

*Ann of the
Ku Klux Klan*

A partly fictional story of the Old South,
Centered around the Kirke-Holden War
and the murder of John Walter ('Chicken')
Stephens.

By **TOM HENDERSON**

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Ann Of The Ku Klux Klan

The shadows of night were falling on "Leahurst," colonial home of the Leas under grant of King George of England. The gentle winds of late autumntime lazily stirred the tops of the graceful cedars and lofty oaks on the large lawn. From the barnlot came the fading notes of tinkling bells, as the cows sprawled in their littered stalls. Jarflies chirred their trilling notes and a whippoorwill called to its mate in nocturnal wooing. Seemingly, Nature and all her children were serenely settling down to peaceful slumber.

Ann Lea, lovely bud of blossoming womanhood and only daughter of the home, blithely slipped into the antiquesly decorated parlor, drew the heavy shades of the large windows and lighted the canopied kerosene lamp. Her athletic body moved with the bouyancy of tomboyish life as she darted to a corner of the room and lifted an edge of the massive Brussels rug. The lifting revealed a partial view of white robes and hoods, deftly spread in unwrinkled underlayings, the regalia of the "invisible riders" of the order of the Ku Klux Klan, newly organized to safeguard property and save southern womanhood from the loot and lust of those who, just one generation removed from the wild savagery of Africa, were exulting in the exotic and voluptuous freedoms of Abraham Lincoln's emancipation proclamation—freedoms for which they were unfitted and unprepared, in the enjoyment of which they were being encouraged and spurred on by unscrupulous white men, both northern "carpetbaggers" and southern "scalawags," the riffraff of of the Union and Confederate armies, who were using them for their own political, financial, social and personal aggrandizement.

Ann Lea's own tapering artistic fingers had sewed the cotton cambric of the regalia, with the help of her mother, born Ann Blount Wright in Virginia, and 'Old Liney', faithful ex-slave negress, who had stayed on after Gen. Robert E. Lee's surrender, to cook, tend and fend for "her folks." Far into many a night those aristocratic hands had plied the needle in sewing the uniforms that were to take the place of the bed sheets which were formerly used by the klansmen, imitative of the garb of haints and phantom riders. These three alone knew the secret of the hiding place of the robes and hoods, whose gleaming whiteness struck terror to the eyes and hearts of base white men and superstitious blacks, as their wearers dashed horseback at nighttimes along the roads and bypaths. Were not six of her own eight brothers true klansmen! Was not her brother, Captain John, the Imperial Wizard of the klan! Was it not at Leahurst that the invisible riders assembled from far and near to put on their regalia!

Stealthily, Ann drew from the floor a robe and a hood. Daringly, she thrust her hands through the armholes of the robe and buttoned the collar around her slender neck. She was vainly trying to hide the long, luxuriant curls of her chestnut-brown hair under the hood, when 'Old Liney' entered the parlor with cat-like, unannounced movements.

"Lawsy mussey, 'Little Missie'," exclaimed the overly fat colored woman, "whut in God's name is yo' doin'? Don't yo' knos no bedder den t' go monkeyin' wid dem ragaliums an' hit hain't skercely sunsot? Hit hain't safe. I jist scatted erway frum de dinin' room do' dem two 'ittle mischievous brudders ob your'n, no bigger den grasshoppers, who's dyin' t' jine an' git 'em nuniforms so's dey kin skeer de livin' lites outter sum ob dese onery niggers and po' white trash. 'Sides, yo' ain't no Klu Klucker, nohow!"

"Shush, 'Aunt Liney'," admonishingly puckered the pretty lips, "yes I am, too. I'm a full-fledged member of the 'Knights of the Royal Order of the Ku Klux Klan."

"Whut yo' talkin' fulishments fer, Child?" reprimandingly said 'Old Liney', "don't yo' kno' don't nobody 'long 'sides white gennelmums ob de poure aristookrasy, an' yo' gotter kiss de Book an' swar on er stack ob Bibles a mile hi' yo' ain't neber ontel jedgement da' gwinter 'vulge none ob de secruts ob de lodge er go gallervatin' eround gossipertatin' erbout de doins ob de brudders when dey larryups de naked back ob sum low-life nigger er cuts de throate ob sum skulmongerin' po' white trash. An', 'sides, yo' gotter hab de passpot, sealed in de blud ob de Dragon plucked from yo' own veins befo' yo' kin git ni' t' de koncave down t' dem Ivy Banks on County Line Crik."

"Listen, 'Aunt Liney'," excitedly whispered Ann, "I belong, I belong; I made them take me in, I made them do it; I took the oath, I took the oath! Look! See where I pricked my arm and got the blood."

"Lord Goddermighty, 'Little Missie', Heben hep us! Howcum, whut fo', how yo' done hit!" blurted out 'Old Liney', her voice shaking with emotions of horror and her eyes bulging from their sockets.

"You remember, 'Aunt Liney'," continued Ann, "yesterday afternoon when I saddled 'Black Beauty', to ride over to Uncle Doctor Calvin's to take supper. Well, I never went to Uncle Calvin's. I rode over that way, but I took a path leading down to the creek, and I hid 'Black Beauty' in the tall reeds, and then I walked to Ivy Banks, and I hid behind a big boulder just inside the entrance to the cave. I was right there when 'Brer' John and all the rest of the klansmen assembled in secret konclave, and I heard and saw everything they said and did. They were making plans to put 'Chicken' Stephens to death. They —"

"Hebenly Jesus," ejaculatingly interrupted 'Old

Liney', "whut dat ol' buzzard ob a 'publican an' sinner bin up t' now? Whut fer dey gwinter kill him?"

"I don't exactly know, 'Aunt Liney'," answered Ann, "but he's a nigger leader, and they indicted him for arson, inciting seditions, and pernicious atrocities, whatever that is. You ought to have seen how 'sprised they were, 'Aunt Liney', when I jumped out right in the middle of them and told them they had to let me join the klan right then and there like I had been begging to do, since I knew all the secret signs and passwords and had heard all their plans about the plot to get rid of Senator Stephens. My! They hemmed and hawed, and scolded me. Brother Tom and Brother Weldon talked about taking me across their laps and spanking me good, but I outtalked them. Some of the others were scared nearly to death. Finally, 'Brer' John, who was the captain and the judge, told them I was just as good a klansman as any man there, and that they had as well let me go on and take the oath of allegiance, since I had helped to make their regalia and kept the robes and hoods securely hidden, and now knew their secret plans of the death execution. He told them I could shoot a gun and ride horses to the hounds, and that my mettle was just as brave and true as his own. They took a vote on me, 'Aunt Liney', and I was unanimously elected a member-in-good-standing of the Ku Klux Klan. Then, they held the induction ceremonies, and I pricked my vein and mingled my blood with theirs in solemn oath to Almighty God that I would never divulge a secret or name. Only, I was excepting you all the time, 'Aunt Liney', and I'm telling you 'cause I know you're really one of us and just as loyal. We're going to meet again tonight in the dark recesses of the rocks of Ivy Banks, to draw the black button to pick the one who is to stab Stephens to death. I'll be there, but the old meanies think I'm a sissy and too much of a lady to let me take my chance at the black button, and they won't even agree to let me go to Yanceyville with them to carry out the decree. But, I'm a 'Klu Klucker', all right, 'Aunt Liney'."

The old negress had been too dazed to interrupt the fast-flowing conversation of the thrilled young lady. Her enormous hips were now wedged between the fragile arms of a priceless chair, and her huge body swayed forwards and backwards with effortless motions. Mumbly, she was praying her Lord Jesus to "sabe 'Little Missie' frum harm."

There came a knock on the off-side door leading into the dining room. Ann hurriedly refolded the regalia, replaced it flat on the floor and relaid the carpet. 'Old Liney' eased herself out of the chair. She intuitively knew the knuckles of the knockings, and she fortified herself for her favorite sport of berating the much-hen-pecked husband of her bosom, 'Old Jeff' McGhee. She spoke to the knockings:

"Who dar?"

"It's me, 'Little Missie'," came the meek voice of the old darky, speaking to the white lady and seemingly trying to dodge a probable encounter with his wife, "an' de yard is fillin' up wid white gennelmums a-hors'back an' dey's axin' fo' you."

"Go on erway, yo' ol' pryin' debil," volunteered 'Old Liney', dander in her voice, before Ann could reply. "Pity whut dem Klu Kluckers wood mistook yo' fer sum udder nigger an' gin yo' thurty-nin' lashes an' a couple ob whaks on yo' kinky haid."

"Open the front door and invite them in, 'Uncle Jeff,'" ordered Ann, "and tell them to go upstairs to the company bedroom."

The youthful Ku Klux Klansman quickly took charge and drove 'Old Liney', still fuming and fussing and rearing for a bilge with her docile husband, into working action. She and the negress dragged one side of the heavy carpet to the center of the room, and began to pick up and pile the white garments. Then reversing the lay of the carpet, they took from its hiding place the last piece of the regalia. Ann hugged to her bosom one suit.

"This is my own, 'Aunt Liney'," she said. "I made it this morning for me, and I'm going to wear it tonight. You take all the other suits and carry them upstairs, so the gentlemen can dress."

Inky darkness covered the land as the white-robed figures silently left the mansion, mounted their horses and galloped away to Ivy Banks. The dainty slip of a girl, garbed in her regalia, slipped out to the stable-stall, saddled 'Black Beauty', lithely sprang upward, and mounted her steed in lady-like side-saddle fashion. A whisper to the ear of 'Black Beauty' was enough to send him on a run to follow the "invisible riders."

* * *

CHAPTER TWO

Ann arose early the next morning, went to the kitchen and helped 'Old Liney' prepare the morning meal. After breakfast, she helped her wash the dishes, and then herded her into her private boudoir. All the while she had been bubbling over with suppressed news. She was now positioned to relieve herself in confidential talk to her faithful old black mammy.

"Sit down and listen to me, 'Aunt Liney'," she said, "cause I've got lots to tell you. I was right there on the spot, standing back a little, when 'Brer' JoAn, the Imperial Wizard, called the konklave in session. He looked awfully solemn and he talked just like a preacher, only he didn't shout. I believe I remember every word of his speech, and I've got to tell it to you.

"Comrades of the Ku Klux Klan," said 'Brer' John, 'we have met here to make final plans to strike a blow for the safety of Southern womanhood and for the

salvation of our beloved Southland. Insidious assassins are abroad in our land and 'Loyalty Leagues' are springing up everywhere. Human life is unsafe, many of your houses and barns are already in the ashes of arson's torch, and no virtuous white woman dares to travel unaccompanied along our highways even in broad daylight time, lest she be raped and despoiled by some foul beast, fresh from the jungles of Africa. Our state is flat upon her back, the ballot-box is no longer your bulwark of safety, and our courts of justice have been debauched to the point where no former owner of a slave can get justice. Base white men, Confederate 'scalawags' and Union 'carpetbaggers', political hyenas, scavengers and jackals, are telling the niggers that this is their country now and that they are the masters and we are the slaves. They are even preaching social equality and egging on the blacks to demand that they be allowed to marry and intermarry with the whites. They are being incited to riot and rapine, and they are being told that the administration in Washington and the blankety-blank Republicans of the North will back them up in whatever devilment they do. Our blood boils. This is the white man's country, and by the eternal gods it shall remain so.

" 'Comrades, it is a fearful thing we are called upon to do, but civil law and justice have failed. Orderly processes of law no longer protect us. The Ku Klu Klan has established its own courts of justice. We have already tried, legally and fairly, one John Walter Stephens, and a jury of his peers has found him guilty of crimes which deserve the death penalty, and the sentence of death has been passed on him. It remains for us only to execute that sentence. John Walter Stephens must die, that liberty may live.

" 'As Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, I shall name twelve of our number to see that the decree of this court is faithfully executed. Of this number I shall be one, unwilling to saddle upon you any duty or danger that I myself am unready to assume or risk. I have here in my hat twelve buttons, one for each of you I shall name. All of these buttons are white, but one. Who draws the black button draws to himself the solemn duty of putting John Walter Stephens to death.

" 'I understand the Republicans, most of whom, as you well know, are niggers, are having a convention in Yanceyville tomorrow afternoon to name candidates. 'Chicken' Stephens will be the main ramrod of that meeting, and I have reasons for knowing he is trying to get Sheriff Wiley to accept the Republican nomination for sheriff. It will probably be sundown before that convention adjourns. The klansmen I name will ride into Yanceyville late tomorrow afternoon, one by one, in civilian attire but with robes and hoods concealed under their saddles, tether their horses at convenient points in the rear of the courthouse, and, as

secretly as possible, enter the back hallway and conceal themselves in the alcove leading into Stephens' office. As you are all aware, his office is the first one on the right as you enter from the rear. I will send Sheriff Wiley into the convention hall, have him beckon to Stephens to meet him in his office below, as if supposedly to tell him his decision about accepting the nomination, and thus fool and betray him into our hands. We will have a plowline ready, already noosed, and this will be thrown over his head and hurriedly taughtened, to prevent an outcry. In the meantime, Sheriff Wiley will have passed out of the front entrance to the public square, where he will be seen and thus establish an alibi, in case he is accused as one of the perpetrators of the deed. The execution of death will not be accomplished until we have all gone inside of Stephens' office, along with him.

"Comrades, as I call your names, come forward and draw your buttons, and may God give you courage and strength to perform your duty."

"Aunt Liney," continued Ann, "I acknowledge some shivers did run up and down my spine as I looked on and listened, and maybe a few tears did trickle down my cheeks, but my heart never failed me. As a small fire was started just inside the cave, I glanced heavenward and saw a little cloud pass across the face of the peeping moon, and I thought of the poet's words:

" 'Stranger, I am to Rhoderic Dhu
A kinsman born and clansman true.'

"I joined the other klansmen in taking a little cross, or it might have represented a dagger, made of resin-fat lightwood, with its point cut to razor-like sharpness, and pricked a vein in my arm. Then we smeared our crosses with our blood, and each lighted his cross, held it aloft for a moment, then touched points each with the other, and sealed in our mingled blood the vow that never a klansman would betray the trust of their secret and that never a klansman should die, until the last one had passed away, but that another klansman would be there at his deathside, to hold his hand and to seal his lips if, in subconscious delirium, he should start to tell his secret or to name a name of a brother klansman. Then, 'Aunt Liney', we all threw our blood-stained crosses into the blaze of the pyre, in funereal consummation of our oaths, annihilation of evidence and 'ashes to ashes' condemnation of the soul of John Walter Stephens."

* * *

CHAPTER THREE

To the witness-chair we now call the posthumous writings of Capt. John G. Lea, obtained by the late Col. Fred A. Olds and deposited by him in the archives of state in the capital at Raleigh, slightly altered to conform to discrepancies incident to the lapse of time and

the forgetfulness of memory, and purged of name-calling, lest the innocent living be offended or injured:

"The plot to kill 'Chicken' Stephens was carried out with barely a hitch in the detailed plans. One exception should be mentioned. The klansman who drew the black button never did the stabbing. At the crucial moment, after he had drawn his surgical instrument of death, his nerve failed him, his tender heart rebelled, and his arm dropped palsiedly to his side.

"Sheriff Wiley was successful in enticing Stephens out of the political meeting. The Republican leader called another to preside in his absence, and hurriedly left the courtroom, for his office below. Undoubtedly, he suspected no double-crossing or foul play as he walked the length of the long hallway in the gathering twilight. Just before he reached the alcove which led into his office, the noose fell around his neck. There was a guttural cry and a bracing of his feet, but there was no friend near to hear, and the rope quickly pressed upon his windpipe and choked his voice. He was dragged into his own office, and its door was locked.

"I am now the only living man who knows exactly what transpired in that room. The noose was untaughtened a bit, but pistols were kept pointed at the heart of the prisoner. Stephens glanced out of one of the east windows, facing his home across the hill, and, in the fading light, he saw his little children playing hide-and-seek in the yard. He was then commanded to say his prayers for the last time. He fell upon his knees, but his prayers were silent communions with God. As he arose, he made a request that he be allowed to approach the window and look for the last time upon the flitting forms of the children of his flesh and blood. I granted that request, but as he stepped to the window, the powerful hand of the man, who had grabbed the knife when the nerve of the klansman who had drawn the black button failed, struck with terrific force, and Stephens' face fell against a pane of glass. Splotches of blood fell upon the inside ledge of the rock window-sill—splotches that have lingered for more than fifty years as a reminder of the grim tragedy of that fearful time.

"Five more times the executioner plunged his weapon to vital spots. The rope was left around the neck of the dead man, and the body was thrown on the woodpile in the northeast corner. The klansmen then slipped out of the office, locked the door from the outside, mounted their horses and scattered to the several roads leading out of the little countyseat village. One klansman, as he dashed across Poteat's bridge, threw the heavy brass key into the waters of County Line creek."

CHAPTER FOUR

The honored Ex-Sheriff 'Baz' Graves, dying just

the other day in his 88th year, is now speaking to the writer:

"I was a strapping lad of 16 years old, and I saw the murdered body of Stephens the next morning. Negroes had been hunting for him ever since shortly after he left the courtroom. Hundreds of times they had knocked on his office door, turned the knob, and even tried to force the heavy lock of the stout door. Finally, about daylight, 'Uncle' Jerry Graves, a worthy old colored man, got a large goods-box, rolled it up to the high-pitched window, peeked through the panes, and saw a leg of the body of Stephens. The lock of the door was then broken, and the corpse brought out and laid on the lawn. There were three small punctures in the neck, and three in the region of the heart. The punctures were no larger than holes that might have been made by a knitting needle. I have never been satisfied that the knife found near the body made those holes. A piece of steel, especially hand-forged for the purpose, must have been used in the stabbing. The coroner's jury brought in a verdict that 'the deceased came to his death at the hands of unknown parties.'

"All night long John Walter Stephens' wife kept lonely vigil in her home but a few hundred yards from where the body of her dead husband lay. She had known that his life was imperiled and, doubtless, as she huddled her little children and hushed them in sleep, she had forebodings, if not visions, of the calamity that kept her husband away from his home. One can easily picture the pathetic figure of the pitiful woman as she knelt in prayer in her night of Gethsemane, begging that she might not have to drink the cup of sorrow to its dregs.

"It has been said that no man or woman of the white race went to her when death had come to her home in a Christian land, and either comforted or helped her. Negroes bore the body to her after the inquest, and Negroes gave it Christian burial. The grave is in the far southeastern corner of the Methodist burial ground in Yanceyville. Rough stones, set in the ground west and east, mark the spot, and two great boxwoods are everlasting green memorials of somebody's loving testimony.

"The wife and children moved from Yanceyville shortly afterwards. I do not know where they went or what became of them. There must have been something of good in the man, with all of his faults. I never heard questioned his record of loyalty and bravery as a Confederate soldier, I have understood he had good family connections in Rockingham county, and I know that one of his brothers was one of the best loved men ever to live in Durham. John Walter Stephens was a nigger leader, and undoubtedly he inspired niggers to unlawful deeds, but from all I personally knew and

heard, I have never felt that his crimes were deserving of so brutal a death."

* * *

CHAPTER FIVE

'Colonel' George A. Anderson, ex-clerk of the court and Caswell historian, comes forward to give his evidence:

"Stephens was dead, but there was no peace in Caswell. Seemingly, in putting the dagger to his heart, the Ku Klux Klan had sounded its own death-knell, for never again did its 'invisible riders' ride the roads and take the law into their own hands to mete out retributive justice. Troublous times followed in the wake of the lawless deed. Gov. William W. Holden announced to the world that Caswell county was in a state of insurrection, and martial law took the place of constitutional government.

"Federal troops came to Yanceyville, through the appeal of Senator Bedford Brown and Dr. John Q. Anderson to President Ulysses S. Grant. These troops were men of the highest character, and their conduct was so meritorious that they received the heartiest approval of the best citizens. Just when it appeared that things were getting normal again, matters swiftly took a turn for the worst.

"It was then that Governor Holden sent for 'Squire Thomas Satterwhaite Harrison, a white Republican of high honor, who then represented Caswell in the legislature, and said to him:

" 'Mister Harrison, you enjoy the respect of all the Negroes of Caswell and of the best of her white citizenship. Property is in jeopardy there and human life is unsafe. I need a personal representative on the grounds. Will you accept this responsible position?'

" 'Governor,' replied Tom Harrison, 'I thank you for your complimentary remarks, but I'm not hankering for the job and cannot accept.'

" 'Can you not, then,' continued the Governor, 'recommend to me some man of our party in Caswell who is worthy of my trust?'

" 'Governor,' answered Tom Harrison, 'there happens to be in Raleigh at this moment one John Marshal Wooding, from Milton. He is a courageous gentleman, a daring horseman and an unbeatable poker-player. He might consent to serve you.'

"Governor Holden requested Tom Harrison to get in touch with Wooding, and have him come to the executive's office. This was quickly accomplished.

" 'Mister Wooding,' opened up Governor Holden, after introductions, 'you have been highly recommended to me by the Honorable Mister Harrison. Will you accept the responsible appointment of my personal representative in Caswell. You will have the backing

of your Governor, the State Militia and President Ulysses S. Grant.'

" 'I thank you, Governor,' said the Milton man, 'but I can't accept the appointment.'

"Then, showing considerable perturbation, Governor Holden gruffly demanded:

" 'Why not?'

" 'Well, Governor,' replied John Marshal Wooding, 'you see, it's this way. You and the State Militia will be in Raleigh, President Grant will be in Washington, and I'll be in hell with my throat cut.'

"Governor Holden then made further appeal to President Grant, and a veritable army of his own came to Yanceyville. This army was mobilized from the mountains of western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee. The personnel of this army, under Col. George Kirke and Lieutenant Burgin, was of the lowest order, the dregs of society, cut-throats, thieves and convicts. The conduct of these soldiers was disgraceful, especially in their damnable disrespect to the rights and well-being of the white people of Caswell. They took possession of Yanceyville and the courthouse, arrested without cause or reason more than fifty of the best men of the county, and held them prisoners in the courthouse.

"Josiah William Turner, fearless editorial writer of the old school of thought and style, editor of the Raleigh Sentinel and of a weekly paper in his hometown of Hillsboro, had denounced Governor Holden's actions in vitriolic language and had boldly characterized the state's chief executive as a 'white-livered miscreant', so Governor Holden ordered Colonel Kirke to arrest Josiah Turner and to hold him a prisoner in the Yanceyville courthouse.

"Kirk's 'bummers', as they were sometimes called, went to Hillsboro, arrested the great editor, and brought him to Yanceyville. As the posse, with its prisoner, reached the suburbs of Yanceyville, a courier was dispatched with a message to the officers who were guarding the many prisoners in the courthouse. The wildest and maddest exultations broke loose when it was known that within a few minutes they would have in their custody the much-hated Josiah William Turner. One guard jabbed his saber into a rock cornice of the upper balcony, and that broken stone yet tells a story of Caswell's darkest hour in the period of reconstruction. Few of the prisoners were ever actually brought to trial, a Federal judge, whose memory Caswell County should always honor, having come to her rescue when Kirke had refused to recognize habeas corpus writs of our state supreme court, and Chief Justice Pearson had declared the state's judiciary was exhausted. The name of Caswell's friend in her hour of need was Justice George W. Brooks, of Pasquotank.

County."

* * *

CHAPTER SIX

Dr. Stephen A. Malloy, honored and loved, arises to speak:

"I stood at the bedside and saw go down to his death the man who is said to have stabbed Stephens. If he didn't do that deed, he did something in his lifetime which racked his conscience in his last hours, for he died the most horrible death I've ever seen any man die in my lifetime of nearly forty-five years of experience around the bedside of death. It looked like Old Satan was reaching out after him, and he was shrinking back with the horror of a soul damned written upon his dying countenance. I've wished a thousand times I had not seen him die."

. . .

CHAPTER SEVEN

The ghost of John Walter Stephens appears upon the scene and says in defense:

"I was born at Wentworth, Rockingham county. I was a Confederate soldier, and I was loyal to the 'Lost Cause'. I never stole a chicken. At home on a furlough, I went to my own stable-lot, and caught two chickens, for my wife to dress and fry for me, to feed me on my long trek back to my Confederate camp in Virginia. A prominent merchant of Wentworth, who loved me little and hated my politics more, accused me of having caught his chickens. If they were his chickens, and had wandered into my stable-lot, is it reasonable to believe that I knew those chickens did not belong to my wife? It was this merchant who, after the war when I was running for the state senate, to which office I was elected, gave to me the infamous name of 'Chicken' Stephens, and later attempted to assassinate me by firing at me from his store porch while I was standing in my own front porch across the roadway. The ball entered an arm of one of the McArgo boys, who was talking to me at the time.

"I have been called a 'carpetbagger', but this is untrue. 'Carpetbaggers' were Union soldiers, the 'left-behinders' of the northern army who seldom had as much as a bag made of carpet cloth. I fled from Wentworth, fearing for my own life and the lives of my wife and children. I came to Yanceyville, and I became a leader of Republicanism in Caswell, and soon enjoyed a wide degree of popularity among the freshly franchised Negroes. Governor Holden hated the Ku Klux Klan, and he appointed me a special investigator, in an effort to stamp out the klan. The appointment was obnoxious to the whites, and they misunderstood my attitudes and actions. They accused me of all sorts of deeds of violence and crime. Some have said I ordered the burning of tobacco barns and wheat granaries, a tobacco

warehouse and a hotel in Yanceyville. It was even said I furnished the matches for these arsons. I shall not try to justify myself. I leave the accusations to the merciful judgment of the Eternal Judge. Sufficient to me for my own defense is that I was a Republican leader at a time when it was unpopular to be a Republican and that I was conscientious in my loyalty to the party of Abraham Lincoln and the party which abolished human slavery in the South."

* * *

CHAPTER EIGHT

"I was almost twenty years old when the War Between the States commenced," said Ann Lea, "and if I do say it, as I shouldn't, many of the young cavaliers who came to court me said I was beautiful. I had been educated in all the feminine arts of that day and time, yet I was ever a tomboy, pals to my brothers, and riding and hunting and roughing it with them. I am the only living student of Rev. Solomon Lea's 'School for Girls' at Leasburg, and the oldest living alumna of Greensboro Female College, under its first president, the same notable Christian educator, Rev. Solomon Lea. It was of my musically sweet voice that Gov. John Motley Morehead, coming from the executive mansion in Raleigh to his home in Greensboro, which is now the home of Keeley Institute, to speak at one of the college's first commencements, spoke when he said that the notes sounded too angelic to come from the throat of a human being.

"It was at Leahurst that Capt. Billie Griffin Graves wooed and won my heart, after he had been freed from a Yankee prison. It was on the 'love seat' in the Leahurst parlor that my gracious loveliness captured the respect and admiration of a Union officer, who reprimanded a private who dared to nudge the budding bosom of his erstwhile southern hostage. It was there, also, that I, when word came of the coming of the Yanks, gathered together the most valued possessions of the home and sewed them in the stuffing of the 'love seats', and then, with the help of faithful slaves, hitched the handsome carriage horses, Remus and Romulus, to the fine carriage which my father, Thomas Lea, had purchased in Richmond when it took the first prize at the Virginia state fair. I myself drove the conveyance, with the 'love seats', the family silver and other heirlooms, to Ivy Banks, and hid my cargo in the cave until danger had passed.

"It was at Leahurst, also, when Tourgee had arrested 'Brer' John and my husband, and carried them off to Raleigh, leaving me and my helpless babes to the protective care of 'Uncle Jeff' and 'Aunt Liney', that the black couple slept in the white woman's bedroom, 'Uncle Jeff' with his big, strong hands clutching tightly the handle of his faithful razor-edge axe, ready, if

needs be, to give his life in defense of me and my babies. It was with that same axe that 'Uncle Jeff' staved off an uprising, when some of the other ex-slaves were demanding the smokehouse keys, with the threat to 'brain de fust nigger who dars t' sot his feet on de doorstoop."

* * *

CHAPTER NINE

Ann Lea Graves lived for more than 75 years after General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, and for almost seventy years after John Walter Stephens was murdered in the Caswell courthouse, dying in her 99th year at Brandon-on-Dan, Halifax county, Virginia, less than 20 miles from Leahurst. Her mortal body lies by the side of her husband in the Baptist burial ground in Yanceyville, only a few hundred yards away from the spot where the bones of John Walter Stephens have long since mouldered into dust. A monument marks the place, but the grave has leveled their 'feet of clay'.

The End

* * *

(Author's note: Much of the history of Caswell County for nearly 50 years was centered around the Kirke-Holden war and the Ku Klux Klan murder of John Walter ('Chicken') Stephens. There have been many garbled accounts of this history printed, which did injustice to the klan and infamed the name of the murdered politician. Many people have asked me to write the story. I have done it without prejudice and without intention of offending or injuring. The foundations of the story are truthful, in so far as records and reminiscences can be relied on, howbeit I have drawn on my imagination in fictional style. Aside from the standpoint of "reader interest," I have had two purposes in view. One is to show the justification of the existence of the Ku Klux Klan at a time when our courts of justice had broken down. The other is to show that Stephens was not as bad as he has been painted. 'Squire Thomas S. Harrison and John Marshal Wooding were no fools when they refused to accept from Governor Holden the commission which John Walter Stephens did take.

My sincere appreciation is herewith expressed to the advertisers who made it possible for me to publish this booklet. My thanks are also given to the editor and his force of 'The Caswell Messenger' for their helpfulness. All rights in this story are reserved.)

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