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PRIZE-
WINNING
CIVIL WAR
NOVEL**

60TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

ANDERSONVILLE

MACKINLAY KANTOR

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A PLUME BOOK

ANDERSONVILLE

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MACKINLAY KANTOR



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CONTENTS

[About the Author](#)
[Title Page](#)
[Copyright](#)
[Dedication](#)
[Epigraph](#)

[Chapter I](#)
[Chapter II](#)
[Chapter III](#)
[Chapter IV](#)
[Chapter V](#)
[Chapter VI](#)
[Chapter VII](#)
[Chapter VIII](#)
[Chapter IX](#)
[Chapter X](#)
[Chapter XI](#)
[Chapter XII](#)
[Chapter XIII](#)
[Chapter XIV](#)
[Chapter XV](#)
[Chapter XVI](#)
[Chapter XVII](#)
[Chapter XVIII](#)
[Chapter XIX](#)
[Chapter XX](#)
[Chapter XXI](#)
[Chapter XXII](#)
[Chapter XXIII](#)
[Chapter XXIV](#)
[Chapter XXV](#)
[Chapter XXVI](#)
[Chapter XXVII](#)
[Chapter XXVIII](#)
[Chapter XXIX](#)
[Chapter XXX](#)
[Chapter XXXI](#)

[Chapter XXXII](#)

[Chapter XXXIII](#)

[Chapter XXXIV](#)

[Chapter XXXV](#)

[Chapter XXXVI](#)

[Chapter XXXVII](#)

[Chapter XXXVIII](#)

[Chapter XXXIX](#)

[Chapter XL](#)

[Chapter XLI](#)

[Chapter XLII](#)

[Chapter XLIII](#)

[Chapter XLIV](#)

[Chapter XLV](#)

[Chapter XLVI](#)

[Chapter XLVII](#)

[Chapter XLVIII](#)

[Chapter XLIX](#)

[Chapter L](#)

[Chapter LI](#)

[Chapter LII](#)

[Chapter LIII](#)

[Chapter LIV](#)

[Chapter LV](#)

[Chapter LVI](#)

[Chapter LVII](#)

[Chapter LVIII](#)

[Chapter LIX](#)

[Chapter LX](#)

[Chapter LXI](#)

[*Bibliography*](#)

TO IRENE

“The future historian who shall undertake to write an unbiased story of the War between the States, will be compelled to weigh in the scales of justice all its parts and features; and if the revolting crimes . . . have indeed been committed, the perpetrators must be held accountable. Be they of the South or of the North, they can not escape history.”

—R. Randolph Stevenson, formerly surgeon in the Army of the Confederate States of America

Sometimes there was a compulsion which drew Ira Claffey from his plantation and sent him to walk the forest. It came upon him at eight o'clock on this morning of October twenty-third; he responded, he yielded, he climbed over the snake fence at the boundary of his sweet potato field and went away among the pines.

Ira Claffey had employed no overseer since the first year of the war, and had risen early this morning to direct his hands in the potato patch. Nowadays there were only seven and one-half hands on the place, house and field, out of a total Negro population of twelve souls; the other four were an infant at the breast and three capering children of shirt-tail size.

Jem and Coffee he ordered to the digging, and made certain that they were thorough in turning up the harvest and yet gentle in lifting the potatoes. Nothing annoyed Ira Claffey like storing a good thirty-five bushels in a single mound and then losing half of them through speedy decay.

In such a manner, he thought, have some of our best elements and institutions perished. One bruise, one carelessness, and rot begins. Decay is a secret but hastening act in darkness; then one opens up the pine bark and pine straw—or shall we say, the Senate?—and observes a visible wastage and smell, a wet and horrid mouldering of the potatoes. Or shall we say, of the men?

In pursuit of his own husbandry on this day, Ira carried a budding knife in his belt. While musing in bed the night before, he had been touched with ambition: he would bud a George the Fourth peach upon a Duane's Purple plum.

Veronica was not yet asleep, but reading her Bible by candlelight beside him. He told her about it.

But, Ira, does not the Duane's Purple ripen too soon? Aren't those the trees just on the other side of the magnolias?

No, no, my dear. Those are Prince's Yellow Gage. The Duane's Purple matures in keeping with the George Fourths. I'd warrant you about the second week of July. Say about the tenth. I should love to see that skin. Such a fine red cheek on the George Fourths, and maybe dotted with that lilac bloom and yellow specks—

But she was not hearing him, she was weeping. He turned to watch her; he sighed, he put out one big hand and touched the thick gray-yellow braid which weighted on her white-frilled shoulder. It was either Moses or Sutherland whom she considered now. Dully he wondered which one.

She said, on receiving the communication of his thought, though he had said nothing— She spoke Suthy's name.

Oh, said Ira. I said nothing to make you think—

The Prince's Yellow Gage. He fancied them so. When they were still green he'd hide them in the little waist he wore. Many's the time I gave him a belting—

She sobbed a while longer, and he stared into the gloom beyond the bed curtains, and did his best to forget Suthy. Suthy was the eldest. Sixteenth Georgia. It was away up at the North, at a place no one had ever heard of before, a place called Gettysburg.

In recent awareness of bereavement had lain the germ of retreat and restlessness, perhaps; but sometimes Ira spirited himself off into the woods when he was fleeing from no sadness or perplexity. He had gone like that since he could first remember. Oh, pines were taller forty-five years ago . . . when he was only three feet tall, the easy nodding grace of their foliage was reared out of all proportion, thirty times his stature. And forests were wilder, forty-five years ago, over in Liberty County, and he went armed with a wooden gun which old Jehu had carved and painted as a Christmas gift for him. It had a real lock, a real flint; it snapped and the sparks flew. Ira Claffey slew brigades of redcoats with this weapon; he went as commander of a force of small blacks; he was their general.

Hi, them's British, Mastah Iry.

Where?

Yonder in them 'simmons!

Take them on the flank.

Hi, what you say we do, Mastah?

He wasn't quite sure what he wanted them to do. Something about the flank. His Uncle Sutherland talked about a flank attack in some wild distant spot known as the Carolinas. . . . Of course this was later on, perhaps only forty years ago, when Ira Claffey was ten. . . .

Charge those redcoats! They advanced upon the persimmon brake in full cry and leaping; and on there came terror when a doe soared out of the thicket directly in their faces, and all the little darkies scattered like quail, and Ira came near to legging it after them.

In similar shades he had been Francis Marion, and surely his own boys had scuttled here in identical pursuits. It was a good place to be, treading alone on the clay-paved path curving its way to the closest branch of Sweetwater Creek. God walked ahead and behind and with him, near, powerful, silent . . . *words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.*

He had budded the peach upon the plum as he wished to do, though he feared that it was a trifle too late in the season for success. He budded each of the two selected trees five times, and then went back to the potato field. Coffee and Jem were doing well enough, but they were plaguèd slow; Ira had been emphatic about the tenderness he required of them, and they handled the big sulphur-colored Brimstones as if they were eggs. Well, he thought, I shan't speed them on this. Better forty bushels well-dug and well-stored than eighty bushels bumped and scratched and ready to spoil as soon as they're covered.

Keep on with it until I return, and mind about no bruising. I shall look up some pine straw—when it's thickest and easy to scoop—and we'll fetch the cart after the nooning.

Yassah.

Frost had not yet killed the vines. Some planters always waited for a killing frost before they dug, but Ira was certain that the crop kept better if dug immediately before the frost struck.

He was newly come into his fifty-first year; the natal day had been observed on October sixth. Black Naomi chuckled mysteriously in the kitchen; there had been much talk about, Mistress, can I please speak with you a minute *alone*? He had to pretend that he was blind and deaf, and owned no suspicion that delicate and hard-to-come-by substances were being lavished in his honor. The fragrant Lady Baltimore cake appeared in time, borne by Ira Claffey's daughter because she would not trust the wenches with this treasure.

There they sat, the three surviving Claffeys left at home, sipping their roast-grain coffee and speaking words in praise of the cake, and now Ira had lived for half a century . . . fifty years stuffed with woe and work and dreams and peril. He sought to dwell in recollection only on the benefits

accruing. With Veronica and Lucy he tried to keep his imaginings away from far-off roads where horses and men were in tragic operation.

The best I've tasted since the Mexican War.

Poppy, you always say that. About everything.

Come, come, Lucy. Do I indeed?

You do, agreed his wife, and gave him her wan smile above the home-dipped candles.

Yes, sir, chimed in Lucy. It's always the best and the worst and the biggest and all such things, but always dated from that old war.

After this night, said Ira, I presume that I should date everything from my fiftieth birthday?

Poppy, love, you don't look even on the outskirts of fifty. Scarcely a shred of gray in your hair.

Well, my dear, I don't have much hair left to me.

That's no certain indication of encroaching age. Is it, Mother? Take Colonel Tollis. I declare, he can't be aged over thirty-one or two, and yet he's got less hair than—

Lucy. Do you consider it ladylike, to discuss baldness so—so intimately?

Well, I declare—

So it had gone; they uttered their little jests and remonstrances; they had their affection; the stringy candles sank and died in chipped gilt candelabra, and in the end Ira Claffey sat alone in his library and treated himself to port. He had tasted no port since the previous winter (there was so little of it left now) and he made a silent gesture and toasted each of his sons in turn as they stared from ambrotype frames beside him. His hand went down and rubbed along his right leg; it caressed his shabby fawn-colored pantaloons above the knotted hole which for years he had bandaged afresh each day. I'd be with you, fifty or no fifty, he tried to tell his sons, reaching to them across uncharted distances and dimensions. I'd be among the muskets if it hadn't been for Monterey. I wonder who the Mexican was! I wonder if he is living still—sorrowing as I am sorrowing, going through repeated and sometimes doleful mimicry. Still able to love, however? Not so frequently? But still able, and most eager at times.

The wine affected Ira Claffey because he drank so little of it in this time of strife and paucity. He thought of Veronica and the fever which came over him sometimes in darkness, the drawing up of her nightdress, the muffled hysteria of their encounter, the shame which she always admitted afterward because she had been taught that carnal enjoyment was lewd and Ira could never persuade her otherwise. He thought of the mistress he had had in Milledgeville when he was in the Legislature, he thought of pretty strumpets he'd known in the brief time when he was a soldier, he thought of the first brown girl he ever lay with at seventeen or thereabouts in age.

How do you countenance such goings-on? You, professedly a religious man—

I suppose each of us must be guilty of certain sins. We'd be less than human if we weren't blemished a bit. And I strive earnestly not to envy, not to grow little snips and slips and buds and seeds of jealousy. I deplore cruelty, and own no avarice—at least none I'm conscious of. But lust—

I'm steeped in that particular brand of iniquity. At least—when I was younger— And now, now, tonight, the night I'm fifty—

Silently he opened the library door and looked across the dark hall. Lucy and her mother were scraping lint at the big table in the crowded parlor; they had a servant helping them, but Lucy was yawning. He felt a fire as he saw that yawn. Soon, then— To bed, to bed! Incestuous sheets, sweet prince? Nay, my Veronica and I lie within the embrace of a mortal primness known as Holy Wedlock

Thus we contrived eight children, and thus the four small graves within the red rusty fence—the longest no longer than my walking stick— Thus we had four children to grow to full stature—or close

to it— Thus we came to another war.

~~I was a Stephens man from the first, but what possible difference can that make now, to Mr. Stephens or to me?~~

I was no Secessionist. Quite the contrary. But dress yourselves in gray, Suthy and Badger and Moses, and be off with your shooting-irons. Scrape the raw white fabric, Lucy. Put up the calves-foot jelly for the wounded, my Veronica. And cry and cry, and read your Bible, and pray again, and cry once more. . . .

Mist had condensed thickly after a chilly night, and Ira walked through it like a swimmer moving erect, walking rapidly though lamely, a man with broad round powerful shoulders, and carrying his head tipped forward as if to resist the weight of the flat-brimmed black hat pulled low on his forehead. His brow was channeled horizontally by four distinct wrinkles like deep narrow scars. His pale eyes shone from a covert of long dark lashes and coffee-colored eyebrows. His nose was insignificant, his wide full-lipped mouth the best feature in a round smooth face. Ira Claffey demonstrated the manner of a keen-eyed hunter who was forever on the watch for birds and expected that a covey would go crackling up and out, only a few steps ahead.

He would have been able to name the week—and possibly the day—of the year; he would have been able to name it by evidence before him if startled quickly awake from a century's repose. The long-leaved pines themselves, their banks of dark green plush in milky distance, with the outer tips of pine needles touched by autumnal tan, and yet this tan was invisible until you came close. Sunflower the little susie flowers still blooming spiritedly; sodden cornfields shrunken merciless, every ragged stalk of fodder soaked with mist; sandy, clayey bare spots in yard and gardens standing out silvery—intense spots, never casual, but seeming to have been cleared and stamped recently, and for a special purpose . . . eight o'clock in the morning, as told by his silver watch, with the sun burning low and solid in a cloudless sky but with farthestmost groves still fogged; jack-oaks half green and looking withered and scrofulous; the scrub swamp gums well turned at this date, and some of them burning in artificial pinks; tulip trees half green; some of the buttonwoods verdant as in summer.

The air hung clammy, but still good because it was wild, unprovoked by many men or their machines or structures. Ira heard the squeal of a train whistle (the service was untidy and uncertain on this Southwestern line from Macon to Americus and Albany. Claffey could not have told you with accuracy just how many trains jounced puffing up and down the line each day; at least he knew that the service was sadly confused because of military necessity) and far above the hill and western pine there frothed some woodsmoke as the cars halted at Anderson Station. Nothing much there except a wretched store, several houses, and a pyramid of old sawdust from Yeoman's mill, no longer operating.

...Air good because it was wild, and because deer had run through it, and turkeys also. It was long since the Creeks trotted those easy slopes, but you could still smell them when fall came on. Cold weather was their time, the time of Indian ghosts, and Ira loved to sense them; he loved the ghosts as well as any boy and better than some. More than the Indians, however: air was tanged with sweet-gum and persimmons and nut trees and dry goober vines and thistles. Ira Claffey worshipped vegetation; he understood the small or wide-spread miracles appurtenant to chlorophyll, photosynthesis . . . oh, list the botanizing, the rub or splitting of cotyledons! . . . Any plant was his love, some were near to being his spiritual mistresses (he remembered making love and crushing infinitesimal purplish flowers while they did it; he and a slave girl, when he was young, when he was very young; but he could never get a white woman to lie with him in grass and blossoms, though he had tried. Ladies wanted beds). More than these affections, too: Ira had an enormous respect for vegetation beyond loving it; yet he

was disciplined and sensible, and recognized that weeds must be ripped out, and some trees also.

Here, in the last field at his left hand, once the cotton had flourished . . . dry toughness of the stalks, the long long picking-sacks, the dark hands going like beaks to bite and swallow the cotton. Now cotton now, markets were gone. A few good melon vines had volunteered and come running over the ground, squarely over the bottom rail of the fence; and more gourd vines and some pumpkins had volunteered from another quarter, and doubtless cucumbers as well, though Ira Claffey hadn't checked. They interbred as all gourds will. Now their awful progeny rotted amid visible ruins of a cotton planter's hopes. They were not melons, not pumpkins; they were monsters; not even the hungriest hand would eat them. Children came and kicked them loose and rolled them around. The green worms had come, too, and the green worms worked their especial penetrating assassination: once the air was admitted to these fruit, spoilage was hurried. The bastard product of vines lay exposed where leaves had fallen, like bulbous rotting bodies—skulls, perhaps—and they made an almost visible awfulness of odor. Ah, said Ira Claffey to himself, I didn't realize that this was such a horror. Well, there's no pride in having an old field turned into a sink, even though we have nothing to plant in it. Send Coffee down here post haste with a cart and let him get rid of these nuisances; he can dump them into the swamp—bury them, if necessary. . . . No, Coffee's instructed with the Brimstone I shan't take him from potato digging, I'll take Jonas from the woodpile and send him instead.

He left the orbs and jellies of noxious cross-breeds behind him thankfully, and turned north on a path which led from northern limits of his own plantation . . . pines cool in their brittle dignity, and a stile to be mounted over. This was a serious obstacle because his right leg could not be made to bend past forty-five degrees at the knee without pain. Something about a quadriceps tendon fastening itself to a femur; Ira did not know; he was no surgeon. He wrinkled his small nose, thinking of surgeons and probes which looked something like knitting needles—uncompanionable needles, to say the least.

Halfway down the northern slope of this ridge was where the stile bothered him; now he lurched on a downward path through land belonging to the McWhorters, the Yeomans, the Biles. Wilderness barely fit for pasture, these eminences were; no one was ever quite certain just where the joining line ran, and no survey had been made since the earliest times. The McWhorter heirs lived in Americus and did nothing about their woodland except to pay microscopic taxes; the Yeoman place no longer operated as a plantation, with both the young-middle-aged men gone to the army and their wives dwelling with cousins in Tattnall County. The Biles were old, sedentary, retiring—their house stood two miles away, and they lived off their garden-patch with two slovenly house servants to bear them company. Ira Claffey himself had given them meat as a neighborly gift in winter and trusted that some other folks had done the same.

Irvine Yeoman, aged forty-one, had died in the same battle which claimed Sutherland Claffey—that Gettysburg place. For the moment Ira had forgotten.

In speculation on death (even secret half-realized contemplation of the misery) and on the scrawny barrenness which fell over remote holdings like this when war ruled, Ira desired keenly all faith and sustenance which the forest might give. . . . No deer here nowadays; one had not been shot in these woods for years. Raccoons and bobcats and other vermin, the spotted skunks and weasels darting at night on urgent autumnal errands . . . but lean stringy dancing legs of the deer went piercing other thickets. It was a miraculous thing how a deer could be frightened loose and go rising and plunging through tough jagged windfalls from some old hurricane; then you'd go and examine the route where he'd run, and you wouldn't think that a rat could have gotten through there; but the deer had, and the remarkable mechanism of his small hoofs and elastic sinews was even now carrying him at a fool's pace through tighter fences of tumbled roots and pine boughs at the other end of the wilderness.

The Sweetwater branch to be crossed, a fine fair small stream to visit, generous in its treatment of roots of gums and willows which marked its way. Ira went across on the trunk of a tree he'd had his hands fell for that very purpose: to make a bridge where strollers could pass dry-shod. This portion of the valley belonged definitely to the McWhorters; Ira requested and received permission for the tree to be cut. It was a willow, hurt badly by lightning, and no great sacrifice in any event. He thought of kneeling to drink from the clean black water, he knew that this branch of Sweetwater would taste cold and leaf-mouldy, it would be a balm to mouth and tongue and throat and would pour slowly and dark as if rinsing at a gentle course through his whole big body, into every extremity. He had risen before sunrise and worked long and well, and he needed a drink.

But better to try the spring beyond. Only a short way above the marshy plashy boundaries of the creek there stood clay and brown boulders exposed. . . . Here, he explained once to Lucy when he took her that way— Here is where the fairies live.

What kind of fairies?

Good ones, my dear. They are wet, very tiny, very green—

As big as me, Poppy?

Heavens, no. Miniature fairies of the damp sort, scarcely as big as your finger.

Where do they sleep?

Ah, there's that moss. Where do you think?

Yes, Poppy, I think they use the moss. And for table linen, too. Would they let me drink their water?

Assuredly. That's the reason they keep it running. Here, child, I'll make a cup of my hand. Beneath this rock, so. Now you bend down—take care, don't wet your boots and skirts— That's the way.

She faced him with plump pink face dripping, and said, I saw one, whilst I was drinking.

Where was he?

In the moss.

Alone he squatted now amid kindly memories and held out his hand. The water looked like a sheathed fluted icicle. Ira had seen icicles long before, when he went to Washington City in winter. Water drenched his heavy hand, and curled along his wrist and tried to make its way up his sleeve, and he laughed and drew back his hand and shook it. This was the smallest, loveliest spring of several which he knew in these few square miles of domestic woodland. Especially the moss . . . his daughter was too grown-up to dream about fairies; she was twenty; the youth she loved had died of fever in the Yankee prison pen at Camp Douglas, Chicago, the winter before . . . or maybe she did dream secretly about fairies still. She owned a pretty mouth filled with all the young lady chatter and some of the young lady slang. Veronica would say impatiently, I declare, sometimes I believe that youngun has scarcely a wit in her noggin. But both the Claffeys were glad to boast Lucy as their own. She was dainty and valiant, she was skillful and kindly at nursing the sick be they white or black. Sick people followed her with their eyes. She would have made a noble wife for big Rob Lamar. But he was dead. So many were dead.

A chill came from darker gloom of pines and touched Ira's face and heart.

He shook his head, removed his hat, and—kneeling deeper and more painfully in the niche of stones and moss—he turned up his face beneath the steady pouring of the spring. He opened his mouth and drank deeply, swallowing steadily until he was satisfied.

Distantly sounded the slow talking of shod hoofs on rock and hardpan clay. Ira heard the approach as he was drying his face with a yellow bandana; he heard voices also, and a light metallic drag and

jingle. With curiosity he examined the nearer paths to see who might be coming. Seldom did you meet hunters or planters in this quiet place; this section of the county was but sparsely settled—all the hunters gone to more dangerous hunting, some of the planters gone too.

A sorrel horse and a gray came in sight, moving cautiously down the steep trail from the north—from the direction of the empty Yeoman plantation—and ridden by two young men. They appeared to be in uniform, at least as to pants and boots and hats, though one wore a jacket of checkered brown and drab denim. Behind them stumbled a youth in Confederate gray, bearing a surveyor's rod over his shoulder; and in the rear followed a tall ragged Negro who carried some sort of wooden satchel-box in his right hand and held a tripod and a looped linked chain in heavy coils upon his other shoulder. What's this, demanded Ira Claffey of himself in astonishment. Surveyors? Have the McWhorters sold out?

I want a drink, spoke the man in the checkered coat. He seemed to be in charge, for the little procession turned promptly along the declivity toward the spring. Ira walked to meet them.

Good day, gentlemen.

Good day to you.

The two horsemen dismounted. Both were officers or so Ira took them to be. Something about the undersized denim-jacketed fellow made Ira recoil instinctively if slightly as the man moved past him.

Look out you don't slip, Sid, said the other. The young private soldier and the slave were standing back, waiting to drink in their proper turns.

The unprepossessing man called Sid finished his refreshment and stood wiping his mouth on his sleeve. His jacket was smeared with clay, his boots greased reddishly with it. He had been walking in the marsh first; there was black muck higher on his legs.

You own this property? He was addressing Ira curtly.

No, sir. I believe we're standing on McWhorter land at the moment. My place begins yonder. He pointed to the fence barely visible among trees, south across the branch. He said, My name is Claffey. He offered his hand, but not eagerly.

Both officers shook hands with him. I'm Captain W. S. Winder—

In belated respect to Ira's elder years he added *Sir*.

—This is Captain Boyce Charwick. He's from the topographical engineers.

Ira gave his grave smile. Are you looking up a new battleground? This would be rather remote from the lines.

Prison, said Winder.

A prison? Here?

It's possible. I'm charged with locating a site. We're considering several locations. This is one of them.

Ira had a thought of murderers and lunatics in chains. What sort of prison would that be?

A stockade to keep damn Yankee prisoners in, replied Charwick.

A stockade to keep God damn Yankee prisoners in, Captain Winder amended. They both laughed.

Ah, I see. But it's so far from—

Winder grimaced in a manner to show impatience or impertinence, Claffey could not be sure which. The captains climbed back into their saddles and stood waiting for the other two to drink—first the white boy, then the Negro.

It's a long way removed from the theatre of war, is it not?

My father, General John H. Winder, is Superintendent of Military Prisons. I have been authorized to seek a site for a new stockade. You've got railroad transportation here—

His hand swept and stabbed the horizon, pointing out things which Ira Claffey had known for years. He talked impolitely as if the planter were a child retarded in mind.

Excellent drainage. Bountiful supply of water; not that the Yankees are over-prone to bathe, or so I've heard.

Laughter.

I'm considering this area seriously because of the provender situation. You folks hereabouts are not tributary to Virginia when it comes to food. Self-sustaining, I'd say. Bountiful crops—or at least the areas where they could be raised. How was your own corn this year?

Fair, sir, said Claffey guardedly. Merely fair. Locally we received inundation at the wrong season. But—How on earth could you build sufficient structures to house—?

See these pines? How many million board feet of pine's around here, anyway? I didn't say anything about structures. We can take those trees and square them off, and slap them together, and build a fence around ten or twenty acres—a fence so high that the meanest living Yankee couldn't get over the top if he had an aerial balloon.

Laughter. Sid, you're a caution, said Captain Charwick.

Claffey stared. I was told that you are a topographical engineer. Do you agree, sir, that this location is ideal for a prison site?

Charwick said, his smile gone, Well, I agree in general theory with Captain Winder's observations. Of course I'm present strictly in an advisory capacity. His decision will be tailored by demands other than those of topography. He may be aware of military exigencies of which I know nothing—

Oh, thought Claffey, talk, talk, talk. I know your sort. We had mealy-mouths like yours when we were baking in the sun at Matamoras.

Captain Winder took up his reins. I want you to see the lay of the land on this southern ridge, Boyce. I went over it yesterday—

They were turning, the boy and the Negro waited in the path.

Where would you get your labor, to build such a large stockade?

Winder's rodent mouth puffed out as he wiped his teeth with his tongue. Mr. Claffey, sir, and he emphasized that address—Mr. Claffey, we can obtain the authority to impress all the labor we need. Tom Twitt's niggers, Bill Bump's niggers, your niggers, anybody's niggers. Also the authority to take your acres for our purpose—as much as we need.

Ira said coolly, I trust you'll require none of my acres. If my surviving son returns from the army he'll need the land.

I take it you've lost a son? Young Winder set his boots tightly into his stirrups. My sincerest regrets, sir.

Two, said Ira. The youngest at Crampton's Gap, the eldest at Gettysburg.

Ah. Sad. A mere boy, I presume—a private soldier?

He was a major.

Winder looked disconcerted momentarily. He felt a stinging rebuke against his bumptiousness and cavalier attitude; it was apparent, yet he could not locate it, or discern in just what words and intonation it was phrased. He gave a kind of half salute. Captain Charwick touched his hat-brim. The Negro and the boy were already far up the slope with their burdens. The officers rode quickly away up the difficult steep, both riding effortlessly as if they had spent years in their saddles, as undoubtedly they had.

The party went into the woods. Claffey did not see them again after he crossed near the stile; he

saw only the marks of their going. He saw traces where rails had been taken out beside the stile in order for horses to pass, but the rails had been restored carefully to position again. Ira wondered whether, if these people had not chanced to meet him at the spring near the Sweetwater branch, they might have left rails lying after taking them down. Perhaps he was doing the officers an injustice in the thought.

But he did not like their attitude. They seemed to bring a meanness to war. There should be nobility about the business of risking life, even the business of taking it. Why did we all respect more the memory of the benevolent knight who died in battle—the profound and kingly knight—more than the memory of the truculent, self-seeking warrior? . . . The memory—or the legend? Which? . . . Both the godly knight and the cruel one wagered the same; they wagered hopefully that they would not need to lay their lives down; yet each took the same hazard in the wagering, and one might fight as stoutly as the other, and each would be just as dead as the other when the end came. It was a thought to baffle him. Ira squinted his eyes shut and shook his head like a horse shaking off flies; he always did that when he was perplexed, when he was alone and there was no one to see him. He had to guard against doing it before his family and his servants, for he felt that simple dignity was an honest and important thing. Yet somehow the shaking seemed to help.

He brooded his way back to the potato patches. It was now long after nine o'clock. He had wasted a good hour and a half in his wanderings and musings, and in conversing with the military party. He considered it wasted, because for the first time in—when?—the forest had not granted him the peace and food he sought. A prison, here where always there had been the green pleasure of growth, or water having its way with lichens—the blessing of gum, pine cones, sly animals feeding, rare birds meeting their kind? Let them build their prison someplace else, he'd have none of it. He knew the President, or had known him slightly seventeen years before. He should go to Richmond (but it would cost a sight of cash, and cash was not plentiful in these days) and utter a protest. He should take a firm stand, if this supercilious young captain sought to preempt any of the Claffey acres.

Oh, bother, bother. That Winder person said that they were merely considering the site. No doubt they'll select another area, Lord knows where.

He said farewell to the forest, and heard birds buzzing through it, and had some thought of taking a shotgun soon and fetching a few birds for the table. Claffey did not truly enjoy shooting birds (he was an excellent shot; so all his boys had been) and he pitied the blood and drooping which followed. But Veronica was like a child—she beamed and giggled like Lucy herself—whenever he proffered wildfowl. Black Naomi had a special blue earthenware dish in which she cooked them. She used wine and onions—

Coffee and Jem had made great strides with the potatoes. A good two-thirds of the Brimstones were dug, and by noontime the hands would doubtless be ready to start in on the Hayti yams, which they preferred for the table, and which it was easier to raise as fare for the slaves because the Hayti yams were more prolific and they stored well. Common yams were the most prolific of all, but had rather a pumpkinish flavor. Ira couldn't abide growing them.

Coffee. Did you dig these?

Coffee was a long-armed, long-faced fellow with Indian blood apparent. Nossuh, Mastah, I use the hoe. That Jem there—he got the old potato hook. I done told him to look sharp.

Well, Jem, suppose you try the hoe instead. Potato hook's a tricky implement. You've hurt a few in this hill. Look there. And there, in the next. . . .

Real sorry, Mastah. They just jump up out of the earth and get themselves tore, fore I know what they's about.

Hear me, Jem. Do you use the hoe from now on, and give the hook to Coffee. And slow with the hoe. You'll need to eat the ones you bruise, and they don't keep long so. That you know.

Jem, wide and black and rubbery as to body, stood grinning weakly in an attitude of shame.

Caution, Jem, use caution. Hear me, now?

Mastah, I surely take care.

Gracious, thought Ira, I neglected to look into the pine straw situation. But there'll be sufficient, over on Little Sweetwater. We fetched none from there last year. . . . He continued to give the slaves detailed instructions. He had decided that they shouldn't get into the yams today. There was sun, and the crop would have to undergo a good drying for several hours before the piles were started. There were the floors of piles to be built, the trenches to be dug around the floors; then a few days of sustained drying should continue under pine straw only, before the piles were finally earthed up and barked up.

Ira went on toward the big house (oh Lord, if only he had paint) and stopped a moment at the implement shed, which he unlocked with a key selected from the hefty wad at his belt. He cleaned his budding knife and hung it in its groove. Then, locking up, he walked on around through the narrow carriageway, aiming for the west end of the gallery where he wished to examine some cold frames he'd built. But he was surprised to find a gig under the big oak, with an old black horse tied and eating oak leaves. At first Ira thought that the advent of this horse and rig must have something to do with the surveyors he encountered; they had so few callers these days. Then he recognized the horse as belonging to the Reverend Mr. Cato Dillard of Americus.

He heard a voice— Poppy, she said, and it was Lucy, rising drunkenly from the top step where she'd been sitting. She is grown suddenly ill, thought Ira. An epidemic, perhaps? Some fever has struck? He limped toward her and held out his arms as the girl came swaying down the steps.

Oh, Poppy, and she nuzzled deep into his wide-flung coat. Poppy. It's Badge.

Lucy— The minister's horse—

They wrote to him. A colonel did—and—a surgeon. They wrote to him first. Reckoned it'd be easier on— On us.

Where's Mr. Dillard? Where's your mother, child? He shook her as if he hated her.

She's on her bed. They came— It was an hour ago. The letters only reached them last night. Mrs. Dillard is with Mother, and he's praying up there. He wished me to stay for prayers. I didn't wish to pray.

Still holding her in his arms, he waited and waited. Finally he could command his voice and make it do what he wanted. He could make it talk and sound like a human being, not like a beast's whine.

Lucy, where did it happen?

Some place up in Tennessee. Chick-a-something. He was hurt on the twentieth of September, and we didn't know it, Poppy, we didn't know it all this time, we were in utter ignorance. Why didn't they tell us? You might have gone to him. So he died of his wounds, just as my dear Rob died in that Yankee pen of his sickness.

...Lucy, are you certain that you don't wish to pray? I think—it would—be—well—if we both went in to—prayers. Later Mr. Dillard can hold a service for the hands.

It will do no good, said Lucy, but she came quivering along with him. It never does any good. We should know that by now.

...And there sat in a window a certain young man . . . and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves: for his life

is in him.

~~Ah, it was not, life not in him in the slightest, but only abysmal decay and bad sight and odor, like the cross-bred pumpkin-gourd-cucumbers in that unholy field yonder, nigh to the woods. He was the last: Moses, the youngest, first; then Suthy, the eldest; now Badger, the middle son. Get up from your mounds, you small fry behind that old rusty fence, and join in lamentation, for we've only Lucy to help us with the task of weeping.~~

The Yankees got Moses and Suthy. Yankees now destroy Badger. They got him, with their many cannon and many men, and their quick-shooting breech-loading rifles. Damn the Yankees. Damn them forever, damn them to a hundred hells with their cannon and their money and their blankets and their medicines. God—damn—the Yankees. God damn the Yankees. God *damn* the Yankees. Amen.

★ II ★

Having shared the grief of the Claffeys for some hours, the Reverend Mr. Cato Dillard at last handed his wife into the gig and prepared to drive away. Grief was nothing new to Cato Dillard, whether he suffered his own or witnessed it in that portion of humanity he considered to be within his charge; and he believed that all mankind he had observed since leaving the seminary came within his charge. Excepting, possibly, Roman Catholics. Sometimes he wasn't even too certain about those. And, of recent years, Yankees. . . .

Veronica Claffey stared sightlessly at the canopy above her bed, and lay unable to read her Bible or to respond to any prayer offered. Lucy was in her own room, also, with the servant Ninny rubbing her ankles. Ira Claffey attended the brief service to which the slaves had been called. The black people's wail and chanting hung bitterly protracted in the sunlight of early afternoon; the whites wished that the slaves would not manufacture such sounds, but there was no way of hushing them.

The servant Pet came with a wicker basket containing corn bread, fried chicken and a bottle of beer to refresh the Dillards on their drive to Americus. Cato Dillard embraced his friend and then drove away without looking back; it was better so.

He wished with recurrent regret that Ira Claffey was not averse to metaphysical discussion, but Ira was averse to it. Ira was one of three men among the parson's acquaintances who possessed sufficient scholarly background to indulge in such activity. Still Ira always changed the subject as soon as Cato Dillard was well-embarked and as soon as his tiny eyes burnt bright with intellectual zeal and as soon as his eager voice thrummed with a new range and timbre of enthusiasm. Ira's religion was of a gentle, affectionate, pantheistic variety, and he refused stubbornly to be tricked into any exercise of theology.

I fear the beer may be flat, Ira said in parting. It's from the only brewing which kept, and this year we can't spare the grain. What with military levies and all.

Flat or not, it'll be tasty. Goodbye, my dear friend.

Goodbye, Mrs. Dillard. I can say but Thank You. Goodbye, Brother.

And the dry shivering handclasp saying more.

God bless you, Brother Ira. I'll pray daily.

Whatever benefit that may bring! Bitterness of the deep and stunning hurt.

I'll pray, Brother Ira.

And light wheels going away, and the gloom on all hearts.

Halfway down the lane with its magnolias on one side and its small oaks on the other, Cato turned to his wife and began to quote, So we say farewell to our lamented dead, and know only that we shall reassemble on that great day when all shall foregather—some from the East, and some from the West, some from the South— And it may even be that a few shall come from the North.

Muckle wish have I that any should come from the North. Effie Dillard was a Scotswoman. The words of her Rothesay youth came easily from her wide thin lips when she was stirred. She was

wearing a faded frilled pink cap and now she lifted her straw bonnet and drew it on over the cap, which act would have seemed astonishing to a stranger. Mrs. Dillard had suffered fever many years before—had nearly died of it, and all her hair was lost. She wore caps, waking and sleeping. No one except a trusted servant had ever seen her without a cap, since she recovered. Not even the Reverend Mr. Dillard.

She was a bony, bent woman with knobs on her shoulders and a face like a yellow witch. Everyone in the region knew that she had a heart bigger than the area of Sumter County itself, and many traded on her accordingly. Her skin was marred by smallpox which she had acquired when nursing a brood of Negroes from whom the rest of humanity fled.

Effie, don't talk hatred.

I feel it. If I feel it I should utter it.

Thus purging your soul? The minister smiled a tired sly smile.

Aye. She gave him the ghost of her own smile.

Mr. Cato Dillard was plump and squat, and loose flesh squeezed out around his short neck in rolls. His hazel eyes lost themselves in chasms of veined wrinkles; they peeked out like twin squirrels in hiding. He was brilliantly far-sighted, literally as well as figuratively, and donned his spectacles only when working on his sermons or when reading tracts aloud to some blind or illiterate sufferer unable to read the tracts himself. He was sixty-six years old and still moved with the bounce of youth. The Dillards had no living children, but five of their eight grandchildren were serving in the army, all alive as yet.

Mr. Cato Dillard had one vanity: the tufts of luxuriant tingling curly silver, growing down past his ears on either side of his firm fat face, and so fluffy that the lightest breeze set them rippling.

Cate, she called him in private, and sometimes in public when she forgot. Now she cried, Cate! in a manner of alarm.

Is something wrong, my dear?

You've turned off the road. You're not bound for Americus. There's the railroad ahead.

Only bound down this side track on an errand. Briefly.

Where are we bound?

He wriggled guiltily. If you must know, we're bound for the Widow Tebbs' place.

Cate, are you daft?

The Cloth can be worn anywhere and remain unsullied. It is my Christian duty. And I might add—yours also, Effie.

Let me out of this gig, man. I'll not go.

You've been before.

On a fool's errand!

Effie, don't be difficult. She's a poor miserable creature, with no great happiness behind her, and only iniquity and grief to make up her present, and flames reaching ahead. But she's human, and I knew her grandfather well, and as a ruling elder he represented our congregation in the presbytery.

Scarlet is as scarlet does. What charity can you give her? I mean what charity would she accept? Neither the Word nor the practice thereof. She does not know the meaning of repentance.

Perhaps, at one time, neither did Mary Magdalene.

Ah. Touch pitch, I say.

Now, how often do you suppose The Saviour touched pitch? And how severely was He tarred?

Cate, you're daft.

But Mrs. Dillard gave no further remonstrance—only a reedy sigh now and then, as the little

vehicle bumped down the miserable side road.

~~Over the railway tracks they rocked, the horse snorting when wheels grated on the rails:~~ Blackie recognized the railroad and tossed his head at the notion of encountering a locomotive which always set him to spreading his legs and lifting wild ears. The Widow Tebbs' place was just beyond—a small house with a sloping roof like the tilt of a water-soaked visored cap. There was a ruined stable, a pig-pen, several miscellaneous sheds; and across a wide dirty yard stood a cubicle structure which had once served as a storage place for corn. That was when Dickwood Tebbs was alive. Nowadays it was fitted out with curtains, lamps, a reedy music box, and definitely a bed. In this building the Widow Tebbs did her entertaining. Her children referred to it as The Crib, as did Mrs. Tebbs' regular patrons. This collection of buildings was bounded by a fence of split palings, heavy with gourd vines, some sections leaning in and some sections leaning out. A few tattered specimens of poultry fled jabbering as the gig came closer.

To think you'd carry your own good wife to such a spot.

My dear, be benevolent and forgiving. Her eldest's just back from the battles, and he's wanting a foot. This is sad poverty, dire poverty.

When they halted before the sagging gate, they saw the flight of something other than poultry: a small brown object which sped under the house like a bunchy high-backed varmint. It was a child, a boy of three or four, dressed in a loose skirt and shirt of filthy material. He traveled on his hands and knees with a speed to baffle the eye. One moment he was crouched, gazing fearfully at the approach of the gig; the next he had streaked between the chunks of stone which supported the old cottage, and had gone into darkness like a rabbit or a pig.

The Reverend Mr. Cato Dillard smiled. That would be her youngest.

Never knowing who his father is or was!

Doubtless none of them knows, save the eldest.

A flat-chested youth of thirteen came out on the stoop and stared warily. Mr. Dillard said, Good afternoon, Floral.

The boy mumbled a reply. He had a head small for the skinny body and long neck on which it was perched. His head was covered with spiny golden hair, kept clipped raggedly close by his mother's shears. He wore a dirty undershirt, and patched pantaloons were held around his thin waist by a knotted cord.

Is your mother at home, Floral?

Yes, sir.

Then fetch her, please. And when you've done that, come down here to the buggy. I've something for you.

The boy ducked through the door, there were mumblings inside and then an exclamation of surprise, then Floral reappeared. He came down the two steps and across the littered yard, walking gingerly and seeking smooth places to set his bare left foot as he came.

What's ado here, Flory? Cato Dillard spoke with light jocularly which it was difficult for him to muster, faced with the want and degradation he witnessed, faced with the boy's wizened face and round blank gray eyes. Did you hurt your foot?

Yes, sir.

How did that occur?

Stepped on a damn old nail in a board.

Hush that profanity, child, said Effie Dillard sharply. Now you climb up here on the hub and show me your foot.

With agility, even if in some pain, Flory obeyed. Solemnly he presented the dirty sole of his foot to the woman's gaze. Effie took her specs from her pocket, examined the wound, and gave an exclamation of disgust. I'll be bound. That needs green ointment, and I must see to it.

Will it hurt?

Never you mind about that. It's got proud flesh in it.

Yes, Ma'am.

From his jacket pocket Cato Dillard drew a comfit-case of battered silver; he had carried it since his youth. Solemnly he opened the lid and revealed a hoard of lozenges. These are wintergreen, he said. One for you, one for the little lad— What's his name, my boy? He went under the house.

That's Zoral.

Very well, one for Zoral. One for Laurel—

She ain't to home. She's over helping tend old Mrs. Bile. Both the niggers is sickly, and so's the old Mrs.

Save it for her. These are hard to come by.

Well I know. Flory sucked his lozenge with relish.

Where is Coral?

Coral wouldn't want no sugarplum. He just don't want nothing since he got himself wounded. Flory had a greedy eye on the lozenge offered for his elder brother.

He might fancy it. Where is he, bubby?

Took the shotgun and gone a-hunting.

What? On one foot?

I done whittled him out a crutch. Flory still eyed the lozenge. Had it all ready for him when the wagon set him down at the door. First thing he says was, I'll learn you to make gawk at my crippledness, and he took a swipe at me with the crutch. Coral's mean as sin.

The Widow Tebbs appeared on the stoop, noticeably unstayed but wearing a fringed shawl over a old blue poplin gown which had been obviously a hand-me-down and was too tight for her. Her ruddy hair was wound up in a mass of curl papers. Heavens, said Cato involuntarily, behold the Gorgon Medusa.

Don't you choose to light, Parson? And Ma'am? Her voice was high of key, nervous as a fledgling girl's voice . . . she had no great share of wits. Her soft chin was weak, sagging; her bright brown eye kept up an incessant blinking. Her body bulged, but in keeping with its original construction. A walking fleshly altar to Eros, thought Cato. Nothing could be done with her or about her. Nothing, no from her maiden days which must have ended when she was ten.

Despite the fact that she had a son nearly seventeen years old, she was barely in her thirties. Marget Lumpkin she had been born, and her father once conducted a tannery in Americus. He drove his children from him by fiendish exercise of the most antique and ascetic religious profession. Marget, or Mag as she was more commonly called, was in trouble at fourteen, wife to a slovenly young farmer and mother of his child at fifteen. . . . She had a persistent pitiable fondness for color, whether in flowers or in ribbons; the rougher boys of the town in her young time knew for a literal truth that Mag would lay herself down for the mere gift of a brass button or a spool of crimson thread. Lumpkin was a respectable—even an honored—name throughout most of Georgia, but the poor girl had always loathed the sound of it, when meaner children teased her muddled little brain and called her Bumpkin. Hence she groped for some sort of beauty when she named her scrawny troop of children (three of them fathered by men other than her husband). She named them Coral, Laurel, Floral, Zoral. Dick Tebbs had been dead for ten years, but poor Mag was gone into whoredom long

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