

THE LITTLE SHEPHERD OF KINGDOM COME

were grated windows—the penitentiary! Every mountaineer has heard that word, and another—the “Legislatur’.”

Chad shivered as he looked, for he could recall that sometimes down in the mountains a man would disappear for years and turn up again at home, whitened by confinement; and, during his absence, when anyone asked about him, the answer was—“penitentiary.” He wondered what those boxes on the walls were for, and he was about to ask, when a guard stepped from one of them with a musket and started to patrol the wall, and he had no need to ask. Tom wanted to go up on the hill and look at the Armory and the graveyard, but the school-master said they did not have time, and, on the moment, the air was startled with whistles far and near—six o’clock! At once Caleb Hazel led the way to supper in the boarding-house, where a kind-faced old lady spoke to Chad in a motherly way, and where the boy saw his first hot biscuit and was almost afraid to eat anything at the table for fear he might do something wrong. For the first time in his life, too, he slept on a mattress without any feather-bed, and Chad lay wondering, but unsatisfied still. Not yet had he been out of sight of the hills, but the master had told him that they would see the Bluegrass next day, when they were to start back to the mountains by train as far as Lexington. And Chad went to sleep, dreaming his old dream still.

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IT had been arranged by the school-master that they should all meet at the railway station to go home, next day at noon, and, as the Turner boys had to help the Squire with the logs at the river, and the school-master had to attend to some business of his own, Chad roamed all morning around the town. So engrossed was he with the people and the sights and sounds of the little village that he came to himself with a start and trotted back to the boarding-house for fear that he might not be able to find the station alone. The old lady was standing in the sunshine at the gate.

Chad panted—“Where’s——?”

“They’re gone.”

“Gone!” echoed Chad, with a sinking heart.

“Yes, they’ve been gone——” But Chad did not wait to listen; he whirled into the hall-way, caught up his rifle, and, forgetting his injured foot, fled at full speed down the street. He turned the corner, but could not see the station, and he ran on about another corner and still another, and, just when he was about to burst into tears, he saw the

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low roof that he was looking for, and hot, panting, and tired, he rushed to it, hardly able to speak.

"Has that *enjine* gone?" he asked breathlessly. The man who was whirling trunks on their corners into the baggage-room did not answer. Chad's eyes flashed and he caught the man by the coat-tail.

"Has that *enjine* gone?" he cried.

The man looked over his shoulder.

"Leggo my coat, you little devil. Yes, that *enjine's* gone," he added, mimicking. Then he saw the boy's unhappy face and he dropped the trunk and turned to him.

"What's the matter?" he asked, kindly.

Chad had turned away with a sob.

"They've lef' me—they've lef' me," he said, and then, controlling himself:

"Is thar another goin'?"

"Not till to-morrow mornin'."

Another sob came, and Chad turned away—he did not want anybody to see him cry. And this was no time for crying, for Chad's prayer back at the grave under the poplar flashed suddenly back to him.

"I got to ack like a man now." And, sobered at once, he walked on up the hill—thinking. He could not know that the school-master was back in the town, looking for him. If he waited until the next morning, the Turners would probably have gone on; whereas, if he started out now on foot,

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and walked all night, he might catch them before they left Lexington next morning. And if he missed the Squire and the Turner boys, he could certainly find the school-master there. And if not, he could go on to the mountains alone. Or he might stay in the "settlements"—what had he come for? He might—he would—oh, he'd get along somehow, he said to himself, wagging his head—he always had and he always would. He could always go back to the mountains. If he only had Jack—if he only had Jack! Nothing would make any difference then, and he would never be lonely, if he only had Jack. But, cheered with his determination, he rubbed the tears from his eyes with his coat-sleeve and climbed the long hill. There was the Armory, which, years later, was to harbor Union troops in the great war, and beyond it was the little city of the dead that sits on top of the hill far above the shining river. At the great iron gates he stopped a moment, peering through. He saw a wilderness of white slabs and, not until he made his way across the thick green turf and spelled out the names carved on them, could he make out what they were for. How he wondered when he saw the innumerable green mounds, for he hardly knew there were as many people in the world living as he saw there must be in that place, dead. But he had no time to spare and he turned quickly back to the pike—saddened—for his heart

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went back, as his faithful heart was always doing, to the lonely graves under the big poplar back in the mountains.

When he reached the top of the slope, he saw a rolling country of low hills stretching out before him, greening with spring; with far stretches of thick grass and many woodlands under a long, low sky, and he wondered if this was the Bluegrass. But he "reckoned" not—not yet. And yet he looked in wonder at the green slopes, and the woods, and the flashing creek, and nowhere in front of him—wonder of all—could he see a mountain. It was as Caleb Hazel had told him, only Chad was not looking for any such mysterious joy as thrilled his sensitive soul. There had been a light sprinkle of snow—such a fall as may come even in early April—but the noon sun had let the wheat-fields and the pastures blossom through it, and had swept it from the gray moist pike until now there were patches of white only in gully and along north hill-sides under little groups of pines and in the woods, where the sunlight could not reach; and Chad trudged sturdily on in spite of his heavy rifle and his lame foot, keenly alive to the new sights and sounds and smells of the new world—on until the shadows lengthened and the air chilled again; on, until the sun began to sink close to the far-away haze of the horizon. Never had the horizon looked so far away. His foot

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began to hurt, and on the top of a hill he had to stop and sit down for a while in the road, the pain was so keen. The sun was setting now in a glory of gold, rose, pink, and crimson. Over him, the still clouds caught the divine light which swept swiftly through the heavens until the little pink clouds over the east, too, turned golden pink and the whole heavens were suffused with green and gold. In the west, cloud was piled on cloud like vast cathedrals that must have been built for worship on the way straight to the very throne of God. And Chad sat thrilled, as he had been at the sunrise on the mountains the morning after he ran away. There was no storm, but the same loneliness came to him now and he wondered what he should do. He could not get much farther that night—his foot hurt too badly. He looked up—the clouds had turned to ashes and the air was growing chill—and he got to his feet and started on. At the bottom of the hill and down a little creek he saw a light and he turned toward it. The house was small, and he could hear the crying of a child inside and could see a tall man cutting wood, so he stopped at the bars and shouted:

"Hello!"

The man stopped his axe in mid-air and turned. A woman, with a baby in her arms, appeared in the light of the door with children crowding about her.

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"Hello!" answered the man.

"I want to git to stay all night." The man hesitated.

"We don't keep people all night."

"Not keep people all night," thought Chad with wonder.

"Oh, I reckon you will," he said. Was there anybody in the world who wouldn't take in a stranger for the night? From the doorway the woman saw that it was a boy who was asking shelter and the trust in his voice appealed vaguely to her.

"Come in!" she called, in a patient, whining tone. "You can stay, I reckon."

But Chad changed his mind suddenly. If they were in doubt about wanting him—he was in no doubt as to what he would do.

"No, I reckon I'd better git on," he said sturdily, and he turned and limped back up the hill to the road—still wondering, and he remembered that, in the mountains, when people wanted to stay all night, they usually stopped before sundown. Travelling after dark was suspicious in the mountains, and perhaps it was in this land, too. So, with this thought, he had half a mind to go back and explain, but he pushed on. Half a mile farther, his foot was so bad that he stopped with a cry of pain in the road and, seeing a barn close by, he climbed the fence and into the loft and burrowed himself

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under the hay. From under the shed he could see the stars rising. It was very still and very lonely and he was hungry—hungrier and lonelier than he had ever been in his life, and a sob of helplessness rose to his lips—if he only had Jack!—but he held it back.

"I got to ack like a man now." And, saying this over and over to himself, he went to sleep.