

The Gay Chevalier

BY SYDNEY H. PRESTON

I SUPPOSE if it hadn't been for Uncle Jim I should have gone on feeling cut up about The Gay Chevalier without telling any one just how badly I felt. Indeed, if I had been a girl I should have cried over him many a time; as it was, I often had to open my eyes very wide, stand with my legs far apart, put my hands in my pockets, and whistle hard when I found him boozing in a sunny corner like a battered old tramp, or running away with a grub stolen from some industrious hen.

Somehow, though I tried hard enough, I never could forget what a beauty he was when he came to Orchard Farm last summer, and how visitors used to stand and exclaim with delight when they saw him strutting about with the hens, and how proud I was to show off that he had learned to fly up on my arm and take corn out of my pocket.

Miss Darlington said he was a perfect symphony in color. From the way she said it I know that is something very fine.

She pointed out the contrast between his bright yellow legs and the deep crimson of his comb and wattles, and said the way the golden shimmer of his neck feathers harmonized with the deep purple of his tail plumes would be the despair of an artist. "After all," said Miss Darlington, drawing a long breath and putting her head a little to one side, "Nature is the one true artist."

It is strange how surprised our minister was when I repeated it to him the next week; he didn't seem to have thought of harmonizings and contrasts when The Gay Chevalier came around to get some corn, until I pointed them out to him. Then he looked at me through his glasses, and said, "Wha-at, my little man,—ch?" And when I drew a long breath and said that after all Nature was the one true artist, he didn't know what I meant until I said it again; then he took off his

glasses and wiped them, and had another look, and asked me if I never played ball.

Tom, our hired man, was different. When I told him my Chevalier was a symphony in color, he bit off a big piece of tobacco, and said he was a darn fine rooster, anyway, and could knock the spots off of Taylor's big Brahma, and if he was his he wouldn't let the biggest painter in the world touch a brush to him.

And his manners were in keeping with his appearance. As father said, he was a model of gentlemanly deportment in his behavior toward the gentler sex. That is how we came to call him The Gay Chevalier. Whenever he found a tidbit he would cluck to the hens and set it down before them, and then step backwards with a courtly air as if it wasn't worth mentioning, like a well-bred gentleman giving up a car seat to a lady. Of course the hens always snatched, and never waited to say thank you, but he didn't seem to mind.

That was last summer, as I said, and if I had been told on my eighth birthday, when I got him, that before the ninth I'd be ashamed to meet him in the barn-yard, I couldn't have believed it. Considering that he had lost all his own self-respect, I thought I was treating him as he deserved when I pretended not to see him; but when other people got provoked at his doings, I couldn't help feeling more indignant than if he had stayed as respectable as he was when he came to Orchard Farm. That, I suppose, is because he is mine, for I remember mother saying that the more you are mortified at the behavior of your own, the less able you are to stand other people's comments.

The trouble began with those two Plymouth Rock cockerels. I wish they had never been hatched, or that they had been made into broilers. Up to the time they got big enough to push the hens aside and gobble up most of the food, The

Chevalier was most gentle and courteous, but after that he had to work hard to save enough for the hens, and those two vulgar creatures wouldn't pay attention to anything but good hard knocks. It wasn't fair, though, that they had four legs while he had only two, for one pair was always getting rested while he was exercising the other, and one cockerel was always gobbling while he had to do without. I suppose that helped to make their legs so strong and large, for they began to look like young ostriches, and you could hear their feet clumping while they ran. They were so clumsy that sometimes they'd run right over him and knock him down when he got them cornered. Perhaps that's how they found out they were stronger than he was; anyway, they began to show fight; then his tail feathers got dragged and his wattles got torn and his comb pecked, until one day in the winter I found him with his head poked between the nest-boxes and the wall, an awful-looking image. After that *they* always chased *him*, and he never got a chance to feed with the others.

When the fowls were let out in the spring he used to mope about by himself in the daytime, and roost in the tree at the kitchen door at night. Then I learned what my copy-book head-line meant, for that pair of Evil Communications had corrupted all his good manners. He would hide in a corner if he heard one coming, and squawk and run away if even a hen pecked him. Then he took to waiting around the kitchen door for Martha to shake the table-cloth, and one evil day she took him inside and let him eat the bread and milk the cat had left under the kitchen table. If he hadn't sunk so low he would have bobbed his head and walked out when Martha hinted that it was time to go; but perhaps he thought the kitchen would be a good place to live, for when she spread her skirt and began to shoo him toward the door, he dodged around her and ran under the stove. When Martha poked him out with the broom, he squeezed in behind the cupboard, and Tom had to be brought in from his work to move it. Then he dodged them both and flew up to the lamp-shelf. Martha screeched and Tom shouted, and then

there was a smash, for he ran behind the whole row of lamps and knocked them down before he was caught. After that there was heaps of trouble for him and for every one; he insisted upon slipping through every open door he could find, and looking for imaginary bowls of bread and milk under the tables. One day mother found him in the parlor, and they had a game of hide-and-seek which ended in his upsetting the glass shade with the vase of wax flowers that Grandma Thornton made when she was a girl. I was in an awful fright, and father was dreadfully angry. He said that he wouldn't have had that destroyed for a thousand dollars, and that he had hoped to hand it down to future generations; but mother bore up better, for I heard her laugh to herself when she was sweeping up and say that it was just a providence—meaning, I suppose, that no one was cut by the glass.

One day I found him in the stable after Tom had taken the horses out to work; he was scratching the feed over that was ready for the cows' tea in the big mixing-box. I hustled him out in a hurry, for father is very particular about not letting fowls get into the stable. That evening, while we were at tea, Tom came running to the house for help, in a great state of excitement; he said the cows were going crazy. We all followed him out to the stable, and there they were rocking back and forth as if they were on rockers instead of feet. Every little while they would put their noses into the feed and give a loud snort, then throw back their heads and moo in the most heart-broken way. No one seemed to know they were calling out "Hens in the feed!" and before I could stop laughing to explain that they had mistaken The Chevalier for a hen, one of the horses began to plunge and snort, and when Tom looked in his manger, up flew my rooster from the oat-box.

Not long after that father took me to the Poultry Show, and of course we saw plenty of fine-looking roosters there, but not one of them finer than The Chevalier had been. It gave me a lump in my throat to look at them; but, worse than that, father offered to buy me one if I would let The Chevalier be disposed of. He got very red and didn't seem to know

exactly what disposing meant when I asked him; but anyway I didn't want another, though I knew it was mortifying to father as well as to me to have people who came to the place laugh when they saw him and ask if that bunch of feathers and bones was a rooster.

If only he would have stayed out of sight! but he never did. Whatever was going on he had to be around, with his head cocked on one side to see out of the eye that wasn't closed up, and he got into the habit of running so hard when he saw strangers in the yard that he'd often bring up against somebody's legs, and then fall over in a heap, and kick until he was set on his feet again. Then there was sure to be a laugh, and father would get red and try to look amused when he explained it was a pet of his little boy's.

That was the sort of bird he was when Uncle Jim arrived.

It is strange I didn't know I had an Uncle Jim until then, but it seems that he was a great traveller, and had been away for years, and came back unexpectedly. Mother kissed him and father shook hands, but they both looked very grave, and not as glad as you'd think; and when he was upstairs getting washed, they talked about him in a low tone as if he was going to die soon, though to me he seemed very big and strong. Mother said to remember what he was a few years ago and give him this one chance, and father said of course he was a Hayter and must have some good in him, and that perhaps his experience in sowing oats out West had given him a taste for farming, and he might pull through all right.

When uncle came down stairs he apologized for his rough clothes, and explained that his trunk and dress-suit case had gone astray—ha, ha, ha!—and railway travelling was so confounded dusty. Then he looked at father and mother, and they smiled in a sorrowful sort of way, as if they'd like to laugh more if it wasn't a solemn occasion. But at tea that evening they laughed harder than he did, he told so many funny things about his travels, and I thought he was great fun.

After tea he wanted me to show him the live-stock, so we went around to the

yard, and first thing The Gay Chevalier came running along in the wind, looking like a worn-out feather duster. I tried to hurry Uncle Jim on, for I expected him to laugh awfully, he's such a laugher; but he stood still and looked quite grave, then he picked the poor fellow up and looked him all over, and asked me what had happened to that fine bird. There was something in the tone of his voice that made me tell him the whole story. He seemed to understand right away how ashamed I felt, and didn't look at me when I stopped several times to whistle. Then he sent me for a sponge and a basin of water, and bathed the Chevalier's head and cleaned his feathers; then we put him into a coop and gave him a good feed. After that we sat down on the coop and talked, and I got a chance to describe The Chevalier's former appearance the way Miss Darlington taught me. Uncle Jim sat up very straight and looked at me with his eyes getting bigger and bigger, until I drew a long, long breath and looked thoughtful, and said that after all Nature was the one true artist. Then his cheeks bulged out, and his eyes got to look like big glass alleys, and he wiped his face all over with his handkerchief, and said he'd—be—jiggered. He sat for a long time thinking with his chin on his hands; then he looked around as if he was going to tell me a secret, and said: "Say, young un, tell us where you got all that. I won't tell a soul."

Of course I told him about Miss Darlington, and he got quite excited, and wanted to know her first name, and then he slapped his leg and called out: "Why, that's little Millie Darlington that I used to go to school with! Hasn't she got blue eyes, pinky cheeks, curvy red lips like a doll?—white dress, with a big blue sash?—two braids of long yellow hair hanging down her back with bows of ribbon on the ends?"

"No, no," I said; "it's bobbed up like this." I made a twirling motion with my hand.

Uncle Jim laughed, and said she must be grown up, then—wasn't that wonderful? And she used to admire The Gay Chevalier? Well, we must see if we can't help him back to respectability. Had we better try to put a head on him, or change his heart? I said no, it might

kill him to do that; besides, even if it didn't, he wouldn't be the same bird. Uncle Jim believed I was right; for his part he thought it was better to begin from the outside, and that a wash, clean clothes, and a full crop would be the first step toward respectability; then, if he could be made to feel that some one cared enough for him to take pleasure in his change for the better, he might get back his self-respect. He said that of course The Gay Chevalier had behaved badly, but perhaps he wasn't altogether to blame. I said no, for there wouldn't have been half the trouble if Martha hadn't taken him into the kitchen and let him get a taste for bread and milk, and if Tom hadn't given him oats at the stable door. Uncle Jim stroked his beard and said ye-es, he was afraid Martha and Tom hadn't been brought up to understand the danger of giving alms to the undeserving poor; they should have insisted upon his proving that he had become ragged and hungry by living an exemplary life, and then referred him to the proper relief-officer; probably by this time they realized their own folly in giving him anything nice to eat instead of plain wholesome food that would not minister to a depraved appetite. Of course he should have had pride enough not to hang around doors looking starved; but then, anything with an empty crop would be likely to accept charity without thinking of pride until afterwards; but when all was said and done—and he looked at me in such a funny way—if some one hadn't passed by on the other side when he got into trouble he mightn't have got into the way of hanging around doors.

I don't know how Uncle Jim knew so well what to do, for it was simply wonderful how The Gay Chevalier improved. In a few days he was strong enough to be put into a little yard of his own, on freshly dug ground where he had to scratch up every grain of corn that he ate. That was the second step, Uncle Jim said, because nothing was so good for a bird as to have to work for its living, and that if he cultivated the ground, his self-respect would grow without his knowing it. That was quite true, for when his new feathers appeared he took pride in preening them and looking tidy,

and one day about two weeks after Uncle Jim came back he flapped his wings and crowed—so did Uncle Jim when I told him. He shook me by the hand and said, "That bird 'll be a credit to the family yet, Paul."

Father said Uncle Jim was a wonderful worker, and was worth any two men on a farm, and he was awfully sorry to see him go. Mother cried and kissed him, and patted him on the back with one hand when her arms were about his neck, saying he must never, never forget how much we all cared for him; and Uncle Jim wriggled a little, the way I do when I'm kissed, and said that was all right, and when he came back he'd bring a trunk, sure—perhaps two—ha, ha, ha!

I didn't cry; I whistled.

He went off without telling me the third step—he said I had a head, and it was my business to figure it out for myself, and that I shouldn't expect him to when he had to go away to look for a farm and—other things. I must be sure to write and let him know if The Gay Chevalier turned out well.

I thought a long, long time; then I shut up the pair of Evil Communications, and let The Chevalier out of the run, and awaited developments. He looked about in his usual way, just as if nothing had happened; then he scratched among some dead leaves for a grub, and clucked to the hens when he found it, and when they came running up he laid it down among them in his most graceful manner and stepped back; then he led the whole flock away to the oat stubble, and looked perfectly self-possessed and happy.

I wrote to Uncle Jim that he seemed to feel the responsibility of having a family to provide for, and was behaving in a most gentlemanly way.

Some time after that mother got a letter that made her laugh and cry and call out to father that Jim was engaged to Millie Darlington. Father seemed profoundly affected, and cleared his throat, and said he always knew Jim would turn out all right, and if he had been allowed to farm when he was a boy, he might never have gone travelling.

I know what I'm going to send them for a wedding-present. I haven't told any one.

It is a pair of Plymouth Rock cockerels.

New Light on Revolutionary Diplomacy

BY HENRIETTA DANA SKINNER

NOTHING brings us into closer touch with any period of history than an acquaintance with the private life of its leading men, and a sight of their familiar letters upon the subjects of the day. I believe, therefore, that a glimpse into the diplomatic experiences of my great-grandfather, Francis Dana, illustrated by extracts from his confidential letters from John Adams, then our minister to France and Holland, will help us to appreciate more keenly than we perhaps do now the difficult paths of diplomacy which our Revolutionary ministers and envoys had to tread.

I have chosen the letters of John Adams rather than those of any other statesman with whom Francis Dana corresponded, as I cannot imagine any more characteristic or more vigorously descriptive of the situation than those of the famous old patriot.

It may be said of our diplomatic relations during the Revolution that they were chiefly conspicuous by their absence. Their beginnings had been made in March, 1776, when Silas Deane was appointed our commercial and political agent in Europe for the purchase of arms, ammunition, clothing, and supplies, of which the revolutionists were in sad want. One little item in his mission had been neglected, namely, the money to purchase these things with; but fortunately, owing to the friendly generosity of individual Spaniards and Frenchmen, he was more successful than could reasonably have been expected, and he made the agreement with La Fayette and De Kalb to serve in our army. In

December of the same year, Deane, Dr. Franklin, Arthur Lee, and John Adams were appointed commissioners to treat with the French government for military and financial aid. For fifteen months the position of the commissioners was an unenviable one. As John Adams writes, in his picturesque way, to Mrs. Warren: "From December, 1776, to February, 1778, the grand Franklin himself was obliged to skulk about in obscurity in Paris, never admitted to the presence of the King, Queen, or any branch of the royal family, nor to any of the ministers of state, unless privately and in secret, and, in truth, very often under trepidation lest he should finally be obliged to flee the country." Their mission ended successfully, however, and in February, 1778, the commissioners signed a treaty of alliance with France, who formally recognized our sovereign independence.

But though France recognized us, and received Benjamin Franklin as our accredited minister, no other European court to whom overtures were made would receive the envoys of our Congress. All were bound by the laws of neutrality. To have recognized the government of the United States would have been to offend Great Britain, who would have construed such a breach of neutrality as an act of war.

In the summer of 1779 the King of Spain, distressed by the "barbarous war" which now for four years had been devastating the American continent and seriously interfering with the commerce of his West-Indian possessions, offered to mediate between Great Britain and her rebellious colonies in the interests of peace, humanity, and freedom of commerce. This offer of Spanish mediation made it appear advisable to Congress to

NOTE.—The Adams letters are published with the kind consent of Mr. Charles Francis Adams, Jr.