

THE LITTLE SHEPHERD OF KINGDOM COME

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I



HE days of that April had been days of mist and rain. Sometimes, for hours, there would come a miracle of blue sky, white cloud, and yellow light, but always between dark and dark the rain would fall and the mist creep up the mountains and steam from the tops—only to roll together from either range, drip back into the valleys, and lift, straightway, as mist again. So that, all the while Nature was trying to give lustier life to every living thing in the lowland Bluegrass, all the while a gaunt skeleton was stalking down the Cumberland—tapping with fleshless knuckles, now at some unlovely cottage of faded white and green, and now at a log cabin, stark and gray. Passing the mouth of Lonesome, he flashed his scythe into its unlifting shadows and went stalking on. High up, at the source of the dismal little stream, the point of the shining blade darted thrice into the open door of a cabin set deep into a shaggy flank of Black Mountain, and three spirits, within, were quickly loosed from aching flesh for the long flight into the unknown.

It was the spirit of the plague that passed, taking with it the breath of the unlucky and the unfit: and in the hut on Lonesome three were dead—a gaunt mountaineer, a gaunt daughter, and a gaunt son. Later, the mother, too, “jes kind o’ tired,” as little Chad said, and soon to her worn hands and feet came the well-earned rest. Nobody was left then but Chad and Jack, and Jack was a dog with a belly to feed and went for less than nothing with everybody but his little master and the chance mountaineer who had sheep to guard. So, for the fourth

time, Chad, with Jack at his heels, trudged up to the point of a wooded spur above the cabin, where, at the foot of a giant poplar and under a wilderness of shaking June leaves, were three piles of rough boards, covering three hillocks of rain-beaten earth; and, near them, an open grave. There was no service sung or spoken over the dead, for the circuit-rider was then months away; so, unnoticed, Chad stood behind the big poplar, watching the neighbors gently let down into the shallow trench a home-made coffin, rudely hollowed from the half of a begum log, and, unnoticed, slipped away at the first muffled stroke of the dirt—doubling his fists into his eyes and stumbling against the gnarled bodies of laurel and rhododendron until, out in a clear sunny space, he dropped on a thick, velvet mat of moss and sobbed himself to sleep. When he awoke, Jack was licking his face and he sat up, dazed and yawning. The sun was dropping fast, the ravines were filling with blue shadows, luminous and misty, and a far drowsy tinkling from the valley told him that cows were starting homeward. From habit, he sprang quickly to his feet but, sharply conscious on a sudden, dropped slowly back to the moss again, while Jack, who had started down the spur, circled back to see what the matter was and stood with uplifted foot, much puzzled.

There had been a consultation about Chad early that morning among the neighbors, and old Nathan Cherry, who lived over on Stone Creek, in the next cove but one, said that he would take charge of the boy. Nathan did not wait for the burial, but went back home for his wagon, leaving word that Chad was to stay all night with a neighbor and meet him at the death-stricken cabin an hour by sun. The old man meant to have Chad

bound to him for seven years by law—the boy had been told that—and Nathan hated dogs as much as Chad hated Nathan. So the lad did not lie long. He did not mean to be bound out, nor to have Jack mistreated, and he rose quickly and Jack sprang before him down the rocky path and toward the hut that had been a home to both. Under the poplar, Jack sniffed curiously at the new-made grave and Chad called him away so sharply that Jack's tail drooped and he crept toward his master, as though to ask pardon for a fault of which he was not conscious. For one moment, Chad stood looking. Again the stroke of the falling earth smote his ears and his eyes filled; a curious pain caught him by the throat and he passed on, whistling—down into the shadows below to the open door of the cabin.

It was deathly still. The homespun bedclothes and hand-made quilts of brilliant colors had been thrown in a heap on one of the two beds of hickory withes; the kitchen utensils—a crane and a few pots and pans—had been piled on the hearth, along with strings of herbs and beans and red pepper-pods—all ready for old Nathan when he should come over for them, next morning, with his wagon. Not a living thing was to be heard or seen that suggested human life, and Chad sat down in the deepening loneliness, watching the shadows rise up the green walls that bound him in, and wondering what he should do, and where he should go, if he was not to go to old Nathan; while Jack, who seemed to know that some crisis was come, settled on his haunches a little way off, to wait, with perfect faith and patience, for the boy to make up his mind.

It was the first time, perhaps, that Chad had ever thought very seriously about himself, or wondered who he was, or whence he had come. Digging back into his memory as far as he could, it seemed to him that what had just happened now had happened to him once before, and that he had simply wandered away. He could not recollect where he had started from first, but he could recall many of the places where he had lived, and why he had left them—usually because somebody, like old Na-

than, had wanted to have him bound out, or had misused Jack, or would not let the two stray off into the woods together, when there was nothing else to be done. He had stayed longest where he was now, because the old man and his son and his girl had all taken a great fancy to Jack, and had let the two guard cattle in the mountains and drive sheep and, if they stayed out in the woods over night, struck neither a stroke of hand nor tongue. The old mother had been his mother and, once more, Chad leaned his head against the worn lintel and wept silently. So far, nobody had seemed to care particularly who he was, or was not—nor had Chad. Most people were very kind to him, looking upon him as one of the wandering waifs that one finds throughout the Cumberland, upon whom the good folks of the mountains do not visit the father's sin. He knew what he was thought to be, and it mattered so little, since it made no discrimination against him, that he had accepted it without question. It did not matter now, except as it bore on the question as to where he should start his feet. It was a long time for him to have stayed in one place, and the roving memories, stirred within him now, took root, doubtless, in the restless spirit that had led his unknown ancestor into those mountain wilds after the Revolution.

All this while he had been sitting on the low threshold, with his elbows in the hollows of his thighs and his left hand across his mouth. Once more, he meant to be bound to no man's service and, at the final thought of losing Jack, the liberty-loving little tramp spat over his hand with sharp decision and rose.

Just above him and across the buck antlers over the door, lay a long flint-lock rifle; a bullet-pouch, a powder-horn, and a small raccoon-skin haversack hung from one of the prongs: and on them the boy's eyes rested longingly. Old Nathan, he knew, claimed that the dead man had owed him money; and he further knew that old Nathan meant to take all he could lay his hands on in payment: but he climbed resolutely upon a chair and took the things down, arguing the question, meanwhile:

"Uncle Jim said once he aimed to give this rifle gun to me. Mebbe he was fool-

in', but I don't believe he owed ole Nathan so much, an', anyways," he muttered grimly, "I reckon Uncle Jim 'ud kind o' like fer me to git the better of that ole devil—jes' a *leetle*, anyways."

The rifle, he knew, was always loaded ; there was not much powder in the horn and there were not more than a dozen bullets in the pouch, but they would last him until he could get far away. No more would he take, however, than what he thought he could get along with—one blanket from the bed and, from the fireplace, a little bacon and a pone of cornbread.

"An' I *know* Aunt Jane wouldn't 'a' keered about these leetle fixin's, fer I have to have 'em, an' I know I've earned 'em anyways."

Then he closed the door softly and caught the short, deer-skin latch-string to the wooden pin outside. With his Barlow knife, he swiftly stripped a bark string from a pawpaw bush near by, folded and tied his blanket, and was swinging the little pack to his shoulder, when the tinkle of a cow-bell came through the bushes, close at hand. Old Nance, lean and pied, was coming home ; he had forgotten her, it was getting late, and he was anxious to leave for fear some neighbor might come ; but there was no one to milk and, when she drew near with a low moo, he saw that her udders were full and dripping. It would hurt her to go un milked and Chad put his things down and took up a cedar piggin from a shelf outside the cabin and did the task thoroughly—putting the strip-pings in a cup and, so strong was the habit in him, hurrying with both to the rude spring-house and setting them in cool running water. A moment more and he had his pack and his rifle on one shoulder and was climbing the fence at the wood-pile. There he stopped once more with a sudden thought, and wrenching loose a short axe from the face of a hickory log, staggered under the weight of his weapons up the mountain. The sun was yet an hour high and, on the spur, he leaned his rifle against the big poplar and set to work with his axe on a sapling close by—talking frankly now to the God who made him :

"I reckon You know it, but I'm a-goin' to run away now. I hain't got no daddy an' no mammy, an' I hain't niver had

none as I knows—but Aunt Jane hyeh—she's been jes like a mother to me an' I'm a-doin' fer her jes whut I wish You'd have somebody do fer my mother, ef You know whar she's a-layin'." Eight round sticks he cut swiftly—four long and four short—and with these he built a low pen, as is the custom of the mountaineers, close about the fresh mound, and, borrowing a board or two from each of the other mounds, covered the grave from the rain. Then he sunk the axe into the trunk of the great poplar as high up as he could reach—so that it could easily be seen—and, brushing the sweat from his face, he knelt down :

"God!" he said, simply, "I hain't nothin' but a boy, but I got to ack like a man now. I'm a-goin' now. I don't believe You keere much and seems like I bring ever'body bad luck : an' I'm a-goin' to live up hyeh on the mountain jus' as long as I can. I don't want you to think I'm a-complainin'—fer I ain't. Only hit does seem sort o' curious that You'd let me be down hyeh—with me a-keerin' fer nobody now, an' nobody a-keerin' fer me. But Thy ways is inscrutable—leastwise, that's whut the 'rider' says—an' I ain't got a word more to say—Amen."

Chad rose then and Jack, who had sat perfectly still, with his head cocked to one side, and his ears straight forward in wonder over this strange proceeding, sprang into the air, when Chad picked up his gun, and, with a joyful bark, circled a clump of bushes and sped back, leaping as high as the little fellow's head and trying to lick his face—for Jack was a rover, too.

The sun was low when the two waifs turned their backs upon it and started along the mountain, and the blue shadows in valley and ravine were darkening fast. Passing the head of the next cove where the two were to leave the spur and climb the mountain, Chad heard the last faint sound of a cow-bell and he stopped short, with a lump in his throat that hurt. Soon darkness fell, and, on the very top, the boy made a fire with his flint and steel, cooked a little bacon, warmed his corn-pone, munched them and, wrapping his blanket around him and letting Jack curl into the hollow of his legs and stomach, turned his face to the kindly stars and went to sleep.

II



THIRTEEN, during the night, Jack roused him by trying to push himself farther under the blanket and Chad rose to rebuild the fire. The third time he was awakened by the subtle prescience of dawn and his eyes opened on a flaming radiance in the east. Again from habit he started to spring hurriedly to his feet and, again sharply conscious, he lay down again. There was no wood to cut, no fire to rekindle, no water to carry from the spring, no cow to milk, no corn to hoe; there was nothing to do—nothing. Morning after morning, with a day's hard toil at a man's task before him, what would he not have given, when old Jim called him, to have stretched his aching little legs down the folds of the thick feather-bed and slipped back into the delicious rest of sleep and dreams. Now he was his own master and, with a happy sense of freedom, he brushed the dew from his face and, shifting the chunk under his head, pulled his old cap down a little more on one side and closed his eyes. But sleep would not come and Chad had his first wonder over the perverse result of the full choice to do, or not to do. At once, the first keen savor of freedom grew less sweet to his nostrils and, straightway, he began to feel the first pressure of the chain of duties that was to be forged for him out of his perfect liberty, link by link, and he lay vaguely wondering.

Meanwhile, the lake of dull red behind the jagged lines of rose and crimson that streaked the east began to glow and look angry. A sheen of fiery vapor shot upward and spread swiftly over the miracle of mist that had been wrought in the night. An ocean of it and, white and thick as snow-dust, it filled valley, chasm, and ravine with mystery and silence up to the dark jutting points and dark waving lines of range after range that looked like breakers, surged up by some strange new law from an under-sea of foam; motionless, it swept down the valleys, poured swift torrents through high gaps in the hills and one long noiseless cataract over a lesser range—all silent, all motionless,

like a great white sea stilled in the fury of a storm. Morning after morning, the boy had looked upon just such glory, calmly watching the mist part, like the waters, for the land, and the day break, with one phrase, "Let there be light," ever in his mind—for Chad knew his Bible. And, most often, in soft splendor, trailing cloud-mist, and yellow light leaping from crest to crest, and in the singing of birds and the shining of leaves and dew—there was light.

But that morning there was a hush in the woods that Chad understood. On a sudden, a light wind scurried through the trees and showered the mist-drops down. The smoke from his fire shot through the low undergrowth, without rising, and the starting mists seemed to clutch with long, white fingers at the tree-tops, as though loath to leave the safe, warm earth for the upper air. A little later, he felt some great shadow behind him, and he turned his face to see black clouds marshalling on either flank of the heavens and fitting their black wings together, as though the retreating forces of the night were gathering for a last sweep against the east. A sword flashed blindingly from the dome high above them and, after it, came one shaking peal that might have been the command to charge, for Chad saw the black hosts start fiercely. Afar off, the wind was coming; the trees began to sway above him, and the level sea of mist below began to swell, and the wooded breakers seemed to pitch angrily.

Challenging tongues ran quivering up the east, and the lake of red coals under them began to heave fiercely in answer. On either side the lightning leaped upward and forward, striking straight and low, sometimes, as though it were ripping up the horizon to let into the conflict the host of dropping stars. Then the artillery of the thunder crashed in earnest through the shaking heavens, and the mists below pitched like smoke belched from gigantic unseen cannon. The coming sun answered with upleaping swords of fire and, as the black thunder hosts swept overhead, Chad saw, for one moment, the whole east in a writhing storm of fire. A thick darkness rose from the first crash of battle and, with the rush of wind and rain, the mighty conflict went on unseen.

Chad had seen other storms at sunrise, but something happened now and he could never recall the others nor ever forget this. All it meant to him, young as he was then, was unrolled slowly as the years came on—more than the first great rebellion of the powers of darkness when, in the beginning, the Master gave the first command that the seven days' work of His hand should float through space, smitten with the welcoming rays of a million suns; more than the beginning thus of light—of life; more even than the first birth of a spirit in a living thing: for, long afterward, he knew that it meant the dawn of a new consciousness to him—the birth of a new spirit within him, and the foreshadowed pain of its slow mastery over his passion-racked body and heart. Never was there a crisis, bodily or spiritual, on the battle-field or alone under the stars, that this storm did not come back to him. And, always, through all doubt, and, indeed, in the end, when it came to him for the last time on his bed of death, the slow and sullen dispersion of wind and rain on the mountain that morning far, far back in his memory, and the quick coming of the Sun-king's victorious light over the glad hills and trees held out to him the promise of a final victory to the sun-king's King over the darkness of all death and the final coming to his own brave spirit of peace and rest.

So Chad, with Jack drawn close to him, lay back, awe-stricken and with his face wet from mysterious tears. The comfort of the childish self-pity that came with every thought of himself, wandering, a lost spirit along the mountain-tops, was gone like a dream and ready in his heart was the strong new purpose to strike into the world for himself. He even took it as a good omen, when he rose, to find his fire quenched, the stopper of his powder-horn out, and the precious black grains scattered hopelessly on the wet earth. There were barely more than three charges left, and something had to be done at once. First, he must get farther away from old Nathan: the neighbors might search for him and find him and take him back.

So he started out, brisk and shivering, along the ridge path with Jack bouncing before him. An hour later, he came upon a hollow tree, filled with doty wood which he could tear out with his hands and he

built a fire and broiled a little more bacon. Jack got only a bit this time and barked reproachfully for more; but Chad shook his head and the dog started out, with both eyes open, to look for his own food. The sun was high enough now to make the drenched world flash like an emerald and its warmth felt good, as Chad tramped the topmost edge of the Big Black, where the brush was not thick and where, indeed, he often found a path running a short way and turning into some ravine—the trail of cattle and sheep and the pathway between one little valley settlement and another. He must have made ten miles and more by noon—for he was a sturdy walker and as tireless almost as Jack—and ten miles is a long way in the mountains, even now. So, already, Chad was far enough away to have no fear of pursuit, even if old Nathan wanted him back, which was doubtful. On the top of the next point, Jack treed a squirrel and Chad took a rest and brought him down, shot through the head and, then and there, skinned and cooked him and divided with Jack squarely.

"Jack" he said, as he reloaded his gun, "we can't keep this up much longer. I hain't got more'n two more loads o' powder here."

And, thereupon, Jack leaped suddenly in the air and, turning quite around, lighted with his nose pointed where it had before he sprang. Chad cocked the old gun and stepped forward. A low hissing whirl rose a few feet to one side of the path and, very carefully, the boy climbed a fallen trunk and edged his way, very carefully, toward the sound: and there, by a dead limb and with his ugly head reared three inches above his coil of springs, was a rattlesnake. The sudden hate in the boy's face was curious—it was instinctive, primitive, deadly. He must shoot off-hand now and he looked down the long barrel, shaded with tin, until the sight caught on one of the beady, unblinking eyes and pulled the trigger. Jack leaped with the sound, in spite of Chad's yell of warning, which was useless, for the ball had gone true and the poison was set loose in the black, crushed head.

"Jack," said Chad, "we just *got* to go down now."

So they went on swiftly through the heat of the early afternoon. It was very silent

up there. Now and then, a brilliant blue-jay would lilt from a stunted oak with the flute-like love-notes of spring; or a lonely little brown fellow would hop with a low chirp from one bush to another as though he had been lost up there for years and had grown quite hopeless about seeing his kind again. When there was a gap in the mountains, he could hear the querulous, senseless love-quarrel of flickers going on below him; passing a deep ravine, the note of the wood-thrush—that shy lyrist of the hills—might rise to him from a dense covert of maple and beech: or, with a startling call, a red-crested cock of the woods would beat his white-striped wings from spur to spur, as though he were keeping close to the long swells of an unseen sea. Several times, a pert flicker squatting like a knot to a dead limb or the crimson plume of a cock of the woods, as plain as a splash of blood on a wall of vivid green, tempted him to let loose his last load, but he withstood them. A little later, he saw a fresh bear-track near a spring below the head of a ravine; and, later still, he heard the far-away barking of a hound and a deer leaped lightly into an open sunny spot and stood with uplifted hoof and pointed ears. This was too much and the boy's gun followed his heart to his throat, but the buck sprang lightly into the bush and vanished noiselessly.

The sun had dropped midway between the zenith and the blue bulk of Pine Mountain now and, at the next gap, a broader path ran through it and down the mountain. This, Chad knew, led to a settlement and, with a last look of choking farewell to his own world, he turned down. At once, the sense of possible human companionship was curiously potent: at once, the boy's half-wild manner changed and, though alert and still watchful, he whistled cheerfully to Jack, threw his gun over his shoulder, and walked erect and confident. His pace slackened. Carelessly now his feet tramped beds of soft, exquisite moss and lone little settlements, of forget-me-nots, and his long rifle-barrel brushed laurel blossoms down in a shower behind him. Once even, he picked up one of the pretty bells and looked idly at it, turning it bottom upward. The waxen cup might have blossomed from a tiny waxen star. There was a little green star for a calyx;

above this, a little white star with its prongs outstretched—tiny arms to hold up the pink-flecked chalice for the rain and dew. There came a time when he thought of it as a star-blossom; but now his greedy tongue swept the honey from it and he dropped it without another thought to the ground. At the first spur down which the road turned he could see smoke in the valley. The laurel blooms and rhododendron bells hung in thicker clusters and of a deeper pink. Here and there was a blossoming wild cucumber and an umbrella-tree with huger flowers and leaves; and, sometimes, a giant magnolia with a thick creamy flower that the boy could not have spanned with both hands and big, thin oval leaves, a man's stride from tip to stem. Soon he was below the sunlight and in the cool shadows where the water ran noisily and the air hummed with the wings of bees. On the last spur, he came upon a cow browsing on sassafras-bushes right in the path and the last shadow of his loneliness straightway left him. She was old, mild, and unfearing, and she started down the road in front of him as though she thought he had come to drive her home, or as though she knew he was homeless and was leading him to shelter. A little farther on, the river flashed up a welcome to him through the trees and at the edge of the water, her mellow bell led him down stream and he followed. In the next hollow, he stooped to drink from a branch that ran across the road and, when he rose to start again, his bare feet stopped as though riven suddenly to the ground; for, half way up the next low slope, was another figure as motionless as his—with a bare head, bare feet, a startled face and wide eyes—but motionless only until the eyes met his: then there was a flash of bright hair and scarlet homespun, and the little feet, that had trod down the centuries to meet his, left the earth as though they had wings and Chad saw them, in swift flight, pass silently over the hill. The next moment, Jack came too near the old brindle and, with a sweep of her horns at him and a toss of tail and heels in the air, she, too, swept over the slope and on, until the sound of her bell passed out of hearing. Even to-day, in lonely parts of the Cumberland, the sudden coming of a stranger may put women

and children to flight—something like this had happened before to Chad—but the sudden desertion and the sudden silence drew him in a flash back to the lonely cabin he had left and the lonely graves under the big poplar and, with a quivering lip, he sat down. Jack, too, dropped to his haunches and sat hopeless, but not for long. The chill of night was coming on and Jack was getting hungry. So he rose presently and trotted ahead and squatted again, looking back and waiting. But still Chad sat irresolute and, in a moment, Jack heard something that disturbed him, for he threw his ears toward the top of the hill and, with a growl, trotted back to Chad and sat close to him, looking up the slope. Chad rose then with his thumb on the lock of his gun and over the hill came a tall figure and a short one, about Chad's size; and a dog, with white feet and white face, that was bigger than Jack: and behind them, three more figures, one of which was the tallest of the group. All stopped when they saw Chad, who dropped the butt of his gun at once to the ground. At once the strange dog, with a low snarl started down toward the two little strangers with his yellow ears pointed, the hair bristling along his back, and his teeth in sight. Jack answered the challenge with an eager whimper, but dropped his tail, at Chad's sharp command—for Chad did not care to meet the world as an enemy, when he was looking for a friend. The group stood dumb with astonishment for a moment and the small boy's mouth was wide-open with surprise, but the strange dog came on with his tail rigid and lifting his feet high.

"Begone!" said Chad, sharply, but the dog would not begone; he still came on as though bent on a fight.

"Call yo' dog off," Chad called aloud. "My dog'll kill him. You better call him off," he called again, in some concern, but the tall boy in front laughed scornfully.

"Let's see him," he said, and the small one laughed, too.

Chad's eyes flashed—no boy can stand an insult to his dog—and the curves of his open lips snapped together in a straight red line. "All right," he said, placidly, and, being tired, he dropped back on a stone by the wayside to await results. The very tone of his voice struck all shackles

of restraint from Jack, who, with a springy trot, went forward slowly, as though he were making up a definite plan of action; for Jack had a fighting way of his own, which Chad knew.

"Sick him, Whizzer!" shouted the tall boy, and the group of five hurried eagerly down the hill and halted in a half circle about Jack and Chad: so that it looked an uneven conflict, indeed, for the two waifs from over Black Mountain.

The strange dog was game and wasted no time. With a bound he caught Jack by the throat, tossed him several feet away, and sprang for him again. Jack seemed helpless against such strength and fury, but Chad's face was as placid as though it had been Jack who was playing the winning game. Jack himself seemed little disturbed; he took his punishment without an outcry of rage or pain. You would have thought he had quietly come to the conclusion that all he could hope to do was to stand the strain until his opponent had worn himself out. But that was not Jack's game, and Chad knew it. The tall boy was chuckling, and his brother of Chad's age was bent almost double with delight.

"Kill my dawg, will he?" he cried, shrilly.

"Oh, Lawdy!" groaned the tall one.

Jack was much bitten and chewed by this time, and, while his pluck and purpose seemed unchanged, Chad had risen to his feet and was beginning to look anxious. The three silent spectators behind pressed forward and, for the first time, one of these—the tallest of the group—spoke:

"Take yo' dawg off, Daws," he said, with quiet authority; but Daws shook his head, and the little brother looked indignant.

"He said he'd kill him," said Daws, tauntingly.

"Yo' dawg's bigger and hit ain't fair," said the other again and, seeing Chad's worried look, he pressed suddenly forward; but Chad had begun to smile, and was sitting down on his stone again. Jack had leaped this time, with his first growl during the fight, and Whizzer gave a sharp cry of surprise and pain. Jack had caught him by the throat, close behind the jaws, and the big dog shook and growled and shook again. Sometimes Jack was lifted

quite from the ground, but he seemed clamped to his enemy to stay. Indeed he shut his eyes, finally, and seemed to go quite to sleep. The big dog threshed madly and swung and twisted, howling with increasing pain and terror and increasing weakness, while Jack's face was as peaceful as though he were a puppy once more and hanging to his mother's neck instead of her breast, asleep. By and by, Whizzer ceased to shake and began to pant; and, thereupon, Jack took his turn at shaking, gently at first, but with maddening regularity and without at all loosening his hold. The big dog was too weak to resist soon and, when Jack began to jerk savagely, Whizzer began to gasp.

"You take yo' dawg off," called Daws, sharply.

Chad never moved.

"Will you say 'nough for him?" he asked, quietly; and the tall one of the silent three laughed.

"Call him off, I tell ye," repeated Daws, savagely; but again Chad never moved, and Daws started for a club. Chad's new friend came forward.

"Hol' on, now, hol' on," he said, easily. "None o' that, I reckon."

Daws stopped with an oath. "Whut you got to do with this, Tom Turner?"

"You started this fight," said Tom.

"I don't keer ef I did—take him off," Daws answered, savagely.

"Will you say 'nough fer him?" said Chad again, and again tall Tom chuckled. The little brother clenched his fists and turned white with fear for Whizzer and fury for Chad, while Daws looked at the tall Turner, shook his head from side to side, like a balking steer, and dropped his eyes:

"Y-e-s," he said, sullenly.

"Say it, then," said Chad, and this time tall Tom roared aloud, and even his two silent brothers laughed. Again Daws, with a furious oath, started for the dogs with his club, but Chad's ally stepped between.

"You say 'nough, Daws Dillon," he said, and Daws looked into the quiet half-smiling face and at the stalwart two grinning behind.

"Takin' up agin yo' neighbors fer a wood-colt, air ye?"

"I'm a-takin' up fer what's right and

fair. How do you know he's a wood-colt—an' suppose he is? You say 'nough now, or——"

Again Daws looked at the dogs. Jack had taken a fresh grip and was shaking savagely and steadily. Whizzer's tongue was out—once his throat rattled.

"'Nough!" growled Daws, angrily, and the word was hardly jerked from his lips before Chad was on his feet and prying Jack's jaws apart. "He ain't much hurt," he said, looking at the hold which Jack had had—which was bloody—"but he'd a-killed him though, he al'ays does. Thar ain't no chance fer *no* dog, when Jack gits *that* holt."

Then he raised his eyes and looked into the quivering face of the owner of the dog—the little fellow—who, with the bellow of a yearling bull, sprang at him. Again Chad's lips took the straight line and being on his knees was an advantage, for, as he sprang up, he got both underholds and there was a mighty tussle, the spectators yelling with frantic delight.

"Trip him, Tad," shouted Daws, fiercely.

"Stick to him, little un," shouted Tom, and his brothers, stoical Dolph and Rube, danced about madly. Even with underholds, Chad, being much the shorter of the two, had no advantage that he did not need, and, with a sharp thud, the two fierce little bodies struck the road side by side, spurring up a cloud of dust.

"Dawg—fall!" cried Rube, and Dolph rushed forward to pull the combatants apart.

"He don't fight fair," said Chad, panting, and rubbing his right eye which his enemy had tried to "gouge;" "but lemme at him—I can fight thataway, too." Tom held them apart.

"You're too little, and he don't fight fair. I reckon you better go on home—you two—an' yo' mean dawg," he said to Daws; and the two Dillons—the one sullen and the other crying with rage—moved away with Whizzer slinking close to the ground after them. But at the top of the hill both turned with bantering yells, derisive wriggling of their fingers at their noses, and with other rude gestures. And thereupon Dolph and Rube wanted to go after them, but the tall brother stopped them with a word.

"That's about all they're fit fer," he

said, contemptuously, and he turned to Chad.

"Whar you from, little man, an' whar you goin', an' what yo' name be?"

Chad told his name, and where he was from, and stopped.

"Whar you goin'?" said Tom again, without a word or look of comment.

Chad knew the disgrace and the suspicion that his answer was likely to generate, but he looked his questioner in the face fearlessly.

"I don't know whar I'm goin'."

The big fellow looked at him keenly, but kindly.

"You ain't lyin' an' I reckon you better come with us." He turned for the first time to his brothers and the two nodded.

"You an' yo' dawg, though Mammy don't like dawgs much; but you air a stranger an' you ain't afeerd an' you can fight—you an' yo' dawg—an' I know Dad'll take ye both in."

So Chad and Jack followed the long strides of the three over the hill and to the bend of the river, where were three long cane fishing-poles with their butts stuck in the mud—the three had been fishing, when the flying figure of the little girl told them of the coming of a stranger into those lonely wilds. Taking these up, they strode on—Chad after them and Jack trotting, in cheerful confidence, behind. It is probable that Jack noticed, as soon as Chad, the swirl of smoke rising from a broad ravine that spread into broad fields, skirted by the great sweep of the river, for he sniffed the air sharply, and trotted suddenly ahead. It was a cheering sight for Chad. Two negro slaves were coming from work in a corn-field close by, and Jack's hair rose when he saw them, and, with a growl, he slunk behind his master. Dazed, Chad looked at them.

"Whut've them fellers got on their faces?" he asked. Tom laughed.

"Hain't you niver seed a nigger afore?" he asked.

Chad shook his head.

"Lots o' folks from yo' side o' the mountains niver have seed a nigger," said Tom. "Sometimes hit skeers 'em."

"Hit don't skeer me," said Chad.

At the gate of the barn-yard, in which was a log stable with a deeply sloping roof, stood the old brindle cow, who

turned to look at Jack, and as Chad followed the three brothers through the yard gate, he saw a slim scarlet figure vanish swiftly from the porch into the house.

In a few minutes, Chad was inside the big log-cabin and before a big log fire, with Jack between his knees and turning his soft human eyes keenly from one to another of the group about his little master, telling how the mountain cholera had carried off the man and the woman who had been father and mother to him, and their children; at which the old mother nodded her head in growing sympathy, for there were two fresh mounds in her own graveyard on the point of a low hill not far away; how old Nathan Cherry, whom he hated, had wanted to bind him out, and how, rather than have Jack mistreated and himself be ill-used, he had run away along the mountain-top; how he had slept one night under a log with Jack to keep him warm; how he had eaten sassafras and birch bark and had gotten drink from the green water-bulbs of the wild honey-suckle; and how, on the second day, being hungry, and without powder for his gun, he had started, when the sun sank, for the shadows of the valley at the mouth of Kingdom Come. Before he was done the old mother knocked the ashes from her clay pipe and quietly went into the kitchen, and Jack, for all his good-manners, could not restrain a whine of eagerness when he heard the crackle of bacon in a frying-pan and the delicious smell of it struck his quivering nostrils. After dark old Joel, the father of the house, came in—a giant in size and a mighty hunter—and he slapped his big thighs and roared until the rafters seemed to shake when tall Tom told him about the dog-fight and the boy-fight with the family in the next cove: for already the clanship was forming that was to add the last horror to the coming great war and prolong that horror for nearly half a century after its close.

By and by, the scarlet figure of little Melissa came shyly out of the dark shadows behind and drew shyly closer and closer, until she was crouched in the chimney corner with her face shaded from the fire by one hand and a tangle of yellow hair, listening and watching him with her big, solemn eyes, quite fearlessly. Already

the house was full of children and dependents, but no word passed between old Joel and the old mother, for no word was necessary. Two waifs who had so suffered and who could so fight could have a home under that roof if they pleased, forever. And Chad's sturdy little body lay deep in a feather bed, and the friendly shadows from a big fire-place flickered hardly thrice over him before he was asleep. And Jack, for that night at least, was allowed to curl up by the covered coals, or stretch out his tired feet, if he pleased, to a warmth that in all the nights of his life, perhaps, he had never known before.

III



HAD was wakened by the touch of a cold nose at his ear, the rasp of a warm tongue across his face, and the tug of two paws at his cover. "Git down, Jack!" he said, and Jack, with a whimper of satisfaction, went back to the fire that was roaring up the chimney, and a deep voice laughed and called:

"I reckon you'd better git *up*, little man!"

Old Joel was seated at the fire with his huge legs crossed and a pipe in his mouth. It was before dawn, but the household was busily astir. There was the sound of tramping in the frosty air outside and the noise of getting breakfast ready in the kitchen. As Chad sprang up, he saw Melissa's yellow hair drop out of sight behind the foot of the bed in the next corner, and he turned his face quickly, and, slipping behind the foot of his own bed and into his coat and trousers, was at the fire himself, with old Joel looking him over with shrewd kindness.

"Yo' dawg's got a heap o' sense," said the old hunter, and Chad told him how old Jack was, and how a cattle-buyer from the "settlements" of the Bluegrass had given him to Chad when Jack was badly hurt and his owner thought he was going to die. And how Chad had nursed him and how the two had always been together ever since. Through the door of the kitchen Chad could see the old

mother with her crane and pots and cooking-pans; outside he could hear the moo of the old brindle, the bleat of her calf, the nicker of a horse, one lusty sheep-call, and the hungry bellow of young cattle at the barn, where tall Tom was feeding the stock. Presently Rube stamped in with a back log and Dolph came through with a milk-pail.

"I can milk," said Chad eagerly, and Dolph laughed.

"All right, I'll give ye a chance," he said, and old Joel looked pleased, for it was plain that the little stranger was not going to be a drone in the household, and taking his pipe from his mouth but without turning his head he called out:

"Git up thar, Melissy."

Getting no answer, he looked around to find Melissa standing at the foot of the bed.

"Come here to the fire, little gal, nobody's goin' to eat ye."

Melissa came forward, twisting her hands in front of her, and stood, rubbing one bare foot over the other on the hearth-stones. She turned her face with a blush when Chad suddenly looked at her, and thereafter the little man gazed steadily into the fire in order to embarrass her no more.

With the breaking of light over the mountain, breakfast was over and the work of the day began. Tom was off to help a neighbor "snake" logs down the mountain and into Kingdom Come, where they would be "rafted" and floated on down the river to the capital—if a summer tide should come—to be turned into fine houses for the people of the Bluegrass. Dolph and Rube disappeared at old Joel's order to "go meet them sheep." Melissa helped her mother clear away the table and wash the dishes; and Chad, out of the tail of his eye, saw her surreptitiously feeding greedy Jack, while old Joel still sat by the fire smoking silently. Chad stepped outside. The air was chill, but the mists were rising and a long band of rich, warm light lay over a sloping spur up the river, and where this met the blue morning shadows the dew was beginning to drip and to sparkle. Chad could not stand inaction long, and his eye lighted up when he heard a great bleating at the foot of the spur and the shouts of men

and boys. Just then the old mother called from the rear of the cabin :

"Joel, them sheep air comin'!"

The big form of the old hunter filled the doorway and Jack bounded out between his legs, while little Melissa appeared with two books, ready for school. Down the road came the flock of lean mountain sheep, with Dolph and Rube behind them and Daws Dillon and Whizzer and little Tad, and Daws's father, old Tad, long, lean, stooping, crafty.

"Joel Turner," he said, sourly, "here's yo' sheep!"

Joel had bought the Dillons' sheep and meant to drive them down to the county-seat ten miles down the river. There had been a disagreement between the two when the trade was made, for Joel pulled out a gray pouch of coonskin, took from it a roll of bills, and without counting them held them out.

"Tad Dillon," he said, shortly, "here's yo' money!"

The Dillon father gave possession with a gesture and the Dillon faction, including Whizzer, drew aside together—the father morose; Daws watching Dolph and Rube with a look of much meanness; little Tad behind him, watching Chad, his face screwed up with hate; and Whizzer, pretending not to see Jack, but darting a surreptitious glance at him now and then, for then and there was starting a feud that was to run fiercely on, long after the war was done.

"Git my hoss, Rube," said old Joel, and Rube turned to the stable, while Dolph kept an eye on the sheep, which were lying on the road or straggling down the river. As Rube opened the stable door a dirty white object bounded out, and Rube, with a loud curse, tumbled over backward into the mud while a fierce old ram dashed with a triumphant bleat for the open gate. Beelzebub, as the mother had christened the mischievous brute, had been placed in the wrong stall and was making for freedom. He gave another triumphant baa as he swept between Dolph's legs and through the gate, and, with an answering chorus, the silly sheep sprang to their feet and followed. A sheep hates water, but not more than he loves a leader, and Beelzebub feared nothing. Straight for the water of the low

ford the old conqueror made and, in the wake of his masterful summons the flock swept, like a Mormon household, after him. Then was there a commotion indeed. Old Joel shouted and swore; Dolph shouted and swore; and Rube shouted and swore. Old Dillon smiled grimly, Daws shouted with laughter, and so did little Tad. The mother came to the door, broom in hand, and, with a frowning face, watched the sheep splash through the water and into the woods across the river. Little Melissa looked frightened. Whizzer, losing his head, had run down after the sheep, barking and hastening their flight, until called back with a mighty curse from old Joel, while Jack sat on his haunches looking at Chad and waiting for orders.

"Goddlemighty!" said Joel, "how air we goin' to git them sheep back?" Up and up rose the bleating and baaing, for Beelzebub, like the prince of devils that he was, seemed bent on making all the mischief that he could.

"How *air* we goin' to git 'em back?"

Chad nodded then, and Jack with an eager yelp made for the river—Whizzer at his heels. Again old Joel yelled furiously, as did Dolph and Rube, and Whizzer stopped and turned back with a drooping tail, but Jack plunged in. He knew but one voice behind him and Chad's was not in the chorus.

"Call yo' dawg back, boy," said Joel, sternly, and Chad opened his lips with anything but a call for Jack to come back—it was instead a fine high yell of encouragement and old Joel was speechless.

"That dawg'll kill them sheep," said Daws Dillon aloud.

Joel's face was red and his eyes rolled.

"Call that damned feist back, I tell ye," he shouted at last. "Hyeh, Rube git my gun, git my gun!"

Rube started for the house, but Chad laughed. Jack had reached the other bank now, and was flashing like a ball of gray light through the weeds and up into the woods; and Chad slipped down the bank and into the river, hieing him on excitedly.

Joel was beside himself and he, too, lumbered down to the river, followed by Dolph, while the Dillons laughed loudly from the road.

"Boy!" he roared. "Eh, boy, eh!"

The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come

what's his name, Dolph? Call him back, Dolph, call the little devil back. If I don't wear him out with a hickory; holler fer 'em, damn 'em! Heh-o-oo-ee!" The old hunter's bellow rang through the woods like a dinner-horn. Dolph was shouting, too, but Jack and Chad seemed to have gone stone-deaf; and Rube, who had run down with his gun, started with an oath into the river himself, but Joel halted him.

"Hol' on, hol' on!" he said, listening. "He's a-roundin' 'em up!" The sheep were evidently much scattered, to judge from the bleating; but here, there, and everywhere, they could hear Jack's bark, while Chad seemed to have stopped in the woods and, from one place, was shouting orders to his dog. Plainly, Jack was no sheep-killer and by and by Dolph and Rube left off shouting, and old Joel's face became placid; and all of them from swearing helplessly fell to waiting quietly. Soon the bleating became less and less, and began to concentrate on the mountain-side. Not far below, they could hear Chad:

"Coo-oo-sheep! Coo-oo-sh'p-cooshy-cooshy-coo-oo-sheep!"

The sheep were answering. They were coming down a ravine, and Chad's voice rang out above:

"Somebody come across, an' stand on each side o' the holler."

Dolph and Rube waded across then, and soon the sheep came crowding down the narrow ravine with Jack barking behind them and Chad shooing them down. But for Dolph and Rube, Beelzebub would have led them up or down the river, and it was hard work to get him into the water until Jack, who seemed to know what the matter was, sharply nipped several sheep near him. These sprang violently forward, the whole flock in front pushed forward, too, and Beelzebub was thrust from the bank. Nothing else being possible, the old ram settled himself with a snort into the water and made for the other shore. Chad and Jack followed and, when they reached the road, Beelzebub was again a prisoner; the sheep, swollen like sponges, were straggling down the river, and Dillons and Turners were standing around in silence. Jack shook himself and dropped panting in the dust at his master's feet, without so much as an up-

ward glance or a lift of his head for a pat of praise. As old Joel raised one foot heavily to his stirrup, he grunted, quietly:

"Well, I be damned." And when he was comfortably in his saddle he said again, with unction:

"I *do* be damned. I'll just take that dawg to help drive them sheep down to town. Come on, boy."

Chad started joyfully, but the old mother called from the door: "Who's a-goin' to take this gal to school, I'd like to know?"

Old Joel pulled in his horse, straightened one leg, and looked all around—first at the Dillons, who had started away, then at Dolph and Rube, who were moving determinedly after the sheep (it was Court Day in town and they could not miss Court Day), and then at Chad, who halted.

"Boy," he said, "don't you want to go to school—you ought to go to school?"

"Yes," said Chad, obediently, though the trip to town—and Chad had never been to a town—was a sore temptation.

"Go on, then, an' tell the teacher I sent ye. Here, Mammy—eh, what's yo' name, boy? Oh, Mammy—Chad, here, 'll take her. Take good keer o' that gal, boy, an' learn yo' a-b-abs like a man now."

Melissa came shyly forward from the door and Joel whistled to Jack and called him, but Jack, though he liked nothing better than to drive sheep, lay still, looking at Chad.

"Go 'long, Jack," said Chad, and Jack sprang up and was off, though he stopped again and looked back, and Chad had to tell him again to go on. In a moment dog, men, and sheep were moving in a cloud of dust around a bend in the road and little Melissa was at the gate.

"Take good keer of 'Lissy," said the mother from the porch, kindly; and Chad, curiously touched all at once by the trust shown him, took the little girl's basket and, like a little savage, stalked ahead, while Melissa followed silently behind. Not once did Chad look around or speak on the way up the river and past the blacksmith's shop and the mill just beyond the mouth of Kingdom Come; but when they arrived at the log school-house it was his turn to be shy and he hung back to let her go in first. Within there was no floor but the bare earth, no

window but the cracks between the logs, and no desks but the flat sides of slabs held up by wobbling pegs. On one side were girls in linsey and homespun—some thin undersized, underfed, and with weak, dispirited eyes and yellow towzled hair; others, round-faced, round-eyed, dark, and sturdy; most of them large-waisted and round-shouldered—especially the older ones—from work in the fields; but, now and then, one, the daughter of a valley-farmer, erect, agile, spirited, intelligent. On the other side were the boys, in physical characteristics the same and suggesting the same social divisions: at the top the farmer—now and then a slaveholder and perhaps of gentle blood—who had dropped by the way on the westward march of civilization and had cleared some rich river bottom and a neighboring summit of the Big Black, where he sent his sheep and cattle to graze; where a creek opened into this valley some free-settler, whose grandfather had fought at King's Mountain—usually of Scotch-Irish descent, often English, but sometimes German or sometimes even Huguenot—would have his rude home of logs; under these, and in wretched cabins at the head of the creek or on the washed spur of the mountain above, or in some “deadenin’” still higher up and swept by mists and low-trailing clouds, the poor white trash—worthless descendants of the servile and sometimes criminal class who traced their origin back to the slums of London, hand-to-mouth tenants of the valley-aristocrat, hewers of wood for him in the lowlands and upland guardians of his cattle and sheep. And finally, walking up and down the earth floor—stern and smooth of face and of a preternatural dignity hardly to be found elsewhere—the mountain school-master.

It was a “blab school,” as the mountaineers characterize a school in which the pupils study aloud, and the droning chorus—as shrill as locust cries—ceased suddenly when Chad came in, and every eye was turned on him with a sexless gaze of curiosity that made his face red-den and his heart throb. But he forgot them when the schoolmaster pierced him with eyes that seemed to shoot from under his heavy brows like a strong light from deep darkness. Chad met them, nor did his chin droop, and Caleb Hazel

saw that the boy's face was frank and honest, and that his eye was fearless and kind, and, without question, he motioned to a seat—with one wave of his hand setting Chad on the corner of a slab and the studious drone to vibrating again. When the boy ventured to glance around, he saw Daws Dillon in one corner, making a face at him, and little Tad scowling from behind a book, and on the other side and among the girls he saw another hostile face—next little Melissa—which had the pointed chin and the narrow eyes of the “Dillon breed,” as old Joel called the family, whose farm was at the mouth of Kingdom Come and whose boundary touched his. When the first morning recess came—“little recess,” as it was called—the master kept Chad in and asked him his name; if he had ever been to school, and whether he knew his A B C's; and he showed no surprise when Chad, without shame, told him no. So the master got Melissa's spelling-book and pointed out the first seven letters of the alphabet, and made him repeat them three times—watching Chad's earnest, wrinkling brow closely and with growing interest. When school “took up” again Chad was told to say them aloud in concert with the others—which he did, until he could repeat them without looking at his book, and the master saw him thus saying them while his eyes roved around the room, and he nodded to himself with satisfaction—for he was accustomed to visible communion with himself, in school and out. At noon—“big recess”—Melissa gave Chad some cornbread and bacon, and the boys gathered around him, while the girls looked at him curiously, merely because he was a stranger, and some of them—especially the Dillon girl—whispered, and Chad blushed and was uncomfortable, for once the Dillon girl laughed unkindly. The boys had no games, but they jumped and threw “rocks” with great accuracy at a little birch-tree, and Daws and Tad always spat on their stones and pointed with the forefinger of the left hand first at what they were to throw at, while Chad sat to one side and took no part, though he longed to show them what he could do. By and by they fell to wrestling, and finally Tad bantered him for a trial. Chad hesitated, and his late enemy misunderstood.

"I'll give ye both underholts again," he said, loftily, "you're afeerd!"

This was too much, and Chad sprang to his feet and grappled, disdaining the proffered advantage, and got hurled to the ground, his head striking the earth violently, and making him so dizzy that the brave smile with which he took his fall looked rather sickly and pathetic.

"Yes, an' Whizzer can whoop yo' dawg, too," said Tad, and Chad saw that he was going to have trouble with those Dillons, for Daws winked at the other boys, and the Dillon girl laughed again scornfully—at which Chad saw Melissa's eyes flash and her hands clench as, quite unconsciously, she moved toward him to take his part; and all at once he was glad that he had nobody else to champion him.

"You wouldn' dare tech him if one of my brothers was here," she said, indignantly, "an' don't you dare tech him again, Tad Dillon. An' you—" she said, witheringly, "you—" she repeated and stopped helpless for the want of words, but her eyes spoke with the fierce authority of the Turner clan, and its dominant power for half a century, and Nancy Dillon shrank, though she turned and made a spiteful face, when Melissa walked toward the schoolhouse alone.

That afternoon was the longest of Chad's life—it seemed as though it would never come to an end; for Chad had never sat so still or so long. His throat got dry repeating the dreary round of letters over and over and his head ached and he fidgeted in his chair while the slow hours passed and the sun went down behind the mountain and left the schoolhouse in rapidly cooling shadows. His heart leaped when the last class was heard and the signal was given that meant freedom for the little prisoners; but Melissa sat pouting in her seat—she had missed her lesson and must be kept in for a while. So Chad, too, kept his seat and the master heard him say his letters, without the book, and nodded his head as though to say to himself that such quickness was exactly what he had looked for. By the time Chad had learned down to the letter O Melissa was ready, for she was quick too and it was her anger that made her miss; and the two started home, Chad stalking ahead once more. To save him, he could

not say a word of thanks, but how he wished that a bear or a wild-cat would spring into the road! He would fight it with teeth and naked hands to show her how he felt and to save her from harm. The sunlight still lay warm and yellow far under the crest of Pine Mountain, and they had not gone far when Caleb Hazel overtook them and with long strides forged ahead. The schoolmaster "boarded around" and it was his week with the Turners, and Chad was glad, for he already loved the tall, gaunt, awkward man who asked him question after question so kindly—loved him as much as he revered and feared him—and the boy's artless, sturdy answers in turn pleased Caleb Hazel. And when Chad told him who had given him Jack the master began to talk about the far-away, curious country of which the cattle-dealer had told Chad so much, where the land was level and there were no mountains at all; where on one farm might be more sheep, cattle, and slaves than Chad had seen in all his life; where the people lived in big houses of stone and brick—what brick was Chad could not imagine—and rode along hard roads in shiny covered wagons, with two "niggers" on a high seat in front and one little "nigger" behind to open gates, and were proud and very high-heeled indeed; where there were towns that had more people than a whole county in the mountains, with rock roads running through them in every direction and narrow rock paths along these roads—like rows of hearthstones—for the people to walk on—the land of the bluegrass—the "settlements of old Kaintuck." And there were churches everywhere as tall as trees and schoolhouses a-plenty; and big schools, called colleges, to which the boys went when they were through with the little schools. The master had gone to one of these colleges for a year, and he was trying to make enough money to go again. And Chad must go some day, too; there was no reason why he shouldn't, since any boy could do anything he pleased if he only made up his mind and worked hard and never gave up. The master was an orphan, too, he said with a slow smile; he had been an orphan for a long while, and indeed the lonely struggle of his own boyhood was what was helping to draw him to Chad. This college, he said, was a

huge brown house as big as a cliff that the master pointed out, that, gray and solemn, towered high above the river; and with a rock porch bigger than another great boulder that hung just under the cliff, with twenty long, long stone steps to climb before one came to the big double front door.

"How do you git thar?" asked Chad, breathlessly, while Melissa suddenly felt a foreboding discomfort at the possible loss of her play-fellow some day. The master had walked, and it took him a week. A good horse could make the trip in four days, and the river men floated logs down the river to the capital in eight or ten days, according to the "tide." "When did they go? In the spring, when the 'tides' came. The Turners went down, didn't they, Melissa?" And Melissa said that her brother Tom made one trip, and that Dolph and Rube were "might' nigh crazy" to go that coming spring, and, thereupon, a mighty resolution filled Chad's heart to the brim and steadied his eyes, but he did not open his lips then.

Dusk was settling when the Turner cabin came in sight. None of the men-folks had come home yet, and the mother was worried; there was wood to cut and the cows to milk, and Chad's friend, old Betsey the brindle, had strayed off again; but she was glad to see Caleb Hazel, who, without a word, went out to the woodpile, took off his coat, and swung the axe with mighty arms, while Chad carried in the wood and piled it in the kitchen, and the two went after the old brindle together.

When they got back there was a great tumult at the cabin. Tom had brought some friends from over the mountain, and had told the neighbors as he came along that there was going to be a party at his house that night.

So there was a great bustle about the barn where Rube was getting the stock fed and the milking done; and around the kitchen, where Dolph was cutting more wood and piling it up at the door. Inside, the mother was hurrying up supper with Sintha, an older daughter, who had just come home from a visit, and Melissa helping her, while old Joel sat by the fire in the sleeping-room and smoked, with Jack lying on the hearth, or anywhere he pleased, for Jack, with his gentle

ways, was winning the household one by one. He sprang up when he heard Chad's voice, and flew at him, jumping up and pawing him affectionately and licking his face while Chad hugged him and talked to him as though he were human and a brother; never before had the two been separated for a day. So, while the master helped Rube at the barn and Chad helped Dolph at the woodpile, Jack hung about his master—tired and hungry as he was and much as he wanted to be by the fire or waiting in the kitchen for a sly bit from Melissa, whom he knew at once as the best of his new friends. After supper, Dolph got out his banjo and played "Shady Grove," and "Blind Coon Dog," and "Sugar Hill" and "Gamblin' Man," while Chad's eyes glistened and his feet shuffled under his chair. And when Dolph put the rude thing down on the bed and went into the kitchen, Chad edged toward it and, while old Joel was bragging about Jack to the schoolmaster, he took hold of it with trembling fingers and touched the strings timidly. Then he looked around cautiously: nobody was paying any attention to him and he took it up into his lap and began to pick, ever so softly. Nobody saw him but Melissa, who slipped quietly to the back of the room and drew near him. Softly and swiftly Chad's fingers worked and Melissa could scarcely hear the sound of the banjo under her father's loud voice, but she could make out that he was playing a tune that still vibrates unceasingly from the Pennsylvania border to the pine-covered hills of Georgia—"Sourwood Mountain." Melissa held her breath while she listened—Dolph could not play like that—and by and by she slipped quietly to her father and pulled his sleeve and pointed to Chad. Old Joel stopped talking, but Chad never noticed: his head was bent over the neck of the banjo, his body was swaying rhythmically, his chubby fingers were going like lightning, and his eyes were closed—the boy was fairly lost to the world. The tune came out in the sudden silence, clean-cut and swinging:

Heh-o-dee-um-dee-eedle-dahdee-dee!

rang the strings and old Joel's eyes danced.

"Sing it, boy!" he roared, "sing it!" And Chad sprang from the bed, on fire

with confusion and twisting his fingers helplessly. He looked almost frightened when Dolph ran back into the room and cried :

"Who was that a-pickin' that banjer?"

It was not often that Dolph showed such excitement, but he had good cause, and, when he saw Chad standing, shame-faced and bashful, in the middle of the floor, and Melissa joyously pointing her finger at him, he caught up the banjo from the bed and put it into the boy's hands. "Here, you just play that tune agin!"

Chad shrank back, half distressed and half happy, and only a hail outside from the first of the coming guests saved him from utter confusion. Once started, they came swiftly, and in half an hour all were there. Each got a hearty welcome from old Joel, who, with a wink and a laugh and a nod to the old mother, gave a hearty squeeze to some buxom girl, while the fire roared a heartier welcome still. Then was there a dance indeed—no soft swish of lace and muslin, but the active swing of linsey and simple homespun; no French fiddler's bows and scrapings, no intricate lancers, no languid waltz; but neat shuffling forward and back, with every note of the music-beat; floor-thumping, "cuttings of the pigeon's wing," and jolly jigs, two by two, and a great "swinging of corners," and "caging the bird," and "fust lady to the right *cheat* an' swing;" no flirting from behind fans and under stairways and in little nooks, but honest, open courtship—strong arms about healthy waists, and a kiss taken now and then, with everybody to see and nobody to care who saw. If a chair was lacking a pair of brawny knees made one chair serve for two, but never, if you please, for two men. Rude, rough, semi-barbarous, if you will, but simple, natural, honest, sane, earthy—and of the earth whence springs the oak and in time, maybe, the flower of civilization. At the first pause in the dance old Joel called loudly for Chad. The boy tried to slip out of the door, but Dolph seized him and pulled him to a chair in the corner and put the banjo in his hands. Everybody looked on with curiosity at first, and for a little while Chad suffered; but when the dance turned attention from him, he forgot himself again and made the old thing hum with all the rousing tunes

that had ever swept its string. When he stopped at last, to wipe the perspiration from his face, he noticed for the first time the schoolmaster, who was yet divided between the church and the law, standing at the door—silent, grave, disapproving. And he was not alone in his condemnation; in many a cabin up and down the river stern talk was going on against the ungodly "carryings on" under the Turner roof and, far from accepting them as proofs of a better birth and broader social ideas, these Calvinists of the hills set the merry-makers down as the special prey of the devil, and the dance and the banjo as sly plots of the same to draw their souls to hell.

Chad felt the master's look and he did not begin playing again, but put the banjo down by his chair and the dance came to an end. Once more Chad saw the master look, this time at Sintha, who was leaning against the wall with a sturdy youth in a fringed hunting shirt bending over her—his elbow against a log directly over her shoulder. Sintha saw the look too, and she answered with a little toss of her head, but when the master turned to go out the door Chad saw that the girl's eyes followed him. A little later, Chad went out too, and found the master at the corner of the fence and looking at a low red star whose rich, peaceful light came through a gap in the hills. Chad shyly drew near him, hoping in some way to get a kindly word, but the master was so absorbed that he did not see or hear the boy and Chad, awed by the stern, solemn face, withdrew and, without a word to anybody, climbed into the loft and went to bed. He could hear every stroke on the floor below, every call of the prompter, and the rude laughter and banter, but he gave little heed to it all. For he lay thinking of Caleb Hazel and listening again to the stories he and the cattle-dealer had told him about the wonderful settlements. "God's country," the dealer always called it, and such it must be, if what he and the master said was true. By and by the steady beat of feet under him, the swift notes of the banjo, the calls of the prompter and the laughter fused, became inarticulate, distant—ceased. And Chad, as he was wont to do, journeyed on to "God's Country" in his dreams.

(To be continued.)



The Pavilion for the Blind in the Library of Congress.
Showing shelves devoted to books published in the New York Point and Braille systems.

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS AND THE BLIND

By Margarita Spalding Gerry

ILLUSTRATIONS BY VERNON HOWE BAILEY

IT is pleasant for Americans that in Mr. Blashfield's allegory of the Nations encircling the dome of the Congressional Library, England is represented by the gracious face and form of a well loved woman. It must be pleasant, too, for Ellen Terry to reflect that in one quiet nook of the big building she is even more effectually enthroned, although it is only in the grateful recollection of a little group of men and women set apart from the rest of the world by a great affliction. This is the way the charming story runs, a story which has over the princess-tales of our youth this one sordid and grown-up advantage, that it really happened.

On her last visit to Washington Miss Terry was much interested in the work of what is known as the Pavilion for the Blind in the Congressional Library. Touched by the wistfulness of the sightless faces gathered moth-like about her while she spoke of her art, she invited a great number of them to hear her as *Ellaline* in "The Amber Heart." Had they seen her twenty times, and with actual sight instead of the mind's eye, their realization of her charm could not have been more keen. They hung upon every subtle intonation, they cried out excitedly many times, "She's looking at us!" A little note which came from her the next day completed the spell.