

**MCLEAN: A
ROMANCE
OF THE WAR**

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McLean: A Romance of the War by John Beatty

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JOHN BEATTY

**MCLEAN: A
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OF THE WAR**

McLEAN

A ROMANCE OF THE WAR

JOHN BEATTY

COLUMBUS, OHIO:
PRESS OF FRED J. HERR
1904

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To the Memory of

COLONEL EDWARD M. DRISCOLL, WHOSE
ACCOUNT OF HIS CAPTURE, IMPRISON-
MENT AND ESCAPE WHILE A CAPTAIN OF
THE THIRD OHIO VOLUNTEER INFANTRY
SUGGESTED THIS STORY.

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A FREIGHT train laden in part with federal prisoners, pulled out of Salisbury at two o'clock on the morning of October —, 1864. Its destination was Richmond. A cold, drizzling rain had set in during the afternoon of the preceding day, and still continued. For two or three hours after starting the darkness was intense, but now for the first time since the journey began the open fields and cultivated farms could, by careful observation, be distinguished from the darker lines of the forest.

While crossing a level, sandy tract two of the prisoners sprang forward, threw up the crossed bayonets of the guards, and leaped from the train. They had scarcely struck the ground when the sharp reports of two muskets were heard, succeeded by shots from a dozen others.

The train was stopped and soldiers, lighted on their way by lamps, returned to the place where the disturbed surface

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of the sand indicated that the fugitives had fallen, then staggered to their feet, and finally found refuge in the dense shadow of the adjacent woods. After a delay of perhaps ten minutes, the search was abandoned, and the train moved forward.

The men who had acquired freedom by this perilous leap, felt their way slowly into the forest, and when it became fairly light, pushed westward at rapid pace. Soon after sunrise they entered a fertile region where houses and cultivated fields were not infrequent.

They were young men, and it had been some time — some months in fact — since they had partaken of a substantial meal. The violent exercise of the morning had, therefore, awakened in them a vigorous desire for food. Approaching the line of settlements, but still pursuing their way in the forest, they soon came near a field of corn, and before they had passed by it, discovered a negro stripping husk from the ears.

The shorter, but evidently not the younger of the fugitives, whispered his companion

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to stand, while he should reconnoiter the premises, and if prudent to do so, speak to the workman. When the latter was told that two escaped union soldiers desired food, a gleam of good feeling lighted up his dark face, and picking up the basket containing the lunch brought with him to the field, he asked:

"Whar de udder one?"

"Just beyond the fence in the woods."

Accompanying the white man to the place indicated, the negro surrendered his sweet potatoes and hacon to them with great cheerfulness, but the taller of the fugitives, as if troubled over the matter in some way, before partaking of the food, asked:

"Shall we not be robbing you of your dinner, my good fellow?"

"No, sah;" replied the slave, "I pray de Lo'd dat no harm-kotch yer; dat ez dinner nuff for me, sah."

"You can get more?"

"Yasser, yasser, dis nigger aint gwinter starve fo' night; 'possum en hoe cake plenty, sah."

It was not a full meal for two healthy and hungry young men, but compared

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with some repasts they had recently been obliged to be content with, it was most luxurious and they rose from it strengthened and thankful.

"How far is it to the Blue Ridge?" asked the shorter man, turning to the negro.

"Ter de mountings, sah? Dunno sah; long stretch; nebber been dar, sah; dat dar road yander side de co'n fiel' goes ober de Yadkin ribber, sah, en on ter Wilkesboro, en de mounting ez funder on. Fokes goes ter Ten'essy dat dar way, sah, en hab ter clomb de mountings fer ter git dar, sah."

Bidding the negro good bye, and thanking him for his kindness, the fugitives now started westward, keeping still in the woodlands, but within sight of the open fields.

About noon the sky became clear, and they caught glimpses of the sun through openings in the foliage. In many places underbrush, fallen timber, and spreading vines rendered their progress slow and laborious; but as if to compensate them somewhat for the trouble occasioned by these obstacles, clustets of wild grapes were found, here and there, which to their vigorous appetites were very acceptable.