

## THE LITTLE SHEPHERD OF KINGDOM COME

to open into the perfect flower had its living symbol in the little creature racing over the bluegrass 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.

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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



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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 Connors, 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 Deans'. 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 quar-

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ters. It stirred dreamy memories of his youth in the Major, and it brought a sad light into Miss Lucy's faded eyes. Would she ever see another spring? It brought tender memories to General Dean, 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 amid 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



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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 bought; 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

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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 school-house, 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 recalled asking the school-master once what was meant when the latter



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read about a knight doffing his plume, and the school-master had told him that men, in those days, took off their hats in the presence of ladies just as they did in the Bluegrass 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 lances 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

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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 ran toward the boy. After supper, Dan brought the banjo into the house and made Chad play on 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.



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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.

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"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 shoulder.

"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."



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"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

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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,



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white, staring silence and a clinched fist, that was almost ready to strike. Something 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 Bluegrass." 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 pickaninnies 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

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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 the 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-doors opened, the four 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 and vassal 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 oc-



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curred 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 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

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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.