

THE LITTLE SHEPHERD OF KINGDOM COME

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

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CHAD was awakened 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 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 soon 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

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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 a-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,

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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

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mountain-sheep, Dolph and Rube driving them. Behind, slouched the Dillon tribe—Daws and Whizzer and little Tad; Daws's father, old Tad, long, lean, stooping, crafty: and two new ones—cousins to Daws—Jake and Jerry, the giant twins.

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

Joel had bought the Dillons' sheep and meant to drive them to the county-seat ten miles down the river. There had evidently 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 and the giant twins, 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 strag-

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gling 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 Turner mother had christened the mischievous brute, had been placed in the wrong stall and Beelzebub 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 and little Tad shouted with derisive laughter, and the big twins grinned. 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.

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"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 possible.

"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. "Hych, 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

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down to the river, followed by Dolph, while the Dillons roared from the road.

"Boy!" he roared. "Eh, boy, eh! 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 the gun, started with an oath into the river himself, but Joel halted him.

"Hol' on, hol' on!" he said, listening. "By the eternal, 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:

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"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 shooin' 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 upward 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."

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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.

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"Take good keer of 'Lissy," said the mother from the porch, kindly; and Chad, curiously touched all at once by the trust shown him, stalked ahead like a little savage, while Melissa with her basket followed silently behind. The boy never thought of taking the basket himself—that is not the way of men with women in the hills—and not once did he look around or speak on the way up the river and past the blacksmith's shop and the grist-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 Melissa 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 tousled 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 like Melissa, 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 slave-holder and perhaps of gentle blood—who had dropped by the way on the westward march of civilization and had cleared some rich river-

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bottom and a neighboring summit of the mountains, 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 him, 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 might have 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 redden and his heart throb. But he forgot them when the school-master pierced him with eyes that seemed to shoot from under his heavy brows like a strong light

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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, 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 own. 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 Chad repeat them three times—watching the boy'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

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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 corn-bread 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 going 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 agin," 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

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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't 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 school-house 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 for 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 school-house in rapidly cooling shadow. 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

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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 school-master "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 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

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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, white 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 hearth-stones—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 school-houses 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

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that the master pointed out, that, gray and solemn, towered high above the river; and with a rock porch bigger than a 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?” Chad asked so breathlessly that Melissa looked quickly up with a sudden foreboding that she might lose her little 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 had 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 wood-pile, took off his coat,

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and swung the axe with mighty arms, while Chad carried in the wood and piled it in the kitchen; and then 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 wood-pile, Jack hung about his master—tired and hungry as he was and much as he wanted to be by the fire or waiting in

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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 school-master, 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

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eyes were closed—the boy was fairly lost to the world. The tune came out in the sudden silence, clean-cut and swinging:

Hen-o-dee-um-dee-ee-dle-dah-dee-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, shamefaced 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

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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 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

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the school-master, 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 Caleb Hazel 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 any-

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body, 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.