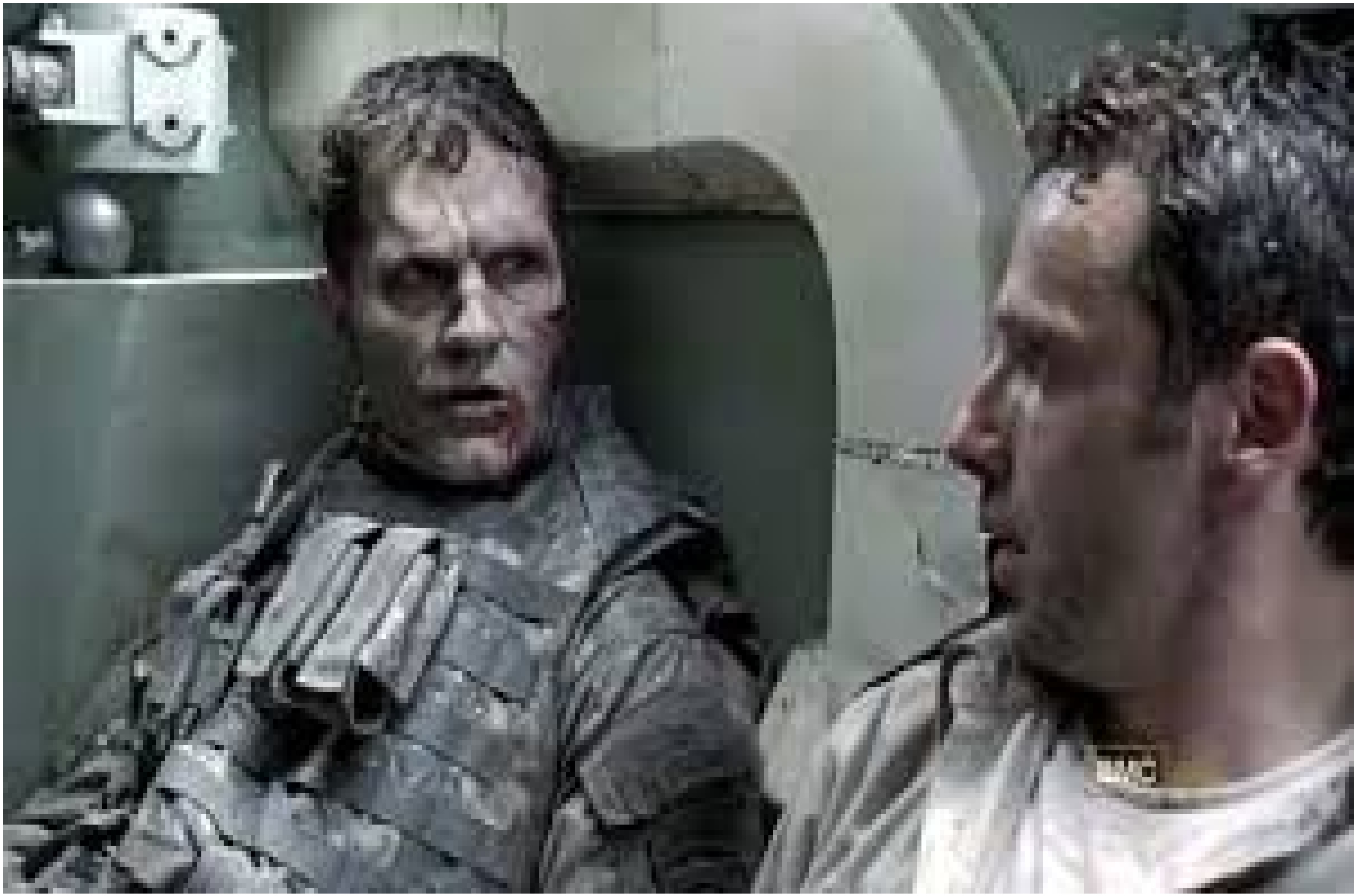
The youth went again into the deep thickets. The brushed branches made a noise that drowned the sounds of cannon. He walked on, going from obscurity into promises of a greater obscurity.

At length he reached a place where the high, arching boughs made a chapel. He softly pushed the green doors aside and entered. Pine needles were a gentle brown carpet. There was a religious half light.

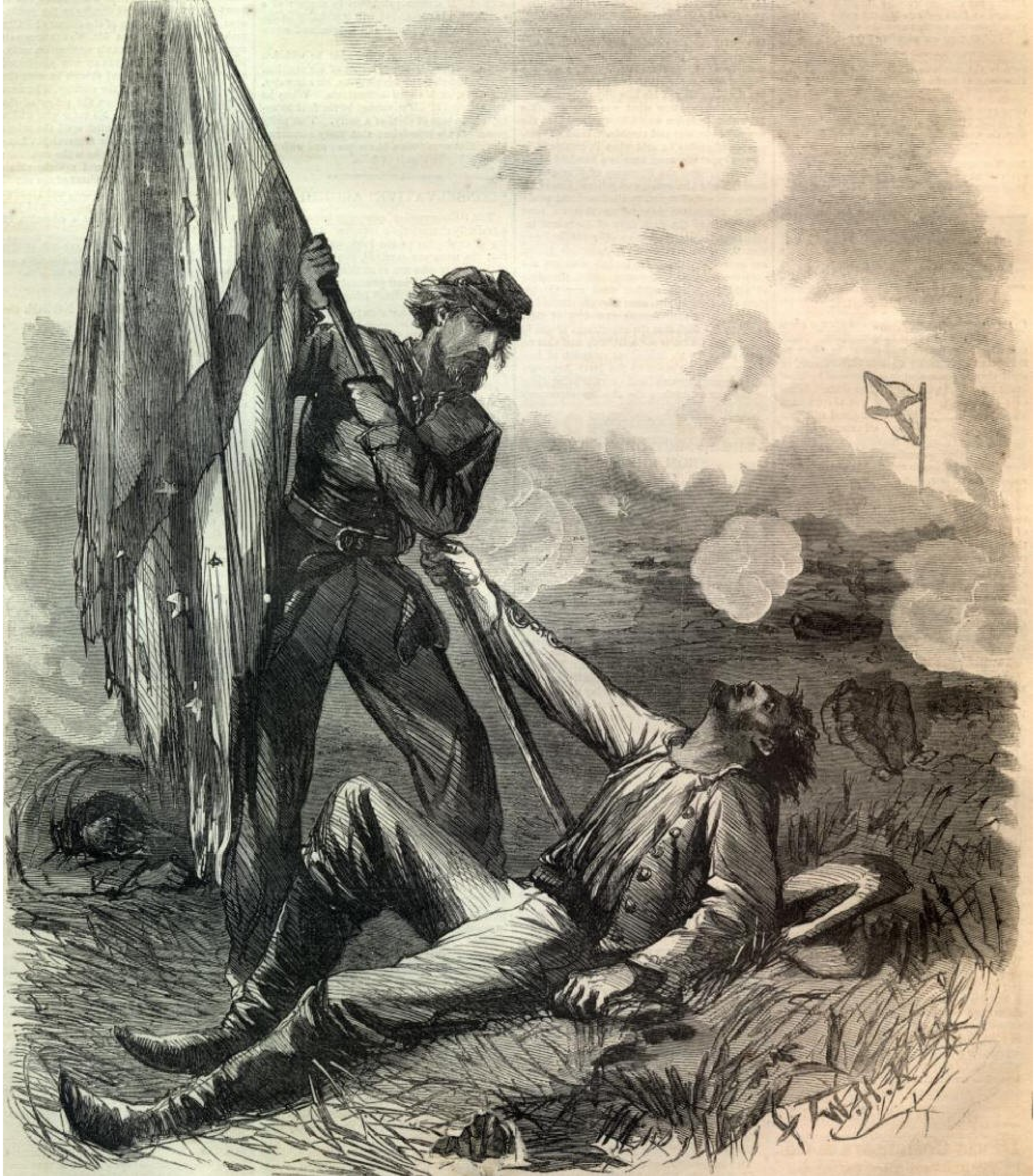
Near the threshold he stopped, horror-stricken at the sight of a thing. He was being looked at by a dead man who was seated with his back against a column-like tree. The corpse was dressed in a uniform that once had been blue, but was now faded to a melancholy shade of green.

The eyes, staring at the youth, had changed to the dull hue to be seen to the side of a dead fish. The mouth was open. Its red had changed to an appalling yellow. Over the grey skin of the face ran little ants. He remained staring into the liquid-looking eyes. The dead man and the living man exchanged a long look. He retreated, step by step, with his face still toward the thing. He feared that if he turned his back the body might spring up and stealthily pursue him.



"Others fell down about the feet of their companions. Some of the wounded crawled out and away, but many lay still, their bodies twisted into impossible shapes."

Turning his head swiftly, the youth saw his friend running in a staggering and stumbling way toward a little clump of bushes. His heart seemed to wrench itself almost free from his body at this sight. He made a noise of pain. […] He protested in a dulled way, keeping his eyes fastened on the mystic place of his intentions. […] In his eyes there was a great appeal. […] There was something ritelike in these movements of the doomed soldier. And there was a resemblance in him to a devotee of a mad religion, bloodsucking, muscle-wrenching, bone-crushing. […] At last they saw him stop and stand motionless. […] He was at the rendezvous. […] Finally, the chest of the doomed soldier began to heave with a strained motion. It increased in violence until it was as if an animal was within and was kicking and tumbling furiously to be free. […] He was invaded by a creeping strangeness that slowly enveloped him. For a moment the tremor of his legs caused him to dance a sort of hideous hornpipe. His arms beat wildly about his head in



Dear comrades on my brow the hand of death is cast,
My breath is growing short, all pain will soon be past;
My soul will soar away to that bright land of bliss,
Far from the pain and woe of such a world as this.

I left my home and friends to battle with the foe,
To save the Southern land from misery and woe;
I gave my life my all (oh! not to win a name,
Or have it e'en enrolled upon the scroll of fame.)

Not so, I only wished a helper brave to be
To save the glorious South from cruel tyranny;
My soul with ardor burned the treacherous foe to fight,
And take a noble stand for liberty and right.

But oh! how weak is man! It was not God's decree,
That I should longer live a helper brave to be,
Before another day I shall be with the dead,
And 'neath the grassy sod will be my lonely bed.

And should you see the friends that nurtured me in youth,
Tell them I tried to walk the ways of peace and truth;
O! tell my mother kind the words that she has given,

Farewell! farewell! my friends my loving comrades dear,
I ask you not to drop for me one bitter tear;
The angels sweetly stand and beckon me to come,
To that bright land of bliss that heavenly realm my home.

MARYLAND

Focusing on dying rather than on killing enabled soldiers to mitigate their terrible responsibility for the slaughter of others. As men saw themselves mirrored in the faces of those expiring around them, they struggled to come to terms with the possibility and the significance of their own annihilation. Dying assumed clear preeminence over killing in the soldier's construction of his emotional and moral universe. Civil War soldiers were, in fact, better prepared to die than to kill, for they lived in a culture that offered many lessons in how life should end. But these lessons had to be adapted to the dramatically changed circumstances of the Civil War. The concept of the Good Death was central to mid-nineteenth-century America, as it had long been at the core of Christian practice. Dying was an art, and the tradition of ars moriendi had provided rules of conduct for the moribund and their attendants since at least the fifteenth century: how to give up one's soul "gladlye and wilfully" how to meet the devil's temptations of unbelief, despair, impatience, and worldly attachment; how to pattern one's dying on that of Christ; how to pray.

(Drew Gilphin Faust, This Republic of Suffering, 21)