

THE NIGHT

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Beneath his feet the long road called to him as it wound a curving white line drawn through the vague darkness of the landscape. Somewhere in a distant pasture a bull bellowed, and the sound came to him like the plaintive voice of the abandoned fields. While he listened the response of his tired feet to the road appeared to him as madness, and stopping short, he turned quickly and looked back in the direction of Tappahannock. But from the spot on which he stood the lights of the town offered little promise of hospitality, so after an uncertain glance, he moved on again to a bare, open place where two roads met and crossed at the foot of a blasted pine. A few steps farther he discovered that a ruined gate stood immediately on his right, and beyond the crumbling brick pillars, he made out dimly the outlines of several fallen bodies, which proved upon nearer view to be the prostrate forms of giant cedars. An avenue had once led, he gathered, from the gate to a house situated somewhere at the end of the long curve, for the great trees lying across the road must have stood once as the guardians of an estate of no little value. Whether the cedars had succumbed at last to age or to the axe of the destroyer, it was too dark at the moment for him to ascertain; but the earth had claimed them now, magnificent even in their ruin, while under the dim tent of sky beyond, he could still discern their living companions of a hundred years. So impressive was the past splendour of this approach that the house seemed, when he reached it, almost an affront to the mansion which his imagination had