a rendezvous there. King's Tavern was a place of importance in 1807.

CHAPTER VI

Forest

WILLIAM DUNBAR, the owner of Forest, was a native of Morayshire, Scotland, the youngest son of Sir Archibald Dunbar, of Dunbar Castle, near Elgin (Thunderton). He was born in 1749 and was educated in Glasgow and London. He was usually referred to as Sir William Dunbar but signed his name William Dunbar Esq. It is thought he came into possession of a title after he was in America but, being thoroughly democratic, refused to claim it.

Forest was erected in 1792 and antedates all other mansions in the Natchez country. It was a building of architectural beauty and commanding proportions and, in that far-off day, must have seemed a veritable palace to the early settlers, most of whom lived in simple log houses or houses constructed in the plain Spanish style.

The building was destroyed by fire in the winter of 1852. It was a cold day, and a heavy mantle of snow covered the ground. The slaves, thinking it an ideal time to burn out the chimneys, commenced the task while the family were at breakfast. No one knew just how it happened, but suddenly the whole upper portion of the building burst into a mass of flame. In the excitement many valuable furnishings that might have been saved were overlooked.

Forest was never rebuilt, but a descendant of the family still lives on the plantation.

William Dunbar did much for the development of the Southwest by scientific research, experimentation and exploration. The Spanish government named him astronomical commissioner to assist in determining the line between the United States and the Spanish possessions. His report of this work is preserved in the archives at Madrid, Spain, and is said to be a marvelously concise and accurate scientific document.

He was as versatile as he was learned, and his activities covered numerous phases of science. He kept exact records of rainfall, temperature and barometric pressure. He knew soils and discovered on his own land valuable deposits of ochre, which he exported. He collected fossils and studied microscopic life in the waters of the Mississippi. He corresponded with Herschel and was the adviser of President Jefferson,

with whom he carried on an extensive correspondence. Through Jefferson's backing he made explorations throughout Louisiana and Arkansas, at which time he studied and classified the Indian tribes, their languages and customs. He also kept records of the natural phenomena and the plant life of the three states; these records are in the Congressional Library.

For all of Mr Dunbar's scholarly attainments, he was a devoted husband and father who indulged his wife and daughters in the feminine fineries of the day. Duplicates of orders he sent to firms in London still exist, extracts from which are:

One fashionable necklace and one pair of earrings for a young lady; also a set of brooches to match. Three ladies' gold, breast pins. The hair to be set in handsome device, and cyphered [monogrammed]. Three parcels of hair are enclosed, with letters marked on each, to be cyphered.

We, who enjoy the automobile, will be interested in an order he sent to a firm in Philadelphia. It reads as follows:

I am desirous of obtaining, by your assistance, a wheel carriage, light and strong, of the kind called the *coachee;* proper for a family, so as to hold commodiously four grown persons. I wish it neat, handsome, well finished. A carriage with plated mountings, but nothing gaudy or superfluous. My friend, Major Stephen Minor, wants exactly the same thing, and writes, I believe, by the same post.

After further directions he mentions that the cost should not be more than six hundred dollars, and adds:

> On the carriage may be placed the letters W. D. in cipher [monogram]. I presume, we republicans must not think of coats of arms.

In his journal the entries deal principally with plantation routine, but the pages are sometimes exciting. He tells of raids of lawless bands pretending to be Revolutionary soldiers, a slave uprising nipped in the bud, a trial where a negress was condemned to have one hand cut off and to be hanged until dead. One pleasanter entry shows that Christmas was observed even on the frontier. It is as follows:

> Friday, being Christmas day, the gentlemen of the settlement dined with Mrs Watts . . . today, the gentlemen dined with me . . .

This was the Christmas of 1778 and the new year of 1779.

WINDY HILL MANOR

STAIRWAY OF WINDY HILL MANOR

CHAPTER VII

Windy Hill Manor

THIS dignified and commodious plantation house, with its typical Roman gallery, Tuscan columns and hand-turned balustrades, is one and one-half stories high. It has quaint dormer windows and a doorway remarkable for its size. The fanlights, which are of early American glass, often show opalescent tints because of the slight imperfections of a then unmastered art.

The house is full of historic interest. It was here that Aaron Burr found a haven when his dream kingdom failed him. It was here he came when released on bail after his first arrest for treason against the country he had helped establish. His arrest took place at Bruinsburg, just north of Natchez, and near the site of the country store once kept by Andrew Jackson, but his preliminary trial was held at Wash-

ington, Mississippi, then the capital of the territory. Philander Smith, in February 1807, was foreman of the grand jury that investigated the Burr Expedition and refused to indict Aaron Burr.* Tradition says that men of affairs, in the Natchez country, believed Burr to be a courageous gentleman and gallant soldier, persecuted by political enemies. But Claiborne thought differently. He says:

> Col. Burr was the recipient of much attention from a few wealthy citizens, but the body of the Territory warmly approved of acting-governor, Cowles Meade's, and President Jefferson's course in having him arrested.

When released on a five-thousand-dollar bond, Burr went to Windy Hill Manor to be the guest of his old friend, Colonel Benjah Osmun. Major Guion, known to history as the first man to raise the American flag over Fort Panmure, lived near by. He had been a soldier in the New Jersey line, and Osmun, too, had served throughout the Revolution. Both had known Burr intimately. They aided him, but through their championship neither seems to have fallen under suspicion.

Burr is described as:

"A suave, nonchalant, well groomed man, handsome and magnetic, with flashing black eyes, aquiline nose and a large, well shaped mouth with even teeth. He was not tall, but his erect, military carriage gave the

*Monette's *Valley of the Mississippi.* Vol. 2, p. 376.

impression of height and there was a regal-like ease and poise in his bearing that was irresistible. Even his enemies admired him."

His flirtation with the unsophisticated Madeline Price, daughter of a lowly widow, almost caused him to be captured on the stormy night when he forfeited his bond. It is said that he remained overlong at her house trying to persuade her to fly with him. She had the good sense to refuse him, but the story is that she waited and grieved for him many years before she married.

At Windy Hill Manor he was treated with great respect by the hospitable Colonel Osmun, and there met the leading men of the territory. Admitting that he is entitled to the benefit of a doubt, we find much damaging evidence even in his conduct while in Natchez as a guest in the home of this friend who trusted him. While there, he received mysterious visitors. Many things happened that might have compromised the good name of his host.

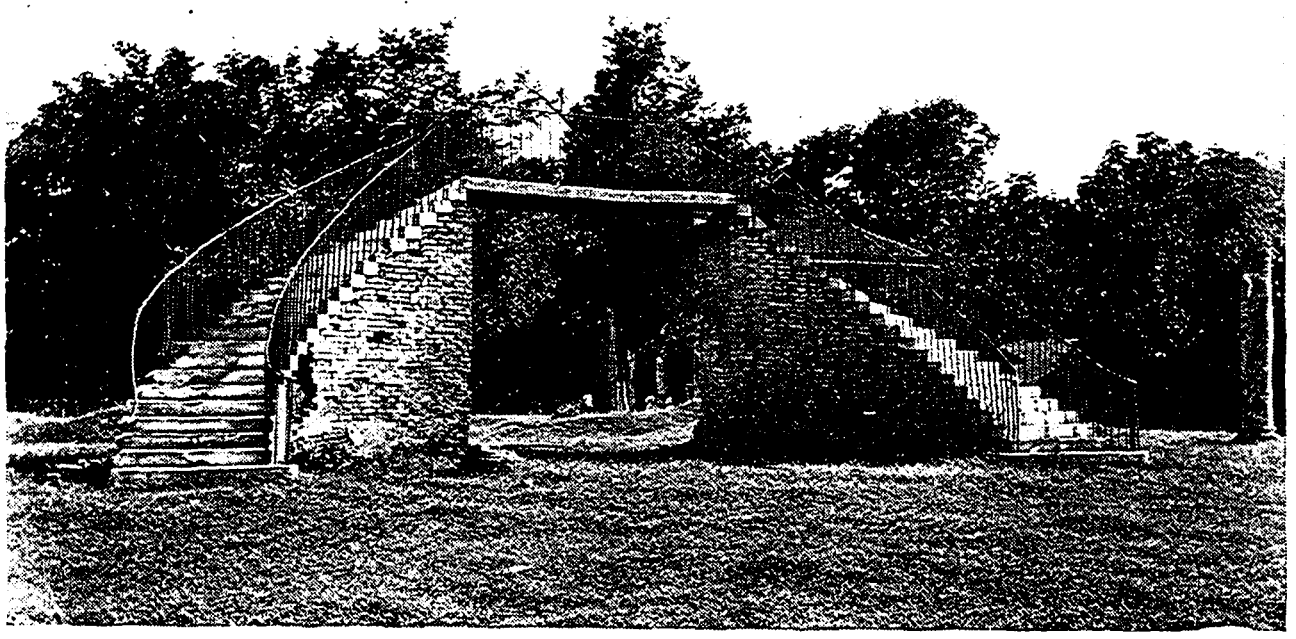
CHAPTER VIII

Hope Farm

THE HOUSE here is definitely of Spanish origin and was built in 1774, though no one knows for whom it was constructed. It is known that in 1789 Governor Don Carlos de Grand Pré added the front as shown in the picture and lived there with his family. Its age is evinced by the low ceilings, narrow windows and door facings and an absence of all pretense at ornamentation. It is fitted by the tongue-and-groove method, and its timbers are as sound as they were a century ago. According to the old Spanish custom, it was constructed so that carriages might pass, through an arch, beneath the building.

In 1792 Job Routh obtained the grant of land upon which the house stands from Baron Corondelet, the governor of the province of Louisiana. In the settlement of Mr Routh's estate the property was given to

CONCORD



RUINS OF CONCORD

LINDEN

Mary Routh, wife of Thomas G. Ellis. They later sold the place to Eli Montgomery Esq. For more than ninety years Hope Farm belonged to the Montgomery family.

Mr and Mrs Balfour Miller, who are the present owners, have done much to restore the property but, with their appreciation of the antiquity of their house, have wisely refrained from changing one line of the original plan.

CHAPTER IX

Concord

In 1794 Spain was still one of the leading nations of the world and the most formal in the observance of court etiquette. Don Gayoso Lemos, representative of His Majesty, the King of Spain, in the Natchez country, decided to build a dwelling in keeping with the dignity of the state. He christened his mansion Concord, for he thought that name expressed the sentiment of his subjects who, though drawn from every nation and clime, dwelt side by side in friendship.

The house was two and one-half stories high, with wide galleries surrounding it on every side. The lower floor was of brick, and the upper of frame. Huge columns reached from the ground floor to the roof. Beneath the long double flight of steps at the front entrance was a driveway leading into the basement, which, according to Spanish custom, was used as a

carriage room and domicile for domestic animals. The upper floors contained the living apartments. The entire house was richly furnished with importations from the old country.

Following the recall of Gayoso, Don Estavon Minor, a member of a well-known Pennsylvania family who had come to the Natchez country in his early youth, purchased the property and had the basement completely refinished and converted into reception rooms. He lived at Concord for many years, in magnificent style, and his name became a synonym for lavish hospitality. He was a man of intelligence; well educated and had a striking personality. He held many civil offices and had the complete confidence of the Spanish authorities. During the absence of a governor he filled the office of chief executive, and it was through his influence the Spanish rule, at this time, was of liberal and tolerant aspect.

He married Catharine, a sister of the lovely Fanny Lintot who is said to have died of a broken heart when her husband, Philip Nolan, was executed in Mexico following the discovery of his complicity in Burr's scheme. Philip was young; he was full of the love of high adventure, and he fell under the sway of that evil genius, Burr, who possessed power over many more experienced men. Philip's tragic story formed the background for Edward Everett Hale's classic, "The Man Without a Country." This story,

so Natchez tradition says, grossly misrepresented Nolan.

A few years ago Concord was almost entirely destroyed by fire. Today the handsome, iron-railed double stairway is all that is left to mark a spot that was once the center of life in the Natchez colony.

CHAPTER X

Linden

THIS IS ONE of the very old houses in Natchez; it is known to have existed as far back as 1790, but the exact date of the erection is uncertain. In its classic simplicity it reminds one of Mt Vernon. There is an absolute freedom from ostentation and a dignified restraint that is appealing.

The colonial front doorway is an architectural triumph. An arch overhead is a fine example of the fanlight; the side lights of this door are inlaid in a frame carved to fit alternate diamond and oval panes.

There is a harmonious relationship in the furnishings of Linden that is most restful; on the walls there are three paintings by Audubon who, it must be remembered, did much of his work in and near Natchez. One of these depicts a squirrel on the bough of a pine tree and is considered one of his best paintings.

CHAPTER XI

Gloucester

GLOUCESTER STANDS a mile or more beyond the city limits, on the old Natchez Trace. It is half obscured by dense foliage and towering forest trees and is surrounded by two hundred and fifty acres of land. Its age and beauty alone would command interest, but history is written upon its walls—it was the home of Mississippi's first territorial governor.

The building, which faces north, is of red brick; it has a double-decked gallery upheld by huge Corinthian columns. Its eastern and western extremities are octagonal, and it is further distinguished by twin entrances at the opposite extremes of the gallery. The doors are remarkable for their massive construction and heavy inner bars and date back to the time when Indians and other marauders made such precautions necessary.

The base of Gloucester is surrounded by a dry moat which was formerly fenced in by iron pickets. The windows are iron-barred and shuttered.

The exact date of Gloucester's erection is in doubt. Several authorities think that it was built by David Williams in 1800. A member of this family became Mrs Winthrop Sargent, and soon after his marriage Sargent purchased Gloucester.

In 1798, upon the evacuation of the Spanish garrison, Winthrop Sargent, of Massachusetts, was appointed governor of the Mississippi Territory and upon his arrival took up his abode at Concord, the former home of the Spanish governors.

He was a strict Puritan with uncompromising views; his early environment and training completely unfitted him to rule over the cosmopolitan citizenship of the Mississippi Territory. He had been reared where blue laws were in effect. Natchez was settled by people from many nations who had a varied heritage. A love of adventure from the Spaniards was theirs, keen wit they got from the Irish, a taste of beauty and gallantry from the French and a desire for the refinements of life from the English. They lived lavishly and opulently, and it is little wonder that they developed a code of their own—they ate, drank and were merry. Life was cheap in those days. Settlers were constantly clashing over lines with the Spanish authorities; Indians and highwaymen made travel a hazard; pestilence

was looked upon as an unavoidable evil. A man was sensitive to a blow aimed at his honor; duels were of common occurrence. There was not much mercy or tolerance in the world then. The Puritans had just left off burning witches at the stake. Natchez not only had stocks and a whipping post, but, a few years before, a Spanish governor had condemned a man to be nailed in a coffin and had then ordered that he be slowly sawed in two parts. The insane were beaten, and cruelty usually went hand in hand with power.

To Sargent the leisure-loving Mississippians at first seemed both indolent and wicked. There is no doubt that he planned well and accomplished much, but his policies were distasteful to the Natchez people, and he antagonized many of the foremost men of his day—men who were respected and influential: Anthony Hutchins, Gerard Brandon, William Conner, Philander Smith, William Foster, Abner Green and Thomas Cato West, who later became a power in the territory as secretary of state and acting governor. They protested that Sargent's policies were petty—he levied exorbitant fees on marriage licenses and passports. He made it necessary to obtain a passport every time the Louisiana line was crossed. There is little wonder that he was said to be amassing a fortune.

Claiborne accuses him of being fanatical and suspicious, like his Puritan ancestors, and quotes a letter from the amiable, sweet-tempered William Dunbar as

GLOUCESTER

THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO COURTLAND

proof. Mr Dunbar described Sargent as frigid and austere. But whatever Claiborne may have thought of Sargent, other historians say he was a refined, scholarly gentleman of good morals and high ideals. He married a Southern woman, became a slaveowner and adopted many Southern customs which would lead us to believe that he eventually became adjusted to his surroundings.

After his term of office expired he acquired Gloucester—the sum involved being twenty thousand dollars. Further light is shed on his character by his will:

> I, Winthrop Sargent, of Gloster Place, near Natchez, wish my body to be speedily, and without parade, borne to the willow yard, by my own blacks, attended only by one half dozen friends, and committed to the earth. I desire that no mausoleum, but some humble stone proclaim me dead.

After other dry directions concerning the sale of lands in Ohio, Mississippi, Louisiana and 28,000 acres in the state of Virginia, he says of Gloucester:

> Perhaps one of my sons may possess it, but it is a costly establishment and unprofitable, and in a climate suited only to the winter of life. It can not be a proper place of residence for them till they have passed the meridian of their days. It may not be amiss to advise my sons, [he had two: William Felix Winthrop and George Washington Sargent] to form no matrimonial connections before they are twenty-five years of age, for from my observation, I do not believe that, most generally, men's minds are unalterably made up until then, as they have not had opportunity of enough seeing or enough knowing of THE SEX, ere such a period.

Sargent's sons died early. The tragic death of George Washington Sargent, who inherited Gloucester at his mother's death, has given rise to many ghost stories connected with the house.

During the occupancy of Natchez by the Federal troops, he was called to the door one night by the clang of the bell. Upon opening the door he received a shot through the heart from one of the two soldiers standing there. In the excitement both soldiers escaped, only to be captured and later condemned to death. Even today there live a few who recall the execution of these men on the grounds of D'Evereux Mansion, where they were shot by military orders. Some people say bloodstains still mar the beauty of the floors at Gloucester, and the darkies have manufactured a whole train of ghosts that dwell in the Sargent graveyard opposite the house.

CHAPTER XII

Courtland

WHEN COURTLAND SMITH, son of Philander, decided to build on Sandy Creek his family tried to dissuade him. He would be fifteen miles from their home in the Second Creek Neighborhood, he was not married, and they said they considered him too young to live alone. And then, too, the site he had chosen for his house was supposed to be an Indian burial mound. The family were not superstitious, but they thought, with so many beautiful places to choose from, it seemed a pity for him to select that spot. His mother, Esther, told him the Indian legend of Atala:

> After the Natchez were routed by the Muscogees, Chactas, whose father was White Apple, the Great Sun of the Natchez Nation, was taken prisoner. Then he met Atala, daughter of the Muscogee chief, who fell in love with him and arranged his escape. They

fled into the wilderness and began the long journey to Chactas' Mississippi home. After a toilsome march through cane and over hills and slopes, Atala began to grow faint. White Apple Village was near, but the dying Atala could go no further and, gently murmuring a message of love to Chactas, closed her eyes.
The last sad rites over the beloved maiden were said, and because Chactas belonged to the noble Suns of the Natchez tribe, twelve Indian virgins were obliged to follow Atala for company, into the country of souls. In due time their bodies were inhumed, Chactas choosing for this new mound a slope overlooking the waters of the Homochitto River. Sentinel pines and mighty oaks, moss-draped and gray, kept watch over the lonely graves. So long as the lover Chactas lived, he would often, as the pale moon arose, come and, standing high upon the mound, chant:

"I would save you from every danger . . . live my dearest Atala!
White man! white man!
Fight where and with whom you please—
But beware! Oh! beware of the Chiefs of the Beard!
Give way to them, as you would to death,
Or their black beards with your blood will be red!
White man, white man, of this spot beware!"

Courtland listened to his mother, but he liked the spot, the Indians were scattered, and his government grants were secured. When he built, the place was unpretentious, consisting of only four rooms, but was of solid timbers fitted together with thumb grooves and pegs. But he did not live to enjoy his house. On

the thirteenth of February 1817 he was found dead in his bed. The darkies claimed that it was the work of an Indian "ha'nt," but Esther, his mother, said it was God's will, preordained from the beginning of time.

His house was deserted for many years, and then his niece, Mrs Adaline Baker, decided to enlarge the place, call it Courtland for her uncle, of whom she had been fond, and live there.

She built twelve rooms around the original cabin, also a smokehouse, servants' quarters, a dairy, two outside kitchens and large stables. To preserve the contour of the cabin she allowed the floor plan to be uneven, the newer portion being slightly raised, giving the place an old-world atmosphere. She ordered furniture from England and a pair of well-matched white horses from Kentucky. The grounds were landscaped, an orchard planted. Brick slave quarters were built that were considered the most commodious and comfortable in the Natchez country. She had, at one time, one thousand of these happy-hearted, contented black children.

Many of the negroes told of seeing the Indian woman, Atala. When Mrs Baker's son, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, returned to Courtland with the skeleton that all physicians possessed in those days, the darkies' imaginations had full sway. The Big House was ha'nted they said. There was no doubt

about it. This superstition persists after many years. Fire and time have obliterated the glory of Courtland, but there are still old negroes in the neighborhood who will tell you of Atala, the Indian girl, who haunts what is left of the house that rests upon the ancient burial mound.

CHAPTER XIII

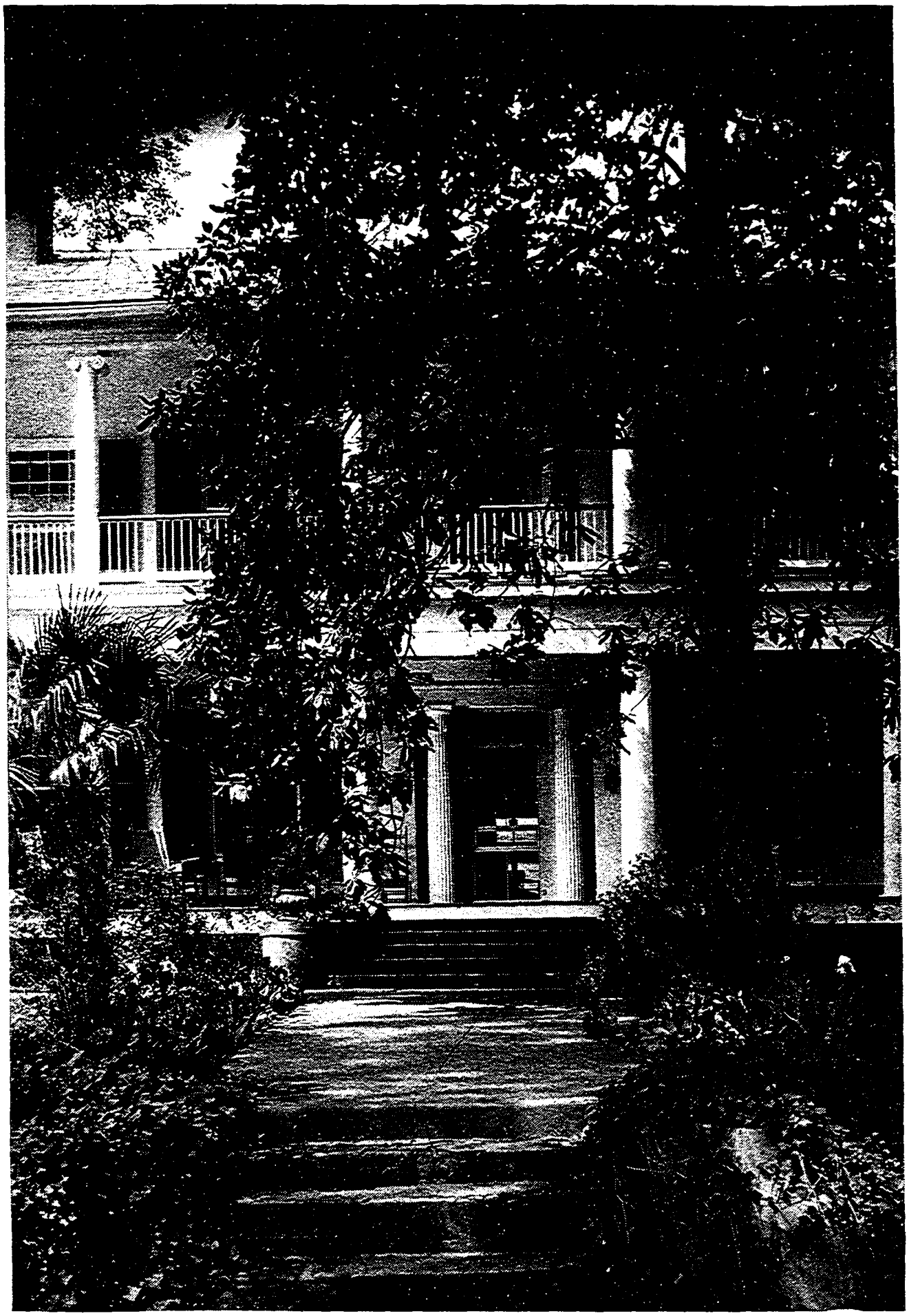
Ravenna

RAVENNA IS A DIGNIFIED HOUSE, with pillared galleries both back and front, built after colonial lines. Its charm is enhanced by the fact that it faces a ravine, or bayou, where the natural grandeur of the Mississippi forest has remained undisturbed. Giant azaleas, wisteria and masses of purple and white iris adorn the grounds and add a touch of magic to the margin of the bayou. The furnishings of the house are in rosewood, with sofas and chairs in the Empire or second Napoleonic period. An interesting heirloom is an old, bronze, lard-oil lamp dating back to 1805. Its opaque shade has medallions so designed that when lighted quaint figures are seen etched in transparent highlights.

The Harris family were living at Ravenna in May 1840 when a tornado spread destruction in the Natchez

country. The storm took place about two o'clock in the afternoon and is said to have been preceded by an appalling stillness. Suddenly darkness enveloped the city, and in a few moments a great roar, like some mighty cataract, warned the citizens that a cataclysm was near. Buildings were lifted bodily in the air to break and fall like chaff; trees were felled as if they had been straw. The river rose in a fury and lashed the bluffs. Three ships in the Natchez port were wrecked; two capsized, drowning passengers and crew. Almost every house in Natchez was damaged, and three hundred persons were killed and many injured. Ravenna did not escape; the roof was lifted off and deposited in the bayou.

On June 23, 1857, the place was sold to Mr and Mrs Oren Metcalfe. During the Civil War they were ordered to vacate the house as Mrs Metcalfe was suspected of communicating with the Confederate army by means of the bayou. Though this was never proven, Union officers considered it too strategic a point to allow a Southern family to remain there.



RAVENNA

LANSDOWNE

CHAPTER XIV

Lansdowne

In 1801 David Hunt came to the Natchez country. His uncle, Abijah Hunt, had preceded him, and when Abijah was killed by George Poindexter in a duel in 1811, David fell heir to a considerable estate. In time he became a veritable Croesus—his gifts to Oakland College amounted to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. He was said to have been the largest slave-owner in America. At one time he was master of one thousand and seven hundred slaves, and his lands extended from Pine Ridge to Port Gibson.

When his daughter Charlotte became the bride of George Marshall he gave them Lansdowne Plantation and allowed them to plan and build their own house. It is an almost perfect type of Georgian architecture. The wide steps rise in a graceful sweep from a brick court, on both sides of which are iron carriage blocks.

The portico has fluted columns and wrought-iron banisters. An unusual feature is that these iron grilles are enclosed in wooden frames. The colonial door has fluted pilasters and side lights made of rectangular panes which form a pattern in small alternate rectangles and squares. Overhead hangs a Spanish wrought-iron lamp of rare workmanship—the winged lamp is held suspended by a lifelike hand.

The great dimensions of the hallway at Lansdowne give it a magnificence not seen in many a larger house. It has a lofty ceiling and runs the entire length of the building which is ninety feet long. There are bronze chandeliers fitted for gas, and on the ceilings around each fixture are circular arabesques of beautiful design.

In the banquet hall there is much exquisite china, although some of this was destroyed during the Federal occupation of Natchez. The story connected with this destruction is interesting. Mr Marshall, who had been wounded at the battle of Shiloh, was at home recuperating when Natchez fell into the hands of the Federals. Marauding or looting parties began to sack the houses of this section. One such party came to Lansdowne and insolently demanded the keys of the establishment from Mrs Marshall. She refused them with hauteur. At this a Yankee soldier not only struck her in the face but knocked her full length on the floor. Friends who were there at the time restrained the wounded Mr Marshall. Mrs Marshall carried to her

grave a scar on her lip, made by the soldier's blow. Prior to this, Mr Marshall, with the aid of Robert, the loyal butler, had secreted his wife's collection of jewels under the front portion of the house where they lay safely buried until the war was over. The soldiers knew of these jewels and, furious at not finding them, destroyed portions of the china—pieces of which are said to have been scattered along the highway from Lansdowne to Natchez.

CHAPTER XV

The Burn

IN FEBRUARY 1833, John Walworth, of Cleveland, Ohio, was en route by steamboat to New Orleans when he decided to visit his friend, Colonel Schuyler, of Monmouth near Natchez. While there he met Sarah Wren, a relative of Sir Christopher Wren, and fell in love with her. So enchanted was he with Natchez and with Sarah that he decided to make his home in that section of the country. As soon as they were married he brought an architect from the East who took more than a year to build them a house which was called The Burn. When first built it had two stories, but shortly after it was completed the entire upper story was destroyed by fire. Following this disaster, it was repaired as it stands today.

The garden at The Burn was arranged in a series of terraces and was entered between hedges of Chero-

kee roses. On the first terrace there was a summerhouse covered with yellow jasmine; here also was Magnolia fuscagti, flowering almond and masses of amaryllis—the scarlet lily of the Orient to which Christ is supposed to have referred when he spoke the words: "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

On the second terrace there were many beds of Easter lilies, with wide borders of white and purple iris, also masses of blue and pink larkspur and fragrant old-fashioned roses. In 1864 a rosebush ran the entire length of the southern portion of the building and covered that side of the house with a mass of pure white blooms. This bush had been planted by Mr Walworth's little daughter a few weeks before she was stricken with yellow fever and died. It is needless to say that it held a peculiar significance for the Walworth family, and it was almost the last thing Mrs Walworth's eyes rested upon when, after the family were given twenty-four hours by Union officers to vacate their home, they left for their plantation. During the occupancy of The Burn by the Federal army the grove that surrounded the house was felled and the garden demolished that the place might be put within fortifications, for it was to be used as a hospital for Union soldiers. The invaders even left their marks upon the windowpanes for today there can still be seen the name of Major John P. Colman (a Union officer) cut into

the glass by the diamond of one who, no doubt, has long since joined the great army of the dead.

The bombardment of Natchez lasted only one hour, but shells lodged in many places: one hit the cupola of Stanton Hall, another crashed through the walls of Ruthlands, many fell on Canal Street. While most of these shells failed to explode, much damage was done. Twenty years after the war an unexploded shell was found by Miss Ernestine Walworth. It was buried in the grounds of The Burn and had not this dud been recognized for what it was and carefully removed, great damage even at that late day might have resulted.

When The Burn was at last restored to its owner by the Federal government not a trace of the beautiful garden remained. The family were appalled at the desolation around them. But the next spring the white rosebush that had been planted by their little daughter showed a tiny shoot above the mass of debris. They cherished it and protected it, and when, in 1935, the property was sold, a member of the family moved it to the cemetery that it might bloom above the grave of the little child who had planted it in her mother's garden.

CHAPTER XVI

Brandon Hall

GERARD BRANDON was born in North Ireland in 1750. Before he was twenty he became implicated in one of the uprisings and fled from his native land to America. He reached here before the Revolution and settled in South Carolina. When war broke out, he welcomed the fight, joined the Colonial forces and was made a colonel under General Marion. He fought with John Sevier and was cited for bravery. In after years he greatly prized a rifle on the barrel of which was engraved these words:

Given to Gerard Brandon for valiant conduct at King's Mountain.

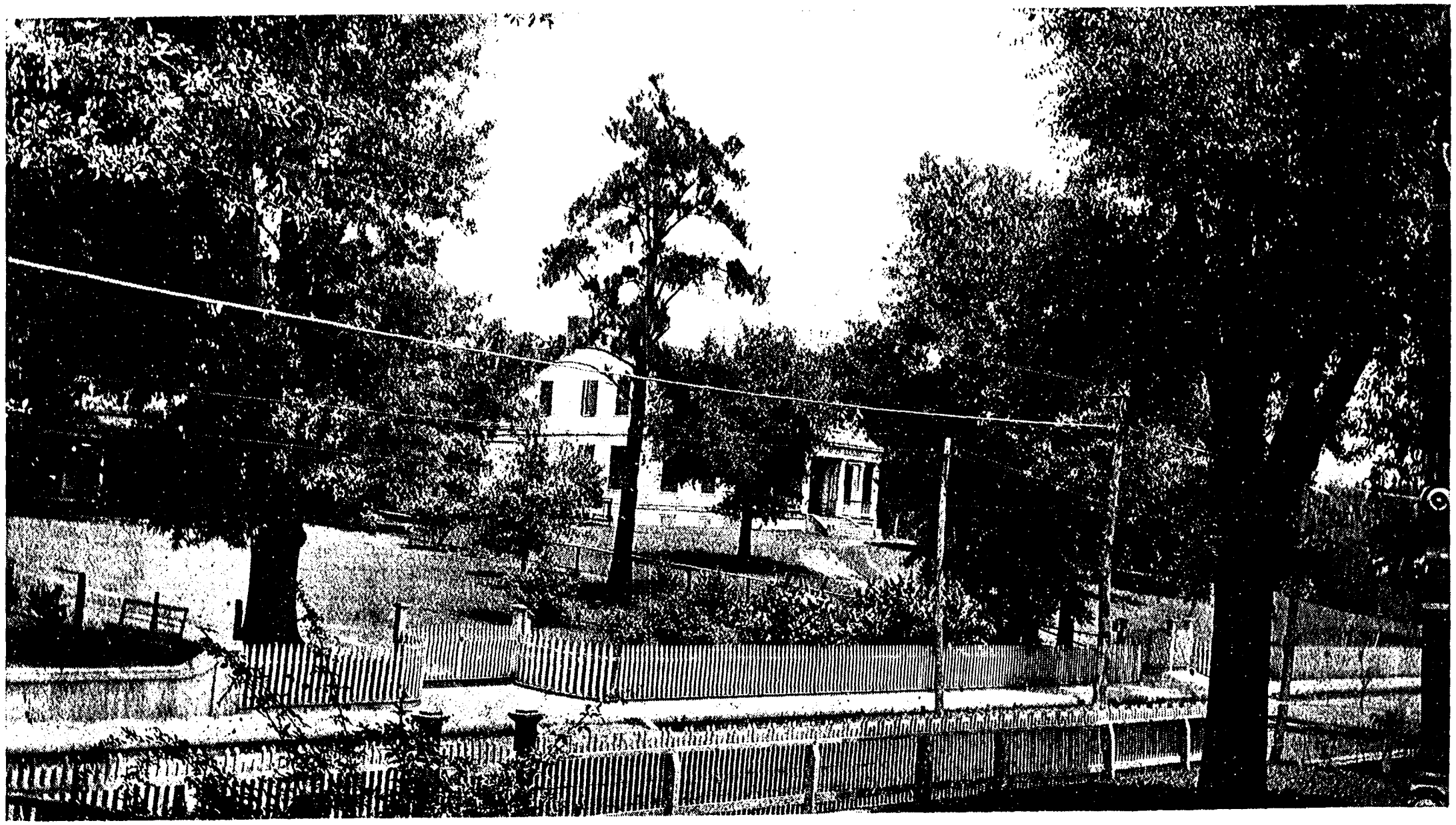
At the close of the Revolution he came to the Natchez country and married Dorothy Nugent. He then took up a Spanish land grant which was confirmed

by the United States government. Here he built his house and called it Brandon Hall. It is made of strong, hand-hewn, poplar timbers and is fitted together by the thumb-groove and wooden-peg method, for it was built when nails were scarce and prohibitive in price—due to the fact that each was a work of art, to be hammered out, one at a time, by a blacksmith.

At this time bears, panthers, Indians and banditti infested the surrounding country; a man's house was not only his castle, but his fort as well. This being the only house for many miles that stood in plain view of the Natchez Trace (the only highway in the Southwest), it was but natural that many weary wayfarers sought shelter at Brandon Hall. But the hazard of entertaining strangers was extreme, and Colonel Brandon kept his trusty sword ever near. The peaceable found welcome and good cheer, but woe betide the offender!

Gerard Brandon was one of the most picturesque characters that ever settled in the Natchez country, and many amusing stories are told of his emotional temperament and open-handed hospitality. A crane hung over the fire in the dining hall, and it was here he regaled his guests with the flowing bowl and a wit as keen as his hunting blade.

He was a successful planter and for many years raised more indigo than anyone else in that section. He was also a pioneer in pecan growing, and an inter-



THE BURN

THE BRIARS

esting anecdote is told in connection with his start in this culture.

A weary stranger begged for lodging one night and the next morning after a hearty breakfast asked for a reckoning.

"I charge you nothing, sir," said the generous host.

"I intended paying," remonstrated the stranger, "but if you will take no money, you'll at least accept these." He held in his hand the first pecans ever seen in the Natchez country.

As he rode away, he called out:

"Plant them. They'll make you a fortune!"

The pecans were planted and in due time brought forth abundantly. Today (1936) there are five hundred bearing pecan trees on the plantation. Last year one crop alone brought twenty-three hundred dollars, and everywhere young trees are springing up.

Among the children born to Gerard and Dorothy Brandon was Gerard the second, who became Mississippi's first native governor.

When Gerard Brandon died in 1823 he was, according to the custom of the time, buried on the plantation. Some years ago the Daughters of the American Revolution placed a marker over the resting place of this doughty warrior, and it is thus that Mississippi holds close to her bosom a bit of ould Ireland and proudly claims it as her own.

CHAPTER XVII

The Briars

WILLIAM HOWELL was the son of Governor Richard Howell of New Jersey and a cousin of Aaron Burr. He was with the United States Navy and had served honorably in the War of 1812. When Louise Kempe, daughter of Colonel James Kempe, married him, her father gave her The Briars as a wedding gift.

So it came about that Varina, their daughter, spent her youth in this wildly beautiful spot on the steepest bluffs of the Mississippi River. The fertile plains of Concordia Parish, Louisiana, are plainly visible from the grounds, and the waters of the Mississippi spread in the distance. The place is almost separated from the mainland by a series of deep ravines or bayous. It is approached by a narrow road that is walled in by tall trees and overhung by grape vines and Virginia creeper. Here is Mrs Davis' description of her home:

A large, old-fashioned house on a bluff near Natchez. The ground slopes on each side to a dry bayou about one hundred feet deep, the sides of which are covered with pine, oak and magnolia. On the west . . . deep, caving bayous that are washed by drainage to the river.

The building is not a mansion but a typical Mississippi plantation house, one and one-half stories high. There is a quiet dignity and a simplicity in the structure that is reminiscent of many famous Virginia houses. Its wide, sloping roof, spacious front gallery, upheld by slender pillars, and quaint dormer windows add much to its old-fashioned appearance.

The floor plan of The Briars is as simple as the exterior. The long building has three arched doorways opening onto the gallery. A hall through the center opens upon a back gallery which extends across the rear. At opposite ends of this gallery are beautifully constructed stairways ascending to the upper floor, which contains four rooms. The central ones are large and connect with folding doors in such a manner that, when occasion demands, they can be converted into a ballroom or banquet hall. The wedding breakfast for Jefferson Davis and Varina, his bride, was served here.

The lower floor also contains four rooms. To the right of the hall is the parlor where, on February 26, 1845, Varina Howell became the wife of Jefferson Davis. As you enter the room you can imagine the

lovers standing before the immense fireplace and gazing down upon the blazing hickory logs.

Their marriage was a hurried affair and was celebrated without pomp. Varina had been ill, and the wedding date had been delayed. When Mr Davis suddenly appeared for a visit he found her fully restored to health, and it was decided to have the wedding at once. Only members of the Howell and Davis families and a few close friends were present. Margaret Sprague, first cousin of the bride, and Joseph Davis were the only attendants.

It is not known what the bride wore, but tradition says it was a dark dress with a lace bertha, and it is told that the maid of honor, wishing to add a touch of brightness to what she considered a somber costume, placed a rose in the bride's black hair. *Godey's Lady's Book* for 1845 shows the hair worn with a smooth part and a fringe of curls over each ear. Bodices were tight, yokes dropped off the shoulder, while skirts were wide and flowing, so we can make our own picture of this stately, dark-haired bride. The officiating minister was the Rev David Page, rector of Trinity Episcopal Church of Natchez. After breakfast Mr Davis and his bride left for a wedding journey to Woodville, Bayou Sara and New Orleans.

Mrs Davis, in telling of her wedding, says:

> In those days, trousseaus were moderate and young people did not expect presents, but gave them to the brides-

maids. Two bonnets were an abundance, and every young bride had a second dress; that is, one more dressy than the rest, to be worn the day after her marriage. Among the plain class of people this was worn at the *imfair* [reception].

In New Orleans Mr and Mrs Davis stopped at the famous old St Charles Hotel, then considered the most elegant place in the South. Here they were given a soiree, and Mrs Davis met and charmed many celebrities of the day.

On their return they went to live in the Davis home at Briarfield. Later, Mr Davis' election to Congress started a political career that is Southern history.

CHAPTER XVIII

Richmond

AT RICHMOND three separate and distinct residences of widely different types of architecture are incorporated under one roof. Each of them reflects an epoch in Southern history.

The most interesting part is the central portion, a beautiful specimen of provincial Spanish workmanship thought to antedate 1790 when Richmond Plantation was granted to John Girault by the Spanish government. The back portion of the house is plain, a two-story brick of the type seen in Boston early in the eighteenth century. The front is a colonial structure, with the portico and entrance frequently used in the South during the era prior to the Civil War.

The grant to John Girault is recorded in the oldest book of American records in the Mississippi country and is written in Spanish. It is signed by Estavan Miro

and accompanied by a map which is yellowed by time and dated 1790. Of John Girault's antecedents we know nothing, but his clear and beautiful handwriting in this old chancery record attests his learning and ability. He was evidently, too, a man of considerable means and owned slaves. In an old deed, made in 1799, he sold a negro man named Cudjo to William Foster for the sum of five hundred dollars.

The central portion of Richmond must have been a fine house for those days. After one hundred and fifty years or more, it is still extraordinarily sturdy. It is made of brick, cement and heavy, hand-hewn timbers. It is the usual raised house with long galleries on two sides, one of which is reached by a flight of iron steps and enclosed by a handsome iron grille. The gutters on this section of the building are extremely primitive, being made of wood and held together with iron brads.

Elijah Smith and his wife Mary bought Richmond and later sold it to Thomas Ellis who added the austere brick portion which makes no pretense at beauty. An old writer mentions Ellis as the builder of Richmond, but he must have referred to the adding of this second portion.

In 1832 Thomas Ellis sold the place to Levin R. Marshall for the sum of seventy-five hundred dollars.

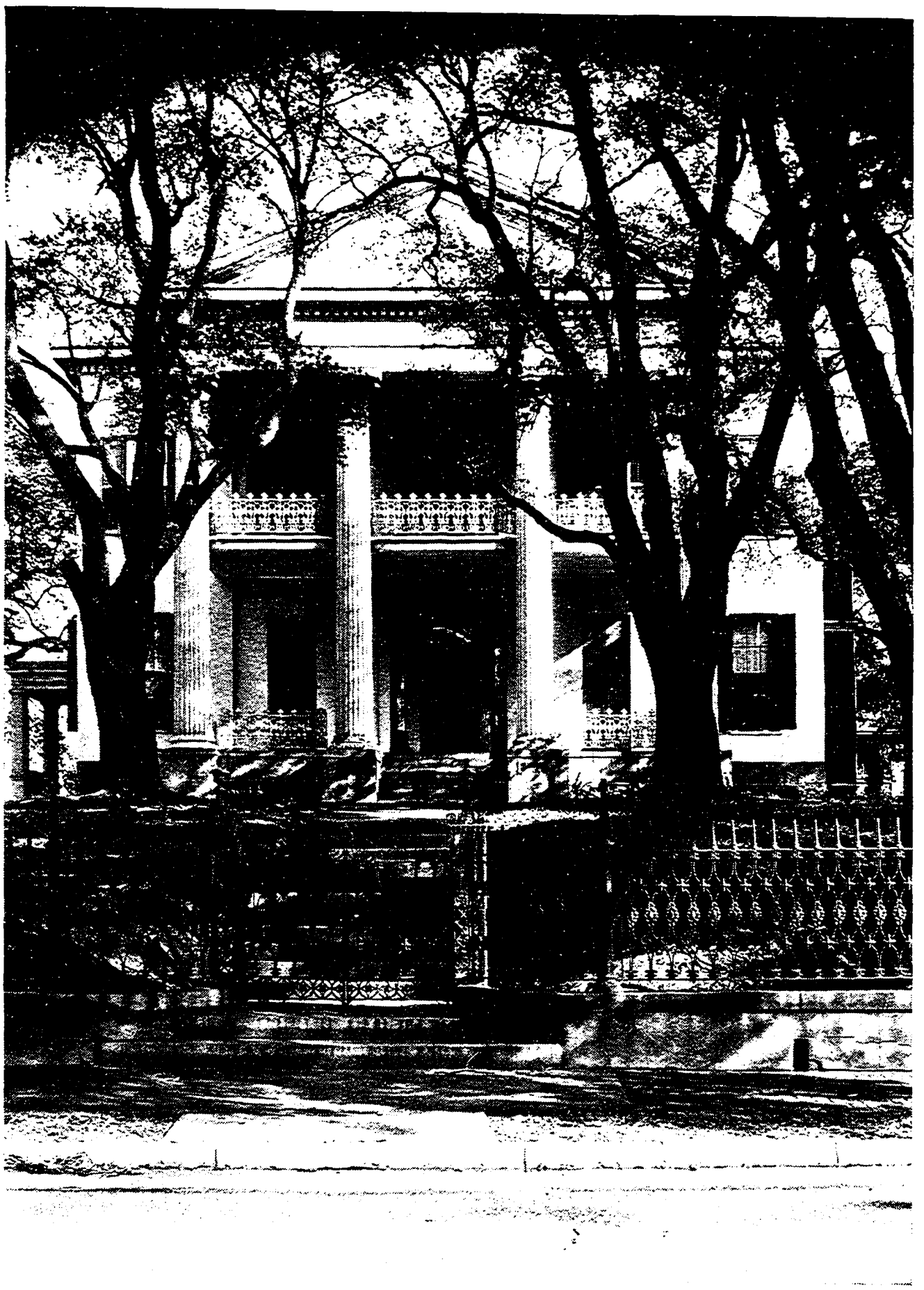
Texas was in the throes of a revolution during Mr Marshall's early manhood, and many men in Natchez

were interested in the outcome. It is known that Sam Houston came to Natchez to hold secret conferences with his friends, one of whom was Levin Marshall. There is no doubt that financial aid was given Houston, for in later years Mr Marshall received large land grants by way of payment. Marshall, Texas, is thought to have been in this grant and to have been named for him.

It was Levin Marshall who built the colonial portion of Richmond. This portion contains six large rooms on the main floor and four in the basement. The entrance has Doric pilasters, and the building follows the dignified, stately style of the day. In the hall there is a graceful staircase with low, wide treads and woodwork of unusual beauty; the walls here are frescoed in scenes from a fox hunt.

The double drawing rooms on the right are lofty and imposing with woodwork that reflects the influence of the Adam brothers. Grecian pilasters with carved rosettes support the windows and doors. The mantels of black Italian marble are exquisitely plain and have huge mirrors in heavy gold frames behind them. There is still much of the original furniture in these rooms—all of rosewood on Second Empire lines. Circular arabesques form ceiling decorations around each chandelier, and ornate gold cornices are over the windows. Like most of the handsome buildings of the period, Richmond has silver doorknobs and hinges.

RICHMOND



STANTON HALL

The descendants of Levin Marshall still live at Richmond and in the fall of each year enjoy, with their friends, the fox hunt for which this plantation has always been famous.

PART III

Mansions

CHAPTER XIX

Stanton Hall

STANTON HALL occupies an entire block in the center of Natchez and is a magnificent reminder of ante-bellum taste and grandeur. With the exception of Clifton it is the finest mansion ever erected in the Natchez country.

It was built by Frederick Stanton, one of three brothers who came to America from Belfast, Ireland, and is a replica of the ancestral home of the Stantons in the old country. Mr A. T. Stewart came with the brothers on their journey to America and later became a merchant prince of New York. He and the Stanton brothers were fast friends, but the latter chose the South as their home. Frederick was a commission merchant and became enormously wealthy. His brothers, William (of Windy Hill Manor) and David (of The Elms), were equally successful in other lines.

Frederick married Hulda Helm of the Second

Creek Neighborhood and in 1851 began the erection of Stanton Hall, which was more than five years in construction. He chartered a boat to bring from France and Italy such materials as hand-carved woodwork, marble mantels, enormous mirrors and bronze chandeliers. The furniture, upholstered in rich crimson velvet brocade, was made abroad by special order and was brought over at the same time.

The front entrance of Stanton Hall is especially imposing, having a double-decked portico upheld by huge Doric columns. The lower floor of this portico is laid with gray-and-white mosaics, and the steps are granite. Both galleries are enclosed with wrought-iron banisters in a rose design. The double door is a monumental affair with fluted pilasters and encloses a recess or vestibule. The vestibule is floored with white marble and the inner door is of solid mahogany, carved with a simple frieze around each panel. On the side are plain side lights with the unusual feature of heavy inside shutters.

The hall is of impressive dimensions with ceilings twenty-two and a half feet high. The extreme length of this hall is broken by an overhead arch, carved in oriental style. Circular arabesques ornament the ceilings, which are also bordered by narrow, geometrical friezes. As in so many mansions of that period, the stairway occupies a recess. This stair rises in a series of elliptical loops which form a rotundalike opening

to the third story. The mahogany rails curve in corkscrew fashion at the lower step to form a newel post, and at each landing is a bronze wall sconce.

As you enter, on the right there is a large front drawing room; this is separated from the music room by an overhead arch. This arch, which was carved in Italy, is an architectural feature that attracts admiration due the fact that it has no supports, being merely attached to the ceiling.

In these double rooms the walls are a soft cream, the carved woodwork in white and the ceiling ornamentations in white, while the mantel is also of white marble, ornately carved in fruits and flowers to match the arch.

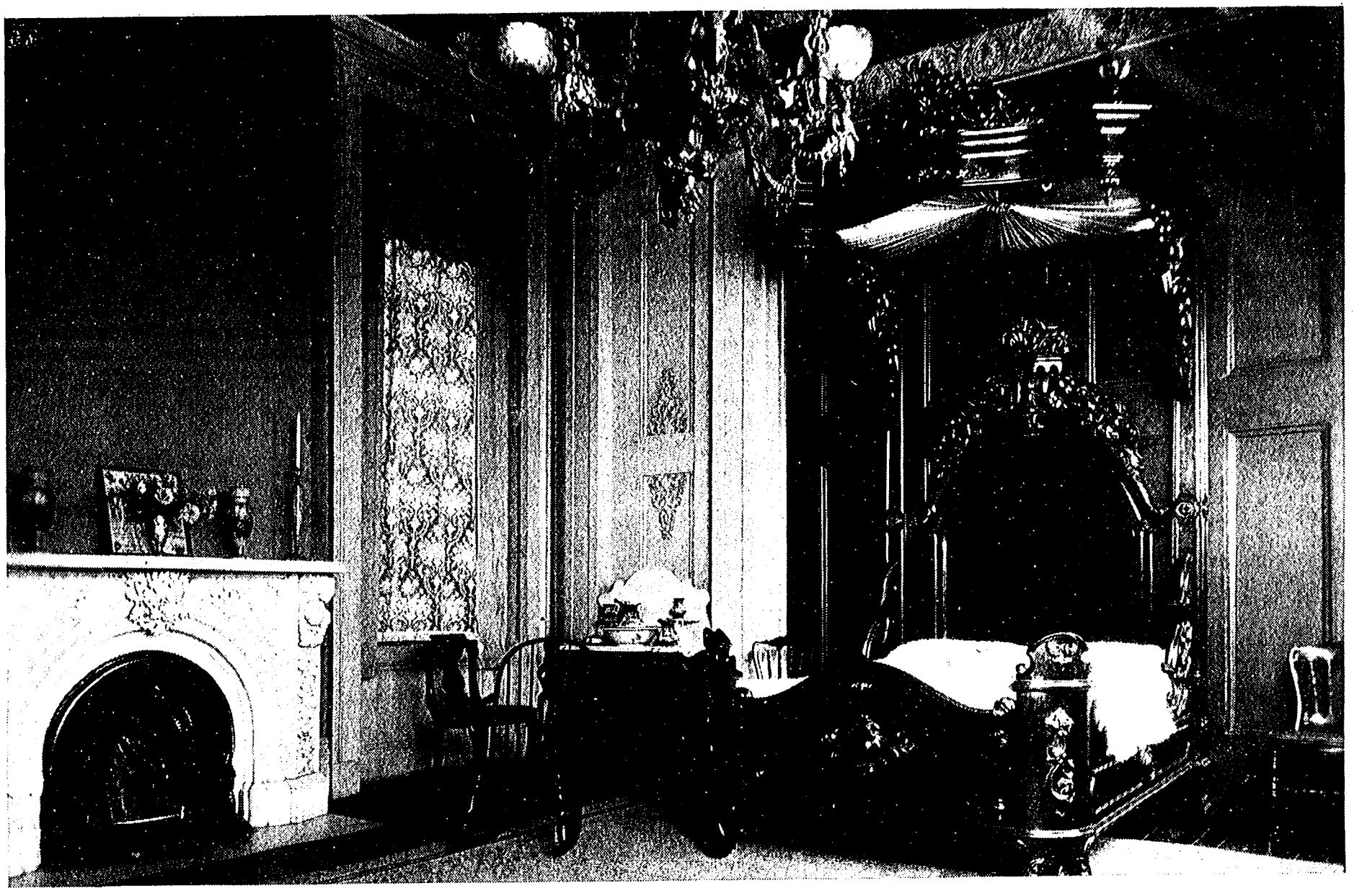
The walls of the music room are frescoed in a mural composed of stringed instruments with the names of noted masters and composers used in the pattern. A large bay window opens onto a side porch or balcony inclosed in wrought-iron grilles. Huge mahogany doors, with silver key fitments, open into a third drawing room. With the doors open, the entire right side of the building is thrown into one tremendous suite with mirrors at each end which reflect light from chandeliers of unusual beauty. These mirrors were made in France and are twenty feet high, with frames of white and gold and shelflike bases of white marble. In the sides of this suite are four large mirrors fitted into the walls in panels.

The chandeliers are of bronze and, in themselves, are outstanding works of art. In the drawing rooms they show a pattern of dancing cupids holding tambourines while other cupids support the light sockets. The mantels here also show cupids to match.

On the left side of the hall is another drawing room with a mirror that corresponds to those across the hall. Here there is a white marble mantel carved in pomegranates, grapes and flowers. Behind this room is the banquet hall, a room of superb proportions. There are two fireplaces here, with the same pure-white marble mantels seen elsewhere in the house. The walls are a soft green and the woodwork white. Chandeliers of bronze hang at opposite ends of the room and around each is an arabesque of leaves. These fixtures show horsemen and a corn-and-husk design, representing the harvest season. They are in harmony with the carvings seen on the mantels.

Mr Stanton died several months after the completion of his mansion, but his family lived there for many years. He had taken pride in the erection of the house and had sent to Belfast for his parents in order that they might spend their declining days in the sunny and congenial atmosphere of Natchez.

During the ownership of the Stantons, the drawing rooms were furnished in sofas and chairs made by George Hepplewhite. These pieces, though lighter in construction than the earlier Georgian, were sturdy and



STANTON HALL

DUNLEITH

practical, with much of the beauty and style of the Louis XVI furniture. There was delicate, open acanthus scrolling: the wheat ear, the covered classic urn and bellflowers. In the music room were twenty-four hand-carved rosewood chairs with cushioned seats, and beneath the arch between the front drawing room and this room was an immense divan in the same brocaded upholstering. In the hall there were bronzes from Paris and pieces of statuary from Italy. In the library were hand-carved bookcases and wall sconces; the cornices over the windows on this floor were overlaid with leaf gold. Carpets, in the medallion design of the period, were woven in France and carried out the same warm crimson effect as the upholstery.

A pier table stood in the hall, also two huge, gold-framed cathedral chairs of unusual beauty. Most of this furniture still exists but has passed to the heirs, many of whom retain today much of their grandfather's love for the original Staunton Hall* in Ireland.

*The name Staunton was changed to Stanton soon after the family came to America.

CHAPTER XX

Dunleith

JEREMIAH ROUTH, of Wales, emigrated to America in 1760. He first settled in Virginia but came to the Natchez country in 1775. When his son, Job, married Ann Miller, a sister of the secretary of state for the Spanish government, he decided to build a handsome house for them. It must be one of the finest mansions ever erected in the city of Natchez.

Job chose the site for his new house where Dunleith stands today. It was in the center of an extensive estate and, when finished, was a veritable palace. Shimmering brocade draped the windows, and Venetian bronze chandeliers, hung with colored prisms, held tall wax candles. All of the furnishings were imported from Europe.

As his sons and daughters married, Job gave them portions of the original paternal land grant, and they

in turn erected houses commensurate with their means and social position. John, the oldest son, married Anne Smith, a daughter of Calvin Smith. He was one of the richest men recorded in the early history of Natchez. He owned many slaves and had vast possessions in Concordia Parish, Louisiana across from Natchez, where he lived a part of the year. It is said that no Eastern potentate had more elegant silver than he. He possessed a complete dinner service engraved with the family coat of arms. Each year he shipped an average of four thousand bales of cotton to foreign ports from his plantations.

He left Routhland, or Dunleith as it is known today, to his daughter, Mary Routh Dalghren. In 1847, while the Dalghrens were visiting a summer resort in the North, Routhland was struck by lightning and destroyed; all of the handsome furnishings and paintings were lost.

In 1849 General Dalghren erected the present house and called it Dunleith.

CHAPTER XXI

The Elms

THE HISTORY OF THE ELMS is shrouded in mystery. The owner, at the time written records were begun in Natchez, was William Barland. At this time the map shows the property to have been a fairly large plantation. The floor plan of the house, the low ceilings, narrow window facings, huge iron hinges and paved courts all give evidence of its Spanish origin.

The place has always been known for the beauty of its garden. Blossoms from there were in such demand that a former mistress made it her custom to clip arm-fuls each morning and send them to the old Spanish market to be distributed by her slaves gratuitously to all who cared to have them.

Three octagonal summerhouses, with brick floors and latticed walls, still remain. One of these is called

THE ELMS

ROSALIE

Eagle House because here a former owner kept a pet eagle in captivity. Another unusual feature of the garden is a Spanish arch, partly in ruin but still beautiful.

CHAPTER XXII

Rosalie

WITH THE EXCEPTION of Windy Hill Manor and The Briars, Rosalie has excited more interest, and there has been more written about it than any other ante-bellum mansion in Natchez. The name Rosalie is that of the French fort. Though the house does not occupy the exact site of the old fort, it is situated near by and stands on ground that was once soaked with the blood of the French garrison that fell in the great Indian massacre of 1729. It remains today one of the most historic and romantic buildings in the Mississippi country and, though it has weathered both disaster and war, is still almost as sturdy as the day it was erected by that master builder, James S. Griffin.

This century-old house first appeared in print when an anonymous writer mentioned it in the fourth edition of Morses' *Gazette,* printed in 1823:

MANSIONS

Natchez contains a courthouse; a bank with a capital of three million dollars; an hospital and three houses of worship; . . . At the opposite ends of the bluff are splendid pillared mansions, one of which is the home of Mr Peter Little [Rosalie] and the other Clifton.

Again this writer says of Natchez:

On the right, to the south, is a noble colonnaded structure [Rosalie] whose heavy appearance is gracefully relieved by shrubbery, *parterres* of roses, and a light latticed summerhouse. The summerhouse crowns an eminence in the rear, and is half suspended over a three hundred foot precipice overlooking the Mississippi River. Between this and the forest background, rise the romantic ruins of Fort Rosalie.

The Rosalie tract, according to chancery records, once contained twenty-two acres and was acquired by the United States government when Fort Rosalie, or Panmure, became American property in 1798. The first hospital in this part of the world stood somewhere near this site. In one of the oldest books at the Natchez courthouse the following record appears:

I, Frances Jones, Assistant Quartermaster General of the Western Army of the United States, have received orders from Brigadier General James Wilkinson, commanding said army, to sell at public vendue the buildings belonging to the United States, and attached to the Fort at Natchez, in the Territory of the Mississippi, including the buildings called The Hospital which are situated in front of said town of Natchez near said Fort.

This sale took place in May 1801, and William Dunbar, Esq., as the highest bidder was the purchaser. Later in that year the tract passed to Peter Little, the founder of the present Rosalie. The erection of the house is fixed between the years 1820 and 1823, the year mentioned in the Morses' *Gazette*.

The mansion is of brick and built on the square Georgian style, with a large gallery upheld by massive Tuscan columns. Wide concrete steps rise in a graceful sweep to the front entrance. Curving, hand-wrought iron rails add an unusual touch to the steps. Both the upper and lower doorways are monumental affairs with side lights and exquisite fanlights set in decorative framework.

The floor plan is simple and dignified, with a hallway running through the main building. On the right, a deep recess contains a stairway which rises in a series of loops to the second and third floors. This stair has mahogany handrails, and on the outer edge of each step is a hand-carved frieze.

During the occupancy of Natchez by the Federal troops the commanding officer made his headquarters here and spurred heels left their scars both on the mantels and woodwork.

The upper floors contain the sleeping apartments. In the large north room is a massive four-poster in which General U. S. Grant is said to have slept.

The second bedroom is also of huge proportions and

GREEN LEAVES

MAGNOLIA VALE

contains almost two complete suites of furniture. Here may be seen the bed occupied by General Gresham during his stay in Natchez. The second bed is of French design, developed in rosewood with a satin-lined canopy. A prie-dieu is built on each side of this bed.

Rosalie, like many other old houses, has a number of interesting stories connected with it. Mr Little, it is said, married his ward, Miss Low, and, following the marriage, sent her away to school in the North. His ambition was to acquire an immense fortune for her while she was away. In this he was successful.

In 1837 he made a will which was probated in the December court, 1856. The preamble of the will is unusual and reads as follows:

> Death is certain, I know. I have not a moment that I can call my own. I am upward of fifty-five years old, and have often wondered how I have been spared so long. In the course of nature I cannot be permitted to live much longer and it has pleased Almighty God to bless me with a portion of property . . .

Mrs Little was already dead when this will was probated, and, there being no children, the property went to distant relations.

Rosalie was then purchased by an Irishman, Mr Andrew L. Wilson. He and his wife are said to have escaped during the historic siege of Derry, bringing some wealth with them. During the war between the

states Mrs Wilson was untiring in her service to the Confederacy, though after Vicksburg fell her house became headquarters for the Union officers. At first they professed to have a great respect for her honesty and bravery, but later she fell under suspicion, was arrested and sent to prison.

CHAPTER XXIII

Green Leaves

PERHAPS NO MANSION in Natchez is more suitably named than the Beltzhoover house, which is set in the midst of age-old oaks whose boughs spread a canopy of living green over the roof and grounds. Shadows cast by these huge trees have a tendency to subdue the whiteness of the building. The house antedates many others in this section by several decades. That it existed prior to the War of 1812 there seems to be no doubt, but it was remodeled in the 'forties, by the present owner's grandfather. The earliest houses of the gentry were usually built on one floor, according to a chronicler of the 'twenties who commented on the Southerner's hatred of climbing stairs.

Green Leaves is reached by two flights of steps, however: one that rises from the sidewalk to the grounds, and another long flight that leads to a nar-

row portico with Corinthian columns. The front entrance is a stately affair with a heavy mahogany door set in a monumental frame with Corinthian pilasters on each side. The side lights are of alternating circular- and diamond-shaped panes, and there is a rectangular light overhead.

The earliest records concerning this property are obscure. At one time Jonathan Thompson, a planter, owned the entire square, and there is a probability that he erected Green Leaves as a town house, it being the custom of the wealthy at that time to maintain several establishments. The story of the Thompsons is one of the tragedies of the 'twenties. The entire family were swept out of existence within a few days. It was during one of the virulent epidemics of yellow fever that not only killed but drove people almost insane with fear. The family is thought to have been on one of their plantations. Mr Thompson, not realizing that he was ill, sent for the doctor for his wife. By the time the doctor arrived he found Mr Thompson in a dying condition, the wife and children dead. A brick vault was hastily constructed to receive their bodies, and the family was buried together. Their untimely death left a tremendous estate to distant relatives and connections by marriage.

George Washington Koontz, who married Mary Roane Beltzhoover, eventually bought Green Leaves and established a home known for its elegance and the

refinement of the society that gathered there. An interesting story is told of him. It happened at the close of the Civil War when outlaws, posing as soldiers, ravaged the South. Mr Koontz was standing on the front portico one evening when a band of ruffians dashed by. One of the hoodlums saw him and took deliberate aim at him; the shot missed by a fraction of an inch but pierced one of the panes in the door. This small round hole remains today, a reminder of those days of Reconstruction when life was held so cheaply in the South.

CHAPTER XXIV

Magnolia Vale

ONE OF THE MOST extensive gardens in the Natchez country was at Magnolia Vale. This estate lies on a long strip of land bounded on one side by the Mississippi River and on the other by a steep bluff. The river has steadily encroached upon the grounds until they are less than half their size, though still very beautiful.

The house, over a century old, was built in 1831 by Mr Andrew Brown, the grandfather of the present owner, and contains twenty-four rooms. Mr Brown, a native of Scotland, took a keen delight in planning and arranging his garden; indeed, so famous did the spot become that no trip up or down the river was considered complete without a visit being paid to Magnolia Vale.

The garden has a formal entrance with a winding

drive that is more than a quarter of a mile in length; it is bordered by Magnolia grandiflora, and there are English myrtle and gardenias in profusion. A rose garden, containing all of the old-time favorites, borders the river; iron benches are placed here, and the steamers can be seen as they go by. Quaint arbors, white marble statuary and strutting peafowls, in their glinting blue-green plumage, lend charm to the scene.

Magnolia Vale is unoccupied now, except for a caretaker, but in deference to a cherished custom of the past, all visitors have access to the grounds.

CHAPTER XXV

Homewood

THE TORNADO that visited Natchez in 1840 had its influence in the construction of this sturdy house. Because of it every known precaution was taken to make the building impervious to wind and fire. The walls are three feet thick and rest on a foundation as solid as Gibraltar. A system of copper drainpipes built into these walls, through cement casements, carry off surplus water from the roof to huge cisterns which are still retained in case of fire.

The building, begun in 1855, was not fully completed until 1860, although many expert workmen and an army of slaves labored constantly. Architecturally, the house presents a number of striking features. There are four entrances to the main corridor, each entrance facing one of the four points of the compass. These open into lofty hallways which form a perfect Maltese cross and are connected by a series of elliptical arches.

HOMEWOOD

ELMSCOURT

The front entrance has fluted columns and a wide portico; here a balcony with wrought-iron banisters projects from the second story directly over the doorway. On each side of this doorway there are graceful Corinthian pilasters. The side lights of the door are of delicate pink glass imported from Belgium. The house, exclusive of the basement, is three stories high; in the basement there are a number of rooms, all of which have large fireplaces.

On the first floor there are six rooms. The library, reception hall and drawing room may be thrown into one salon, seventy-two feet long. The sliding doors here are of mahogany, three inches thick, rubbed to a dull luster. All doorknobs and hinges on this floor are of solid silver. The stairway, leading from the central hall, curves continuously from the lower to the third floor; the steps are fan-shaped and the handrails are of black walnut.

In the library, the hand-carved mantel is of pink marble delicately veined in gray. The mantel in the drawing room is of white marble and in the dining room, of pink marble mottled with oxblood.

The house was a gift from Mr David Hunt to his daughter, Catharine, when she became the bride of William Balfour. During the Balfour ownership Homewood was celebrated for its fox hunts. These together with gay balls and parties made it a popular place with the pleasure-loving people of Natchez.

CHAPTER XXVI

Elmscourt

ELMSCOURT OFFERS a striking contrast to the usual Georgian architecture of the ante-bellum mansion; it reminds one of an old-world house of the Renaissance period. It stands in the center of a park and is approached by a winding driveway which forms a semicircle before the entrance. This drive is bordered by crepe myrtle and passes through a dense woodland where one may see almost every variety of indigenous tree thriving in its native environment.

The central portion of the house is two stories in height, and on either side are long, one-storied wings, which lend breadth and dignity to the structure. Extending across the entire front is a tremendous gallery with graceful wrought-iron banisters and supports. These banisters and supports are of indescribably lovely fretwork, in a grape motif.

One enters a lofty corridor which extends the entire

length of the building. On the left are double drawing rooms, a smoking room and a billiard hall. To the right is a music room, library and a banquet hall of unusual dimensions. On the upper floor are the bedrooms.

The furnishings of Elmscourt are delightful. The dining table was made by Duncan Phyfe with chairs to match; a mahogany punkah is there to move slowly back and forth over the board. Around this table have gathered many notable people, among them: Jenny Lind, General Andrew Jackson, Lafayette and Thackeray.

A spacious gallery runs across the rear, and this, like the front gallery, has wrought-iron railings and fretwork. Broad stone steps, on either side of which stand rare antique lamps, lead to a flagged walk beyond which lies a terraced rose garden.

When Jane Surget, granddaughter of Sir William Dunbar, became the bride of Ayers P. Merrill, Elmscourt was presented to them as a wedding gift by the bride's father.

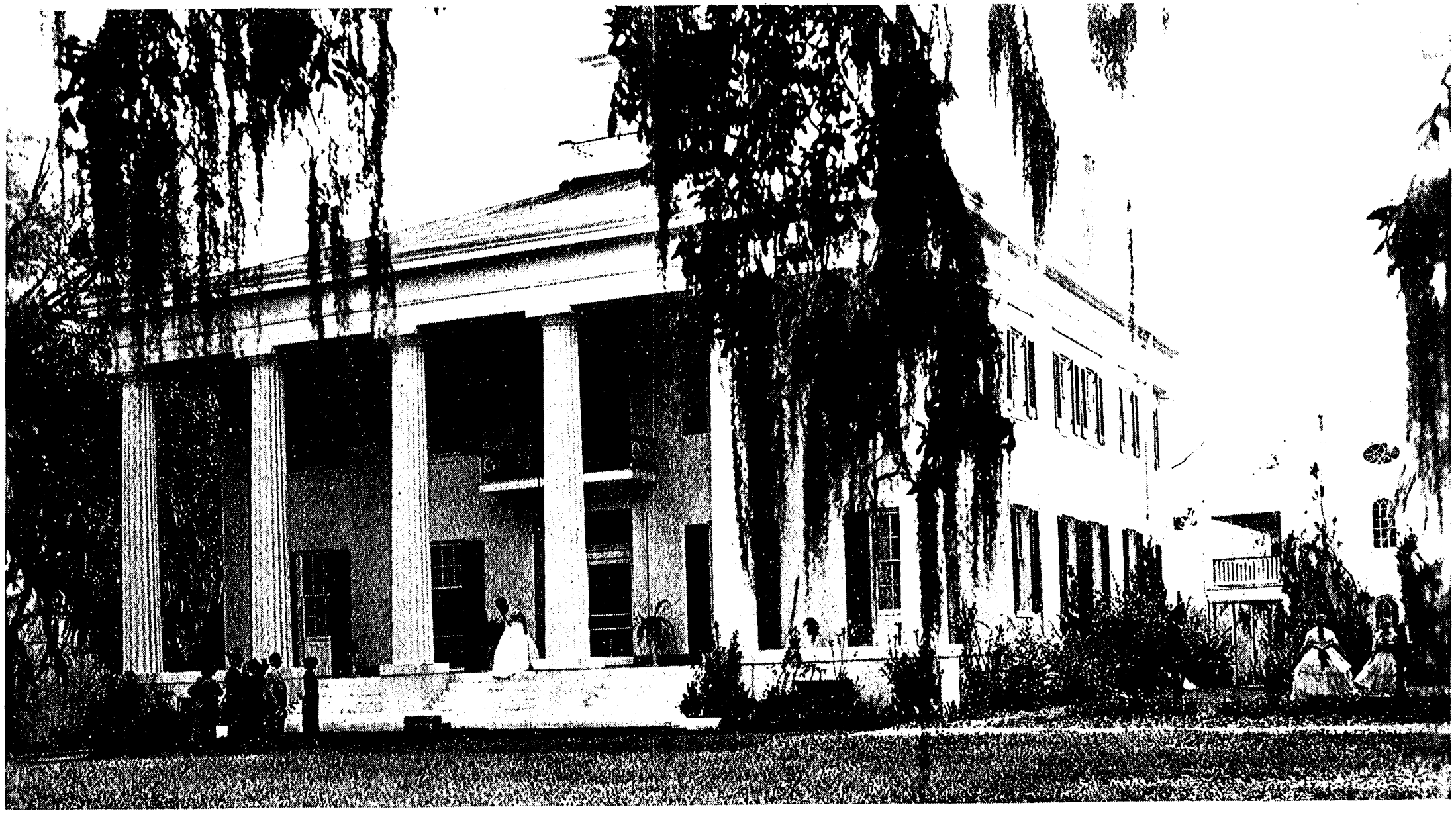
Ayers Merrill was born in Natchez and according to the custom, at the time, first studied under tutors. Later, in 1849, he graduated from Harvard. Among his friends was General U. S. Grant who visited Elmscourt and found relaxation there, in his favorite pastime of billiards. Mr Merrill was appointed minister to Belgium, and it was while there he purchased the exquisite ironwork that makes Elmscourt distinctive.

CHAPTER XXVII

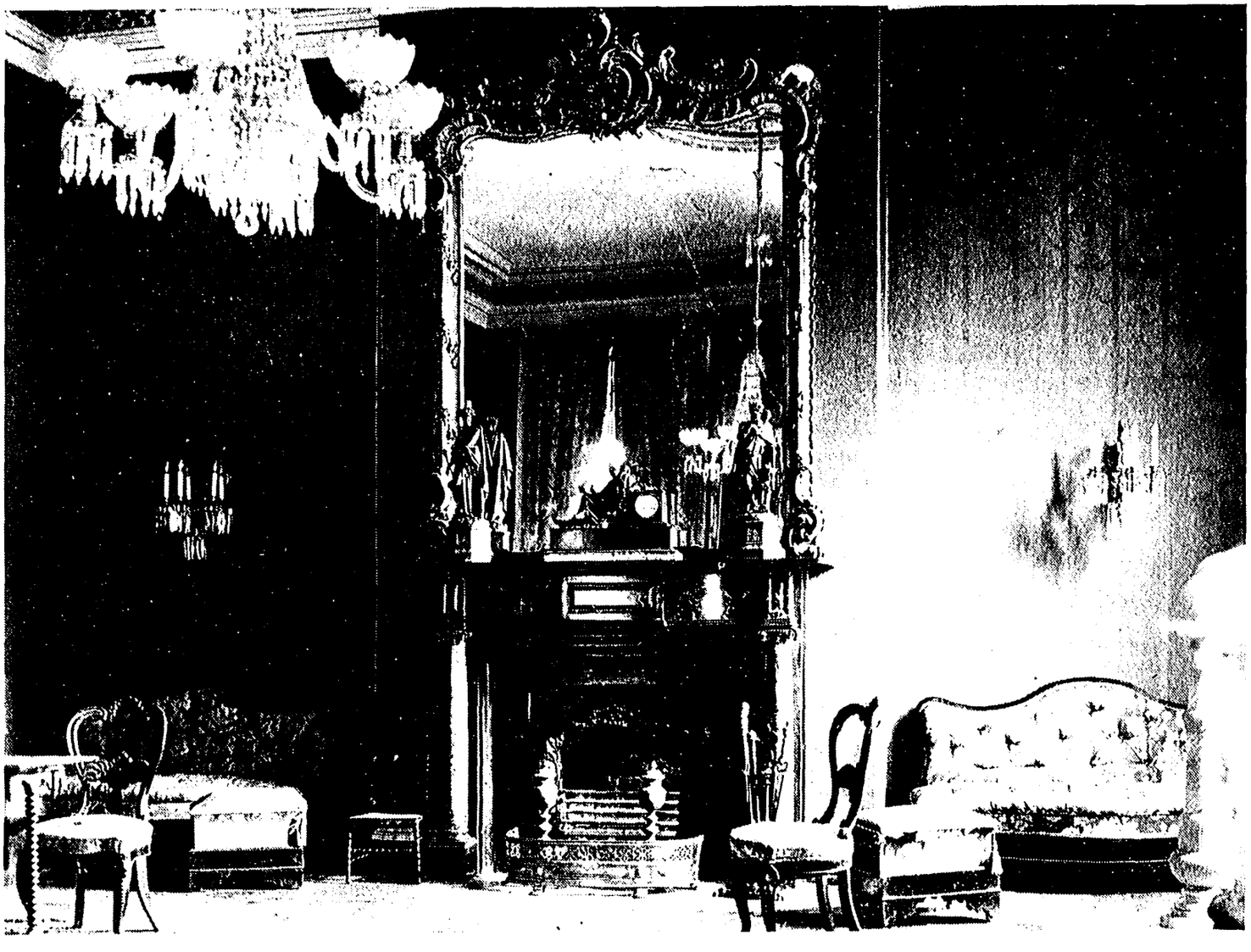
D'Evereux

D'EVEREUX STANDS like an ancient Greek temple in the midst of a grove. Its tall columns glisten in the sunlight, and it has a broad gallery and spacious entrance.

The house was planned for William St John Elliott by the master architect, Hardy. The real pride of D'Evereux though was the garden, in which, too, Mr Hardy had a hand; he brought artists from the old country to assist him, and they decided to place it in the rear of the house. A courtyard opened on to it, with steps leading from one terrace to the other. On the first terrace there were brilliantly colored japonicas, on the second, roses and great masses of delicate-hued azaleas. At the foot of the lower terrace was a large natural lake with a boat resting on its placid surface. At the further end stood a quaint, old-fashioned mill. A num-

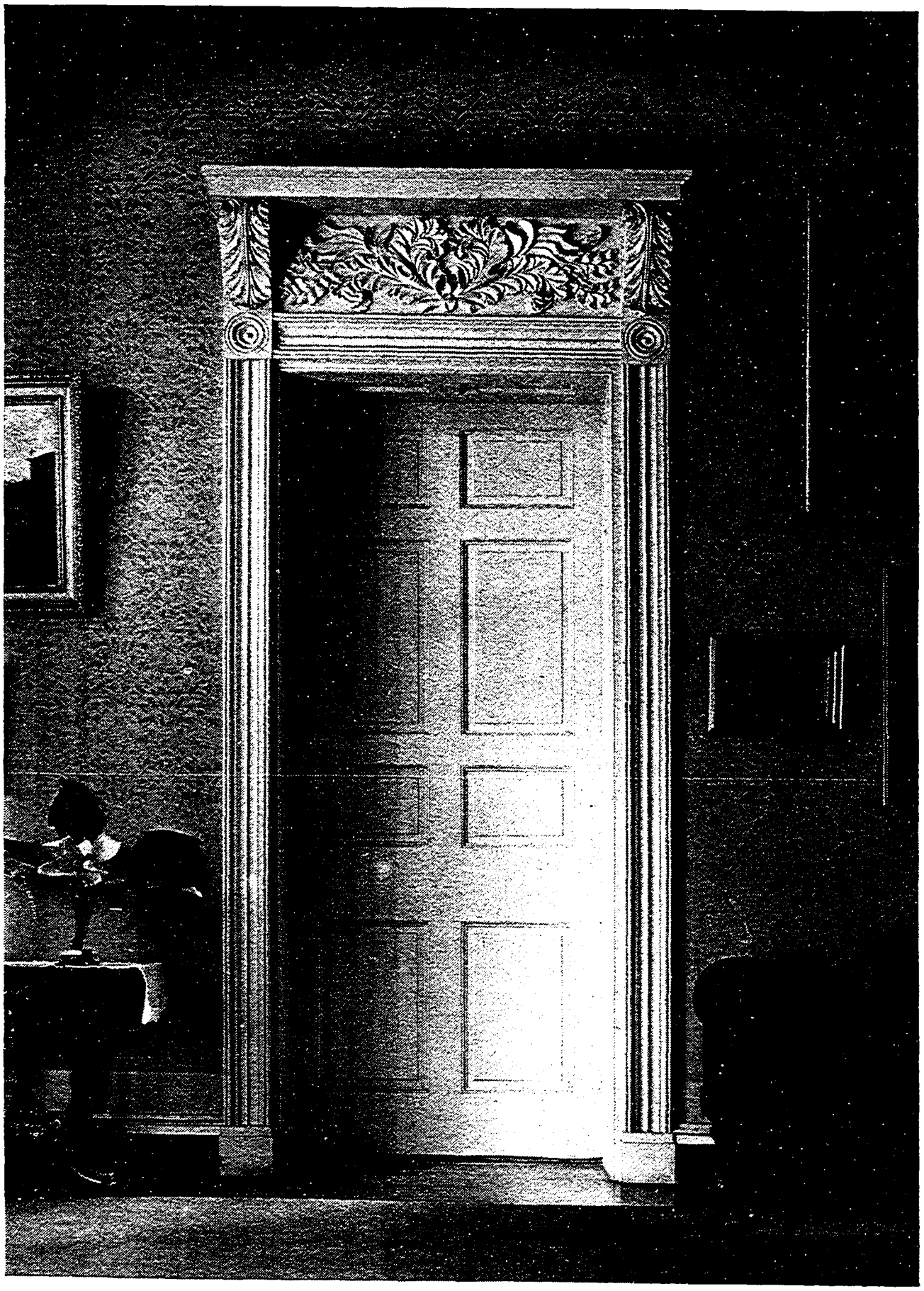


D'EVEREUX



ARLINGTON

ARLINGTON



ARLINGTON

ber of white swans usually could be seen slowly skimming over the water.

The master of D'Evereux was a friend of Henry Clay and gave a ball in Clay's honor that was said to have been one of the most magnificent ever given in the state of Mississippi. A chronicler wrote this of it:

> Myriads of wax candles burning in wall sconces, sparkling chandeliers, entrancing music, the scent of jasmine, rose and sweet olive, the sparkle of wine mellowed by age, the flow of wit and brilliant repartee, all were there.

Henry Clay was painted while he was at D'Evereux by Bahin, the French artist. This portrait, of which no copies have been made, is owned by Judge W. C. Martin of Natchez. At the time Clay visited there he was tall, erect and thin, with hair that was slightly gray. He is said to have been suave and courteous and to have had a magnetic personality.

Ingraham, a New Englander, also visited Mr Elliott about the same time; after he returned home he wrote an article about his trip in which he says:

> Natchez society is distinguished beyond any in the Union. The people are generous and frank in character, polished yet free, and full of the courtesies of life.

Judge W. H. Sparks, of Georgia, after visiting at D'Evereux wrote:

> The society of Natchez is not surpassed by any . . . English and Irish gentlemen, of family and fortune, have

there founded homes; the *gentilhomme* of sunny France and the dark browed don of old Castile also dwell on the low green hills that gently recede from the city.

In 1855 the master of D'Evereux died, and Mrs Elliott closed the house. Later, she gave the property and all the furnishings to a favorite niece, Mrs Bayard Shields, who added to the garden which now became celebrated for the size and beauty of the japonicas cultivated there.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Arlington

THOUGH MORE than a century old, this house carries its years lightly. It still contains most of the original furniture and pieces of art collected by the original owner. It was built for Mrs Jane White, eldest daughter of Pierre Surget, of Rochford, France, one of the pioneer settlers of the Natchez country. The contractor who had charge of the actual construction of Arlington came from Philadelphia, and much of the material was imported. The building was started in 1816 but was not completed until four years later. The manual labor incident to the making and burning of the brick was done by slaves, and the materials for the foundation were hauled to the spot by oxen.

The main entrance is remarkable for the fan-shaped lights overhead. The interior woodwork is hand carved. That over the doors, entering the main corri-

dor, is especially rich; it is in a design of acanthus leaves. The furniture was brought from France and England, much of it being made by special order. In the drawing room it is of hand-carved rosewood upholstered with old-gold brocade. The original hand-woven lace curtains and brocade overdraperies are at the windows; these match the upholstery. The art collection contains many famous works by Italian and French painters and was brought to America prior to the passing of the law in 1859 which made it a felony to remove such things from the country in which they were wrought. Prominent in this collection are: a marine piece by Vernet, "Convoy of Prisoners" by Schwenfust, an Annunciation by Barocci, one of Carlo Dolci's tragic-eyed Magdalenes and a copy of Raphael's "Galatea" by Coccanari.

The lawn and formal garden were laid out by a landscape artist from England and were outstanding beauty spots in a city where beauty was accepted as a matter of course. Walks were bordered by clipped boxwood, and there were three acres of azaleas to dazzle the eye with the sheer beauty of their rainbow tints. A parterre of roses made the spot a fragrant place, and there was the enchantment of a quaint boxwood labyrinth, or maze, to bewilder and delight the children.

Anxious to share her treasures with her friends, Mrs White had planned a grand ball to be given upon the first night she was to spend in her new home. For years

she had worked, and now everything was ready. At seven o'clock that evening she went up to her room to dress. Suddenly she was stricken with a heart attack and died as the first of her guests entered the front door.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Henderson *or* Britton House

In 1646 Alexander Henderson, Esq., of Scotland, ancestor of Thomas Henderson, who later built Henderson House in Natchez, was the leading Presbyterian divine, after Knox. His statue may be seen on St Giles in Edinburgh, and his tomb bears this inscription:

"Alexander Henderson, scholar and minister of the gospel. He framed the first League and Covenant, and sat with the council of divines at West Minister."

When Thomas Henderson reached Natchez he carried on the traditions of the family. Claiborne says: "He was foremost in all good works." The first Presbyterian church was founded in his house; his wife Selah in 1816 started the first missionary society in the state. It was known as the Charitable Female Society

and was the nucleus from which the Natchez Protestant Orphans Home developed.

The family not only abounded in good works, but they also loved beauty. In 1858 Thomas Henderson built a palatial house for himself and family. The building contained twenty rooms; the ell where the servants lived was connected to this main building by an inner passage that the body servants might have access to the sleeping rooms of their mistresses and masters.

During the bombardment of Natchez, a shell tore its way through the masonry and exploded in the servants' dining hall just as the meal was finished. By some miracle no one was injured, but the patch on the wall is still visible.

Following the fall of Vicksburg, when the Northern troops were stationed at Natchez, the family were given twelve hours in which to vacate the lower floor. These rooms were then used by the Union soldiers for almost two years.

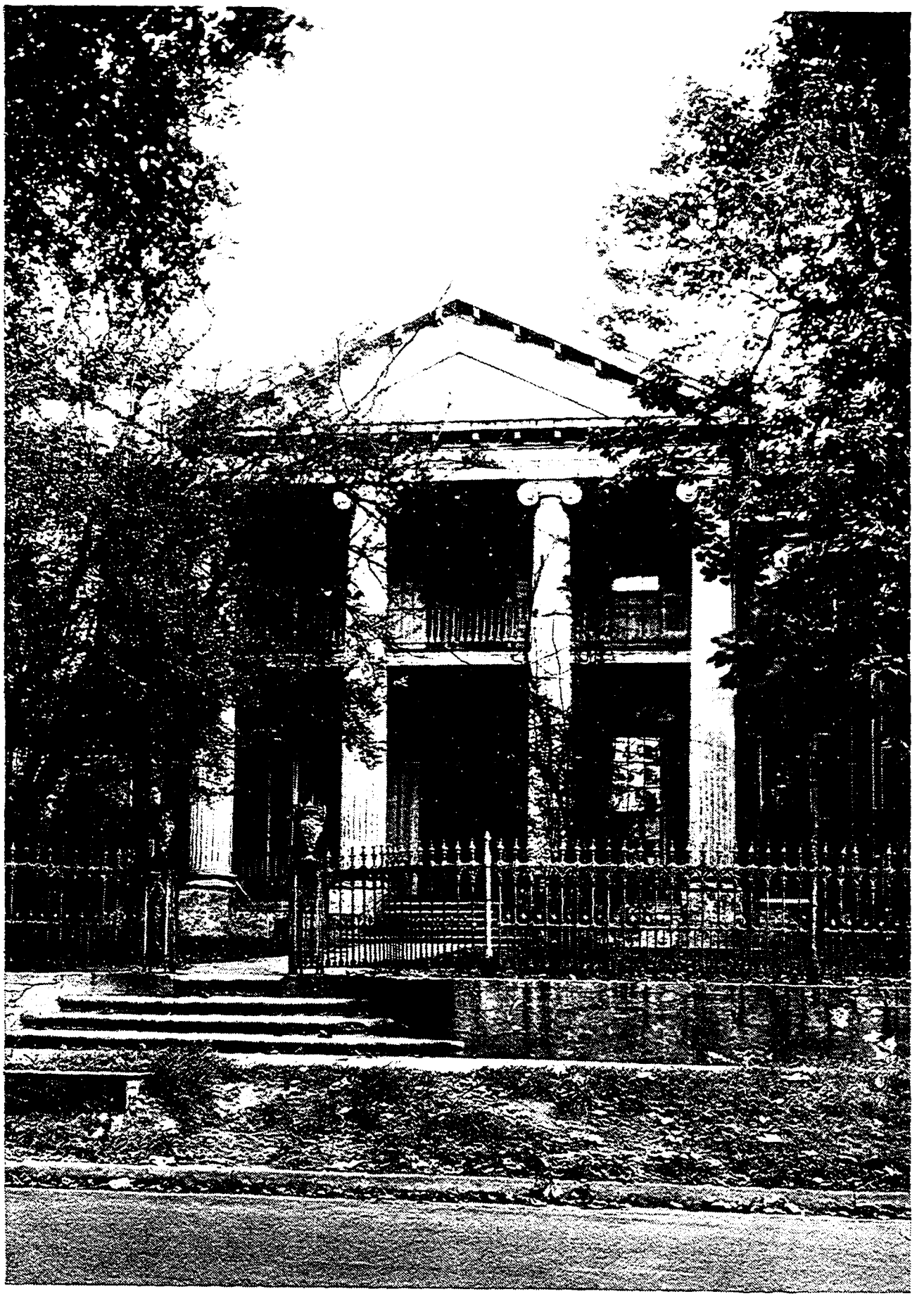
In 1868 this house became the property of Mr Audley Britton. As Henderson House the place had always been noted for its delightful atmosphere; during the Britton occupancy added to this was the sound of revelry, for now gay parties and grand balls became the order of the day.

CHAPTER XXX

Longwood

THOUGH IN STRANGE CONTRAST to the chaste architecture usually seen in the Natchez country, Longwood is interesting because no other house in that section makes a greater appeal to the imagination or brings home more strongly the tragedy of the Civil War than it does. It was partially erected by Dr Haller Nutt, just prior to that conflict.

If the call to arms had been deferred only a few months, the building would have been completed. But it stands a tragic reminder of shattered hopes and frustrated dreams. Tools were thrown down, and brushes were left to dry in freshly opened buckets of paint, where they have lain undisturbed for seventy-five years. One can see where the last nail was driven in the last lath that was put on, by hands that have, probably, long since turned to dust.



HENDERSON HOUSE

LONGWOOD

As originally planned, it would have been one of the most unusual structures of its kind in Mississippi. It is of Oriental or Byzantine design, with thirty-two octagonal rooms. A rotunda of the same shape reaches the height of five stories, to form a tower on the sixth floor.

It was designed by Sloan, a Philadelphia architect, who not only planned it but came to Mississippi with a number of skilled mechanics to carry out the work.

When Dr and Mrs Nutt went to Philadelphia to consult with Mr Sloan it took a year to make the arrangements and have an acceptable plan drawn. All the brick in the building was burned by slaves. The timber is of well-seasoned, time-defying cypress. The house still has the original roof, placed there nearly a century ago. The basement, or ground floor, contains a large nursery, apartments for a housekeeper, a billiard room, a card room and a wine cellar. When the war broke out, and the workmen left, Dr Nutt lingered long enough to supervise the completion of this floor. The windows in the upper part of the house were boarded up, and the family moved into the ground-floor rooms in order to prevent damage to the property by stragglers.

Orders that had been placed abroad were countermanded; a marble stairway, carved in Italy, was on the way and had to be returned. This stairway was designed for the main floor where the entrance hall,

rotunda and gallery were to be laid with mosaics. Niches had been built in the walls for statuary which was being carved in Italy, and furniture was being made by special order in Philadelphia. The silver had been ordered from England, and the linens were being woven in Ireland. A library had been designed to hold Dr Nutt's collection of ten thousand volumes. On the main floor there were, beside this room, eight others. The third floor contained bedrooms; the fourth, apartments for white servants who might accompany guests from the North. The fifth floor was designed as an observation room, and the sixth was a tower room enclosed with glass.

To give some idea of the opulence of that period in Southern history it may be well to explain the extent of the ménage of Dr Nutt. He had eight hundred farm slaves, thirty-two house servants and a number of white grooms and stablemen to care for the Kentucky-bred horses. There were governesses for the girls, a tutor for the boys, with separate school buildings maintained for each. A three-story building near by contained a series of bathrooms. There was an outside kitchen and several greenhouses with an English gardener.

Dr and Mrs Nutt had eleven children. Miss Julia, one of their daughters, continued to live in the basement of unfinished Longwood until her death in 1933.

CHAPTER XXXI

Monteigne

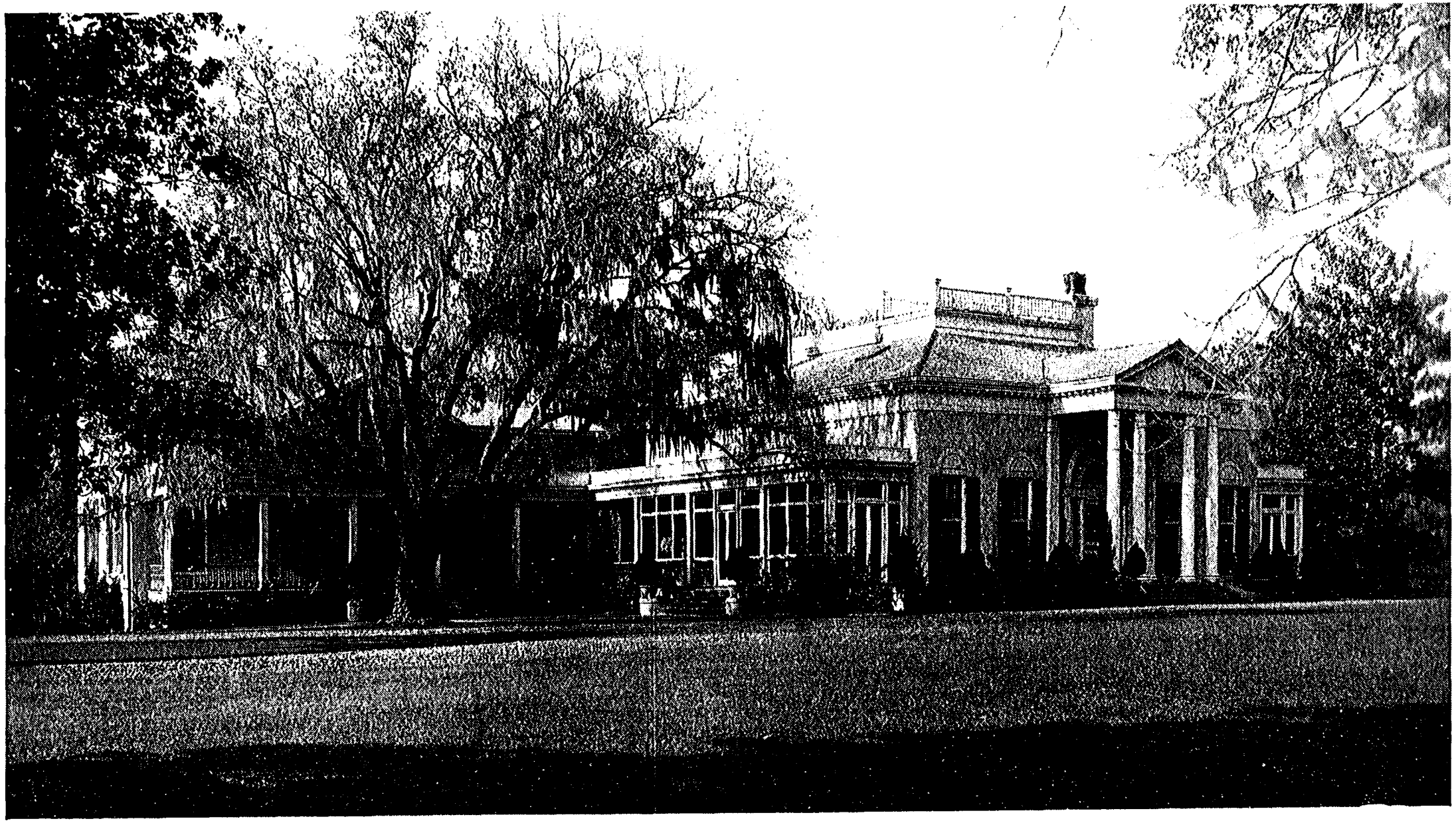
MONTEIGNE WAS COMPLETED about 1855 and was a decided departure from the prevailing type of architecture of that day, being in the style of a Swiss chalet. An interesting story is told in connection with its building. On digging for the foundations a large piece of hand-hewed timber was found. It was in almost perfect condition and gave evidence of having been used in some previous structure. This would indicate that an earlier dwelling occupied this site, the builder and occupants probably perishing in the great massacre of 1729, when the Indians slaughtered the garrison of Fort Rosalie and all of the outlying settlers. French's Memoirs of Louisiana state that the earliest comers to the Natchez country purchased land directly from the Indians, and Penicault's Journal speaks of several land grants as early as 1702.

Monteigne stands on a part of the Linden tract, which was a Spanish patent to Sarah Truly made on the thirty-first of January 1785. It was built by General Martin who was of French Huguenot descent, the family's original name being Monteigne.

He was violently opposed to secession, though his sympathies were with the South, for he realized the odds that section must face and foresaw its almost certain defeat. Yet when the inevitability of war became apparent he organized the Adams troop and was commissioned by them and others to purchase arms. This he did, and the Ames Company of Massachusetts, knowing full well for what purpose the consignment was bought, sold him about fifteen thousand dollars' worth of arms and also presented him with a handsome saber as a token of appreciation.

General Martin served the Confederacy with distinction and was promoted in rapid succession from captain to major general. In a skirmish near Shelbyville, Tenn., when hemmed in by fifteen hundred Union men, he made an almost miraculous escape but lost the saber which bore his name inscribed on the hilt. Ten years after the war was over, however, it was returned to him.

When Natchez came into Federal hands General Martin's family suffered because of his prominence in the Southern army. Their house was not only looted but was occupied by groups of newly freed slaves.



MONTEIGNE

MONMOUTH

Horses were housed in the drawing rooms, the chandeliers smashed and the mirrors broken. When he returned from the war the house was a ruin and his fortune gone, but he faced the task of rehabilitation with courage.

CHAPTER XXXII

Monmouth

MONMOUTH IS SUPPOSED to have been built in 1820 by John Hankinson, a man of vast wealth, related to the distinguished Schuyler family of New York. An old *Ariel* magazine, published in 1826, carries this statement:

> Letters of administration have been granted to Alvarez Fisk on the estate of Peter Schuyler, deceased, late of Adams County, Mississippi, December 8, 1825.

This would indicate that Fisk may have been a friend or business associate of the Schuyler or Hankinson family.

Mr and Mrs Hankinson's end was tragic. The story is that while returning in their carriage from Natchez one day, they found a dying man on the roadside. Like good Samaritans they tenderly ministered to him, although they soon discovered that he had yellow fever.

In less than a week both of them contracted the disease and died within a few hours of each other.

Calvin Smith bought Monmouth, when the Hankinson estate was settled, for the sum of ten thousand dollars. Later he sold it to John A. Quitman and his wife Eliza.

Eliza was the niece of Judge Edward Turner, in whose house a ball in honor of Lafayette was given. Some say that it was on the night she led the ball with America's beloved guest that John proposed to her. An old clipping says of the ball:

> Judge Turner dwelt in a Spanish house in Washington Street within a square of the bluff . . . a purely Spanish domicile built by some forgotten grandee. Here was given the ball for Lafayette where the fairest and most distinguished congregated to do him honor. There were myriads of wax tapers . . . waxed and polished floors . . . the stately minuet . . . gay gallants . . . brilliant uniforms . . . jewels . . . high combed hair . . . curls . . . a flowing bowl and clash of wits.

One of the uniforms mentioned at this ball was that worn by John Quitman who, as captain of the Fencibles, not only met Lafayette at the landing but acted as his military escort while he was in Natchez. It was this same year, 1826, that John purchased Monmouth.

John Quitman was one of the most beloved and gifted men who ever lived in the Natchez country. He came there from Rhinebeck, N. Y., in 1821 and was

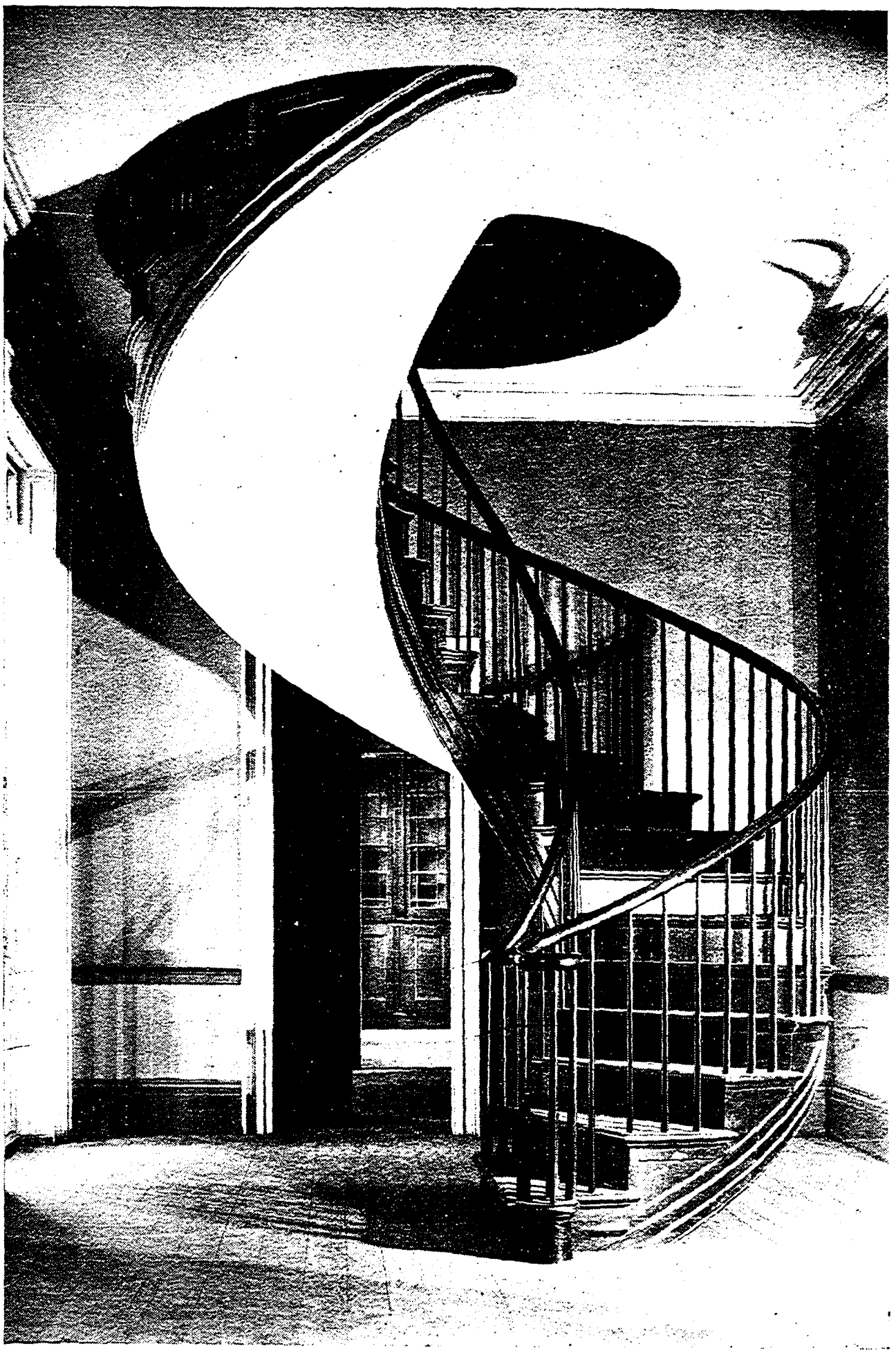
the first captain of the Fencibles, whom he is said to have organized and drilled. Their uniforms were strikingly beautiful, being of French blue with silver buttons, silver lace and braid. They were the pride of Natchez, those stalwart boys of a century ago.

Quitman possessed an overwhelming, forceful personality. His men adored him. When the Mexican War broke out he was appointed major general. Jefferson Davis, then a member of Congress, went with a Mississippi regiment as a colonel, and General Zachary Taylor was also a leader, but it was John Quitman who led the column that stormed Belan Gate, and he was in command at the assault on Chapultepec Castle. He jauntily marched his Mississippians down the Grand Plaza of the Mexican capital and to them fell the honor of raising Old Glory over that citadel. Frederick Macrery, of Natchez, raised the flag.

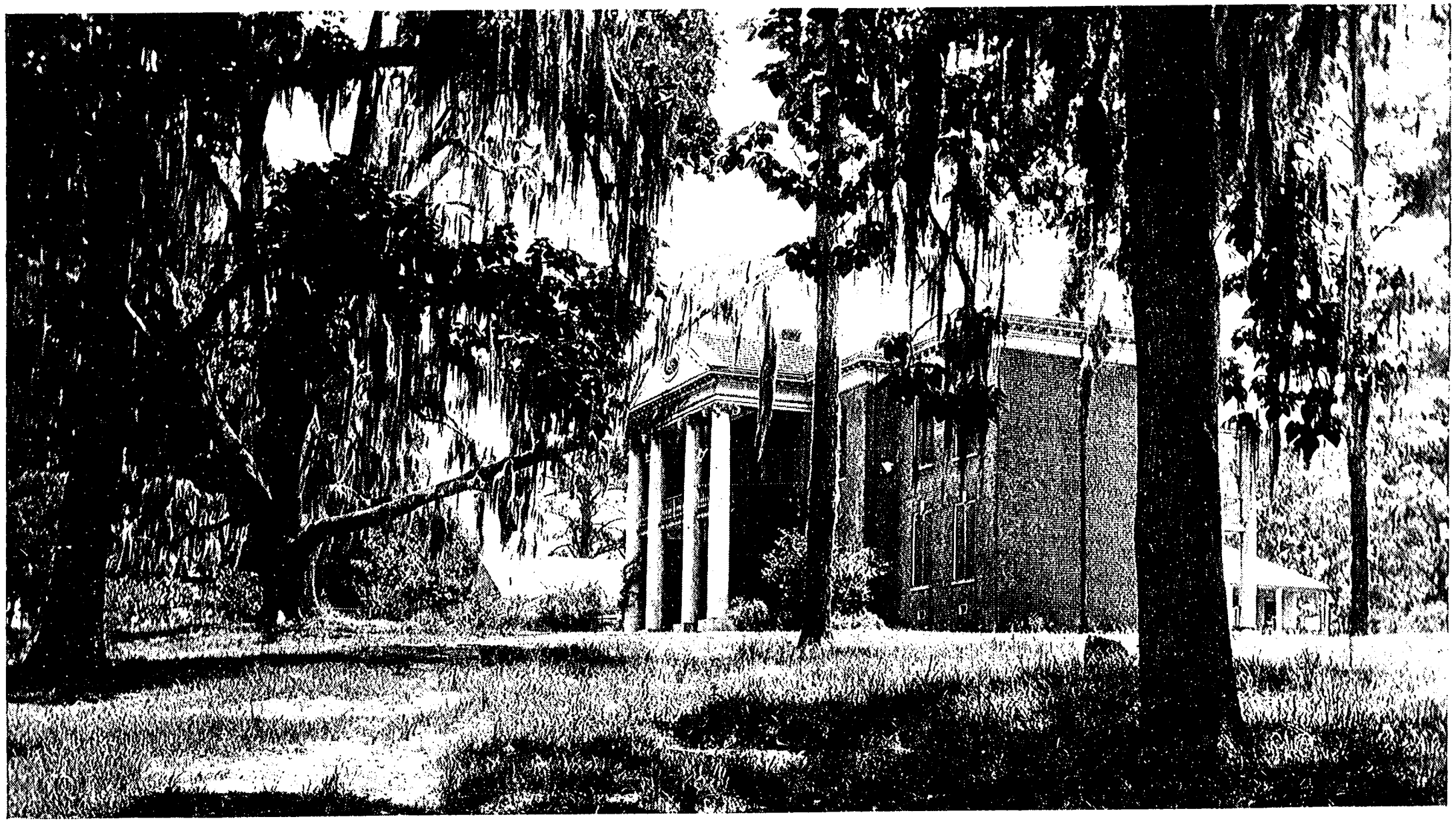
On his return from the war Quitman became chancellor, then congressman and later governor of the state. He resigned as governor in 1851 but served in Congress from 1855–1858.

He died after the banquet given to President Buchanan at Washington in 1859. It is known that poison was administered to the guests by some mysterious means, and although Quitman returned to Natchez, it was only to die a lingering death.

NATCHEZ TRACE



STAIRWAY OF AUBURN



AUBURN

CHAPTER XXXIII

Auburn

AUBURN, which stands in the center of what still remains a primeval forest, was, a few years ago, deeded to the city of Natchez for a park by the heirs of its builder, Dr Stephen Duncan, who was a man of importance in his day. At a dinner given at Auburn, plans were made for the building of the Episcopal church which was begun in 1822. Dr Duncan also helped found the first bank in Mississippi. Henry Clay, Edward Everett Hale and John Howard Payne, author of "Home Sweet Home," knew and enjoyed the whole-souled hospitality of the master of Auburn. The house has inspired several delightful poems, and its grounds have been used to give proper setting to many pictures.

The house was probably erected about 1815. It was built of brick, burned in a kiln operated by slaves. The

solidity and perfect planning of every detail make for a whole that is balanced to a fraction. Corinthian columns which support a wide front gallery and a spiral stairway with no support other than its own base give evidence of a master architect.

Oaks and pines of indescribable majesty surround the front and left side of the building. Draped in somber festoons of gray-green Spanish moss they cause the view from the front gallery to be one of incomparable beauty.

There is a live oak that grows on one side of the front walk which is believed to be at least one thousand years old. Many of its branches equal in girth the trunk of an average-size tree, and it shades a large area. Its counterpart died several years ago. Wrapped in the garb of eternal spring, this king of trees stands guard while the pageant of life goes by.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Melrose

MELROSE WAS BUILT about 1840 by Mr John T. McMurran. Like most handsome houses of its day it was solidly constructed. The brick was burned on the place by slave labor, and the heavier timbers are of heart cypress. The size of the rooms seems extraordinary in this day of compact apartments, but that was an age when fashion favored a generous scale of living.

The house has a double-deck portico upheld by huge Tuscan columns. Wrought-iron banisters in a Greek pattern enclose the upper deck, and the lower is reached by a broad flight of steps. Directly over the entrance there hangs an old-fashioned, wrought-iron lamp, and the doorway is designed after the colonial tradition.

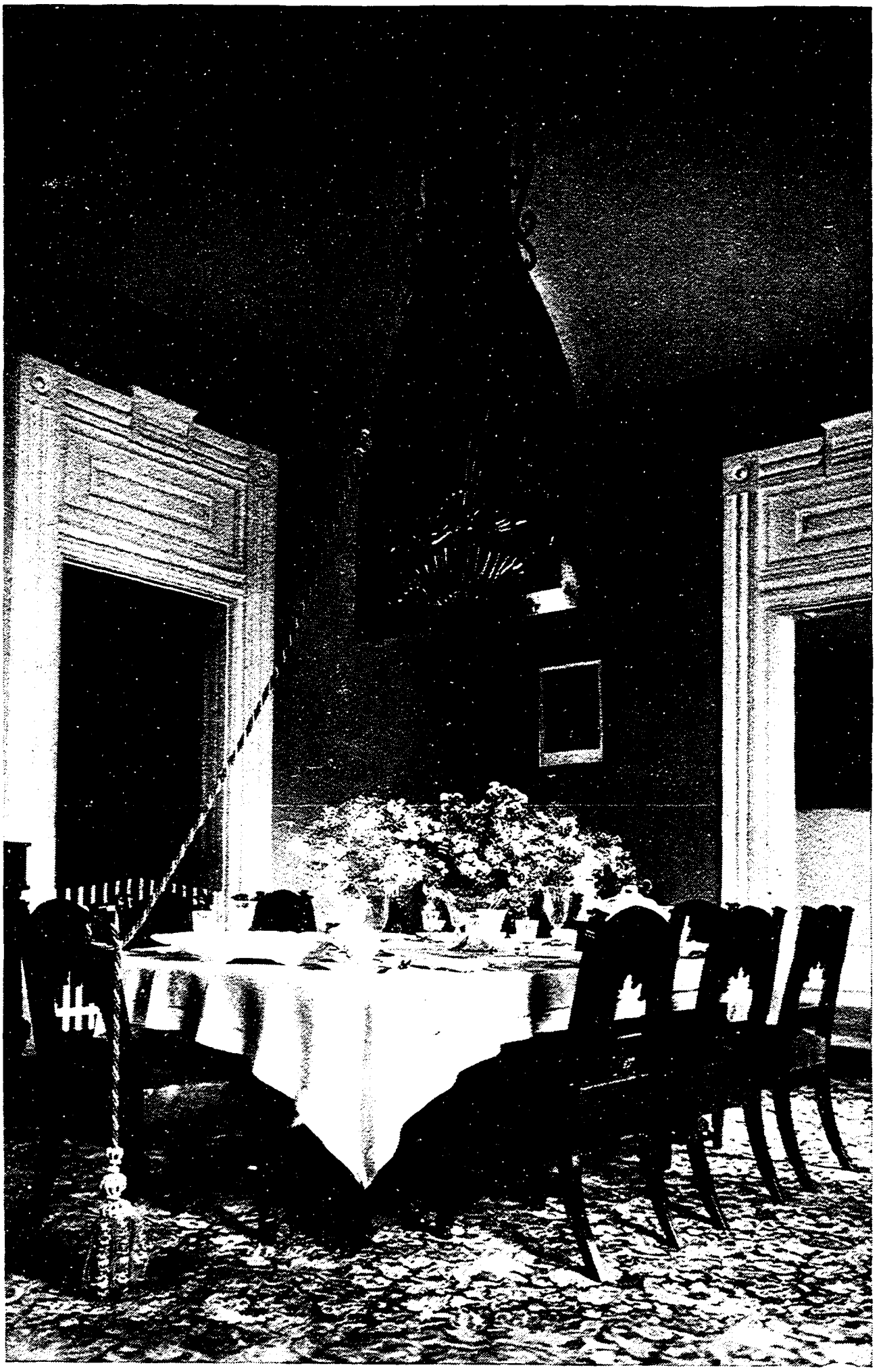
The lighting system in the halls of Melrose is simple but beautiful, consisting of a row of candles over each doorway. There is a particularly interesting table in

the front drawing room. It is circular in shape and inlaid with delicately hued marble which forms a bird design. Formerly each bird had tiny jeweled eyes, but during the Civil War Union soldiers picked these jewels out and left saber scars on the polished surface of the table. The mantel in this room is of black Italian marble, backed by a large mirror in a heavy gilt frame.

In the second drawing room, rosewood recalls the Parisian fashions of the eighteen thirties. The room has a rose carpet, and the upholsterings are in rose and gold brocatel. Suspended from the ceiling is an antique chandelier for candles. It is made in tiers and has for its apex a wide-lipped vase of hand-etched crystal. Each candle socket is surrounded by a chalice and hung with glass prisms.

In 1866 Mr McMurran lost his life near Baton Rouge, when the steamboat Fashion was destroyed by fire. It was this tragedy and the heroism of the engineer who stuck to his boat that gave the inspiration for John Hays's best-known poem, *Jim Bludsoe*.

MELROSE



MELROSE

CHAPTER XXXV

The Lost Clifton

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, a distinguished New Englander made the entire trip to Natchez by boat, and the beauty of the country seemed to strike him with particular force. He wrote a fascinating record of his impressions and among other things said:

> The town, Natchez, is mantled with a rich, green foliage, like a garment. A noble esplanade runs parallel with the river; at the northern extremity of this esplanade, upon an eminence, gradually yet roundly swelling away, stands Clifton. Its lofty colonnades glance in the sun, and a magnificent garden spreads out around it. This garden is diversified with avenues and terraces, and adorned with grottoes and summer-houses.

Clifton was old when the Civil War began. It was built for Samuel Postlethwaite, about 1820. Later, Mr Frank Surget owned it. His wife was Mrs Charlotte

Linton, who was wealthy in her own right. Clifton was her ancestral home, built by her parents.

The grounds were landscaped by European artists, and exotic plants rioted in a cloud of fragrant bloom. A commanding view of the Mississippi River and the fertile plains of Louisiana lent peculiar picturesqueness to the entire setting.

Such was the fairylike Clifton when, at the close of that historic siege, Vicksburg fell. Natchez was then placed under military rule with six hundred Union soldiers garrisoned there. Mr Surget invited a number of these officers to dine at Clifton but, by some oversight, failed to ask the chief engineer. In speaking of the matter later, Mr Surget said:

"It was not an intentional slight on my part."

The next day, a peremptory order came to the Surgets to vacate their house. The order said that it was necessary to erect fortifications where Clifton stood.

It seemed strange to Mr Surget that no other site could be found. "Natchez is a fallen city!" he expostulated. "There is no reason to fortify the place!" But the chief engineer was obdurate.

In their astonishhment and excitement, the Surgets only found time to gather up the family silver and a few personal belongings before Clifton was blown to atoms. The detonation of the explosion was heard for miles; not one brick was left upon another. Even the

gardens were demolished; the greenhouses, grottoes and pavilions were leveled to a mass of debris.

The loss of their beloved house, treasures and keepsakes weighed heavily upon the hearts of these gentlefolk, and as soon as peace was declared they prepared to depart for France to make their home. But Mr Surget did not live long; he died in America before they could sail, though his wife continued living in Bordeaux to a ripe old age.

War is always hideous, and Natchez fared better than most Southern cities. The memory of Clifton has faded, though a section of Natchez perpetuates the name of the beautiful house that was wantonly sacrificed to one man's petty animosity.

The inhabitants of Natchez today, these descendants of that gallant band who enjoyed the spacious life of the feudal days of Southern civilization, have little inclination to indulge in unhappy retrospection. They love beauty, and it is around them in abundance. The pink, white and cerise azalea, the japonica, the sweet olive and the cape jasmine are ever before them, tiny monuments to the beauty of a civilization that has died.

THE END