

THE VAGABOND

change of words. At the station, crowded with returning soldiers and incoming supplies, he left her with Marcus Aurelius while he had the horses entrained. In the car, she insisted in vain that the wounded officers should remain seated while she stood, for insistence meant that every place would be vacant. They knew by her voice that she was a Virginian, and they guessed that she was returning to some devastated plantation. She felt the mute expression of their sympathy by look and action. The Vagabond, grown pale, his lips tightly compressed, was wishing that two of the passengers might never arrive at their station.

When he assisted her to alight, and again when he assisted her to mount Folly, he could not have spoken if he would. His throat seemed in a vise, and his head was dizzy from his heart's fast beating. His ears were awaiting the ominous warning that she could go the rest of the way alone, which did not come. Her manner was as preoccupied as his, and he took silence for consent. Both stared into space, the horses choosing their own gait. Every step was marking off a second of the few minutes left to him. When they were so near that a dozen rods farther would show them the tops of the trees of Lanleyton, he made his east.

"I love you! I love you! I cannot wait! I must know!" he cried.

Slowly she turned her face toward him. It was radiant with the smile that had been the Mecca of his fancy. She held out her hand. No words could be fraught with such grace as the confession of one whose battle against her affection had been its noblest justification.