

THE ROAD TO VIDALIA

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of the armies of the Far South, of the Army of Tennessee, the Army of the Trans-Mississippi, and he thought of the fighting in Virginia, of the Army of Northern Virginia, the army he had quitted but a few weeks before. He, too, that afternoon, had felt homesick for it, lying there behind the hills to the south of Fredericksburg, waiting for Burnside to cross the Rappahannock! . . . The soldier must go where he is sent! He thought of his own people, of his father, of Fauquier Cary, of Greenwood, and his sisters there. He should find at Vicksburg a letter from Judith. From the thought of Judith he moved to that of Richard Cleave. . . . Presently, with an impatient sigh, he shook himself free. Better think, to-night, of something else than tragedies and mysteries! He thought of roses and old songs, and deep forests and sunny childhood spaces. He put attention to sleep, diffused his mind and hovered in mere warmth, odors, and hues of memory and imagination. He set faint silver bells to ringing, then, amid slow alternating waves of red and purple, a master violin to playing. Lulled, lulled in the firelight, his eyelids drooped. He drew sleeper's breath.

"De water's comin' under de doah! De water's comin' under de doah!"

The violin played the strain for a moment, then it appeared that a string broke. Edward sat up. "What's the matter? — Ha, the levee broke, did it?"

"Hit ain't de river, hit am de bayou! De bayou's comin' out, en' ef you don' min', sah, we's obleeged ter move!"

Edward rose, stretching himself. "Move where?"

"Ter Cape Jessamine, sah. Bayou can't git dat far, en' dey sho' ain't gwine let de river come out ef dey kin help hit!"

The floor was ankle deep in yellow water. Suddenly the door blew open. There entered streaming rain and a hiss of wind. The negro, gathering into a bundle his meagre wardrobe and bedding, shook his head and made haste. Edward took his rifle and ragged hat. The water deepened and put the fire out. The two men emerged from the cabin into a widening lake, seething and eddying between the dark trees. Behind them the hut tilted a little upon its rude foundation. The negro looked back. "Liked dat house, en' now hit's er-gwine, too! Bayou never come out lak dat befo' dishyer war!"

Out of the knee-deep water at last, they struck into something that to the feet felt like a road. On either hand towering cypresses