https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0WtigndmcIN

Reading: the American Civil War

Annotation Key

colonialism

white supremacy, racism

misogyny, femininity injunctions

sexism by men, Real Men injunctions

context, historical interest, general info

my personal commentary

History & Context - "The Clansman"

Book IV—The Ku Klux Klan

CHAPTER I

The Hunt for the Animal

Aunt Cindy came at seven o'clock to get breakfast, and finding the house closed and no one at home, supposed Mrs. Lenoir and Marion had remained at the Cameron House for the night. She sat down on the steps, waited grumblingly an hour, and then hurried to the hotel to scold her former mistress for keeping her out so long.

Accustomed to enter familiarly, she thrust her head into the dining-room, where the family were at breakfast with a solitary guest, muttering the speech she had been rehearsing on the way:

"I lak ter know what sort er way dis—whar's Miss Jeannie?"

Ben leaped to his feet.

"Isn't she at home?"

"Been waitin' dar two hours."

"Great God!" he groaned, springing through the door and rushing to saddle the mare. As he left he called to his father: "Let no one know till I return."

At the house he could find no trace of the crime he had suspected. Every room was in perfect order. He searched the yard carefully and under the cedar by the window he saw the barefoot tracks of a negro. The white man was never born who could make that track. The enormous heel projected backward, and in the hollow of the instep where the dirt would scarcely be touched by an Aryan was the deep wide mark of the African's flat foot. He carefully measured it, brought from an outhouse a box, and fastened it over the spot.

Well, looky-here: we've got ourselves a white supremacist Sherlock Holmes.

I'm sure he'll leave it for the courts to decide, where everything will be fair and up to Constitutional standards for this black man accused of raping a Southern white woman.

It might have been an ordinary chicken thief, of course. He could not tell, but it was a fact of big import. A sudden hope flashed through his mind that they might have risen with the sun and strolled to their favourite haunt at Lover's Leap.

In two minutes he was there, gazing with hard-set eyes at Marion's hat and handkerchief lying on the shelving rock.

The mare bent her glistening neck, touched the hat with her nose, lifted her head, dilated her delicate nostrils, looked out over the cliff with her great soft half-human eyes and whinnied gently.

Ben leaped to the ground, picked up the handkerchief, and looked at the initials, "M. L.," worked in the corner. He knew what lay on the river's brink below as well as if he stood over the dead bodies. He kissed the letters of her name, crushed the handkerchief in his locked hands, and cried:

"Now, Lord God, give me strength for the service of my people!"

He hurriedly examined the ground, amazed to find no trace of a struggle or crime. Could it be possible they had ventured too near the brink and fallen over?

He hurried to report to his father his discoveries, instructed his mother and Margaret to keep the servants quiet until the truth was known, and the two men returned along the river's brink to the foot of the cliff.

They found the bodies close to the water's edge, Marion had been killed instantly. Her fair blonde head lay in a crimson circle sharply defined in the white sand. But the mother was still warm with life. She had scarcely ceased to breathe. In one last desperate throb of love the trembling soul had dragged the dying body to the girl's side, and she had died with her head resting on the fair round neck as though she had kissed her and fallen asleep.

Father and son clasped hands and stood for a moment with uncovered heads. The doctor said at length:

"Go to the coroner at once and see that he summons the jury *you* select and hand to him. Bring them immediately. I will examine the bodies before they arrive."

Ben took the negro coroner into his office alone, turned the key, told him of the discovery, and handed him the list of the jury.

"I'll hatter see Mr. Lynch fust, sah," he answered.

Ben placed his hand on his hip pocket and said coldly:

"Put your cross-mark on those forms I've made out there for you, go with me immediately, and summon these men. If you dare put a negro on this jury, or open your mouth as to what has occurred in this room, I'll kill you."

See? I knew Ben would handle it like a true believer in the Bill of Rights and "law and order" - isn't that the phrase these types like to throw around?

I inevitably reach a point in these books where I am so fed up with the author's bullshit that I become oppositional, and I believe that point for *The Clansman* just happened.

The negro tremblingly did as he was commanded.

The coroner's jury reported that the mother and daughter had been killed by accidentally failing over the cliff.

In all the throng of grief-stricken friends who came to the little cottage that day, but two men knew the hell-lit secret beneath the tragedy.

When the bodies reached the home, Doctor Cameron placed Mrs. Cameron and Margaret outside to receive visitors and prevent any one from disturbing him. He took Ben into the room and locked the doors.

"My boy, I wish you to witness an experiment."

He drew from its case a powerful microscope of French make.

"What on earth are you going to do, sir?"

The doctor's brilliant eyes flashed with a mystic light as he replied:

"Find the fiend who did this crime—and then we will hang him on a gallows so high that all men from the rivers to ends of the earth shall see and feel and know the might of an unconquerable race of men."

Ya, it takes really "mighty" men to arrest a newly freed, formerly enslaved person, with little political power and no social standing; to put them through a sham trial without a jury of their peers; and then to get together in a great big group to murder them in the woods at night. You're really showing the world, alright.

"But there's no trace of him here."

"We shall see," said the doctor, adjusting his instrument.

"I believe that a microscope of sufficient power will reveal on the retina of these dead eyes the image of this devil as if etched there by fire. The experiment has been made successfully in France. No word or deed of man is lost. A German scholar has a memory so wonderful he can repeat whole volumes of Latin, German, and French without an error. A Russian officer has been known to repeat the roll-call of any regiment by reading it twice. Psychologists hold that nothing is lost from the memory of man. Impressions remain in the brain like words written on paper in invisible ink. So I believe of images in the eye if we can trace them early enough. If no impression were made subsequently on the mother's eye by the light of day, I believe the fire-etched record of this crime can yet be traced."

Sherlock Holmes would have shit on this from a very great height.

Ben watched him with breathless interest.

He first examined Marion's eyes. But in the cold azure blue of their pure depths he could find nothing.

"It's as I feared with the child," he said. "I can see nothing. It is on the mother I rely. In the splendour of life, at thirty-seven she was the full-blown perfection of womanhood, with every vital force at its highest tension——"

He looked long and patiently into the dead mother's eye, rose and wiped the perspiration from his face.

"What is it, sir?" asked Ben.

Without reply, as if in a trance, he returned to the microscope and again rose with the little, quick, nervous cough he gave only in the greatest excitement, and whispered:

"Look now and tell me what you see."

Ben looked and said:

"I can see nothing."

"Your powers of vision are not trained as mine," replied the doctor, resuming his place at the instrument.

"What do you see?" asked the younger man, bending nervously.

"The bestial figure of a negro—his huge black hand plainly defined—the upper part of the face is dim, as if obscured by a gray mist of dawn—but the massive jaws and lips are clear—merciful God—yes—it's Gus!"

Well, no one ever said that white supremacists were *smart*.

The doctor leaped to his feet livid with excitement.

Ben bent again, looked long and eagerly, but could see nothing.

"I'm afraid the image is in your eye, sir, not the mother's," said Ben sadly.

"That's possible, of course," said the doctor, "yet I don't believe it."

"I've thought of the same scoundrel and tried blood hounds on that track, but for some reason they couldn't follow it. I suspected him from the first, and especially since learning that he left for Columbia on the early morning train on pretended official business."

"Then I'm not mistaken," insisted the doctor, trembling with excitement. "Now do as I tell you. Find when he returns. Capture him, bind, gag, and carry him to your meeting-place under the cliff, and let me know."

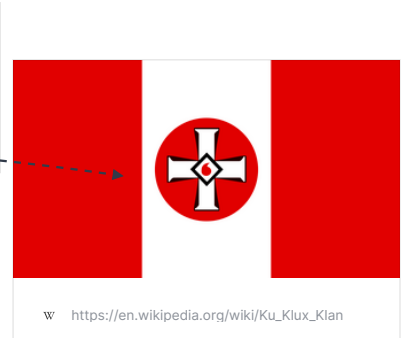
On the afternoon of the funeral, two days later, Ben received a cypher telegram from the conductor on the train telling him that Gus was on the evening mail due at Piedmont at nine o'clock.

The papers had been filled with accounts of the accident, and an enormous crowd from the county and many admirers of the fiery lyrics of the poet father had come from distant parts to honour his name. All business was suspended, and the entire white population of the village followed the bodies to their last resting-place.

As the crowds returned to their homes, no notice was taken of a dozen men on horseback who rode out of town by different ways about dusk. At eight o'clock they met in the woods near the first little flag-station located on McAllister's farm four miles from Piedmont, where a buggy awaited them. Two men of powerful build, who were strangers in the county, alighted from the buggy and walked along the track to board the train at the station three miles beyond and confer with the conductor.

The men, who gathered in the woods, dismounted, removed their saddles, and from the folds of the blankets took a white disguise for horse and man. In a moment it was fitted on each horse, with buckles at the throat, breast, and tail, and the saddles replaced. The white robe for the man was made in the form of an ulster overcoat with cape, the skirt extending to the top of the shoes. From the red belt at the waist were swung two revolvers which had been concealed in their pockets. On each man's breast was a scarlet circle within which shone a white cross. The same scarlet circle and cross appeared on the horse's breast, while on his flanks flamed the three red mystic letters, K. K. K. Each man wore a white cap, from the edges of which fell a piece of cloth extending to the shoulders. Beneath the visor was an opening for the eyes and lower down one for the mouth. On the front of the caps of two of the men appeared the red wings of a hawk as the ensign of rank. From the top of each cap rose eighteen inches high a single spike held erect by a twisted wire. The disguises for man and horse were made of cheap unbleached domestic and weighed less than three pounds. They were easily folded within a blanket and kept under the saddle in a crowd without discovery. It required less than two minutes to remove the saddles, place the disguises, and remount.

Nothing says "I'm a big, brave, stud of a man with the courage of my garbage convictions" like operating under the cover of night with a hood over your own face and that of your freaking *horse*. Pathetic.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ku_Klux_Klan

Ku Klux Klan

At the signal of a whistle, the men and horses arrayed in white and scarlet swung into double-file cavalry formation and stood awaiting orders. The moon was now shining brightly, and its light shimmering on the silent horses and men with their tall spiked caps made a picture such as the world had not seen since the Knights of the Middle Ages rode on their Holy Crusades.

Ah, the Crusades - another thing about which white people should cease to brag.

As the train neared the flag-station, which was dark and unattended, the conductor approached Gus, leaned over, and said: "I've just gotten a message from the sheriff telling me to warn you to get off at this station and slip into town. There's a crowd at the depot there waiting for you and they mean trouble."

Gus trembled and whispered:

"Den fur Gawd's sake lemme off here."

The two men who got on at the station below stepped out before the negro, and as he alighted from the car, seized, tripped, and threw him to the ground. The engineer blew a sharp signal, and the train pulled on.

In a minute Gus was bound and gagged.

One of the men drew a whistle and blew twice. A single tremulous call like the cry of an owl answered. The swift beat of horses' feet followed, and four white-and-scarlet clansmen swept in a circle around the group.

One of the strangers turned to the horseman with red-winged ensign on his cap, saluted, and said:

"Here's your man, Night Hawk."

Oooooh, and they have tough, quasi-military nicknames! I bet they have a swank treehouse, too, with a hand-lettered sign that says "Boys Only - No Girls Allowed!"

"Thanks, gentlemen," was the answer. "Let us know when we can be of service to your county."

The strangers sprang into their buggy and disappeared toward the North Carolina line.

The clansmen blindfolded the negro, placed him on a horse, tied his legs securely, and his arms behind him to the ring in the saddle.

The Night Hawk blew his whistle four sharp blasts, and his pickets galloped from their positions and joined him.

Again the signal rang, and his men wheeled with the precision of trained cavalrymen into column formation three abreast, and rode toward Piedmont, the single black figure tied and gagged in the centre of the white-and-scarlet squadron.

CHAPTER II

The Fiery Cross

The clansmen with their prisoner skirted the village and halted in the woods on the river bank. The Night Hawk signalled for single file, and in a few minutes they stood against the cliff under Lover's Leap and saluted their chief, who sat his horse, awaiting their arrival.

Pickets were placed in each direction on the narrow path by which the spot was approached, and one was sent to stand guard on the shelving rock above.

Through the narrow crooked entrance they led Gus into the cave which had been the rendezvous of the Piedmont Den of the Clan since its formation. The meeting-place was a grand hall eighty feet deep, fifty feet wide, and more than forty feet in height, which had been carved out of the stone by the swift current of the river in ages past when its waters stood at a higher level.

To-night it was lighted by candles placed on the ledges of the walls. In the centre, on a fallen boulder, sat the Grand Cyclops of the Den, the presiding officer of the township, his rank marked by scarlet stripes on the white-cloth spike of his cap. Around him stood twenty or more clansmen in their uniform, completely disguised. One among them wore a yellow sash, trimmed in gold, about his waist, and on his breast two yellow circles with red crosses interlapping, denoting his rank to be the Grand Dragon of the Realm, or Commander-in-Chief of the State.

The 19th-century Klan was originally organized as a social club by Confederate veterans in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1866. They apparently derived the name from the Greek word *kyklos*, from which comes the English "circle"; "Klan" was added for the sake of alliteration and Ku Klux Klan emerged." - Britannica

"The title "Grand Wizard" was chosen because General Forrest had been known as "The Wizard of the Saddle" during the war. According to Jack Hurst's 1993 biography, "Two years after Appomattox, Forrest was reincarnated as grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. As the Klan's first national leader, he became the Lost Cause of the Confederacy's avenging angel, galvanizing a loose collection of Boylish secret social clubs into a reactionary instrument of terror still feared today." - Wikipedia

The Cyclops rose from his seat:

"Let the Grand Turk remove his prisoner for a moment and place him in charge of the Grand Sentinel at the door, until summoned."

This is just ultra-cringe racist cos-playing. I can't believe grown men did this shit as a form of terrorism. What - did they go around giving girls cooties, too?

The officer disappeared with Gus, and the Cyclops continued:

"The Chaplain will open our Council with prayer."

Solemnly every white-shrouded figure knelt on the ground, and the voice of the Rev. Hugh McAlpin, trembling with feeling, echoed through the cave:

"Lord God of our Fathers, as in times past thy children, fleeing from the oppressor, found refuge beneath the earth until once more the sun of righteousness rose, so are we met to-night. As we wrestle with the powers of darkness now strangling our life, give to our souls to endure as seeing the invisible, and to our right arms the strength of the martyred dead of our people. Have mercy on the poor, the weak, the innocent and defenceless, and deliver us from the body of the Black Death. In a land of light and beauty and love our women are prisoners of danger and fear. While the heathen walks his native heath unharmed and unafraid, in this fair Christian Southland our sisters, wives, and daughters dare not stroll at twilight through the streets or step beyond the highway at noon. The terror of the twilight deepens with the darkness, and the stoutest heart grows sick with fear for the red message the morning bringeth. Forgive our sins—they are many—but hide not thy face from us, O God, for thou art our refuge!"

Oh, well since they invoked the name of God, everything is fine. No problems here.

(only the white children, though)

(the poor, weak, innocent, defenceless white people, that is)

The fear is specific to gender, but not to race. White men raised women through fear as much as they did enslaved people, just with different mechanisms of enforcement.

As the last echoes of the prayer lingered and died in the vaulted roof, the clansmen rose and stood a moment in silence.

Again the voice of the Cyclops broke the stillness:

"Brethren, we are met to-night at the request of the Grand Dragon of the Realm, who has honoured us with his presence, to constitute a High Court for the trial of a case involving life. Are the Night Hawks ready to submit their evidence?"

"We are ready," came the answer.

"Then let the Grand Scribe read the objects of the Order on which your authority rests."

Gee, I must have missed the part where this authority was delegated.

The Scribe opened his Book of Record, "*The Prescript of the Order of the Invisible Empire*," and solemnly read:

"To the lovers of law and order, peace and justice, and to the shades of the venerated dead, greeting:

I called it!!

"This is an institution of Chivalry, Humanity, Mercy, and Patriotism: embodying in its genius and principles all that is chivalric in conduct, noble in sentiment, generous in manhood, and patriotic in purpose: its particular objects being,

"First: To protect the weak, the innocent, and the defenceless from the indignities, wrongs, and outrages of the lawless, the violent, and the brutal; to relieve the injured and the oppressed: to succour the suffering and unfortunate, and especially the widows and the orphans of Confederate Soldiers.

"Second: To protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, and all the laws passed in conformity thereto, and to protect the States and the people thereof from all invasion from any source whatever.

"Third: To aid and assist in the execution of all Constitutional laws, and to protect the people from unlawful seizure, and from trial except by their peers in conformity to the laws of the land."

Obviously these one-dimensional hypocrites only intended this to apply to white people. Specifically those white people who conform to the societal norms encompassed by white male supremacy. White people were also occasionally lynched for antiracist beliefs and/or advocacy.

"The Night Hawks will produce their evidence," said the Cyclops, "and the Grand Monk will conduct the case of the people against the negro Augustus Cæsar, the former slave of Dr. Richard Cameron."

Dr. Cameron advanced and removed his cap. His snow-white hair and beard, ruddy face and dark-brown brilliant eyes made a strange picture in its weird surroundings, like an ancient alchemist ready to conduct some daring experiment in the problem of life.

"I am here, brethren," he said, "to accuse the black brute about to appear of the crime of assault on a daughter of the South——"

A murmur of thrilling surprise and horror swept the crowd of white-and-scarlet figures as with one common impulse they moved closer.

"His feet have been measured and they exactly tally with the negro tracks found under the window of the Lenoir cottage. His flight to Columbia and return on the publication of their deaths as an accident is a confirmation of our case. I will not relate to you the scientific experiment which first fixed my suspicion of this man's guilt. My witness could not confirm it, and it might not be to you credible. But this negro is peculiarly sensitive to hypnotic influence. I propose to put him under this power to-night before you, and, if he is guilty, I can make him tell his confederates, describe and rehearse the crime itself."

Not only is this idea absurd, I'm not going to countenance the assertion that these lynching victims were given even this much of a trial. This is just Dixon trying to garb the KKK in the chivalric glory of the Knights Templar or some other comparison equally overblown and ridiculous.

https://plaintalkhistory.com/monroeandflorence...

Interactive Lynching Map of the U.S.

This is amazing! Definitely check out this incredibly well-made resource. Scrolling through many of the victims and noting the data really brought home to me how widespread and intense was the horror of the first KKK.

I also found a lynching in my current hometown, which did not surprise me as I live in a former "Sundown Town" and Klan enclave. No shit. **But things are changing!** We had a BLM rally here in the summer of 2020 - around 200 people showed up, and the vast majority of them were white. It's a memory I call up when I catch myself feeling hopeless.

The Night Hawks led Gus before Doctor Cameron, untied his hands, removed the gag, and slipped the blindfold from his head.

Under the doctor's rigid gaze the negro's knees struck together, and he collapsed into complete hypnosis, merely lifting his huge paws lamely as if to ward a blow.

They seated him on the boulder from which the Cyclops rose, and Gus stared about the cave and grinned as if in a dream seeing nothing.

The doctor recalled to him the day of the crime, and he began to talk to his three confederates, describing his plot in detail, now and then pausing and breaking into a fiendish laugh.

Old McAllister, who had three lovely daughters at home, threw off his cap, sank to his knees, and buried his face in his hands, while a dozen of the white figures crowded closer, nervously gripping the revolvers which hung from their red belts.

Doctor Cameron pushed them back and lifted his hand in warning.

The negro began to live the crime with fearful realism—the journey past the hotel to make sure the victims had gone to their home; the visit to Aunt Cindy's cabin to find her there; lying in the field waiting for the last light of the village to go out; gloating with vulgar exultation over their plot, and planning other crimes to follow its success—how they crept along the shadows of the hedgerow of the lawn to avoid the moonlight, stood under the cedar, and through the open windows watched the mother and daughter laughing and talking within——

"Min' what I tells you now—Tie de ole one, when I gib you de rope," said Gus in a whisper.

"My God!" cried the agonized voice of the figure with the double cross—"that's what the piece of burnt rope in the fireplace meant!"

Doctor Cameron again lifted his hand for silence.

Now they burst into the room, and with the light of hell in his beady, yellow-splotched eyes, Gus gripped his imaginary revolver and growled:

"Scream, an' I blow yer brains out!"

In spite of Doctor Cameron's warning, the white-robed figures jostled and pressed closer——

Gus rose to his feet and started across the cave as if to spring on the shivering figure of the girl, the clansmen with muttered groans, sobs, and curses falling back as he advanced. He still wore his full Captain's uniform, its heavy epaulets flashing their gold in the unearthly light, his beastly jaws half covering the gold braid on the collar. His thick lips were drawn upward in an ugly leer and his sinister bead eyes gleamed like a gorilla's. A single fierce leap and the black claws clutched the air slowly as if sinking into the soft white throat.

Strong men began to cry like children.

"Stop him! Stop him!" screamed a clansman, springing on the negro and grinding his heel into his big thick neck. A dozen more were on him in a moment, kicking, stamping, cursing, and crying like madmen.

Doctor Cameron leaped forward and beat them off:

"Men! Men! You must not kill him in this condition!"

Quick - someone find a fainting couch; these men have clearly been overcome by the hysteria. This scene is really bizarre.

Some of the white figures had fallen prostrate on the ground, sobbing in a frenzy of uncontrollable emotion. Some were leaning against the walls, their faces buried in their arms.

Again old McAllister was on his knees crying over and over again:

"God have mercy on my people!"

When at length quiet was restored, the negro was revived, and again bound, blindfolded, gagged, and thrown to the ground before the Grand Cyclops.

A sudden inspiration flashed in Doctor Cameron's eyes. Turning to the figure with yellow sash and double cross he said:

"Issue your orders and despatch your courier to-night with the old Scottish rite of the Fiery Cross. It will send a thrill of inspiration to every clansman in the hills."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross_burning

Cross burning

I'm so sorry, Scottish people - I was hoping to be able to debunk the claim that cross-burning originated in Scotland, but alas...it had nothing to do with racism, though, so there's that.

"Good—prepare it quickly!" was the answer.

Doctor Cameron opened his medicine case, drew the silver drinking-cover from a flask, and passed out of the cave to the dark circle of blood still shining in the sand by the water's edge. He knelt and filled the cup half full of the crimson grains, and dipped it into the river. From a saddle he took the lightwood torch, returned within, and placed the cup on the boulder on which the Grand Cyclops had sat. He loosed the bundle of lightwood, took two pieces, tied them into the form of a cross, and laid it beside a lighted candle near the silver cup.

The silent figures watched his every movement. He lifted the cup and said:

"Brethren, I hold in my hand the water of your river bearing the red stain of the life of a Southern woman, a priceless sacrifice on the altar of outraged civilization. Hear the message of your chief."

I'm certain that most of these guys frequented brothels filled with white Southern women, so miss me with this nonsense about how much they've cherished. This lynching is 100% about these white men's fragile masculinity and empty "racial" identity - it has absolutely nothing to do with a woman being raped. That's merely the justification for an act they were itching to carry out anyway.

The tall figure with the yellow sash and double cross stepped before the strange altar, while the white forms of the clansmen gathered about him in a circle. He lifted his cap, and laid it on the boulder, and his men gazed on the flushed face of Ben Cameron, the Grand Dragon of the Realm.

He stood for a moment silent, erect, a smouldering fierceness in his eyes, something cruel and yet magnetic in his alert bearing.

He looked on the prostrate negro lying in his uniform at his feet, seized the cross, lighted the three upper ends and held it blazing in his hand, while, in a voice full of the fires of feeling, he said:

"Men of the South, the time for words has passed, the hour for action has struck. The Grand Turk will execute this negro to-night and fling his body on the lawn of the black Lieutenant-Governor of the State."

The Grand Turk bowed.

"I ask for the swiftest messenger of this Den who can ride till dawn."

The man whom Doctor Cameron had already chosen stepped forward:

"Carry my summons to the Grand Titan of the adjoining province in North Carolina whom you will find at Hambright. Tell him the story of this crime and what you have seen and heard. Ask him to report to me here the second night from this, at eleven o'clock, with six Grand Giants from his adjoining counties, each accompanied by two hundred picked men. In olden times when the Chieftain of our people summoned the clan on an errand of life and death, the Fiery Cross, extinguished in sacrificial blood, was sent by swift courier from village to village. This call was never made in vain, nor will it be to-night, in the new world. Here, on this spot made holy ground by the blood of those we hold dearer than life, I raise the ancient symbol of an unconquered race of men——"

High above his head in the darkness of the cave he lifted the blazing emblem——

"The Fiery Cross of old Scotland's hills! I quench its flames in the sweetest blood that ever stained the sands of Time."

He dipped its ends in the silver cup, extinguished the fire, and handed the charred symbol to the courier, who quickly disappeared.

More ridiculous cos-playing.

CHAPTER III

The Parting of the Ways

The discovery of the Captain of the African Guards lying in his full uniform in Lynch's yard send a thrill of terror to the triumphant leagues. Across the breast of the body was pinned a scrap of paper on which was written in red ink the letters K. K. K. It was the first actual evidence of the existence of this dreaded order in Ulster county.

The First Lieutenant of the Guards assumed command and held the full company in their armoury under arms day and night. Beneath his door he had found a notice which was also nailed on the courthouse. It appeared in the Piedmont *Eagle* and in rapid succession in every newspaper not under negro influence in the State. It read as follows:

"Headquarters of Realm No 4.

"Dreadful Era, Black Epoch,

"Hideous Hour.

"General Order No. I.

"The Negro Militia now organized in this State threatens the extinction of civilization. They have avowed their purpose to make war upon and exterminate the Ku Klux Klan, an organization which is now the sole guardian of Society. All negroes are hereby given forty-eight hours from the publication of this notice in their respective counties to surrender their arms at the courthouse door. Those who refuse must take the consequences.

"By order of the G. D. of Realm No. 4.

"By the Grand Scribe."

The white people of Piedmont read this notice with a thrill of exultant joy. Men walked the streets with an erect bearing which said without words:

"Stand out of the way."

For the first time since the dawn of Black Rule negroes began to yield to white men and women the right of way on the streets.

It wasn't enough for these people that black people were content with peaceful coexistence; they wanted public displays of deference to confirm their belief in their own superiority. Super gross.

On the day following, the old Commoner sent for Phil.

"What is the latest news?" he asked.

"The town is in a fever of excitement—not over the discovery in Lynch's yard—but over the blacker rumour that Marion and her mother committed suicide to conceal an assault by this fiend."

"A trumped-up lie," said the old man emphatically.

"It's true, sir. I'll take Doctor Cameron's word for it."

"You have just come from the Camerons?"

"Yes."

"Let it be your last visit. The Camerons are on the road to the gallows, father and son. Lynch informs me that the murder committed last night, and the insolent notice nailed on the courthouse door, could have come only from their brain. They are the hereditary leaders of these people. They alone would have the audacity to fling this crime into the teeth of the world and threaten worse. We are face to face with Southern barbarism. Every man now to his own standard! The house of Stoneman can have no part with midnight assassins."

"Nor with black barbarians, father. It is a question of who possesses the right of life and death over the citizen, the organized virtue of the community, or its organized crime. You have mistaken for death the patience of a generous people. We call ourselves the champions of liberty. Yet for less than they have suffered, kings have lost their heads and empires perished before the wrath of freemen."

This is a nonsense argument, because there is already an established set of local, state, and federal laws that lay out the rights of citizens - the white Southern men just didn't LIKE the laws. That didn't give them the right to resort to terrorism. Just in case that needs to be spelled out.

"My boy, this is not a question for argument between us," said the father with stern emphasis. "This conspiracy of terror and assassination threatens to shatter my work to atoms. The election on which turns the destiny of Congress, and the success or failure of my life, is but a few weeks away. Unless this foul conspiracy is crushed, I am ruined, and the Nation falls again beneath the heel of a slaveholders' oligarchy."

"Your nightmare of a slaveholders' oligarchy does not disturb me."

"At least you will have the decency to break your affair with Margaret Cameron pending the issue of my struggle of life and death with her father and brother?"

"Never."

"Then I will do it for you."

"I warn you, sir," Phil cried, with anger, "that if it comes to an issue of race against race, I am a white man. The ghastly tragedy of the condition of society here is something for which the people of the South are no longer responsible——"

This choice has been made by white people far too often. If we are to break the cycle of white supremacy, we have to stop circling the wagons at every little perceived threat and start using our privilege to protect the vulnerable instead of putting them down.

"I'll take the responsibility!" growled the old cynic.

"Don't ask me to share it," said the younger man emphatically.

The father winced, his lips trembled, and he answered brokenly:

"My boy, this is the bitterest hour of my life that has had little to make it sweet. To hear such words from you is more than I can bear. I am an old man now—my sands are nearly run. But two human beings love me, and I love but two. On you and your sister I have lavished all the treasures of a maimed and strangled soul—and it has come to this! Read the notice which one of your friends thrust into the window of my bedroom last night."

He handed Phil a piece of paper on which was written:

"The old club-footed beast who has sneaked into our town, pretending to search for health, in reality the leader of the infernal Union League, will be given forty-eight hours to vacate the house and rid this community of his presence.

"K. K. K."

"Are you an officer of the Union League?" Phil asked in surprise.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_League

Union League

The Union Leagues were quasi-secretive men's clubs established separately, starting in 1862, and continuing throughout the Civil War (1861–1865). The oldest Union League of America council member, an organization originally called "The League of Union Men", was formed in June 1862 in Pekin, Illinois. Four months later, on November 22, 1862, the Union League of Philadelphia, the first of the elite eastern Leagues and the second oldest ULA council member, was established.

"I am its soul."

"How could a Southerner discover this, if your own children didn't know it?"

"By their spies who have joined the League."

"And do the rank and file know the Black Pope at the head of the order?"

"No, but high officials do."

"Does Lynch?"

"Certainly."

"Then he is the scoundrel who placed that note in your room. It is a clumsy attempt to forge an order of the Klan. The white man does not live in this town capable of that act. I know these people."

White supremacy would be impossible to maintain without the meting out of punishment to white people who don't conform. Phil is either naive (the gracious interpretation), or else the depth of his terror at the idea of not being "the master race" has led him to willingly buy into a delusion (the blunt interpretation).

"My boy, you are bewitched by the smiles of a woman to deny your own flesh and blood."

"Nonsense, father—you are possessed by an idea which has become an insane mania——"

"Will you respect my wishes?" the old man broke in angrily.

"I will not," was the clear answer. Phil turned and left the room, and the old man's massive head sank on his breast in helpless baffled rage and grief.

He was more successful in his appeal to Elsie. He convinced her of the genuineness of the threat against him. The brutal reference to his lameness roused the girl's soul. When the old man, crushed by Phil's desertion, broke down the last reserve of his strange cold nature, tore his wounded heart open to her, cried in agony over his deformity, his lameness, and the anguish with which he saw the threatened ruin of his life-work, she threw her arms around his neck in a flood of tears and cried:

"Hush, father, I will not desert you. I will never leave you, or wed without your blessing. If I find that my lover was in any way responsible for this insult, I'll tear his image out of my heart and never speak his name again!"

She wrote a note to Ben, asking him to meet her at sundown on horseback at Lover's Leap.

Ben was elated at the unexpected request. He was hungry for an hour with his sweetheart, whom he had not seen save for a moment since the storm of excitement broke following the discovery of the crime.

He hastened through his work of ordering the movement of the Klan for the night, and determined to surprise Elsie by meeting her in his uniform of a Grand Dragon.

Secure in her loyalty, he would deliberately thus put his life in her hands. Using the water of a brook in the woods for a mirror, he adjusted his yellow sash and pushed the two revolvers back under the cape out of sight, saying to himself with a laugh:

"Betray me? Well, if she does, life would not be worth the living!"

When Elsie had recovered from the first shock of surprise at the white horse and rider waiting for her under the shadows of the old beech, her surprise gave way to grief at the certainty of his guilt, and the greatness of his love in thus placing his life without a question in her hands.

He tied the horses in the woods, and they sat down on the rustic.

He removed his helmet cap, threw back the white cape showing the scarlet lining, and the two golden circles with their flaming crosses on his breast, with boyish pride. The costume was becoming to his slender graceful figure, and he knew it.

"Boyish" is the operative word here. And "boyish pride" is the nice way of describing a grown man evincing a "Hey, mom, look at me!" attitude, which wouldn't be irritating if so many of them didn't act like petty and endlessly needy tyrants the rest of the time.

"You see, sweetheart, I hold high rank in the Empire," he whispered.

From beneath his cape he drew a long bundle which he unrolled. It was a triangular flag of brilliant yellow edged in scarlet. In the centre of the yellow ground was the figure of a huge black dragon with fiery red eyes and tongue. Around it was a Latin motto worked in scarlet: "*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*"—what always, what everywhere, what by all has been held to be true. "The battle-flag of the Klan," he said; "the standard of the Grand Dragon."

Elsie seized his hand and kissed it, unable to speak.

"Why so serious to-night?"

"Do you love me very much?" she answered.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay his life at the feet of his beloved," he responded tenderly.

"Yes, yes; I know—and that is why you are breaking my heart. When first I met you—it seems now ages and ages ago—I was a vain, self-willed, pert little thing——"

"It's not so. I took you for an angel—you were one. You are one to-night."

"Now," she went on slowly, "in what I have lived through you I have grown into an impassioned, serious, self-disciplined, bewildered woman. Your perfect trust to-night is the sweetest revelation that can come to a woman's soul and yet it brings to me unspeakable pain——"

"For what?"

"You are guilty of murder."

Ben's figure stiffened.

"The judge who pronounces sentence of death on a criminal outlawed by civilized society is not usually called a murderer, my dear."

"And by whose authority are you a judge?"

"By authority of the sovereign people who created the State of South Carolina. The criminals who claim to be our officers are usurpers placed there by the subversion of law."

Once again: To dislike or disagree with a law doesn't give one the right to form an extralegal vigilante organization. That would be an extremely entitled attitude to take.

You know, for a group of people who like to flaunt how "civilized" they are, compared to the "savage" Africans and indigenous Americans, these white supremacists were sure fast to abandon all principles of civilized law and order as soon as they stopped getting their own way about every single thing.

"Won't you give this all up for my sake?" she pleaded. "Believe me, you are in great danger."

"Not so great as is the danger of my sister and mother and my sweetheart—it is a man's place to face danger," he gravely answered.

"This violence can only lead to your ruin and shame——"

"I am fighting the battle of a race on whose fate hangs the future of the South and the Nation. My ruin and shame will be of small account if they are saved," was the even answer.

How about we change this garbage narrative, which implies that men are place-holding cannon fodder who must sacrifice themselves on command, to something that makes more sense. Instead of "Women and children first," how about "the healthy and able-bodied should help first, regardless of their freaking gender."

"Come, my dear," she pleaded tenderly, "you know that I have weighed the treasures of music and art and given them all for one clasp of your hand, one throb of your heart against mine. I should call you cruel did I not know you are infinitely tender. This is the only thing I have ever asked you to do for me——"

"Desert my people! You must not ask of me this infamy, if you love me," he cried.

"But, listen; this is wrong—this wild vengeance is a crime you are doing, however great the provocation. We cannot continue to love one another if you do this. Listen: I love you better than father, mother, life, or career—all my dreams I've lost in you. I've lived through eternity to-day with my father——"

Because women should expect for their entire identities to be subsumed upon intimately associating herself with a man. This was much more literally true in Dixon's day.

"You know me guiltless of the vulgar threat against him——"

"Yes, and yet you are the leader of desperate men who might have done it. As I fought this battle to-day, I've lost you, lost myself, and sunk down to the depths of despair, and at the end rang the one weak cry of a woman's heart for her lover! Your frown can darken the brightest sky. For your sake I can give up all save the sense of right. I'll walk by your side in life—lead you gently and tenderly along the way of my dreams if I can, but if you go your way, it shall be mine; and I shall still be glad because you are there! See how humble I am—only you must not commit crime!"

"Come, sweetheart, you must not use that word," he protested, with a touch of wounded pride.

"You are a conspirator——"

"I am a revolutionist."

"You are committing murder!"

"I am waging war."

Elsie leaped to her feet in a sudden rush of anger and extended her hand:

"Good-bye. I shall not see you again. I do not know you. You are still a stranger to me."

Way to go, Elsie!

He held her hand firmly.

"We must not part in anger," he said slowly. "I have grave work to do before the day dawns. We may not see each other again."

She led her horse to the seat quickly and without waiting for his assistance sprang into the saddle.

"Do you not fear my betrayal of your secret?" she asked.

He rode to her side, bent close, and whispered:

"It's as safe as if locked in the heart of God."

A little sob caught her voice, yet she said slowly in firm tones:

"If another crime is committed in this county by your Klan, we will never see each other again."

He escorted her to the edge of the town without a word, pressed her hand in silence, wheeled his horse, and disappeared on the road to the North Carolina line.

CHAPTER IV

The Banner of the Dragon

Ben Cameron rode rapidly to the rendezvous of the pickets who were to meet the coming squadrons.

He returned home and ate a hearty meal. As he emerged from the dining-room, Phil seized him by the arm and led him under the big oak on the lawn:

"Cameron, old boy, I'm in a lot of trouble. I've had a quarrel with my father, and your sister has broken me all up by returning my ring. I want a little excitement to ease my nerves. From Elsie's incoherent talk I judge you are in danger. If there's going to be a fight, let me in."

Ben took his hand:

"You're the kind of a man I'd like to have for a brother, and I'll help you in love—but as for war—it's not your fight. We don't need help."

Reason #3,498 that white supremacy is pointless: There will always be someone "whiter" than you. There will never be a time when you get to sit back, relax, and finally enjoy all of the massive privilege you've eliminated so many other peoples and cultures to acquire. That day will never, ever come because white supremacy requires a **hierarchy**. Some white people have to be on the bottom for other white people to maintain the delusion of their superiority. There will never be a time when white supremacy is done culling the herd.

Here Ben is telling Phil that they can be friends and even family, but that Phil is essentially a Northerner, and hence the "wrong kind" of white man. The KKK isn't his vigilante organization.

At ten o'clock Ben met the local Den at their rendezvous under the cliff, to prepare for the events of the night.

The forty members present were drawn up before him in double rank of twenty each.

"Brethren," he said to them solemnly, "I have called you to-night to take a step from which there can be no retreat. We are going to make a daring experiment of the utmost importance. If there is a faint heart among you, now is the time to retire——"

"We are with you!" cried the men.

"There are laws of our race, old before this Republic was born in the souls of white freemen. The fiat of fools has repealed on paper these laws. Your fathers who created this Nation were first Conspirators, then Revolutionists, now Patriots and Saints. I need to-night ten volunteers to lead the coming clansmen over this county and disarm every negro in it. The men from North Carolina cannot be recognized. Each of you must run this risk. Your absence from home to-night will be doubly dangerous for what will be done here at this negro armoury under my command. I ask of these ten men to ride their horses until dawn, even unto death, to ride for their God, their native land, and the womanhood of the South!

No - not a fiat, which carries authoritarian connotations; the LAW.

But only the pure, virginal Southern womanhood, not the unclean women they bang in brothels - I guess they were on their own. No need to ~~defend~~ "defend" women. Btw - this attitude is one of the things that drove Marion and her mother to commit suicide, but [Kermit the frog sipping tea] I'm just here watching things unfold...

"To each man who accepts this dangerous mission I offer for your bed the earth, for your canopy the sky, for your bread stones; and when the flash of bayonets shall fling into your face from the Square the challenge of martial law, the protection I promise you—is exile, imprisonment, and death! Let the ten men who accept these terms step forward four paces."

Making an appeal to Real Man masculinity, which encourages men to throw themselves on the sword for all kinds of nebulous, pointless reasons by glamorizing their rugged, individualistic martyrdom. It's nonsense. Men deserve better than this.

Authoritarians use this tactic because it works.

With a single impulse the whole double line of forty white-and-scarlet figures moved quickly forward four steps!

The leader shook hands with each man, his voice throbbing with emotion as he said:

"Stand together like this, men, and armies will march and countermarch over the South in vain! We will save the life of our people."

The ten guides selected by the Grand Dragon rode forward, and each led a division of one hundred men through the ten townships of the county and successfully disarmed every negro before day without the loss of a life.

The remaining squadron of two hundred and fifty men from Hambright, accompanied by the Grand Titan in command of the Province of Western Hill Counties, were led by Ben Cameron into Piedmont as the waning moon rose between twelve and one o'clock.

They marched past Stoneman's place on the way to the negro armoury, which stood on the opposite side of the street a block below.

The wild music of the beat of a thousand hoofs on the cobblestones of the street waked every sleeper. The old Commoner hobbled to his window and watched them pass, his big hands fumbling nervously, and his soul stirred to its depths.

The ghostlike shadowy columns moved slowly with the deliberate consciousness of power. The scarlet circles on their breasts could be easily seen when one turned toward the house, as could the big red letters K. K. K. on each horse's flank.

You know what couldn't been seen? Their **faces**, because they were fucking cowards. They want to pump themselves up with all of their silly Scottish warlord cos-play, but they can't ride into town with the courage of their own convictions. No. This is because they aren't the "master race," they're spoiled, whining little brats who are throwing a temper tantrum because they got their silly little asses paddled.

In the centre of the line waved from a gold-tipped spear the battle-flag of the Klan. As they passed the bright lights burning at his gate, old Stoneman could see this standard plainly. The huge black dragon with flaming eyes and tongue seemed a living thing crawling over a scarlet-tipped yellow cloud.

At the window above stood a little figure watching that banner of the Dragon pass with aching heart.

Phil stood at another, smiling with admiration for their daring:

"By George, it stirs the blood to see it! You can't crush men of that breed!"

The watchers were not long in doubt as to what the raiders meant.

They deployed quickly around the armoury. A whistle rang its shrill cry, and a volley of two hundred and fifty carbines and revolvers smashed every glass in the building. The sentinel had already given the alarm, and the drum was calling the startled negroes to their arms. They returned the volley twice, and for ten minutes were answered with the steady crack of two hundred and fifty guns. A white flag appeared at the door, and the firing ceased. The negroes laid down their arms and surrendered. All save three were allowed to go to their homes for the night and carry their wounded with them.

Once again we see the cowardice of white supremacy on full display. It's not enough that they are preparing to terrorize an impoverished people with few political rights and no social standing, they're going to disarm them first so that they can't even put up a fight. This isn't "manliness" or bravery or ancient warrior's spirit; it's weakness, fear, and shame.

The three confederates in the crime of their captain were bound and led away. In a few minutes the crash of a volley told their end.

The little white figure rapped at Phil's door and placed a trembling hand on his arm:

"Phil," she said softly, "please go to the hotel and stay until you know all that has happened—until you know the full list of those killed and wounded. I'll wait. You understand?"

As he stooped and kissed her, he felt a hot tear roll down her cheek.

"Yes, little Sis, I understand," he answered.

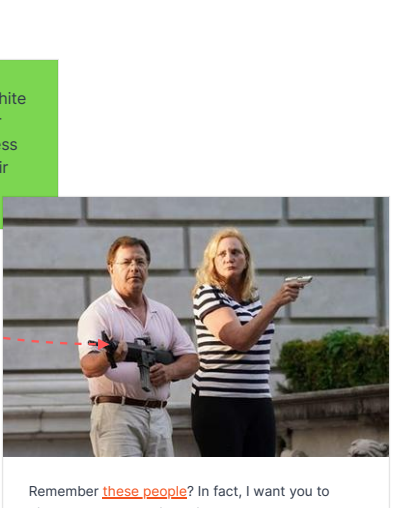
CHAPTER V

The Reign of the Klan

In quick succession every county followed the example of Ulster, and the arms furnished the negroes by the State and National governments were in the hands of the Klan. The League began to collapse in a panic of terror.

A gale of chivalrous passion and high action, contagious and intoxicating, swept the white race. The moral, mental, and physical earthquake which followed the first assault on one of their daughters revealed the unity of the racial life of the people. Within the span of a week they had lived a century.

Unfortunately, it is often the case that white people circle the wagons to protect their own interests in times of crisis - regardless of whether the crisis is real or any of their interests actually need to be protected.



Remember these people? In fact, I want you to picture them every time Dixon talks about the KKK from now on, because it's the same principle - just different eras in American history.

The spirit of the South "like lightning had at last leaped forth, half startled at itself, its feet upon the ashes and the rags," its hands tight-gripped on the throat of tyrant, thug, and thief.

It was the resistless movement of a race, not of any man or leader of men. The secret weapon with which they struck was the most terrible and efficient in human history—these pale hosts of white-and-scarlet horsemen! They struck shrouded in a mantle of darkness and terror. They struck where the power of resistance was weakest and the blow least suspected. Discovery or retaliation was impossible. Not a single disguise was ever penetrated. All was planned and ordered as by destiny. The accused was tried by secret tribunal, sentenced without a hearing, executed in the dead of night without warning, mercy, or appeal. The movements of the Klan were like clockwork, without a word, save the whistle of the Night Hawk, the crack of his revolver, and the hoofbeat of swift horses moving like figures in a dream, and vanishing in mists and shadows.

The old club-footed Puritan, in his mad scheme of vengeance and party power, had overlooked the Covenanter, the backbone of the South. This man had just begun to fight! His race had defied the Crown of Great Britain a hundred years from the caves and wilds of Scotland and Ireland, taught the English people how to slay a king and build a commonwealth, and, driven into exile into the wilderness of America, led our Revolution, peopled the hills of the South, and conquered the West.

As the young German patriots of 1812 had organized the great struggle for their liberties under the noses of the garrisons of Napoleon, so Ben Cameron had met the leaders of his race in Nashville, Tennessee, within the picket lines of thirty-five thousand hostile troops, and in the ruins of an old homestead discussed and adopted the ritual of the Invisible Empire.

Within a few months this Empire overspread a territory larger than modern Europe. In the approaching election it was reaching out its daring white hands to tear the fruits of victory from twenty million victorious conquerors.

The triumph at which they aimed was one of incredible grandeur. They had risen to snatch power out of defeat and death. Under their clan leadership the Southern people had suddenly developed the courage of the lion, the cunning of the fox, and the deathless faith of religious enthusiasts.

Society was fused in the white heat of one sublime thought and beat with the pulse of the single will of the Grand Wizard of the Klan of Memphis.

Women and children had eyes and saw not, ears and heard not. Over four thousand disguises for men and horses were made by the women of the South, and not one secret ever passed their lips!

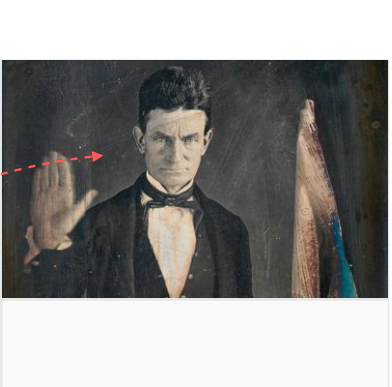
With magnificent audacity, infinite patience, and remorseless zeal, a conquered people were struggling to turn his own weapon against their conqueror, and beat his brains out with the bludgeon he had placed in the hands of their former slaves.

Behind the tragedy of Reconstruction stood the remarkable man whose iron will alone had driven these terrible measures through the chaos of passion, corruption, and bewilderment which followed the first assassination of an American President. As he leaned on his window in this village of the South and watched in speechless rage the struggle at that negro armoury, he felt for the first time the foundations sinking beneath his feet. As he saw the black cowards surrender in terror, noted the indifference and cool defiance with which those white horsemen rode and shot, he knew that he had collided with the ultimate force which his whole scheme had overlooked.344

I honestly don't know what to say about this. It strikes me as utterly alien and incomprehensible why anyone would boast about this kind of terrorism campaign.

If you want to read about people engaged in a righteous fight for their liberty and lives, here are some suggestions off the top of my head:

- The Battle of Little Bighorn
- John Brown (one of my personal heroes: patriotic, antiracist, and utterly fearless) at Pottawatomie, Osawatomie, and Harper's Ferry
- The Haitian Revolution
- The Warsaw ghetto uprising
- The labor battle at "Bloody" Harlan, KY



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John Brown's Body

Listen to Paul Robeson, singer and antifascist, sing the Union Army and abolitionist anthem "John Brown's Body."

He turned on his big club foot from the window, clinched his fist and muttered:

"But I'll hang that man for this deed if it's the last act of my life!"

The morning brought dismay to the negro, the carpet-bagger, and the scallawag of Ulster. A peculiar freak of weather in the early morning added to their terror. The sun rose clear and bright except for a slight fog that floated from the river valley, increasing the roar of the falls. About nine o'clock a huge black shadow suddenly rushed over Piedmont from the west, and in a moment the town was shrouded in twilight. The cries of birds were hushed and chickens went to roost as in a total eclipse of the sun. Knots of people gathered on the streets and gazed uneasily at the threatening skies. Hundreds of negroes began to sing and shout and pray, while sensible people feared a cyclone or cloud-burst. A furious downpour of rain was swiftly followed by sunshine, and the negroes rose from their knees, shouting with joy to find the end of the world had after all been postponed.

But that the end of their brief reign in a white man's land had come, but few of them doubted. The events of the night were sufficiently eloquent. The movement of the clouds in sympathy was unnecessary.

Old Stoneman sent for Lynch, and found he had fled to Columbia. He sent for the only lawyer in town whom the Lieutenant-Governor had told him could be trusted.

The lawyer was polite, but his refusal to undertake the prosecution of any alleged member of the Klan was emphatic.

There's a phrase bandied about by oligarchs of the Putin persuasion: "Everything for my friends; for my enemies, the law." Meaning the law only applies when it's convenient for whoever holds power at any given time.

"I'm a sinful man, sir," he said with a smile. "Besides, I prefer to live, on general principles."

"I'll pay you well," urged the old man, "and if you secure the conviction of Ben Cameron, the man we believe to be the head of this Klan, I'll give you ten thousand dollars."

The lawyer was whittling on a piece of pine meditatively.

"That's a big lot of money in these hard times. I'd like to own it, but I'm afraid it wouldn't be good at the bank on the other side. I prefer the green fields of South Carolina to those of Eden. My harp isn't in tune."

AMERICA FIRST

The KKK experienced a resurgence during the Civil Rights era. Just dropping this in here because their slogan sounds so familiar...

Stoneman snorted in disgust:

"Will you ask the Mayor to call to see me at once?"

"We ain't got none," was the laconic answer.

"What do you mean?"

"Haven't you heard what happened to his Honour last night?"

"No."

"The Klan called to see him," went on the lawyer with a quizzical look "at 3 A. M. Rather early for a visit of state. They gave him forty-nine lashes on his bare back, and persuaded him that the climate of Piedmont didn't agree with him. His Honour, Mayor Bizzel, left this morning with his negro wife and brood of mulatto children for his home, the slums of Cleveland, Ohio. We are deprived of his illustrious example, and he may not be a wiser man than when he came, but he's a much sadder one."

Stoneman dismissed the even-tempered member of the bar, and wired Lynch to return immediately to Piedmont. He determined to conduct the prosecution of Ben Cameron in person. With the aid of the Lieutenant-Governor he succeeded in finding a man who would dare to swear out a warrant against him.

As a preliminary skirmish he was charged with a violation of the statutory laws of the United States relating to Reconstruction and arraigned before a Commissioner.

Against Elsie's agonizing protest, old Stoneman appeared at the courthouse to conduct the prosecution.

In the absence of the United States Marshal, the warrant had been placed in the hands of the sheriff, returnable at ten o'clock on the morning fixed for the trial. The new sheriff of Ulster was no less a personage than Uncle Aleck, who had resigned his seat in the House to accept the more profitable one of High Sheriff of the County.

There was a long delay in beginning the trial. At 10:30 not a single witness summoned had appeared, nor had the prisoner seen fit to honour the court with his presence.

Old Stoneman sat fumbling his hands in nervous, sullen rage, while Phil looked on with amusement.

"Send for the sheriff," he growled to the Commissioner.

In a moment Aleck appeared bowing humbly and politely to every white man he passed. He bent halfway to the floor before the Commissioner and said:

The triumph of terrorism. I wonder if this truly made any of these sorry losers feel better. I sincerely doubt it; no servility on the part of black people can fill the hole in a white supremacist's soul.

"Marse Ben be here in er minute, sah. He's er eatin' his breakfus'. I run erlong erhead."

Stoneman's face was a thundercloud as he scrambled to his feet and glared at Aleck:

"*Marse* Ben? Did you say *Marse* Ben? Who's he?"

Aleck bowed low again.

"De young Colonel, sah—Marse Ben Cameron."

"And you the sheriff of this county trotted along in front to make the way smooth for your prisoner?"

"Yessah!"

"Is that the way you escort prisoners before a court?"

"Dem kin' er prisoners—yessah."

"Why didn't you walk beside him?"

Aleck grinned from ear to ear and bowed very low:

"He say sumfin' to me, sah!"

"And what did he say?"

Aleck shook his head and laughed:

"I hates ter insinuate ter de cote, sah!"

"What did he say to you?" thundered Stoneman.

"He say—he say—ef I walk 'longside er him—he knock hell outen me, sah!"

If you're so hyper-sensitive and -fragile that you can't even handle walking beside someone who looks differently than you, then you're a dysfunctional, pampered twit. Get over yourself, weak-link.

"Indeed."

"Yessah, en I 'spec' he would," said Aleck insinuatingly. "La, he's a gemman, sah, he is! He tell me he come right on. He be here sho'."

Stoneman whispered to Lynch, turned with a look of contempt to Aleck, and said:

"Mr. Sheriff, you interest me. Will you be kind enough to explain to this court what has happened to you lately to so miraculously change your manners?"

Aleck glanced around the room nervously.

"I seed sumfin'—a vision, sah!"

"A vision? Are you given to visions?"

"Na-sah. Dis yere wuz er sho' 'nuff vision! I wuz er feelin' bad all day yistiddy. Soon in de mawnin', ez I wuz gwine 'long de road, I see a big black bird er settin' on de fence. He flop his wings, look right at me en say, 'Corpse! Corpse! Corpse!'"—Aleck's voice dropped to a whisper—"'en las' night de Ku Kluxes come ter see me, sah!"

Stoneman lifted his beetling brows.

"That's interesting. We are searching for information on that subject."

"Yessah! Dey wuz Sperits, ridin' white hosses wid flowin' white robes, en big blood-red eyes! De hosses wuz twenty feet high, en some er de Sperits wuz higher dan dis cote-house! Dey wuz all bal' headed, 'cept right on de top whar dere wuz er straight blaze er fire shot up in de air ten foot high!"

"What did they say to you?"

"Dey say dat ef I didn't design de sheriff's office, go back ter farmin' en behave myself, dey had er job waitin' fer me in hell, sah. En shos' you born dey wuz right from dar!"

Black people were so stupid that they would mistake racist losers in their mama's stained sheets for "Sperits," mmmmkay. I think they were just a little bit more savvy and vigilant than that.

"Of course!" sneered the old Commoner.

"Yessah! Hit's des lak I tell yer. One ob 'em makes me fetch 'im er drink er water. I carry two bucketsful ter 'im 'fo' I git done, en I swar ter God he drink it all right dar 'fo' my eyes! He say hit wuz pow'ful dry down below, sah! En den I feel sumfin' bus' loose inside er me, en I disremember all dat come ter pass! I made er jump fer de ribber bank, en de next I knowed I wuz er pullin' fur de odder sho'. Ise er pow'ful good swimmer, sah, but I nebber git erc'ross er creek befo' ez quick ez I got der ribber las' night."

"And you think of going back to farming?"

"I done begin plowin' dis mornin', marster!"

"*Don't* you call me marster!" yelled the old man. "Are you the sheriff of this county?"

Aleck laughed loudly.

"Na-sah! Dat's er joke! I ain't nuttin' but er plain nigger—I wants peace, judge."

"Evidently we need a new sheriff."

"Dat's what I tell 'em, sah, dis mornin'—en I des flings myself on de ignance er de cote!"

Phil laughed aloud, and his father's colourless eyes began to spit cold poison.

"About what time do you think your master, Colonel Cameron, will honour us with his presence?" he asked Aleck.

Again the sheriff bowed.

"He's er comin' right now, lak I tole yer—he's er gemman, sah."

Ben walked briskly into the room and confronted the Commissioner.

Without apparently noticing his presence, Stoneman said:

"In the absence of witnesses we accept the discharge of this warrant, pending developments."

Ben turned on his heel, pressed Phil's hand as he passed through the crowd, and disappeared.

The old Commoner drove to the telegraph office and sent a message of more than a thousand words to the White House, a copy of which the operator delivered to Ben Cameron within an hour.

President Grant next morning issued a proclamation declaring the nine Scotch-Irish hill counties of South Carolina in a state of insurrection, ordered an army corps of five thousand men to report there for duty, pending the further necessity of martial law and the suspension of the writ of *Habeas Corpus*.

For historical accuracy:

"President Grant looked at the violence with increasing concern. He had a genuine regard for the well-being of the freedpeople who had supported the Union in large numbers and was concerned that the actions of the Ku Klux Klan were undermining the verdict of the Civil War. Sadly, the Federal Government's resources for curbing this widespread violence were limited, especially within the U.S. military, which had downsized significantly since the end of the Civil War. Grant was nevertheless determined to do something...

Congress responded with three "Force Acts" aimed at stopping the violence, especially within the Ku Klux Klan. The Enforcement Act of May 1870 prohibited "banding together" or "going in disguise upon the public highways or upon the premises of another" to violate a citizen's constitutional rights. As the Klan was known for their disguises, this act called put them on notice. The Second Force Act of February 1871 put federal elections under federal supervision mainly by federal judges and U.S. Marshals. Finally, the Third Force Act of April of 1871 empowered President Grant to suspend Habeas Corpus and use the military to enforce these acts. The latter two Force Acts were also known as the "Ku Klux Klan Acts."

https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/president-grant-takes-on-the-ku-klux-klan.htm

CHAPTER VI

The Counter Stroke

From the hour he had watched the capture of the armoury old Stoneman felt in the air a current against him which was electric, as if the dead had heard the cry of the clansmen's greeting, risen and rallied to their pale ranks.

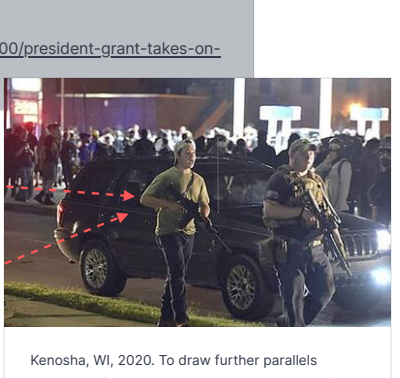
The daring campaign these men were waging took his breath. They were going not only to defeat his delegation to Congress, but send their own to take their seats, reinforced by the enormous power of a suppressed negro vote. The blow was so sublime in its audacity, he laughed in secret admiration while he raved and cursed.

The army corps took possession of the hill counties, quartering from five to six hundred regulars at each courthouse; but the mischief was done. The State was on fire. The eighty thousand rifles with which the negroes had been armed were now in the hands of their foes. A white rifle-club was organized in every town, village, and hamlet. They attended the public meetings with their guns, drilled in front of the speakers' stands, yelled, hooted, hissed, cursed, and jeered at the orators who dared to champion or apologize for negro rule. At night the hoofbeat of squadrons of pale horsemen and the crack of their revolvers struck terror to the heart of every negro, carpet-bagger, and scallawag.

Replace "negro" with "woke"

There was a momentary lull in the excitement, which Stoneman mistook for fear, at the appearance of the troops. He had the Governor appoint a white sheriff, a young scallawag from the mountains who was a noted moonshiner and desperado. He arrested over a hundred leading men in the county, charged them with complicity in the killing of the three members of the African Guard, and instructed the judge and clerk of the court to refuse bail and commit them to jail under military guard.

To his amazement the prisoners came into Piedmont armed and mounted. They paid no attention to the deputy sheriffs who were supposed to have them in charge. They deliberately formed in line under Ben Cameron's direction and he led them in a parade through the streets.



Kenosha, WI, 2020. To draw further parallels between this photo and The Clansman, the white person depicted above went on to murder two other white people who were taking part in an antiracist protest - i.e. refusing to conform to the mandates of white supremacy. Furthermore, the murderer evaded punishment for his crimes, which were committed in public and captured in multiple videos.

The five hundred United States regulars who were camped on the river bank were Westerners. Ben led his squadron of armed prisoners in front of this camp and took them through the evolutions of cavalry with the precision of veterans. The soldiers dropped their games and gathered, laughing, to watch them. The drill ended with a double-rank charge at the river embankment. When they drew every horse on his haunches on the brink, firing a volley with a single crash, a wild cheer broke from the soldiers, and the officers rushed from their tents.

Ben wheeled his men, galloped in front of the camp, drew them up at dress parade, and saluted. A low word of command from a trooper, and the Westerners quickly formed in ranks, returned the salute, and cheered. The officers rushed up, cursing, and drove the men back to their tents.

The horsemen laughed, fired a volley in the air, cheered, and galloped back to the courthouse. The court was glad to get rid of them. There was no question raised over technicalities in making out bail-bonds. The clerk wrote the names of imaginary bondsmen as fast as his pen could fly, while the perspiration stood in beads on his red forehead.

Another telegram from old Stoneman to the White House, and the Writ of *Habeas Corpus* was suspended and Martial Law proclaimed.

Enraged beyond measure at the salute from the troops, he had two companies of negro regulars sent from Columbia, and they camped in the Courthouse Square.

He determined to make a desperate effort to crush the fierce spirit before which his forces were being driven like chaff. He induced Bizzel to return from Cleveland with his negro wife and children. He was escorted to the City Hall and reinstalled as Mayor by the full force of seven hundred troops, and a negro guard placed around his house. Stoneman had Lynch run an excursion from the Black Belt, and brought a thousand negroes to attend a final rally at Piedmont. He placarded the town with posters on which were printed the Civil Rights Bill and the proclamation of the President declaring Martial Law.

Ben watched this day dawn with nervous dread. He had passed a sleepless night, riding in person to every Den of the Klan and issuing positive orders that no white man should come to Piedmont.

A clash with the authority of the United States he had avoided from the first as a matter of principle. It was essential to his success that his men should commit no act of desperation which would imperil his plans. Above all, he wished to avoid a clash with old Stoneman personally.

...seriously?

The arrival of the big excursion was the signal for a revival of negro insolence which had been planned. The men brought from the Eastern part of the State were selected for the purpose. They marched over the town yelling and singing. A crowd of them, half drunk, formed themselves three abreast and rushed the sidewalks, pushing every white man, woman, and child into the street.

They met Phil on his way to the hotel and pushed him into the gutter. He said nothing, crossed the street, bought a revolver, loaded it and put it in his pocket. He was not popular with the negroes, and he had been shot at twice on his way from the mills at night. The whole affair of this rally, over which his father meant to preside, filled him with disgust, and he was in an ugly mood.

Lynch's speech was bold, bitter, and incendiary, and at its close the drunken negro troopers from the local garrison began to slouch through the streets, two and two, looking for trouble.

At the close of the speaking Stoneman called the officer in command of these troops, and said:355

"Major, I wish this rally to-day to be a proclamation of the supremacy of law, and the enforcement of the equality of every man under law. Your troops are entitled to the rights of white men. I understand the hotel table has been free to-day to the soldiers from the camp on the river. They are returning the courtesy extended to the criminals who drilled before them. Send two of your black troops down for dinner and see that it is served. I wish an example for the State."

"It will be a dangerous performance, sir," the major protested.

The old Commoner furrowed his brow.

"Have you been instructed to act under my orders?"

"I have, sir," said the officer, saluting.

"Then do as I tell you," snapped Stoneman.

Ben Cameron had kept indoors all day, and dined with fifty of the Western troopers whom he had identified as leading in the friendly demonstration to his men. Margaret, who had been busy with Mrs. Cameron entertaining these soldiers, was seated in the dining-room alone, eating her dinner, while Phil waited impatiently in the parlour.

The guests had all gone when two big negro troopers, fighting drunk, walked into the hotel. They went to the water-cooler and drank ostentatiously, thrusting their thick lips coated with filth far into the coconut dipper, while a dirty hand grasped its surface.

They pushed the dining-room door open and suddenly flopped down beside Margaret.

She attempted to rise, and cried in rage:

"How dare you, black brutes?"

One of them threw his arm around her chair, thrust his face into hers, and said with a laugh:

"Don't hurry, my beauty; stay and take dinner wid us!"

Because of course all black men are out to sexually assault white women.

Margaret again attempted to rise, and screamed, as Phil rushed into the room with drawn revolver. One of the negroes fired at him, missed, and the next moment dropped dead with a bullet through his heart.

The other leaped across the table and through the open window.

Margaret turned, confronting both Phil and Ben with revolvers in their hands, and fainted.

Ben hurried Phil out the back door and persuaded him to fly.

"Man, you must go! We must not have a riot here to-day. There's no telling what will happen. A disturbance now, and my men will swarm into town to-night. For God's sake go, until things are quiet!"

"But I tell you I'll face it. I'm not afraid," said Phil quietly.

"No, but I am," urged Ben. "These two hundred negroes are armed and drunk. Their officers may not be able to control them, and they may lay their hands on you—go—go!—go!—you must go! The train is due in fifteen minutes."

He half lifted him on a horse tied behind the hotel, leaped on another, galloped to the flag-station two miles out of town, and put him on the north-bound train.

"Stay in Charlotte until I write for you," was Ben's parting injunction.

He turned his horse's head for McAllister's, sent the two boys with all speed to the Cyclops of each of the ten township Dens with positive orders to disregard all wild rumours from Piedmont and keep every man out of town for two days.

As he rode back he met a squad of mounted white regulars, who arrested him. The trooper's companion had sworn positively that he was the man who killed the negro.

Within thirty minutes he was tried by drum-head court-martial and sentenced to be shot.

I mean...I guess I'm supposed to feel pity or outrage or something, but, aside from concerns about due process and my opposition to capital punishment, I kinda think Ben was asking to get put up against a wall by someone. [shrug]

"All they that take up the sword shall perish by the sword." That's from the half of the Bible that white supremacists conveniently ignore for their own political purposes. Nothing ruins their fun like an antiracist white person who also knows their Bible. It tends to shorten debates, one way or another.

CHAPTER VII

The Snare of the Fowler

Sweet was the secret joy of old Stoneman over the fate of Ben Cameron. His death sentence would strike terror to his party, and his prompt execution, on the morning of the election but two days off, would turn the tide, save the State, and rescue his daughter from a hated alliance.

I am so ground down by the constant disregard for historical accuracy that I just cannot correct any more of Dixon's nonsense. I feel like Joe Pesci playing the lawyer in "My Cousin Vinny": (stands up) "Everything that man just said was bullshit." (sits back down, has no further questions).

He determined to bar the last way of escape. He knew the Klan would attempt a rescue, and stop at no means fair or foul short of civil war. Afraid of the loyalty of the white battalions quartered in Piedmont, he determined to leave immediately for Spartanburg, order an exchange of garrisons, and, when the death warrant was returned from headquarters, place its execution in the hands of a stranger, to whom appeal would be vain. He knew such an officer in the Spartanburg post, a man of fierce, vindictive nature, once court-martialled for cruelty, who hated every Southern white man with mortal venom. He would put him in command of the death watch.

He hired a fast team and drove across the county with all speed, doubly anxious to get out of town before Elsie discovered the tragedy and appealed to him for mercy. Her tears and agony would be more than he could endure. She would stay indoors on account of the crowds, and he would not be missed until evening, when safely beyond her reach.

When Phil arrived at Charlotte he found an immense crowd at the bulletin board in front of the *Observer* office reading the account of the Piedmont tragedy. To his horror he learned of the arrest, trial, and sentence of Ben for the deed which he had done.

He rushed to the office of the Division Superintendent of the Piedmont Air Line Railroad, revealed his identity, told him the true story of the tragedy, and begged for a special to carry him back. The Superintendent, who was a clansman, not only agreed, but within an hour had the special ready and two cars filled with stern-looking men to accompany him. Phil asked no questions. He knew what it meant. The train stopped at Gastonia and King's Mountain and took on a hundred more men.

The special pulled into Piedmont at dusk. Phil ran to the Commandant and asked for an interview with Ben alone.

"For what purpose, sir?" the officer asked.

Phil resorted to a ruse, knowing the Commandant to be unaware of any difference of opinion between him and his father.

"I hold a commission to obtain a confession from the prisoner which may save his life by destroying the Ku Klux Klan."

He was admitted at once and the guard ordered to withdraw until the interview ended.

Phil took Ben Cameron's place, exchanging hat and coat, and wrote a note to his father, telling in detail the truth, and asked for his immediate interference.

"Deliver that, and I'll be out of here in two hours," he said, as he placed the note in Ben's hand.

"I'll go straight to the house," was the quick reply.

The exchange of the Southerner's slouch hat and Prince Albert for Phil's derby and short coat completely fooled the guard in the dim light. The men were as much alike as twins except the shade of difference in the colour of their hair. He passed the sentinel without a challenge, and walked rapidly toward Stoneman's house.

On the way he was astonished to meet five hundred soldiers just arrived on a special from Spartanburg. Amazed at the unexpected movement, he turned and followed them back to the jail.

They halted in front of the building he had just vacated, and their commander handed an official document to the officer in charge. The guard was changed and a cordon of soldiers encircled the prison.

The Piedmont garrison had received notice by wire to move to Spartanburg, and Ben heard the beat of their drums already marching to board the special.

He pressed forward and asked an interview with the Captain in command.

The answer came with a brutal oath:

"I have been warned against all the tricks and lies this town can hatch. The commander of the death watch will permit no interview, receive no visitors, hear no appeal, and allow no communication with the prisoner until after the execution. You can announce this to whom it may concern."

"But you've got the wrong man. You have no right to execute him," said Ben excitedly.

"I'll risk it," he answered, with a sneer.

Several state militias were sent out after the Klan with varying degrees of success, but they had been so hesitant to resort to force and so effective had been the KKK's campaign of terror that by the time the militias got involved it was basically too little, too late. There were also all kinds of problems enforcing the law and getting the militias to obey commands due to infiltration by men friendly to the South's cause. At the end of the day, the Ku Klux Klan essentially achieved their hateful goals.

"Great God!" Ben cried beneath his breath. "The old fool has entrapped his son in the net he spread for me!"

Omg - what?! No - you idiots subverted the law by swapping identities. How is that possibly the fault of your father???

CHAPTER VIII

A Ride for a Life

When Ben Cameron failed to find either Elsie or her father at home, he hurried to the hotel, walking under the shadows of the trees to avoid recognition, though his resemblance to Phil would have enabled him to pass in his hat and coat unchallenged by any save the keenest observers.

He found his mother's bedroom door ajar and saw Elsie within, sobbing in her arms. He paused, watched, and listened.

Never had he seen his mother so beautiful—her face calm, intelligent, and vital, crowned with a halo of gray. She stood, flushed and dignified, softly smoothing the golden hair of the sobbing girl whom she had learned to love as her daughter. Her whole being reflected the years of homage she had inspired in husband, children, and neighbours. What a woman! She had made war inevitable, fought it to the bitter end; and in the despair of a reign of terror, still the prophetess and high priestess of a people, serene, undismayed, and defiant, she had fitted the uniform of a Grand Dragon on her last son, and sewed in secret day and night to equip his men. And through it all she was without affectation, her sweet motherly ways, gentle manner and bearing always resistless to those who came within her influence.

Notice that he says nothing about who his mother is as a person, only what she looks like and what she does for others. She is defined by her relationships to others, be it her own daughter or the State. Even her "sweet motherly ways, gentle manner and bearing" are qualities valued for being adjuncts to compliance. I submit that he doesn't love his mother so much as he loves his own ideal of her.

"If he dies," cried the tearful voice, "I shall never forgive myself for not surrendering without reserve and fighting his battles with him!"

"He is not dead yet," was the mother's firm answer. "Doctor Cameron is on Queen's back. Your lover's men will be riding to-night—these young dare-devil Knights of the South, with their life in their hands, a song on their lips, and the scorn of death in their souls!"

"Then I'll ride with them," cried the girl, suddenly lifting her head.

Omg, of course - because all Northern abolitionist women needed was the right Southern bigot to bring them back into the fold...

Ben stepped into the room, and with a cry of joy Elsie sprang into his arms. The mother stood silent until their lips met in the long tender kiss of the last surrender of perfect love.

"How did you escape so soon?" she asked quietly, while Elsie's head still lay on his breast.

"Phil shot the brute, and I rushed him out of town. He heard the news, returned on the special, took my place, and sent me for his father. The guard has been changed and it's impossible to see him, or communicate with the new Commandant——"

Elsie started and turned pale.

"And father has hidden to avoid me—merciful God—if Phil is executed——"

"He isn't dead yet, either," said Ben, slipping his arm around her. "But we must save him without a clash or a drop of bloodshed, if possible. The fate of our people may hang on this. A battle with United States troops now might mean ruin for the South——"

"Gov. William G. Brownlow of TN mobilized a similar militia effort in 1869. The legislature gave him authority to declare martial law, which he did in nine counties...Little fighting occurred, for the Klan leaders decided to disband their forces before the militia arrived. Few arrests and no convictions took place. Although this campaign appeared to have achieved success, other forms of intimidation persisted, and the Republicans lost control of TN in the fall of 1869."

- James McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction*

"But you will save him?" Elsie pleaded, looking into his face.

"Yes—or I'll go down with him," was the steady answer.

"Where is Margaret?" he asked.

"Gone to McAllister's with a message from your father," Mrs. Cameron replied,

"Tell her when she returns to keep a steady nerve. I'll save Phil. Send her to find her father. Tell him to hold five hundred men ready for action in the woods by the river and the rest in reserve two miles out of town——"

"May I go with her?" Elsie asked eagerly.

"No. I may need you," he said. "I am going to find the old statesman now, if I have to drag the bottomless pit. Wait here until I return."

Ben reached the telegraph office unobserved, called the operator at Columbia, and got the Grand Giant of the county into the office. Within an hour he learned that the death warrant had been received and approved. It would be returned by a messenger to Piedmont on the morning train. He learned also that any appeal for a stay must be made through the Honourable Austin Stoneman, the secret representative of the Government clothed with this special power. The execution had been ordered the day of the election, to prevent the concentration of any large force bent on rescue.

"The old fox!" Ben muttered.

From the Grand Giant at Spartanburg he learned, after a delay of three hours, that Stoneman had left with a boy in a buggy, which he had hired for three days, and refused to tell his destination. He promised to follow and locate him as quickly as possible.

It was the afternoon on the day following, during the progress of the election, before Ben received the message from Spartanburg that Stoneman had been found at the Old Red Tavern where the roads crossed from Piedmont to Hambright. It was only twelve miles away, just over the line on the North Carolina side.

He walked with Margaret to the block where Queen stood saddled, watching with pride the quiet air of self-control with which she bore herself.

"Now, my sister, you know the way to the tavern. Ride for your sweetheart's life. Bring the old man here by five o'clock, and we'll save Phil without a fight. Keep your nerve. The Commandant knows a regiment of mine is lying in the woods, and he's trying to slip out of town with his prisoner. I'll stand by my men ready for a battle at a moment's notice, but for God's sake get here in time to prevent it."

She stooped from the saddle, pressed her brother's hand, kissed him, and galloped swiftly over the old Way of Romance she knew so well.

On reaching the tavern, the landlord rudely denied that any such man was there, and left her standing dazed and struggling to keep back the tears.

A boy of eight, with big wide friendly eyes, slipped into the room, looked up into her face tenderly, and said:

"He's the biggest liar in North Carolina. The old man's right upstairs in the room over your head. Come on; I'll show you."

See?! Even the little white boys are more virtuous than black people!

I swear, this book should come with barf bags and transform into a flotation device in case the relentless vindictiveness and racism make you throw yourself off the nearest bridge.

Margaret snatched the child in her arms and kissed him.

She knocked in vain for ten minutes. At last she heard his voice within:

"Go away from that door!"

"I'm from Piedmont, sir," cried Margaret, "with an important message from the Commandant for you."

"Yes; I saw you come. I will not see you. I know everything, and I will hear no appeal."

"But you cannot know of the exchange of men," pleaded the girl.

"I tell you I know all about it. I will not interfere——"

"But you could not be so cruel——"

"The majesty of the law must be vindicated. The judge who consents to the execution of a murderer is not cruel. He is showing mercy to Society. Go, now; I will not hear you."

In vain Margaret knocked, begged, pleaded, and sobbed.

At last, in a fit of desperation, as she saw the sun sinking lower and the precious minutes flying, she hurled her magnificent figure against the door and smashed the cheap lock which held it.

The old man sat at the other side of the room, looking out of the window, with his massive jaws locked in rage. The girl staggered to his side, knelt by his chair, placed her trembling hand on his arm, and begged:

"For the love of Jesus, have mercy! Come with me quickly!"

With a growl of anger, he said:

"No!"

"It was a mad impulse, in my defence as well as his own."

"Impulse, yes! But back of it lay banked the fires of cruelty and race hatred! The Nation cannot live with such barbarism rotting its heart out."

"But this is war, sir—a war of races, and this an accident of war—besides, his life had been attempted by them twice before."

Put on your sheet and gtfo here, then, coward. Maybe Elsie missed the memo about this being the land of the **free** and the ***brave*** - as in "brave enough to tolerate fear of the unknown as embodied in other people, customs, and cultures."

"So I've heard, and yet the negro always happens to be the victim——"

Margaret leaped to her feet and glared at the old man for a moment in uncontrollable anger.

"Are you a fiend?" she fairly shrieked.

Old Stoneman merely pursed his lips.

The girl came a step closer, and extended her hand again in mute appeal.

"No, I was foolish. You are not cruel. I have heard of a hundred acts of charity you have done among our poor. Come, this is horrible! It is impossible! You cannot consent to the death of your son——"

Stoneman looked up sharply:

"Thank God, he hasn't married my daughter yet——"

"Your daughter!" gasped Margaret. "I've told you it was Phil who killed the negro! He took Ben's place just before the guards were exchanged——"

"Phil—Phil?" shrieked the old man, staggering to his club foot and stumbling toward Margaret with dilated eyes and whitening face; "My boy—Phil?—why—why, are you crazy?—Phil? Did you say—Phil?"

"Yes. Ben persuaded him to go to Charlotte until the excitement passed to avoid trouble. Come, come, sir, we must be quick! We may be too late!"

She seized and pulled him toward the door.

"Yes. Yes, we must hurry," he said in a laboured whisper, looking around dazed. "You will show me the way, my child—you love him—yes, we will go quickly—quickly! my boy—my boy!"

Margaret called the landlord, and while they hitched Queen to the buggy, the old man stood helplessly wringing and fumbling his big ugly hands, muttering incoherently, and tugging at his collar as though about to suffocate.

As they dashed away, old Stoneman laid a trembling hand on Margaret's arm.

"Your horse is a good one, my child?"

"Yes; the one Marion saved—the finest in the county."

"And you know the way?"

"Every foot of it. Phil and I have driven it often."

"Yes, yes—you love him," he sighed, pressing her hand.

Through the long reckless drive, as the mare flew over the rough hills, every nerve and muscle of her fine body at its utmost tension, the father sat silent. He braced his club foot against the iron bar of the dashboard and gripped the sides of the buggy to steady his feeble body. Margaret leaned forward intently watching the road to avoid an accident. The old man's strange colourless eyes stared straight in front, wide open, and seeing nothing, as if the soul had already fled through them into eternity.

CHAPTER IX

"Vengeance Is Mine"

It was dark long before Margaret and Stoneman reached Piedmont. A mile out of town a horse neighed in the woods, and, tired as she was, Queen threw her head high and answered the call.

The old man did not notice it, but Margaret knew a squadron of white-and-scarlet horsemen stood in those woods, and her heart gave a bound of joy.

As they passed the Presbyterian church, she saw through the open window her father standing at his Elder's seat leading in prayer. They were holding a watch service, asking God for victory in the eventful struggle of the day.

Margaret attempted to drive straight to the jail, and a sentinel stopped them.

"I am Stoneman, sir—the real commander of these troops," said the old man, with authority.

"Orders is orders, and I don't take 'em from you," was the answer.

"Then tell your commander that Mr. Stoneman has just arrived from Spartanburg and asks to see him at the hotel immediately."

He hobbled into the parlour and waited in agony while Margaret tied the mare. Ben, her mother and father, and every servant were gone.

In a few moments the second officer hurried to Stoneman, saluted, and said:

"We've pulled it off in good shape, sir. They've tried to fool us with a dozen tricks, and a whole regiment has been lying in wait for us all day. But at dark the Captain outwitted them, took his prisoner with a squad of picked cavalry, and escaped their pickets. They've been gone an hour, and ought to be back with the body——"

Old Stoneman sprang on him with the sudden fury of a madman, clutching at his throat.

"If you've killed my son," he gasped—"go—go! Follow them with a swift messenger and stop them! It's a mistake—you're killing the wrong man—you're killing my boy—quick—my God, quick—don't stand there staring at me!"

The officer rushed to obey his order as Margaret entered.

The old man seized her arm, and said with laboured breath:

"Your father, my child, ask him to come to me quickly."

Margaret hurried to the church, and an usher called the doctor to the door.

He read the question trembling on the girl's lips.

"Nothing has happened yet, my daughter. Your brother has held a regiment of his men in readiness every moment of the day."

"Mr. Stoneman is at the hotel and asks to see you immediately," she whispered.

"God grant he may prevent bloodshed," said the father. "Go inside and stay with your mother."

When Doctor Cameron entered the parlour Stoneman hobbled painfully to meet him, his face ashen, and his breath rattling in his throat as if his soul were being strangled.

"You are my enemy, Doctor," he said, taking his hand, "but you are a pious man. I have been called an infidel—I am only a wilful sinner—I have slain my own son, unless God Almighty, who can raise the dead, shall save him! You are the man at whom I aimed the blow that has fallen on my head. I wish to confess to you and set myself right before God. He may hear my cry, and have mercy on me."

He gasped for breath, sank into his seat, looked around, and said:

"Will you close the door?"

The doctor complied with his request and returned.

"We all wear masks, Doctor," began the trembling voice. "Beneath lie the secrets of love and hate from which actions move. My will alone forged the chains of negro rule. Three forces moved me—party success, a vicious woman, and the quenchless desire for personal vengeance. When I first fell a victim to the wiles of the yellow vampire who kept my house, I dreamed of lifting her to my level. And when I felt myself sinking into the black abyss of animalism, I, whose soul had learned the pathway of the stars and held high converse with the great spirits of the ages——"

He paused, looked up in terror, and whispered:

"What's that noise? Isn't it the distant beat of horses' hoofs?"

"No," said the doctor, listening; "it's the roar of the falls we hear, from a sudden change of the wind."

"I'm done now," Stoneman went on, slowly fumbling his hands. "My life has been a failure. The dice of God are always loaded."

His great head drooped lower, and he continued:

"Mightiest of all was my motive of revenge. Fierce business and political feuds wrecked my iron mills. I shouldered their vast debts, and paid the last mortgage of a hundred thousand dollars the week before Lee invaded my State. I stood on the hill in the darkness, cried, raved, cursed, while I watched the troops lay those mills in ashes. Then and there I swore that I'd live until I ground the South beneath my heel! When I got back to my house they had buried a Confederate soldier in the field. I dug his body out, carted it to the woods, and threw it into a ditch——"

IRL Thaddeus Stevens opened an ironworks to employ freedmen because - once again - Thaddeus Stevens actually walked the talk. The Confederates destroyed the ironworks during fighting in Tennessee.

The hand of the white-haired Southerner suddenly gripped old Stoneman's throat—and then relaxed. His head sank on his breast, and he cried in anguish:

"God be merciful to me a sinner! Would I, too, seek revenge!"

Stoneman looked at the doctor, dazed by his sudden onslaught and collapse.

"Yes, he was somebody's boy down here," he went on, "who was loved perhaps even as I love—I don't blame you. See, in the inside pocket next to my heart I carry the pictures of Phil and Elsie taken from babyhood up, all set in a little book. They don't know this—nor does the world dream I've been so soft-hearted——"

He drew a miniature album from his pocket and fumbled it aimlessly:

"You know Phil was my first-born——"

His voice broke, and he looked at the doctor helplessly.

The Southerner slipped his arm around the old man's shoulders and began a tender and reverent prayer.

The sudden thunder of a squad of cavalry with clanking sabres swept by the hotel toward the jail.

Stoneman scrambled to his feet, staggered, and caught a chair.

"It's no use," he groaned, "—they've come with his body—I'm slipping down—the lights are going out—I haven't a friend! It's dark and cold—I'm alone, and lost—God—has—hidden—His—face—from—me!"

Voices were heard without, and the tramp of heavy feet on the steps.

Stoneman clutched the doctor's arm in agony:

"Stop them!—Stop them! Don't let them bring him in here!"

He sank limp into the chair and stared at the door as it swung open and Phil walked in, with Ben and Elsie by his side, in full clansman disguise.

The old man leaped to his feet and gasped:

"The Klan!—The Klan! No? Yes! It's true—glory to God, they've saved my boy—Phil—Phil!"

"How did you rescue him?" Doctor Cameron asked Ben.

"Had a squadron lying in wait on every road that led from town. The Captain thought a thousand men were on him, and surrendered without a shot."

At twelve o'clock Ben stood at the gate with Elsie.

"Your fate hangs in the balance of this election to-night," she said. "I'll share it with you, success or failure, life or death."

"Success, not failure," he answered firmly. "The Grand Dragons of six States have already wired victory. Look at our lights on the mountains! They are ablaze—range on range our signals gleam until the Fiery Cross is lost among the stars!"

"What does it mean?" she whispered.

"That I am a successful revolutionist—that Civilization has been saved, and the South redeemed from shame."

What-the-f-ever.

THE END

(HALLELUJAH!!!!!!!!!)