

III

When Plato started back to the house from the spring branch, where he had been chopping the red-oak and dogwood bark, he was in such a hurry that he forgot his axe, and when he wanted it again, a few hours afterwards, he hunted all over the yard for it, until he suddenly remembered where he had left it. He started after it, but as he was going down the spring branch he heard a clatter in the road to the left, and, looking in that direction, saw two Federal cavalrymen galloping by.

“Ah-yi!” he exclaimed, as if by that means he could find vent for surprise, and slipped behind a tree. The day was raw and drizzly, and there was no movement on the plantation. The negroes were in their cabins, the horses were in their stable, the mules were standing quietly under the long shed in the lot, and even the sheep that were in the ginhouse pasture were huddled together under shelter, nibbling at a pile of waste cotton seed. The riders were couriers, and Plato, observing them, saw that they did not pursue the road to the village, but turned off squarely to