

***G. A. HENTY***



***WITH LEE  
IN VIRGINIA***

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# **With Lee in Virginia**

**Historical Novel**

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# **Preface.**

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My Dear Lads:

The Great War between the Northern and Southern States of America possesses a peculiar interest to us, not only because it was a struggle between two sections of a people akin to us in race and language, but because of the heroic courage with which the weaker party, with ill-fed, ill-clad, ill-equipped regiments, for four years sustained the contest with an adversary not only possessed of immense numerical superiority, but having the command of the sea, and being able to draw its arms and munitions of war from all the manufactories of Europe. Authorities still differ as to the rights of the case. The Confederates firmly believed that the States, having voluntarily united, retained the right of withdrawing from the Union when they considered it for their advantage to do so. The Northerners took the opposite point of view, and an appeal to arms became inevitable. During the first two years of the war the struggle was conducted without inflicting unnecessary hardship upon the general population. But later on the character of the war changed, and the Federal armies carried widespread destruction wherever they marched. Upon the other hand, the moment the struggle was over the conduct of the conquerors was marked by a clemency and generosity altogether unexampled in history, a complete amnesty being granted, and none, whether soldiers or civilians, being made to suffer for their share in the rebellion. The credit of

this magnanimous conduct was to a great extent due to Generals Grant and Sherman, the former of whom took upon himself the responsibility of granting terms which, although they were finally ratified by his government, were at the time received with anger and indignation in the North. It was impossible, in the course of a single volume, to give even a sketch of the numerous and complicated operations of the war, and I have therefore confined myself to the central point of the great struggle—the attempts of the Northern armies to force their way to Richmond, the capital of Virginia and the heart of the Confederacy. Even in recounting the leading events in these campaigns, I have burdened my story with as few details as possible, it being my object now, as always, to amuse, as well as to give instruction in the facts of history.

Yours sincerely,  
G. A. Henty.

# Chapter I.

## A Virginia Plantation.

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"I won't have it, Pearson; so it's no use your talking. If I had my way you shouldn't touch any of the field hands. And when I get my way—that won't be so very long—I will take very good care you shan't. But you shan't hit Dan."

"He is not one of the regular house hands," was the reply; "and I shall appeal to Mrs. Wingfield as to whether I am to be interfered with in the discharge of my duties."

"You may appeal to my mother if you like, but I don't think that you will get much by it. You are too fond of that whip, Pearson. It never was heard on the estate during my father's time, and it shan't be again when it comes to be mine, I can tell you. Come along, Dan; I want you at the stables."

Vincent Wingfield turned on his heel, and followed by Dan, a negro lad of some eighteen years old, he walked toward the house, leaving Jonas Pearson, the overseer of the Orangery Estate, looking after him with an evil expression of face.

Vincent Wingfield was the son of an English officer, who, making a tour in the States, had fallen in love with and won the hand of Winifred Cornish, a Virginia heiress, and one of the belles of Richmond. After the marriage he had taken her to visit his family in England; but she had not been there many weeks before the news arrived of the sudden death of her father. A month later she and her husband returned to

Virginia, as her presence was required there in reference to business matters connected with the estate, of which she was now the mistress.

The Orangery, so called from a large conservatory built by Mrs. Wingfield's grandfather, was the family seat, and the broad lands around it were tilled by upward of two hundred slaves. There were in addition three other properties lying in different parts of the State. Here Vincent, with two sisters, one older and one younger than himself, had been born. When he was eight years old Major and Mrs. Wingfield had gone over with their children to England, and had left Vincent there for four years at school, his holidays being spent at the house of his father's brother, a country gentleman in Sussex. Then he had been sent for unexpectedly; his father saying that his health was not good, and that he should like his son to be with him. A year later his father died.

Vincent was now nearly sixteen years old, and would upon coming of age assume the reins of power at the Orangery, of which his mother, however, would be the actual mistress as long as she lived. The four years Vincent had passed in the English school had done much to render the institution of slavery repugnant to him, and his father had had many serious talks with him during the last year of his life, and had shown him that there was a good deal to be said upon both sides of the subject.

"There are good plantations and bad plantations, Vincent; and there are many more good ones than bad ones. There are brutes to be found everywhere. There are bad masters in the Southern States just as there are bad



landlords in every European country. But even from self-interest alone, a planter has greater reason for caring for the health and comfort of his slaves than an English farmer has in caring for the comfort of his laborers. Slaves are valuable property, and if they are over-worked or badly cared for they decrease in value. Whereas if the laborer falls sick or is unable to do his work the farmer has simply to hire another hand. It is as much the interest of a planter to keep his slaves in good health and spirits as it is for a farmer to feed and attend to his horses properly.

"Of the two, I consider that the slave with a fairly kind master is to the full as happy as the ordinary English laborer. He certainly does not work so hard, if he is ill he is carefully attended to, he is well fed, he has no cares or anxieties whatever, and when old and past work he has no fear of the workhouse staring him in the face. At the same time I am quite ready to grant that there are horrible abuses possible under the laws connected with slavery.

"The selling of slaves, that is to say, the breaking up of families and selling them separately, is horrible and abominable. If an estate were sold together with all the slaves upon it, there would be no more hardship in the matter than there is when an estate changes hands in England, and the laborers upon it work for the new master instead of the old. Were I to liberate all the slaves on this estate to-morrow and to send them North, I do not think that they would be in any way benefited by the change. They would still have to work for their living as they do now, and being naturally indolent and shiftless would probably

fare much worse. But against the selling of families separately and the use of the lash I set my face strongly.

"At the same time, my boy, whatever your sentiments may be on this subject, you must keep your mouth closed as to them. Owing to the attempts of Northern Abolitionists, who have come down here stirring up the slaves to discontent, it is not advisable, indeed it is absolutely dangerous, to speak against slavery in the Southern States. The institution is here, and we must make the best we can of it. People here are very sore at the foul slanders that have been published by Northern writers. There have been many atrocities perpetrated undoubtedly, by brutes who would have been brutes wherever they had been born; but to collect a series of such atrocities, to string them together into a story, and to hold them up, as Mrs. Beecher Stowe has, as a picture of slave life in the Southern States, is as gross a libel as if anyone were to make a collection of all the wife-beatings and assaults of drunken English ruffians, and to publish them as a picture of the average life of English people.

"Such libels as these have done more to embitter the two sections of America against each other than anything else. Therefore, Vincent, my advice to you is, be always kind to your slaves—not over-indulgent, because they are very like children and indulgence spoils them—but be at the same time firm and kind to them, and with other people avoid entering into any discussions or expressing any opinion with regard to slavery. You can do no good, and you can do much harm. Take things as you find them and make the best of them. I trust that the time may come when slavery will be

abolished; but I hope, for the sake of the slaves themselves, that when this is done it will be done gradually and thoughtfully, for otherwise it would inflict terrible hardship and suffering upon them as well as upon their masters."

There were many such conversations between father and son, for feeling on the subject ran very high in the Southern States, and the former felt that it was of the utmost importance to his son that he should avoid taking any strong line in the matter. Among the old families of Virginia there was indeed far less feeling on this subject than in some of the other States. Knowing the good feeling that almost universally existed between themselves and their slaves, the gentry of Virginia regarded with contempt the calumnies of which they were the subject. Secure in the affection of their slaves, an affection which was afterward abundantly proved during the course of the war, they scarcely saw the ugly side of the question. The worst masters were the smallest ones; the man who owned six slaves was far more apt to extort the utmost possible work from them than the planter who owned three or four hundred. And the worst masters of all, were those who, having made a little money in trade or speculation in the towns, purchased a dozen slaves, a small piece of land, and tried to set up as gentry.

In Virginia the life of the large planters was almost a patriarchal one; the indoor slaves were treated with extreme indulgence, and were permitted a far higher degree of freedom of remark and familiarity than is the case with servants in an English household. They had been the nurses or companions of the owners when children, had grown up

with them, and regarded themselves, and were regarded by them, as almost part of the family. There was, of course, less connection between the planters and their field hands; but these also had for the most part been born on the estate, had as children been taught to look up to their white masters and mistresses, and to receive many little kindnesses at their hands.

They had been cared for in sickness, and knew that they would be provided for in old age. Each had his little allotment, and could raise fruit, vegetables, and fowls, for his own use or for sale, in his leisure time. The fear of loss of employment, or the pressure of want, ever present to our English laborers, had never fallen upon them. The climate was a lovely one, and their work far less severe than that of men forced to toil in cold and wet, winter and summer. The institution of slavery assuredly was capable of terrible abuses, and was marked in many instances by abominable cruelty and oppression; but taken all in all, the negroes on a well-ordered estate, under kind masters, were probably a happier class of people than the laborers upon any estate in Europe.

Jonas Pearson had been overseer in the time of Major Wingfield, but his authority had at that time been comparatively small, for the major himself personally supervised the whole working of the estate, and was greatly liked by the slaves, whose chief affections were, however, naturally bestowed upon their mistress, who had from childhood been brought up in their midst. Major Wingfield had not liked his overseer, but he had never any ground to justify him making a change. Jonas, who was a Northern

man, was always active and energetic; all Major Wingfield's orders were strictly and punctually carried out, and although he disliked the man, his employer acknowledged him to be an excellent servant.

After the major's death, Jonas Pearson had naturally obtained greatly increased power and authority. Mrs. Wingfield had great confidence in him, his accounts were always clear and precise, and although the profits of the estate were not quite so large as they had been in her husband's lifetime, this was always satisfactorily explained by a fall in prices, or by a part of the crops being affected by the weather. She flattered herself that she herself managed the estate, and at times rode over it, made suggestions, and issued orders, but this was only in fits and starts; and although Jonas came up two or three times a week to the house nominally to receive her orders, he managed her so adroitly, that while she believed that everything was done by her directions, she in reality only followed out the suggestions which, in the first place, came from him.

She was aware, however, that there was less content and happiness on the estate than there had been in the old times. Complaints had reached her from time to time of overwork and harsh treatment. But upon inquiring into these matters, Jonas had always such plausible reasons to give that she was convinced he was in the right, and that the fault was among the slaves themselves, who tried to take advantage of the fact that they had no longer a master's eye upon them, and accordingly tried to shirk work, and to throw discredit upon the man who looked after the interests of their mistress; and so gradually Mrs.

Wingfield left the management of her affairs more and more in the hands of Jonas, and relied more implicitly upon him.

The overseer spared no pains to gain the good will of Vincent. When the latter declared that the horse he rode had not sufficient life and spirit for him, Jonas had set inquiries on foot, and had selected for him a horse which, for speed and bottom, had no superior in the State. One of Mrs. Wingfield's acquaintances, however, upon hearing that she had purchased the animal, told her that it was notorious for its vicious temper, and she spoke angrily to Jonas on the subject in the presence of Vincent. The overseer excused himself by saying that he had certainly heard that the horse was high spirited and needed a good rider, and that he should not have thought of selecting it had he not known that Mr. Vincent was a first-class rider, and would not care to have a horse that any child could manage.

The praise was not undeserved. The gentlemen of Virginia were celebrated as good riders; and Major Wingfield, himself a cavalry man, had been anxious that Vincent should maintain the credit of his English blood, and had placed him on a pony as soon as he was able to sit on one. A pony had been kept for his use during his holidays at his uncle's in England, and upon his return Vincent had, except during the hours he spent with his father, almost lived on horseback, either riding about the estate, or paying visits to the houses of other planters.

For an hour or more everyday he exercised his father's horses in a paddock near the house, the major being wheeled down in an easy-chair and superintending his riding. As these horses had little to do and were full of spirit,

Vincent's powers were often taxed to the utmost, and he had many falls; but the soil was light, and he had learned the knack of falling easily, and from constant practice was able at the age of fourteen to stick on firmly even without a saddle, and was absolutely fearless as to any animal he mounted.

In the two years which had followed he had kept up his riding. Every morning after breakfast he rode to Richmond, six miles distant, put up his horse at some stable there, and spent three hours at school; the rest of the day was his own, and he would often ride off with some of his schoolfellows who had also come in from a distance, and not return home till late in the evening. Vincent took after his English father rather than his Virginia mother, both in appearance and character, and was likely to become as tall and brawny a man as the former had been when he first won the love of the Virginia heiress.

He was full of life and energy, and in this respect offered a strong contrast to most of his schoolfellows of the same age. For although splendid riders and keen sportsmen, the planters of Virginia were in other respects inclined to indolence; the result partly of the climate, partly of their being waited upon from childhood by attendants ready to carry out every wish. He had his father's cheerful disposition and good temper, together with the decisive manner so frequently acquired by a service in the army, and at the same time he had something of the warmth and enthusiasm of the Virginia character.

Good rider as he was, he was somewhat surprised at the horse the overseer had selected for him. It was certainly a

splendid animal, with great bone and power; but there was no mistaking the expression of its turned-back eye, and the ears that lay almost flat on the head when anyone approached him.

"It is a splendid animal, no doubt, Jonas," he said the first time he inspected it; "but he certainly looks as if he had a beast of a temper. I fear what was told my mother about him is no exaggeration; for Mr. Markham told me to-day, when I rode down there with his son, and said we had bought Wildfire, that a friend of his had had him once, and only kept him for a week, for he was the most vicious brute he ever saw."

"I am sorry I have bought him now, sir," Jonas said. "Of course I should not have done so if I had heard these things before; but I was told he was one of the finest horses in the country, only a little tricky, and as his price was so reasonable I thought it a great bargain. But I see now I was wrong, and that it wouldn't be right for you to mount him; so I think we had best send him in on Saturday to the market and let it go for what it will fetch. You see, sir, if you had been three or four years older it would have been different; but naturally at your age you don't like to ride such a horse as that."

"I shan't give up without a trial," Vincent said shortly. "It is about the finest horse I ever saw; and if it hadn't been for its temper, it would have been cheap at five times the sum you gave for it. I have ridden a good many bad-tempered horses for my friends during the last year, and the worst of them couldn't get me off."



"Well, sir, of course you will do as you please," Jonas said; "but please to remember if any harm comes of it, that I strongly advised you not to have anything to do with it, and I did my best to dissuade you from trying."

Vincent nodded carelessly, and then turned to the black groom.

"Jake, get out that cavalry saddle of my father's, with the high cantle and pommel, and the rolls for the knees. It's like an armchair, and if one can't stick on on that, one deserves to be thrown."

While the groom was putting on the saddle, Vincent stood patting the horse's head and talking to it, and then taking its rein led it down into the inclosure.

"No, I don't want the whip," he said, as Jake offered him one. "I have got the spurs, and likely enough the horse's temper may have been spoiled by knocking it about with a whip; but we will try what kindness will do with it first."

"Me no like his look, Massa Vincent; he debble of a hoss dat."

"I don't think he has a nice temper, Jake; but people learn to control their temper, and I don't see why horses shouldn't. At any rate we will have a try at it. He looks as if he appreciates being patted and spoken to already. Of course if you treat a horse like a savage he will become savage. Now, stand out of the way."

Gathering the reins together, and placing one hand upon the pommel, Vincent sprang into the saddle without touching the stirrups; then he sat for a minute or two patting the horse's neck. Wildfire, apparently disgusted at having allowed himself to be mounted so suddenly, lashed

out viciously two or three times, and then refused to move. For half an hour Vincent tried the effect of patient coaxing, but in vain.

"Well, if you won't do it by fair means you must by foul," Vincent said at last, and sharply pricked him with his spurs.

Wildfire sprang into the air, and then began a desperate series of efforts to rid himself of his rider, rearing and kicking in such quick succession that he seemed half the time in the air. Finding after a while that his efforts were unavailing, he subsided at last into sulky immovability. Again Vincent tried coaxing and patting, but as no success attended these efforts, he again applied the spur sharply. This time the horse responded by springing forward like an arrow from a bow, dashed at the top of his speed across the inclosure, cleared the high fence without an effort, and then set off across the country.

He had attempted to take the bit in his teeth, but with a sharp jerk as he drove the spurs in, Vincent had defeated his intention. He now did not attempt to check or guide him, but keeping a light hand on the reins let him go his own course. Vincent knew that so long as the horse was going full speed it could attempt no trick to unseat him, and he therefore sat easily in his saddle.

For six miles Wildfire continued his course, clearing every obstacle without abatement to his speed, and delighting his rider with his power and jumping qualities. Occasionally, only when the course he was taking would have led him to obstacles impossible for the best jumper to surmount, Vincent attempted to put the slightest pressure upon one rein or the other, so as to direct it to an easier point.

At the end of six miles the horse's speed began slightly to abate, and Vincent, abstaining from the use of his spurs, pressed it with his knees and spoke to it cheerfully, urging it forward. He now from time to time bent forward and patted it, and for another six miles kept it going at a speed almost as great as that at which it had started. Then he allowed it gradually to slacken its pace, until at last first the gallop and then the trot ceased, and it broke into a walk.

"You have had a fine gallop, old fellow," Vincent said, patting it; "and so have I. There's been nothing for you to lose your temper about, and the next road we come upon we will turn your face homeward. Half a dozen lessons like this, and then, no doubt, we shall be good friends."

The journey home was performed at a walk, Vincent talking the greater part of the time to the horse. It took a good deal more than six lessons before Wildfire would start without a preliminary struggle with his master, but in the end kindness and patience conquered. Vincent often visited the horse in the stables, and, taking with him an apple or some pieces of sugar, spent some time there talking to and petting it. He never carried a whip, and never used the spurs except in forcing it to make its first start.

Had the horse been naturally ill-tempered Vincent would probably have failed, but, as he happened afterward to learn, its first owner had been a hot-tempered and passionate young planter, who, instead of being patient with it, had beat it about the head, and so rendered it restive and bad-tempered. Had Vincent not laid aside his whip before mounting it for the first time, he probably would never have effected a cure. It was the fact that the animal had no

longer fear of his old enemy the whip, as much as the general course of kindness and good treatment, that had effected the change in his behavior.

It was just when Vincent had established a good understanding between himself and Wildfire that he had the altercation with the overseer, whom he found about to flog the young negro Dan. Pearson had sent the lad half an hour before on a message to some slaves at work at the other end of the estate, and had found him sitting on the ground watching a tree in which he had discovered a 'possum. That Dan deserved punishment was undoubted. He had at present no regular employment upon the estate. Jake, his father, was head of the stables, and Dan had made himself useful in odd jobs about the horses, and expected to become one of the regular stable hands. The overseer was of opinion that there were already more negroes in the stable than could find employment, and had urged upon Mrs. Wingfield that one of the hands there and the boy Dan should be sent out to the fields. She, however, refused.

"I know you are quite right, Jonas, in what you say. But there were always four hands in the stable in my father's time, and there always have been up to now; and though I know they have an easy time of it, I certainly should not like to send any of them out into the fields. As to Dan, we will think about it. When his father was about his age he used to lead my pony when I first took to riding, and when there is a vacancy Dan must come into the stable. I could not think of sending him out as a field hand; in the first place for his father's sake, but still more for that of Vincent. Dan used to be told off to see that Vincent did not get into mischief when

he was a little boy, and he has run his messages and been his special boy since he came back. Vincent wanted to have him as his regular house servant; but it would have broken old Sam's heart if, after being my father's boy and my husband's, another had taken his place as Vincent's."

And so Dan had remained in the stable, but regarding Vincent as his special master, carrying messages for him to his friends, or doing any odd jobs he might require, and spending no small portion of his time in sleep. Thus he was an object of special dislike to the overseer; in the first place because he had not succeeded in having his way with regard to him, and in the second because he was a useless hand, and the overseer loved to get as much work as possible out of everyone on the estate. The message had been a somewhat important one, as he wanted the slaves for some work that was urgently required; and he lost his temper, or he would not have done an act which would certainly bring him into collision with Vincent.

He was well aware that the lad did not really like him, and that his efforts to gain his good will had failed, and he had foreseen that sooner or later there would be a struggle for power between them. However, he relied upon his influence with Mrs. Wingfield, and upon the fact that she was the life owner of the Orangery, and believed that he would be able to maintain his position even when Vincent came of age. Vincent on his side objected to the overseer's treatment of the hands of which he heard a good deal from Dan, and had already remonstrated with his mother on the subject.

He, however, gained nothing by this. Mrs. Wingfield had replied that he was too young to interfere in such matters, that his English ideas would not do in Virginia, and that naturally the slaves were set against the overseer; and that now Pearson had no longer a master to support him, he was obliged to be more severe than before to enforce obedience. At the same time it vexed her at heart that there should be any severity on the Orangery Estate, where the best relations had always prevailed between the masters and slaves and she had herself spoken to Jonas on the subject.

He had given her the same answer that she had given her son: "The slaves will work for a master, Mrs. Wingfield, in a way they will not for a stranger. They set themselves against me, and if I were not severe with them I should get no work at all out of them. Of course, if you wish it, they can do as they like; but in that case they must have another overseer. I cannot see a fine estate going to ruin. I believe myself some of these Abolition fellows have been getting among them and doing mischief, and that there is a bad spirit growing up among them. I can assure you that I am as lenient with them as it is possible to be. But if they won't work I must make them, so long as I stay here."

And so the overseer had had his way. She knew that the man was a good servant, and that the estate was kept in excellent order. After all, the severities of which she had heard complaints were by no means excessive, and it was not to be expected that a Northern overseer could rule entirely by kindness, as the owner of an estate could do. A change would be most inconvenient to her, and she would have difficulty in suiting herself so well another time.

Besides, the man had been with her sixteen years, and was, as she believed, devoted to her interests. Therefore she turned a deaf ear to Vincent's remonstrances.

She had always been somewhat opposed to his being left in England at school, urging that he would learn ideas there that would clash with those of the people among whom his life was to be spent; and she still considered that her views had been justified by the result.

The overseer was the first to give his version of the story about Dan's conduct; for on going to the house Vincent found his sisters, Rosa and Annie, in the garden, having just returned from a two days' visit to some friends in Richmond, and stayed chatting with them and listening to their news for an hour, and in the meantime Jonas had gone in and seen Mrs. Wingfield and told his story.

"I think, Mrs. Wingfield," he said when he had finished, "that it will be better for me to leave you. It is quite evident that I can have no authority over the hands if your son is to interfere when I am about to punish a slave for an act of gross disobedience and neglect. I found that all the tobacco required turning, and now it will not be done this afternoon, owing to my orders not being carried out, and the tobacco will not improbably be injured in quality. My position is difficult enough as it is; but if the slaves see that instead of being supported I am thwarted by your son, my authority is gone altogether. No overseer can carry on his work properly under such circumstances."

"I will see to the matter, Jonas," Mrs. Wingfield said decidedly. "Be assured that you have my entire support, and I will see that my son does not again interfere."

When, therefore, Vincent entered the house and began his complaint, he found himself cut short.

"I have heard the story already, Vincent. Dan acted in gross disobedience, and thoroughly deserved the punishment Jonas was about to give him. The work of the estate cannot be carried on if such conduct is to be tolerated; and once for all, I will permit no interference on your part with Jonas. If you have any complaints to make, come to me and make them; but you are not to interfere in any way with the overseer. As for Dan, I have directed Jonas that the next time he gives cause for complaint he is to go into the fields."

Vincent stood silent for a minute, then he said quietly:

"Very well, mother. Of course you can do as you like; but at any rate I will not keep my mouth shut when I see that fellow ill-treating the slaves. Such things were never done in my father's time, and I won't see them done now. You said the other day you would get me a nomination to West Point as soon as I was sixteen. I should be glad if you would do so. By the time I have gone through the school, you will perhaps see that I have been right about Jonas."

So saying, he turned and left the room and again joined his sisters in the drawing room.

"I have just told mother that I will go to West Point, girls," he said. "Father said more than once that he thought it was the best education I could get in America."

"But I thought you had made up your mind that you would rather stop at home, Vincent?"

"So I had, and so I would have done, but mother and I differ in opinion. That fellow Jonas was going to flog Dan,



and I stopped him this morning, and mother takes his part against me. You know, I don't like the way he goes on with the slaves. They are not half so merry and happy as they used to be, and I don't like it. We shall have one of them running away next, and that will be a nice thing on what used to be considered one of the happiest plantations in Virginia. I can't make mother out; I should have thought that she would have been the last person in the world to have allowed the slaves to be harshly treated."

"I am sure we don't like Jonas any more than you do, Vincent; but you see mamma has to depend upon him so much. No, I don't think she can like it; but you can't have everything you like in a man, and I know she thinks he is a very good overseer. I suppose she could get another?"

Vincent said he thought that there could not be much difficulty about getting an overseer.

"There might be a difficulty in getting one she could rely on so thoroughly," Rosa said. "You see a great deal must be left to him. Jonas has been here a good many years now, and she has learned to trust him. It would be a long time before she had the same confidence in a stranger; and you may be sure that he would have his faults, though, perhaps, not the same as those of Jonas. I think you don't make allowance enough for mamma, Vincent. I quite agree with you as to Jonas, and I don't think mamma can like his harshness to the slaves any more than you do; but everyone says what a difficulty it is to get a really trustworthy and capable overseer, and, of course, it is all the harder when there is no master to look after him."

"Well, in a few years I shall be able to look after an overseer," Vincent said.

"You might do so, of course, Vincent, if you liked; but unless you change a good deal, I don't think your supervision would amount to very much. When you are not at school you are always on horseback and away, and we see little enough of you, and I do not think you are likely for a long time yet to give up most of your time to looking after the estate."

"Perhaps you are right," Vincent said, after thinking for a minute; "but I think I could settle down, too, and give most of my time to the estate, if I was responsible for it. I dare say mother is in a difficulty over it, and I should not have spoken as I did; I will go in and tell her so."

Vincent found his mother sitting as he had left her. Although she had sided with Jonas, it was against her will; for it was grievous to her to hear complaints of the treatment of the slaves at the Orangery. Still, as Rosa had said, she felt every confidence in her overseer, and believed that he was an excellent servant. She was conscious that she herself knew nothing of business, and that she must therefore give her entire confidence to her manager. She greatly disliked the strictness of Jonas, but if, as he said, the slaves would not obey him without this strictness, he must do as he thought best.

"I think I spoke too hastily, mother," Vincent said as he entered; "and I am sure that you would not wish the slaves to be ill-treated more than I should. I dare say Jonas means for the best."

"I feel sure that he does, Vincent. A man in his position cannot make himself obeyed like a master. I wish it could be otherwise, and I will speak to him on the subject; but it will not do to interfere with him too much. A good overseer is not easy to get, and the slaves are always ready to take advantage of leniency. An easy master makes bad work, but an easy overseer would mean ruin to an estate. I am convinced that Jonas has our interests at heart, and I will tell him that I particularly wish that he will devise some other sort of punishment, such as depriving men who won't work of some of their privileges, instead of using the lash."

"Thank you, mother. At any rate, he might be told that the lash is never to be used without first appealing to you."

"I will see about it, Vincent, and talk it over with him."  
And with that Vincent was satisfied.

# Chapter II. Buying A Slave.

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Mrs. Wingfield did talk the matter over with the overseer, and things went on in consequence more smoothly. Vincent, however, adhered to his wish, and it was arranged that as soon as he could get a nomination he should go to West Point, which is to the American army what Sandhurst and Woolwich are to England. Before that could be done, however, a great political agitation sprang up. The slave States were greatly excited over the prospect of a Republican president being chosen, for the Republicans were to a great extent identified with the abolition movement; and public feeling, which had for some time run high, became intensified as the time approached for the election of a new president, and threats that if the Democrats were beaten and a Republican elected the slave States would secede from the Union, were freely indulged in.

In Virginia, which was one of the most northern of the slave States, opinion was somewhat divided, there being a strong minority against any extreme measures being taken. Among Vincent's friends, however, who were for the most part the sons of planters, the Democratic feeling was very strongly in the ascendant and their sympathies were wholly with the Southern States. That these had a right to secede was assumed by them as being unquestionable.

But, in point of fact, there was a great deal to be said on both sides. The States which first entered the Union in 1776 considered themselves to be separate and sovereign States, each possessing power and authority to manage its own affairs, and forming only a federation in order to construct a central power, and so to operate with more effect against the mother country. Two years later the Constitution of the United States was framed, each State giving up a certain portion of its authority, reserving its own self-government and whatever rights were not specifically resigned.

No mention was made in the Constitution of the right of a State to secede from the Union, and while those who insisted that each State had a right to secede if it chose to do so declared that this right was reserved, their opponents affirmed that such a case could never have been contemplated. Thus the question of absolute right had never been settled, and it became purely one of force.

Early in November, 1860, it became known that the election of Mr. Lincoln, the Republican candidate, was assured, and on the 9th of that month the representatives of South Carolina met at Charleston, and unanimously authorized the holding of a State convention to meet on the third week in December. The announcement caused great excitement, for it was considered certain that the convention would pass a vote of secession, and thus bring the debated question to an issue. Although opinion in Virginia was less unanimous than in the more southern States, it was generally thought that she would imitate the example of South Carolina.

On the day following the receipt of the news, Vincent, who had ridden over to the plantations of several of his friends to talk the matter over, was returning homeward, when he heard the sound of heavy blows with a whip, and loud curses, and a moment later a shrill scream in a woman's voice rose in the air.

Vincent checked his horse mechanically with an exclamation of anger. He knew but too well what was going on beyond the screen of shrubs that grew on the other side of the fence bordering the road. For a moment he hesitated, and then muttering, "What's the use!" was about to touch the horse with the whip and gallop on, when the shriek again rose louder and more agonizing than before. With a cry of rage Vincent leaped from his horse, threw the reins over the top of the fence, climbed over it in a moment, and burst his way through the shrubbery.

Close by, a negro was being held by four others, two having hold of each wrist and holding his arms extended to full length, while a white lad, some two years Vincent's senior, was showering blows with a heavy whip upon him. The slave's back was already covered with weals, and the blood was flowing from several places. A few yards distant a black girl, with a baby in her arms, was kneeling on the ground screaming for mercy for the slave. Just as Vincent burst through the bushes, the young fellow, irritated at her cries, turned round and delivered a tremendous blow with the whip on her bare shoulders.

This time no cry came from her lips, but the slave, who had stood immovable while the punishment was being inflicted upon himself, made a desperate effort to break