

THE LITTLE SHEPHERD OF KINGDOM COME

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ILLUSTRATION (FRONTISPIECE) BY F. C. YOHNN

IX



HE Major was in town and Miss Lucy had gone to spend the day with a neighbor; so Chad was left alone.

"Look aroun', Chad, and see how you like things," said the Major. "Go anywhere you please."

And Chad looked around. He went to the barn to see his old mare and the Major's horses, and to the kennels, where the fox-hounds reared against the palings and sniffed at him curiously; he strolled about the quarters, where the little pickaninnies were playing, and out to the fields, where the servants were at work under the overseer, Jerome Conners, a tall, thin man with shrewd eyes, a sour, sullen face, and protruding upper teeth. One of the few smiles that ever came to that face came now when the overseer saw the little mountaineer. By and by Chad got one of the "hands" to let him take hold of the plough and go once around the field, and the boy handled the plough like a veteran, so that the others watched him, and the negro grinned, when he came back, and said:

"You sutinly can plough fer a fac'!"

He was lonesome by noon and had a lonely dinner, during which he could scarcely realize that it was really he—Chad—Chad sitting up at the table alone and being respectfully waited on by a kinky-headed little negro girl—called Thankyma'am because she was born on Thanksgiving-day—and he wondered what the Turners would think if they could see him now—and the schoolmaster. Where was the schoolmaster? He began to be sorry that he hadn't gone to town to try to find him. Perhaps the

Major would see him—but how would the Major know the schoolmaster? He was sorry he hadn't gone. After dinner he started out-doors again. Earth and sky were radiant with light. Great white tumbling clouds were piled high all around the horizon—and what a long length of sky it was in every direction! Down in the mountains, he had to look straight up, sometimes, to see the sky at all. Blackbirds chattered in the cedars as he went to the yard gate. The field outside was full of singing meadow larks, and crows were cawing in the woods beyond. There had been a light shower, and on the dead top of a tall tree he saw a buzzard stretching his wings out to the sun. Past the edge of the woods, ran a little stream with banks that were green to the very water's edge, and Chad followed it on through the woods, over a worm rail-fence, along a sprouting wheat field, out into a pasture in which sheep and cattle were grazing, and on, past a little hill, where, on the next low slope, sat a great white house with big white pillars, and Chad climbed on top of the stone fence—and sat, looking. On the portico stood a tall man and a lady in black. At the foot of the steps a boy—a head taller than Chad perhaps—was rigging up a fishing-pole. A negro boy was leading a black pony toward the porch, and, to his dying day, Chad never forgot the scene. For, the next moment, a little figure in a long riding skirt stood in the big doorway and then ran down the steps, while a laugh, as joyous as the water running at his feet, floated down the slope to his ears. He saw the negro stoop, the little girl bound lightly to her saddle; he saw her black curls shake in the sunlight, again the merry laugh tinkled in his ears, and then, with a white plume nodding from her

black cap, she galloped off and disappeared among the trees; and Chad sat looking after her—thrilled, mysteriously thrilled—mysteriously saddened, straightway. Would he ever see her again?

The tall man and the lady in black went in-doors, the negro disappeared, and the boy at the foot of the steps kept on rigging his pole. Several times voices sounded under the high creek bank below him, but, quick as his ears were, Chad did not hear them. Suddenly there was a cry that startled him, and something flashed in the sun over the edge of the bank and flopped in the grass.

"Snowball!" an imperious young voice called below the bank, "get that fish!"

On the moment Chad was alert again—somebody was fishing—and he sprang from his perch and ran toward the fish just as a woolly head and a jet-black face peeped over the bank.

The pickaninny's eyes were stretched wide when he saw the strange figure in coon-skin cap and moccasins running down on him, his face almost blanched with terror, and he loosed his hold and, with a cry of fright, rolled back out of sight. Chad looked over the bank. A boy of his own age was holding another pole, and, hearing the little darky slide down, he said, sharply:

"Get that fish, I tell you!"

"Look dar, Mars' Dan, look dar!"

The boy looked around and up and stared with as much wonder as his little body-servant, but with no fear.

"Howdye!" said Chad; but the white boy stared on silently.

"Fishin'?" said Chad.

"Yes," said Dan, shortly—he had shown enough curiosity and he turned his eyes to his cork. "Get that fish, Snowball," he said again.

"I'll git him fer ye," Chad said; and he went to the fish and unhooked it and came down the bank with the perch in one hand and the pole in the other.

"Whar's yo' string?" he asked, handing the pole to the still trembling little darky.

"I'll take it," said Dan, sticking the butt of his cane-pole in the mud. The fish slipped through his wet fingers, when Chad passed it to him, dropped on the bank, flopped to the edge of the creek, and

the three boys, with the same cry, scrambled for it—Snowball falling down on it and clutching it in both his black little paws.

"Dar now!" he shrieked. "I got him!"

"Give him to me," said Dan.

"Lemme string him," said the black boy.

"Give him to me, I tell you!" And, stringing the fish, Dan took the other pole and turned his eyes to his corks, while the pickaninny squatted behind him and Chad climbed up and sat on the bank—letting his legs dangle over. When Dan caught a fish he would fling it with a whoop high over the bank. After the third fish, the lad was mollified and got over his ill-temper. He turned to Chad:

"Want to fish?"

Chad sprang down the bank quickly.

"Yes," he said, and he took the other pole out of the bank, put on a fresh wriggling worm, and moved a little farther down the creek where there was an eddy.

"Ketchin' any?" said a voice above the bank, and Chad looked up to see still another lad, taller by a head than either he or Dan—evidently the boy whom he had seen rigging a pole up at the big house on the hill.

"Oh, 'bout 'leven," said Dan, carelessly.

"Howdye!" said Chad.

"Howdye!" said the other boy, and he, too, stared curiously, but Chad had got used to people staring at him.

"I'm goin' over the big rock," added the new arrival, and he went down the creek and climbed around a steep little cliff, and out on a huge rock that hung over the creek, where he dropped his hook. He had no cork, and Chad knew that he was fishing for catfish. Presently he jerked, and a yellow mudcat rose to the surface, fighting desperately for his life, and Dan and Snowball yelled crazily. Then Dan pulled out a perch.

"I got another one," he shouted. And Chad fished silently. They were making "a mighty big fuss," he thought, "over mighty little fish. If he just had a minnow an' had 'em down in the mountains, 'I Gonnie, he'd show 'em what fishin' was." But he began to have good luck as it was. Perch after perch he pulled out quietly, and he kept Snowball busy string-

ing them until he had five on the string. The boy on the rock was watching him and so was the boy near him—furtively—while Snowball's admiration was won completely, and he grinned and gurgled his delight, until Dan lost his temper again and spoke to him sharply. Dan did not like to be beaten at anything. Pretty soon there was a light thunder of hoofs on the turf above the bank. A black pony shot around the bank and was pulled in at the edge of the ford, and Chad was looking into the dancing black eyes of a little girl with a black velvet cap and a white plume waving from it.

"Howdye!" said Chad, and his heart leaped curiously, but the little girl did not answer. She, too, stared at him as all the others had done and started to ride into the creek, but Dan stopped her sharply:

"Now, Margaret, don't you ride into that water. You'll skeer the fish."

"No, you won't," said Chad, promptly. "Fish don't keer nothin' about a hoss." But the little girl stood still, and her brother's face flushed. He resented the stranger's interference and his assumption of a better acquaintance with fish.

"Mind your own business," trembled on his tongue, and the fact that he held the words back only served to increase his ill-humor and make a worse outbreak possible. But, if Chad did not understand, Snowball did, and his black face grew suddenly grave and he sprang more alertly than ever at any word from his little master. Meanwhile, all unconscious, Chad fished on, catching perch after perch, but he could not keep his eyes on his cork, and more than once he was warned by a suppressed cry from the pickaninny when to pull. Once, when he was putting on a worm, he saw the little girl watching the process with great disgust, and he remembered that Melissa would never bait her own hook. All girls were alike, he "reckoned" to himself, and when he caught a fish that was unusually big, he walked over to her.

"I'll give this un to you," he said, but she shrank from it.

"Go 'way!" she said, and she turned her pony. Dan was red in the face by this time. How did this piece of poor white trash dare to offer a fish to his sis-

ter? And this time the words came out like the crack of a whip:

"Mind your own business!"

Chad started as though he had been struck and looked around quickly. He said nothing, but he stuck the butt of his pole in the mud and climbed up on the bank again and sat there, with his legs hanging over; and his own face was not pleasant to see. The little girl was riding at a walk up the road. Chad kept perfect silence, for he realized that he had not been minding his own business; still he did not like to be told so and in such a way. Both corks were shaking at the same time now.

"You got a bite," said Dan, but Chad did not move.

"You got a bite, I tell you," he said, in almost the tone he had used to Snowball, but Chad when the small aristocrat looked sharply around, dropped his elbows to his knees and his chin into his hand—taking no notice. Once he spat dextrously into the creek. Dan's own cork was going under:

"Snowball!" he cried—"jerk!" A fish flew over Chad's head. Snowball had run for the other pole at command and jerked, too, but the fish was gone and with it the bait.

"You lost that fish!" said the boy, hotly, but Chad sat silent—still. If he would only say something! Dan began to think that the stranger was a coward. So presently, to show what a great little man he was, he began to tease Snowball, who was up on the bank unhooking the fish, of which Chad had taken no notice.

"What's your name?"

"Snowball!" shouted the black little henchman, obediently.

"Louder!"

"S-n-o-w-b-a-l-l!"

"Louder!" The little black fellow opened his mouth wide.

"S-N-O-W-B-A-L-L!" he shrieked.

"LOUDER!"

At last Chad spoke—quietly.

"He can't holler no louder."

"What do you know about it? Louder!" and Dan started menacingly after the little dinky: but Chad stepped between.

"Don't hit him!"

Now Dan had never struck Snowball in

his life, and he would as soon have struck his own brother—but he must not be told that he couldn't. His face flamed and little Hotspur that he was, he drew his fist back and hit Chad full in the chest. Chad leaped back to avoid the blow, tumbling Snowball down the bank; the two clinched, and, while they tussled, Chad heard the other brother clambering over the rocks, the beat of hoofs coming toward him on the turf, and the little girl's cry:

"Don't you *dare* touch my brother!"

Both went down side by side with their heads just hanging over the bank, where both could see Snowball's black wool coming to the surface in the deep hole, and both heard his terrified shriek as he went under again. Chad was first to his feet.

"Git a rail!" he shouted and plunged in, but Dan sprang in after him. In three strokes, for the current was rather strong, Chad had the kinky wool in his hand, and, in a few strokes more, the two boys had Snowball gasping on the bank. Harry, the taller brother, ran forward to help them carry him up the bank, and they laid him, choking and bawling, on the grass. Whip in one hand and with the skirt of her long black riding-habit in the other, the little girl stood above, looking on—white and frightened. The hullabaloo had reached the house and General Dean was walking swiftly down the hill, with Snowball's mammy, topped by a red bandanna handkerchief rushing after him and the kitchen servants following.

"What does this mean?" he said, sternly, and Chad was in a strange awe at once—he was so tall, and he stood so straight, and his eye was so piercing. Few people could lie into that eye. The little girl spoke first—usually she does speak first, as well as last.

"Dan and—and—that boy were fighting and they pushed Snowball into the creek."

"Dan was teasin' Snowball," said Harry the just.

"And that boy meddled," said Dan.

"Who struck first?" asked the General, looking from one boy to the other. Dan dropped his eyes sullenly and Chad did not answer.

"I wasn't goin' to hit Snowball," said Dan.

"I thought you wus," said Chad.

"Who struck first?" repeated the General, looking at Dan now.

"That boy meddled and I hit him."

Chad turned and answered the General's eyes steadily.

"I reckon I had no business meddlin'!"

"He tried to give sister a fish."

That was unwise in Dan—Margaret's chin lifted.

"Oh," she said, "that was it, too, was it? Well——"

"I didn't see no harm givin' the little gal a fish," said Chad. "Little gal," indeed! Chad lost the ground he might have gained. Margaret's eyes looked all at once like her father's.

"I'm a little *girl*, thank you."

Chad turned to her father now, looking him in the face straight and steadily.

"I reckon I had no business meddlin', but I didn't think hit was fa'r fer him to hit the nigger; the nigger was littler, an' I didn't think hit, was right."

"I didn't mean to hit him—I was only playin'!"

"But I *thought* you wus goin' to hit him," said Chad. He looked at the General again. "But I had no business meddlin'." And he picked up his old coonskin cap from the grass to start away.

"Hold on, little man," said the General.

"Dan, haven't I told you not to tease Snowball?" Dan dropped his eyes again.

"Yes, sir."

"You struck first, and this boy says he oughtn't to have meddled, but I think he did just right. Have you anything to say to him?" Dan worked the toe of his left boot into the turf for a moment.

"No, sir."

"Well go up to your room and think about it awhile and see if you don't owe somebody an apology. Hurry up now an' change your clothes. You'd better come up to the house and get some dry clothes for yourself, little man," he added to Chad. "You'll catch cold."

"Much obleeged," said Chad. "But I don't ketch cold."

He put on his old coonskin cap, and then the General recognized him.

"Why, aren't you the little boy who bought a horse from me in town the other

day?" And then Chad recognized him as the tall man who had cried out :

"Let him have her."

"Yes, sir."

"Well I know all about you," said the General, kindly. "You are staying with Major Buford. He's a great friend and neighbor of mine. Now you must come up and get some clothes Harry!"—But Chad, though he hesitated, for he knew now that the gentleman had practically given him the old mare, interrupted, sturdily,

"No, sir, I can't go—not while he's a-feelin' hard at me."

"Very well," said the General, gravely. Chad started off on a trot and stopped suddenly.

"I wish you'd please tell that little *gurl*!"—Chad pronounced the word with some difficulty—"that I didn't mean nothin' callin' her a little gal. Ever'body calls gurls gals whar I come from."

"All right," laughed the General. Chad trotted all the way home and there Miss Lucy made him take off his wet clothes at once, though the boy had to go to bed while they were drying, for he had no other clothes, and while he lay in bed the Major came up and listened to Chad's story of the afternoon, which Chad told him word for word just as it had all happened.

"You did just right, Chad," said the Major, and he went down the stairs, chuckling :

"Wouldn't go in and get dry clothes because Dan wouldn't apologize. Dear me! I reckon they'll have it out when they see each other agin. I'd like to be on hand, and I'd bet my bottom dollar on Chad." But they did not have it out. Half an hour after supper somebody shouted "Hello!" at the gate, and the Major went out and came back smiling.

"Somebody wants to see you, Chad," he said. And Chad went out and found Dan out there on the black pony with Snowball behind him.

"I've come over to say that I had no business hittin' you down at the creek, and—" Chad interrupted him :

"That's all right," he said, and Dan stopped and thrust out his hand. The two boys shook hands gravely.

"An' my papa says you are a man an' he wants you to come over and see us and

I want you—and Harry and Margaret. We all want you."

"All right," said Chad. Dan turned his black pony and galloped off.

"An' come soon!" he shouted back.

Out in the quarters Mammy Ailsie, old Tom's wife, was having her own say that night.

"Ole Marse Cal Buford pickin' a piece o' white trash out de gutter an' not sayin' whar he come from an' nuttin' 'bout him. An' old Mars Henry takin' him jus' like he was quality. My Tom say dat boy don' know who is his mammy ner his daddy. I ain' gwine to let my little mistis play wid no sech trash, I tell you—'deed I ain't!" And this talk would reach the drawing-room by and by, where the General was telling the family, at just about the same hour, the story of the horse sale and Chad's purchase of the old brood mare.

"I knew where he was from right away," said Harry. "I've seen mountain people wearing caps like his up at Uncle Brutus's, when they come down to go to Richmond."

The General frowned.

"Well, you won't see any more people like him up there again."

"Why, papa?"

"Because you aren't going to Uncle Brutus's any more."

"Why, papa?"

The mother put her hand on her husband's knee.

"Never mind, son," she said.

X



OD'S Country.

No humor in that phrase to the blue-grass Kentuckian! There never was—there is none now. To him, the land seems in all the New World, to have been the pet shrine of the Great Mother herself. She fashioned it with loving hands. She shut it in with a mighty barrier of mighty mountains to keep the mob out. She gave it the loving clasp of a mighty river, and spread broad, level prairies beyond that the mob might glide by, or be tempted to the other side, where the earth was level

and there was no need to climb : that she might send priests from her shrine to reclaim western wastes or let the weak or the unloving—if such could be—have easy access to another land.

In the beginning, such was her clear purpose to the Kentuckian's eye, she filled it with flowers and grass and trees, and fish and bird and wild beast, just as she made Eden for Adam and Eve. The red men fought for the Paradise—fought till it was drenched with blood, but no tribe, without a mortal challenge from another straightway, could ever call a rood its own. Boone loved the land from the moment the eagle eye in his head swept its shaking wilderness from a mountain-top, and every man who followed him loved the land no less. And when the chosen came they found the earth ready to receive them—lifted above the baneful breath of river-bottom and marshland, drained by rivers full of fish, filled with woods full of game, and underlaid—all—with thick blue limestone strata that, like some divine agent working in the dark, kept crumbling—ever crumbling—to enrich the soil and give bone-building virtue to every drop of water and every blade of grass. For those chosen people—such, too, seemed her purpose—the Mother went to the race upon whom she has smiled a benediction for a thousand years—the race that obstacle but strengthens, that thrives best under an alien effort to kill, that has ever conquered its conquerors, and that seems bent on the task of carrying the best ideals any age has ever known back to the Old World from which it sprang. The Great Mother knows ! Knows that her children must suffer, if they stray too far from her great teeming breasts. And how she has followed close when this race—her youngest born—seemed likely to stray too far—gathering its sons to her arms in virgin lands that they might suckle again and keep the old blood fresh and strong. Who could know what danger threatened it when she sent her blue-eyed men and women to people the wilderness of the New World ? To climb the Alleghanies, spread through the wastes beyond, and plant their kind across a continent from sea to sea. Who knows what dangers threaten now, when, this task done, she seems to be opening the east-

ern gates of the earth with a gesture that seems to say—"Enter, reclaim, and dwell therein !"

One little race of that race in the New World, and one only, has she kept flesh of her flesh, bone of her bone—to that race only did she give no outside aid. She shut it in with gray hill and shining river. She shut it off from the mother state and the mother nation and left it to fight its own fight with savage nature, savage beast, and savage man. And thus she gave the little race strength of mind and body and brain, and taught it to stand together as she taught each man of the race to stand alone, protect his women, mind his own business, and meddle not at all ; to think his own thoughts and die for them if need be, though he divided his own house against itself ; taught the man to cleave to one woman, with the penalty of death if he strayed elsewhere ; to keep her—and even himself—in dark ignorance of the sins against Herself for which she has slain other nations, and in that happy ignorance keeps them to-day, even while she is slaying elsewhere still.

And Nature holds the Kentuckians close even to-day—suckling at her breasts and living after her simple laws. What further use she may have for them is hid by the darkness of to-morrow, but before the Great War came she could look upon her work and say with a smile that it was good. The land was a great series of wooded parks such as one might have found in Merry England, except that worm fences and stone walls took the place of hedge along the highways. It was a land of peace and of a plenty that was close to easy luxury—for all. Poor whites were few, the beggar was unknown, and throughout the region there was no man, woman, or child, perhaps, who did not have enough to eat and to wear and a roof to cover his head, whether it was his own roof or not. If slavery had to be—then the fetters were forged light and hung loosely. And, broadcast, through the people, was the upright sturdiness of the Scotch-Irishman, without his narrowness and bigotry ; the grace and chivalry of the Cavalier without his Quixotic sentiment and his weakness ; the jovial good-nature of the English squire and the leavening spirit of a simple yeomanry that bore itself with unconscious

tenacity to traditions that seeped from the very earth. And the wings of the eagle hovered over all.

For that land it was the flowering time of the age and the people; and the bud that was about to open into the perfect flower had its living symbol in the little creature racing over the blue-grass fields on a black pony, with a black velvet cap and a white nodding plume above her shaking curls, just as the little stranger who had floated down into those Elysian fields—with better blood in his veins than he knew—was a reincarnation perhaps of the spirit of the old race that had lain dormant in the hills. The long way from log cabin to Greek portico had marked the progress of the generations before her; and, on this same way, the boy had set his sturdy feet.

XI



ON Sunday the Major and Miss Lucy took Chad to church—a country church built of red brick and overgrown with ivy—and the sermon was very short, Chad thought, for, down in the mountains, the circuit-rider would preach for hours—and the deacons passed around velvet pouches for the people to drop money in, and they passed around bread, of which nearly everybody took a pinch, and a silver goblet with wine, from which the same people took a sip—all of which Chad did not understand. Usually the Deans went to Lexington to church, for they were Episcopalians, but they were all at the country church that day, and with them was Richard Hunt, who smiled at Chad and waved his riding-whip. After church Dan came to him and shook hands. Harry nodded to him gravely, the mother smiled kindly, and the General put his hand on the boy's head. Margaret looked at him furtively, but passed him by. Perhaps she was still "mad" at him, Chad thought, and he was much worried. Margaret was not shy like Melissa, but her face was kind. The General asked them all over to take dinner, but Miss Lucy declined—she had asked people to take dinner with her. And Chad, with keen disappointment, saw them drive away.

It was a lonely day for him that Sunday. He got tired staying so long at the table, and he did not understand what the guests were talking about. The afternoon was long, and he wandered restlessly about the yard and the quarters. Jerome Conners, the overseer, tried to be friendly with him for the first time, but the boy did not like the overseer and turned away from him. He walked down to the pike gate and sat on it, looking over toward the Dean's. He wished that Dan would come over to see him or, better still, that he could go over to see Dan and Harry and—Margaret. But Dan did not come and Chad could not ask the Major to let him go—he was too shy about it—and Chad was glad when bedtime came.

Two days more and spring was come in earnest. It was in the softness of the air, the tenderness of cloud and sky, and the warmth of the sunlight. The grass was greener and the trees quivered happily. Hens scratched and cocks crowed more lustily. Insect life was busier. A stallion nickered in the barn, and from the fields came the mooing of cattle. Field-hands going to work chaffed the maids about the house and quarters. It stirred dreamy memories in the Major of his youth, and it brought a sad light into Miss Lucy's faded eyes. Would she ever see another spring? It brought tender memories to the General, and over at Woodlawn, after he and Mrs. Dean had watched the children go off with happy cries and laughter to school, it led them back into the house hand in hand. And it set Chad's heart aglow as he walked through the dewy grass and the singing of many birds toward the pike gate. He, too, was on his way to school—in a brave new suit of clothes—and nobody smiled at him now, except admiringly, for the Major had taken him to town the preceding day and had got the boy clothes such as Dan and Harry wore. Chad was worried at first—he did not like to accept so much from the Major.

"I'll pay you back," said Chad. "I'll leave you my hoss when I go way, if I don't," and the Major laughingly said that was all right and he made Chad, too, think that it was all right. And so spring took the shape of hope in Chad's breast, that morning, and a little later it took the shape of Margaret, for he soon saw the

Dean children ahead of him in the road and he ran to catch up with them.

All looked at him with surprise—seeing his broad white collar with ruffles, his turned-back, ruffled cuffs, and his boots with red tops; but they were too polite to say anything. Still Chad felt Margaret taking them all in and he was proud and confident. And, when her eyes were lifted to the handsome face that rose from the collar and the thick yellow hair, he caught them with his own in an unconscious look of fealty, that made the little girl blush and hurry on and not look at him again until they were in school, when she turned her eyes, as did all the other boys and girls, to scan the new “scholar.” Chad’s work in the mountains came in well now. The teacher, a gray, sad-eyed, thin-faced man, was surprised at the boy’s capacity, for he could read as well as Dan, and in mental arithmetic even Harry was no match for him; and when in the spelling class he went from the bottom to the head in a single lesson the teacher looked as though he were going to give the boy a word of praise openly and Margaret was regarding him with a new light in her proud eyes. That was a happy day for Chad, but it passed after school when, as they went home together, Margaret looked at him no more; else Chad would have gone by the Deans’ house when Dan and Harry asked him to go and look at their ponies and the new sheep that their father had just brought; for Chad was puzzled and awed and shy of the little girl. It was strange—he had never felt that way about Melissa. But his shyness kept him away from her day after day until, one morning, he saw her ahead of him going to school alone, and his heart thumped as he quietly and swiftly overtook her without calling to her; but he stopped running that she might not know that he had been running, and for the first time she was shy with him. Harry and Dan were threatened with the measles, she said, and would say no more. When they went through the fields toward the schoolhouse Chad stalked ahead as he had done in the mountains with Melissa, and, looking back, he saw that Margaret had stopped. He waited for her to come up, and she looked at him for a moment as though displeased. Puzzled, Chad gave

back her look for a moment and turned without a word—still stalking ahead. He looked back presently and Margaret had stopped and was pouting.

“You aren’t polite, little boy. My mamma says a *nice* little boy always lets a little *girl* go first.” But Chad still walked ahead. He looked back presently and she had stopped again—whether angry or ready to cry, he could not make out—so he waited for her, and as she came slowly near he stepped gravely from the path, and Margaret went on like a queen.

In town, a few days later, he saw a little fellow take off his hat when a lady passed him, and it set Chad to thinking. He remembered asking the schoolmaster once what was meant when the latter read about a knight doffing his plume, and the schoolmaster had told him that men, in those days, took off their hats in the presence of ladies just as they did in the Blue-grass now; but Chad had forgotten. He understood it all then and he surprised Margaret, next morning, by taking off his cap gravely when he spoke to her; and the little lady was greatly pleased, for her own brothers did not do that, at least, not to her, though she had heard her mother tell them that they must. All this must be chivalry, Chad thought, and when Harry and Dan got well he revived his old ideas, but Harry laughed at him and Dan did, too, until Chad, remembering Beelzebub, suggested that they should have a tournament with two rams that the General had tied up in the stable. They would make spears and each would get on a ram. Harry would let them out into the lot and they would have “a real charge—sure enough.” But Margaret received the plan with disdain, until Dan, at Chad’s suggestion, asked the General to read them the tournament scene in “Ivanhoe,” which excited the little lady a great deal; and when Chad said that she must be the Queen of Love and Beauty she blushed prettily and thought, after all, that it would be great fun. They would make spears of ash-wood and helmets of tin buckets, and perhaps Margaret would make red sashes for them. Indeed, she would, and the tournament would take place on the next Saturday. But on Saturday one of the sheep was taken over to Major Buford’s and the other was turned

loose in the Major's back-pasture and the great day had to be postponed.

It was on the night of the reading from "Ivanhoe" that Harry and Dan found out how Chad could play the banjo. Passing old Mammy's cabin that night before supper, the three boys had stopped to listen to old Tom play, and after a few tunes, Chad could stand it no longer. "I foller pickin' the banjer a leetle," he said shyly, and thereupon he had taken the rude instrument and made the old negro's eyes stretch with amazement, while Dan rolled in the grass with delight, and every negro who heard gathered around the boy. After supper Dan brought the banjo into the house and made Chad play in the porch, to the delight of them all. And there, too, the servants gathered, and even old Mammy was observed slyly shaking her foot—so that Margaret clapped her hands and laughed the old woman into great confusion. After that no Saturday came that Chad did not spend the night at the Deans, or Harry and Dan did not stay at Major Buford's. And not a Saturday passed that the three boys did not go coon-hunting with the darkies, or fox-hunting with the Major and the General. Chad never forgot that first starlit night when he was awakened by the near winding of a horn and heard the Major jump from bed. He jumped too, and when the Major reached the barn a dark little figure was close at his heels.

"Can I go, too?" Chad asked, eagerly.

"Think you can stick on?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right. Get my bay horse. That old mare of yours is too slow."

The Major's big bay horse! Chad was dizzy with pride.

When they galloped out into the dark woods, there were the General and Harry and Dan and half a dozen neighbors, sitting silently on their horses and listening to the music of the hounds.

The General laughed.

"I thought you'd come," he said, and the Major laughed too, and cocked his ear. "Old Rock's ahead," he said, for he knew, as did everyone there, the old hound's tongue.

"He's been ahead for an hour," said the General with quiet satisfaction, "and I think he'll stay there."

Just then a dark object swept past them, and the Major with a low cry hied on his favorite hound.

"Not now, I reckon," he said, and the General laughed again.

Dan and Harry pressed their horses close to Chad, and all talked in low voices.

"Ain't it fun?" whispered Dan. Chad answered with a shiver of pure joy.

"He's making for the creek," said the Major, sharply, and he touched spurs to his horse. How they raced through the woods, cracking brush and whisking around trees, and how they thundered over the turf and clattered across the road and on! For a few moments the Major kept close to Chad, watching him anxiously, but the boy stuck to the big bay like a jockey, and he left Dan and Harry on their ponies far behind. All night they rode under the starlit sky, and ten miles away they caught poor Reynard. Chad was in at the kill, with the Major and the General, and the General gave Chad the brush with his own hand.

"Where did you learn to ride, boy?"

"I never learned," said Chad, simply, whereat the Major winked at his friends and patted Chad on the shoulders.

"I've got to let my boys ride better horses, I suppose," said the General; "I can't have a boy who does not know how to ride beating them this way."

Day was breaking when the Major and Chad rode into the stable-yard. The boy's face was pale, his arms and legs ached, and he was so sleepy that he could hardly keep his eyes open.

"How'd you like it, Chad?"

"I never knowed nothing like it in my life," said Chad.

"I'm going to teach you to shoot."

"Yes, sir," said Chad.

As they approached the house a squirrel barked from the woods.

"Hear that, Chad?" said the Major. "We'll get him."

The following morning Chad rose early and took his old rifle out into the woods, and when the Major came out on the porch before breakfast the boy was coming up the walk with six squirrels in his hand. The Major's eyes opened and he looked at the squirrels when Chad dropped them on the porch. Every one of them was shot through the head.

"Well, I'm damned! How many times did you shoot, Chad?"

"Seven."

"What—missed only once?"

"I took a knot fer a squirrel once," said Chad.

The Major roared aloud.

"Did I say I was going to teach you to shoot, Chad?"

"Yes, sir."

The Major chuckled and that day he told about those squirrels and that knot to everybody he saw. With every day the Major grew fonder and prouder of the boy and more convinced than ever that the lad was of his own blood.

"There's nothing that I like that that boy don't take to like a duck to water." And when he saw the boy take off his hat to Margaret and observed his manner with the little girl, he said to himself that if Chad wasn't a gentleman born, he ought to have been, and the Major believed that he must be.

Everywhere, at school, at the Deans, with the darkies—with everybody but Conners, the overseer—Chad became a favorite, but, as to Napoleon, so to Chad, came Waterloo—with the long deferred tournament came Waterloo to Chad.

And it came after a certain miracle on May-day. The Major had taken Chad to the festival where the dance was on sawdust in a woodland—in the bottom of a little hollow, around which the seats ran as in an amphitheatre. Ready to fiddle for them stood none other than John Morgan himself, his gray eyes dancing and an arch smile on his handsome face; and, taking a place among the dancers, were Richard Hunt and—Margaret. The poised bow fell, a merry tune rang out, and Richard Hunt bowed low to his little partner, who, smiling and blushing, dropped him the daintiest of graceful courtesies. Then the miracle came to pass. Rage straightway shook Chad's soul—shook it as a terrier shakes a rat—and the look on his face and in his eyes went back a thousand years. And Richard Hunt, looking up, saw the strange spectacle, understood, and did not even smile. On the contrary, he went at once after the dance to speak to the boy and got for his answer fierce, white, staring silence and a clenched fist, that was almost ready to strike. Some-

thing else that was strange happened then to Chad. He felt a very firm and a very gentle hand on his shoulder, his own eyes dropped before the piercing dark eyes and kindly smile above him, and, a moment later, he was shyly making his way with Richard Hunt toward Margaret.

It was on Thursday of the following week that Dan told him the two rams were once more tied in his father's stable. On Saturday, then, they would have the tournament. To get Mammy's help Margaret had to tell the plan to her, and Mammy stormed against the little girl taking part in any such undignified proceedings, but imperious Margaret forced her to keep silent and help make sashes and a tent for each of the two knights. Chad would be the "Knight of the Cumberland" and Dan the "Knight of the Blue-grass." Snowball was to be Dan's squire and black Rufus, Harry's body-servant, would be squire to Chad. Harry was King John, the other pickaninies would be varlets and vassals, and outraged Uncle Tom, so Dan told him, would, "by the beard of Abraham," have to be a "Dog of an Unbeliever." Margaret was undecided whether she would play Rebecca or the "Queen of Love and Beauty," until Chad told her she ought to be both, so both she decided to be. So all was done—the spears fashioned of ash, the helmets battered from tin-buckets, colors knotted for the spears, and shields made of sheepskins. On the stiles sat Harry and Margaret in royal state under a canopy of calico with indignant Mammy behind them. At each end of the stable lot was a tent of cotton, and before one stood Snowball and before the other black Rufus, each with his master's spear and shield. Near Harry stood Sam, the trumpeter, with a fox-horn to sound the charge, and four black vassals stood at the stable-door to lead the chargers forth.

Near the stiles were neighbors' children, and around the barn was gathered every darky on the place, while behind the hedge and peeping through it were the Major and the General, the one chuckling, the other smiling indulgently.

The stable-door opened, the vassals disappeared and came forth each pair leading a ram, one covered with red calico, the other with blue cotton, and each with a

bandanna handkerchief around his neck. Each knight stepped forth from his tent, as his charger was dragged—ba-a-ing and butting—toward it, and, grasping his spear and shield and setting his helmet on more firmly, got astride gravely—each squire solemn, for the King had given command that no varlet must show unseemly mirth. Behind the hedge the Major was holding his hands to his sides and the General was getting grave. It had just occurred to him that those rams would make for each other like tornadoes, and he said so.

"Of course they will," chuckled the Major. "Don't you suppose they know that? That's what they're doing it for. Bless my soul!"

The King waved his hand just then and his black trumpeter tooted the charge.

"Leggo!" said Chad.

"Leggo!" said Dan.

And Snowball and Rufus let go, and each ram ran a few paces and stopped with his head close to the ground, while each knight brandished his spear and dug with his spurred heels. One charger gave a ba-a! The other heard, raised his head, saw his enemy, and ba-a-ed an answering challenge. Then they started for each other with a rush that brought a sudden fearsome silence, quickly followed by a babel of excited cries, in which Mammy's was loudest and most indignant. Dan, nearly unseated, had dropped his lance to catch hold of his charger's wool, and Chad had gallantly lowered the point of his, because his antagonist was unarmed. But the temper of rams and not of knights was in that fight now and they came together with a shock that banged the two knights into each other like catapults and hurled both violently to the ground. General Dean and the Major ran anxiously from the hedge. Several negro men rushed for the rams, who were charging and butting like demons. Harry tumbled from the canopy in a most unkingly fashion. Margaret cried and Mammy wrung her hands. Chad rose dizzily, but Dan lay still. Chad's elbow had struck him in the temple and knocked him unconscious.

The servants were thrown into an uproar when Dan was carried back into the house. Harry was white and almost in tears.

"I did it, father, I did it," he said, at the foot of the steps.

"No," said Chad, sturdily, "I done it myself."

Margaret heard and ran from the hallway and down the steps, brushing away her tears with both hands.

"Yes, you did—you *did*," she cried. "I hate you."

"Why, Margaret," said General Dean.

Chad, startled and stung, turned without a word and, unnoticed by the rest, made his way slowly across the fields.

XII



It was the tournament that, at last, loosed Mammy's tongue. She was savage in her denunciation of Chad to Mrs. Dean—so savage and in such plain language that her mistress checked her sharply, but not before Margaret had heard, though the little girl, with an awed face, slipped quietly out of the room into the yard, while Harry stood in the doorway, troubled and silent.

"Don't let me hear you speak that way again, Mammy," said Mrs. Dean, so sternly that the old woman swept out of the room in high dudgeon. And yet she told her husband of Mammy's charge.

"I am rather surprised at Major Buford."

"Perhaps he does not know," said the General. "Perhaps it isn't true."

"Nobody knows anything about the boy."

"That's true."

"Well, I cannot have my children associating with a waif."

"He seems like a nice boy."

"He uses extraordinary language. I cannot have him teaching my children mischief. Why I believe Margaret is really fond of him. I know Harry and Dan are." The General looked thoughtful.

"I will speak to Major Buford about him," he said; and he did—no little to that gentleman's confusion—though he defended Chad stanchly—and the two friends parted with some heat.

Thereafter, the world changed for

Chad, for is there any older and truer story than that Evil has wings, while Good goes a plodding way? And Chad felt the change, in the negroes, in the sneering overseer, and could not understand. The rumor reached Miss Lucy's ears and she and the Major had a spirited discussion that rather staggered Chad's kind-hearted champion. It reached the school, and a black-haired youngster, named George Forbes, who had long been one of Margaret's abject slaves, and who hated Chad, brought out the terrible charge in the presence of a dozen school-children at noon-recess one day. It had been no insult in the mountains, but Chad, dazed though he was, knew it was meant for an insult, and his hard fist shot out promptly, landing in his enemy's chin and bringing him bawling to the earth. Others gave out the cry then, and the boy fought right and left like a demon. Dan stood sullenly near, taking no part, and Harry, while he stopped the unequal fight, turned away from Chad coldly, calling Margaret, who had run up toward them, away at the same time, and Chad's three friends turned from him then and there, while the boy, forgetting all else, stood watching them with dumb wonder and pain. The school-bell clanged, but Chad stood still—with his heart well-nigh breaking. In a few minutes the last pupil had disappeared through the school-room door, and Chad stood under a great elm—alone. But only a moment, for he turned quickly away, the tears starting to his eyes, walked rapidly through the woods, climbed the worm-fence beyond, and dropped, sobbing, in the thick blue-grass.

An hour later he was walking swiftly through the fields toward the old brick house that had sheltered him. He was very quiet at supper that night, and after Miss Lucy was gone to bed and he and the Major were seated before the fire he was so quiet that the Major looked at him anxiously.

"What's the matter, Chad? Are you sick!"

"Nothin'—no, sir."

But the Major was uneasy, and when he rose to go to bed he went over and put his hand on the boy's head.

"Chad," he said, "if you hear of

people saying mean things about you you mustn't pay any attention to them."

"No, sir."

"You're a good boy, and I want you to live here with me. Good-night, Chad," he added, affectionately. Chad nearly broke down, but he steadied himself.

"Good-by, Major," he said, brokenly. "I'm obleeged to you."

"Good-by?" repeated the Major. "Why——"

"Good-night, I mean," stammered Chad.

The Major stood inside his own door, listening to the boy's slow steps up the second flight. "I'm gettin' to love that boy," he said, wonderingly—"An' I'm damned if people who talk about him don't have me to reckon with"—and the Major shook his head from side to side. Several times he thought he could hear the boy moving around in the room above him, and while he was wondering why the lad did not go to bed he fell asleep.

Chad was moving around. First, by the light of a candle, he laboriously dug out a short letter to the Major—scalding it with tears. Then he took off his clothes and got his old mountain suit out of the closet—moccasins and all—and put them on. Very carefully he folded the pretty clothes he had taken off—just as Miss Lucy had taught him—and laid them on the bed. Then he picked up his old rifle in one hand and his old coon-skin cap in the other, blew out the candle, slipped noiselessly down the stairs in his moccasined feet, out the unbolted door and into the starlit night. From the pike fence he turned once to look back to the dark, silent house amid the dark trees. Then he sprang down and started through the fields—his face set toward the mountains.

It so happened that mischance led General Dean to go over to see Major Buford about Chad next morning. The Major listened patiently—or tried ineffectively to listen—and when the General was through he burst out with a vehemence that shocked and amazed his old friend.

"Damn those niggers!" he cried, in a tone that seemed to include the General in his condemnation, "that boy is the best

boy I ever knew. I believe he is my own blood, he looks like that picture there"—pointing to the old portrait—"and if he is what I believe he is, by —, sir, he gets this farm and all I have. Do you understand that?"

"I believe he told you what he was."

"He did—but I don't believe he knows, and, anyhow, whatever he is, he shall have a home under this roof as long as he lives."

The General rose suddenly—stiffly.

"He must never darken my door again."

"Very well." The Major made a gesture which plainly said, "In that event, you are darkening mine too long," and the General rose, slowly descended the steps of the portico, and turned:

"Do you really mean, Cal, that you are going to let a little brat that you picked up in the road only yesterday stand between you and me?"

The Major softened.

"Look here," he said, whisking a sheet of paper from his coat pocket. While the General read Chad's scrawl, the Major watched his face.

"He's gone, by —. A hint was enough for him. If he isn't the son of a gentleman, then I'm not, nor you."

"Cal," said the General, holding out his hand, "we'll talk this over again."

The bees buzzed around the honey-suckles that clambered over the porch. A crow flew overhead. The sound of a crying child came around the corner of the house from the quarters, and the General's footsteps died on the gravel walk, but the Major heard them not. Mechanically he watched the General mount his black horse and canter toward the pike gate. The overseer called to him from the stable, but the Major dropped his eyes to the scrawl in his hand. When Miss Lucy came out he handed it to her.

"I reckon you know what folks is a-sayin' about me. I tol' you myself. But I didn't know hit wus any harm, and anyways hit ain't my fault, I reckon, an' I don' see how folks can blame me. But I don' want nobody who don' want me. An' I'm leavin' 'cause I don't want to bother you. I never bring nothing but trouble nohow an' I'm goin' back to the mountains. Tell Miss Lucy good-by. She

was mighty good to me, but I know she didn't like me. I left the hoss for you. If you don't have no use fer the saddle, I wish you'd give hit to Harry, 'cause he tuk up fer me at school when I was fightin', though he wouldn't speak to me no more. I'm mighty sorry to leave you. I'm obleeged to you 'cause you wus so good to me an' I'm goin' to see you agin some day, if I can. Good-by."

"Left that damned old mare to pay for his clothes and his board and his schooling," muttered the Major. "By the gods"—he rose suddenly and strode away—"I beg your pardon, Lucy."

A tear was running down each of Miss Lucy's faded cheeks.

Dawn that morning found Chad springing from a bed in a haystack—ten miles from Lexington. By dusk that day he was on the edge of the blue-grass and that night he stayed at a farm-house, going in boldly, for he had learned now that the wayfarer was as welcome in a blue-grass farm-house as in a log-cabin in the mountains. Higher and higher grew the green swelling slopes, until, climbing one about noon next day, he saw the blue foothills of the Cumberland through the clear air—and he stopped and looked long, breathing hard from pure ecstasy. The plain-dweller never knows the fierce home hunger that the mountain-born have for hills.

Besides, beyond those blue summits were the Turners and the school-master and Jack, waiting for him, and he forgot hunger and weariness as he trod on eagerly toward them. That night he stayed in a mountain-cabin, and while the contrast of the dark room, the crowding children, the slovenly dress, and the coarse food was strangely disagreeable, along with the strange new shock came the thrill that all this meant hills and home. It was about three o'clock of the fourth day that, tramping up the Kentucky River, he came upon a long, even stretch of smooth water, from the upper end of which two black boulders were thrust out of the water, and with a keener thrill he recognized that he was nearing home. He recalled seeing those rocks as the raft swept down the river, and the old Squire had said that they were named after

oxen—"Billy and Buck." Opposite the rocks he met a mountaineer.

"How fer is it to Uncle Joel Turner's?"

"A leetle the rise o' six miles, I reckon."

The boy was faint with weariness, and those six miles seemed a dozen. Idea of distance is vague among the mountaineers, and two hours of weary travel followed, yet nothing that he recognized was in sight. Once a bend of the river looked familiar, but when he neared it, the road turned steeply from the river and over a high bluff, and the boy started up with a groan. He meant to reach the summit before he stopped to rest, but, in sheer pain, he dropped a dozen paces from the top and lay with his tongue, like a dog's, between his lips.

The top was warm, but a chill was rising from the fast-darkening shadows below him. The rim of the sun was about to brush the green tip of a mountain across the river, and the boy rose in a minute, dragged himself on to the point where, rounding a big rock, he dropped again with a thumping heart and a reeling brain. There it was—old Joel's cabin in the pretty valley below—old Joel's cabin—home! Smoke was rising from the chimney, and that far away it seemed that Chad could smell frying bacon. There was the old barn, and he could make out one of the boys feeding stock and another chopping wood—was that the school-master? There was the huge form of old Joel at the fence talking with a neighbor. He was gesticulating as though angry, and the old mother came to the door as the neighbor moved away with a shuffling gait that the boy knew belonged to the Dillon breed. Where was Jack? Jack! Chad sprang to his feet and went down the hill on a run. He climbed the orchard fence, breaking the top-rail in his eagerness, and as he neared the house, he gave a shrill yell. A scarlet figure flashed like a flame out of the door, with an answering cry, and the Turners followed:

"Why, boy," roared old Joel. "Mammy, it's Chad!"

Dolph dropped an armful of feed. The man with the axe left it stuck in a log, and each man shouted:

"Chad!"

The mountaineers are an undemonstrative race, but Mother Turner took the boy in her arms and the rest crowded around, slapping him on the back and all asking questions at once—Dolph and Rube and Tom. Yes, and there was the school-master—every face was almost tender with love for the boy. But where was Jack?

"Where's—where's Jack?" said Chad.

Old Joel changed face—looking angry; the rest were grave. Only the old Mother spoke:

"Jack's all right."

"Oh," said Chad, but he looked anxious.

Melissa inside heard. He had not asked for *her*, and with the sudden choking of a nameless fear she sprang out the door to be caught by the school-master, who had gone around the corner to look for her.

"Lemme go," she said, fiercely, breaking his hold and darting away, but stopping, when she saw Chad in the doorway, with a shy smile.

"Howdy, Melissa!"

The girl stared at him mildly and made no answer, and a wave of shame and confusion swept over the boy as his thoughts flashed back to a little girl in a black cap and on a black pony, and he stood reddening and helpless. There was a halloo at the gate. It was the old Squire and the circuit-rider, and old Joel went toward them with a darkening face.

"Why hello, Chad," the Squire said. "You back again?"

He turned to Joel.

"Look hyeh, Joel. Thar hain't no use o' your buckin' agin yo' neighbors and harborin' a sheep-killin' dog." Chad started and looked from one face to another—slowly but surely making out the truth.

"You never seed the dawg afore last spring. You don't know that he hain't a sheep-killer."

"It's a lie—a lie," Chad cried, hotly, but the schoolmaster stopped him.

"Hush, Chad," he said, and he took the boy inside and told him Jack was in trouble. A Dillon sheep had been found dead on a hill-side. Daws Dillon had come upon Jack leaping out of the

pasture, and Jack had come home with his muzzle bloody. Even with this overwhelming evidence, old Joel stanchly refused to believe the dog was guilty and ordered old man Dillon off the place. A neighbor had come over, then another, and another, until old Joel got livid with rage.

"That dawg mought eat a dead sheep but he never would kill a live one, and if you kill him, by ——, you've got to kill me fust."

Now there is no more un-neighborly or unchristian act for a farmer than to harbor a sheep-killing dog. So the old Squire and the circuit-rider had come over to show Joel the grievous error of his selfish, obstinate course, and, so far, old Joel had refused to be shown. All of his sons sturdily upheld him and little Melissa fiercely—the old mother and the schoolmaster alone remaining quiet and taking no part in the dissension.

"Have they got Jack?"

"No, Chad," said the schoolmaster, "He's safe—tied up in the stable." Chad

started out, and no one followed but Melissa. A joyous bark that was almost human came from the stable as Chad approached, for the dog must have known the sound of his master's footsteps, and when Chad threw open the door Jack sprang the length of his tether to meet him and was jerked to his back. Again and again he sprang, barking, as though beside himself, while Chad stood at the door, looking sorrowfully at him.

"Down, Jack!" he said sternly and Jack dropped obediently, looking straight at his master with honest eyes and whimpering like a child.

"Jack," said Chad, "did you kill that sheep?" This was all strange conduct for his little master, and Jack looked wondering and dazed, but his eyes never wavered or blinked. Chad could not long stand those honest eyes.

"No," he said, fiercely—"no, little doggie, no—no." And Chad dropped on his knees and took the dog in his arms and hugged him to his breast.

(To be continued.)

THE DARK BEFORE DAWN

By Edith M. Thomas

Oh, mystery of the morning gloam,
Of haunted air, of windless hush!
Oh, wonder of the deepening dome—
Afar, still far, the morning's flush!
My spirit hears, among the spheres,
The round earth's ever-quickenening rush!

A single leaf, on yonder tree,
The planet's rush hath felt, hath heard;
And soon, all branches whispering be!
That whisper wakes the nested bird—
The song of thrush, before the blush
Of Dawn, the dreaming world hath stirred!

The old moon withers in the East—
The winds of space may drive her far!
In heaven's chancel waits the priest—
Dawn's pontiff-priest, the morning star!
And yonder, lo! a shafted glow—
The gates of Day-spring fall ajar!