

37. COLONEL CROSS

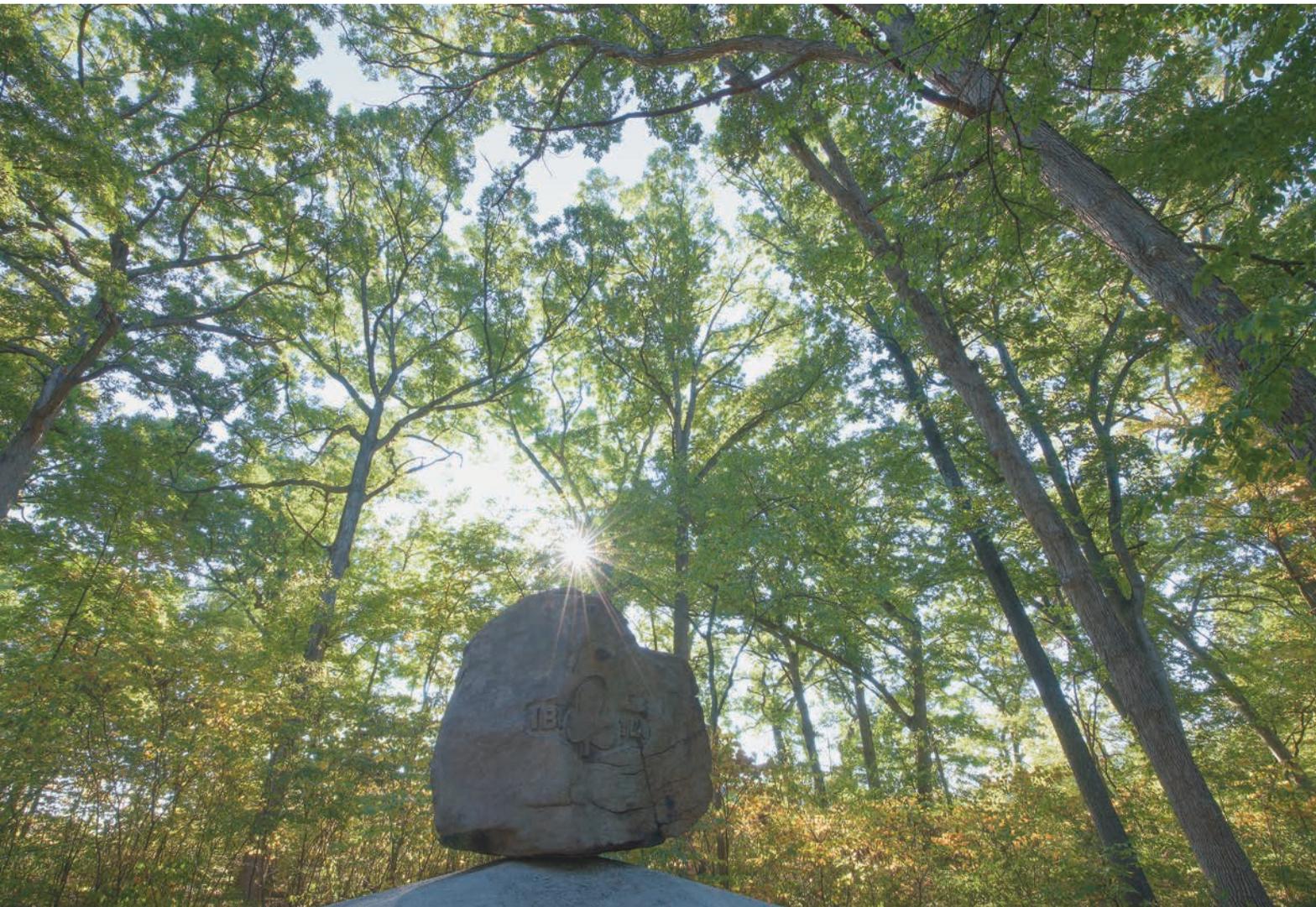
The Rebel bastard shot me from that rock—a vicious, futile act that earned him a body full of bullets from my men. To shoot an unarmed officer, even amid the rage of battle, is nothing but brute stupidity. I always told my boys to kill the ones who carry muskets; the officers will be replaced, perhaps by better ones who've learned from their commanders' mistakes. I had a higher opinion of Rebel infantrymen than of their officers, who had at least some pretense of education and should have known better than to fight for what they were fighting for.

But it is my considered judgment now that the whole lot of them are imbeciles with little more claim to being human than possessing facial hair and Bibles. The uniformed dog on that rock might have believed he did God's will by shooting Yankee officers. They could not be doing what they are doing, fighting to keep an entire race in chains, without their Bible-thumping preachers shouting God's approval—no, His outright favor, and His holy desire to see as many Yankee Philistines murdered on His altar as could be effected by those Christian gentlemen—illiterate, armpit-scratching gentlemen. In them, Christianity is an obscenity—hypocrisy drawled in a ridiculous fog of whiskey. Without their preachers, they could not rush in and die like lunatics in front of my men, line after line coming at us with that childish yell of theirs, swarming forward in the hope of everlasting bliss in a non-Yankee heaven, where black angels, no doubt, light up their seegars and serve them juleps for ever and ever amen, hallelujah! And the Good Lord sending all of us mudsills to the place of sulphur, fire, and brimstone. We'll see. We'll see if there's a heaven

or a hell, and if there is, we'll see what Jesus thinks of gentlemen who whip mere children and women to do their work for them. We might not be gentlemen, but we do our own work!

I can sense that you are the reconciling sort, but even you can see that all this mayhem came about because the South would not suffer themselves to lose an election, and for their own self-interest, therefore, they tore at the very principle of democratic government so they could keep their so-called property. We Northerners entered the war too kindly. The Rebels hated us right off, and won the battles, because war is not Sunday school. We didn't understand that when you take up the cross of war, you must carry it to Calvary. You must abandon your delights and your beliefs, and descend into hell, with no angels to comfort you except your musket and bayonet. I taught my men to hate the gentlemen—"The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman," you read in Shakespeare. And the war itself taught my soldiers to hate. If the Rebels yelled like banshees, then we would yell like Indians! The Rebels fix bayonets; then we fix bayonets and charge first. You may start a war with prayer books, but you must finish it with steel.

I knew that I would die out here. "He who lives by the sword shall die by the sword." Always before battle I would wrap a red kerchief around my bald head to tell my men to be about their business. This time I asked my orderly if he had a black bandanna, and I tied it tight around my head, as if to tell my boys, Don't be dismayed. We are going to die, quite a few of us, but we will give them hell first, and after we are gone, you rest must drive it home. If war begins in church, it ends in



the graveyard. It ends out here, with nothing in between but rage. Give it to them! Give them the bayonet! Let them come on. Shoot the bastards down, and keep your prayers to yourselves until afterwards. Come on, men! Give them some New Hampshire hell! This time we've got them on the run! After them! 🍀