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OFF TO THE WAR

THROUGHOUT that summer Chad fought his fight, daily swaying this way and that—fought it in secret until the phantom of neutrality faded and gave place to the grim spectre of war—until with each hand Kentucky drew a sword and made ready to plunge both into her own stout heart. When Sumter fell, she shook her head resolutely to both North and South. Crittenden, in the name of Union lovers and the dead Clay, pleaded with the State to take no part in the fratricidal crime. From the mothers, wives, sisters and daughters of thirty-one counties came piteously the same appeal. Neutrality, to be held inviolate, was the answer to the cry from both the North and the South; but armed neutrality, said Kentucky. The State had not the moral right to secede; the Nation, no constitutional right to coerce: if both the North and the South left their paths of duty and fought—let both keep their battles from her soil. Straightway State Guards went into camp and Home Guards were held in reserve, but there was not a fool in the Commonwealth who

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did not know that, in sympathy, the State Guards were already for the Confederacy and the Home Guards for the Union cause. This was in May.

In June, Federals were enlisting across the Ohio; Confederates, just over the border of Dixie which begins in Tennessee. Within a month Stonewall Jackson sat on his horse, after Bull Run, watching the routed Yankees, praying for fresh men that he might go on and take the Capitol, and, from the Federal dream of a sixty-days' riot, the North woke with a gasp. A week or two later, Camp Dick Robinson squatted down on the edge of the Bluegrass, the first violation of the State's neutrality, and beckoned with both hands for Yankee recruits. Soon an order went round to disarm the State Guards, and on that very day the State Guards made ready for Dixie. On that day the crisis came at the Deans', and on that day Chad Buford made up his mind. When the Major and Miss Lucy went to bed that night, he slipped out of the house and walked through the yard and across the pike, following the little creek half unconsciously toward the Deans', until he could see the light in Margaret's window, and there he climbed the worm fence and sat leaning his head against one of the forked stakes with his hat in his lap. He would probably not see her again. He would send her word next morning to ask that he might, and he feared what the result of that word would be. Sev-

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eral times his longing eyes saw her shadow pass the curtain, and when her light was out, he closed his eyes and sat motionless—how long he hardly knew; but, when he sprang down, he was stiffened from the midnight chill and his unchanged posture. He went back to his room then, and wrote Margaret a letter and tore it up and went to bed. There was little sleep for him that night, and when the glimmer of morning brightened at his window, he rose listlessly, dipped his hot head in a bowl of water and stole out to the barn. His little mare whinnied a welcome as he opened the barn door. He patted her on the neck.

"Good-by, little girl," he said. He started to call her by name and stopped. Margaret had named the beautiful creature "Dixie." The servants were stirring.

"Good-mawnin', Mars Chad," said each, and with each he shook hands, saying simply that he was going away that morning. Only old Tom asked him a question.

"Foh Gawd, Mars Chad," said the old fellow, "old Mars Buford can't git along widout you. You gwine to come back soon?"

"I don't know, Uncle Tom," said Chad, sadly.

"Whar you gwine, Mars Chad?"

"Into the army."

"De ahmy?" The old man smiled. "You gwine to fight de Yankees?"

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"I'm going to fight *with* the Yankees."

The old driver looked as though he could not have heard aright.

"You foolin' this ole nigger, Mars Chad, ain't you?"

Chad shook his head, and the old man straightened himself a bit.

"I'se sorry to heah it, suh," he said, with dignity, and he turned to his work.

Miss Lucy was not feeling well that morning and did not come down to breakfast. The boy was so pale and haggard that the Major looked at him anxiously.

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

"I didn't sleep very well last night, Major."

The Major chuckled. "I reckon you ain't gettin' enough sleep these days. I reckon I wouldn't, either, if I were in your place."

Chad did not answer. After breakfast he sat with the Major on the porch in the fresh, sunny air. The Major smoked his pipe, taking the stem out of his mouth now and then to shout some order as a servant passed under his eye.

"What's the news, Chad?"

"Mr. Crittenden is back."

"What did old Lincoln say?"

"That Camp Dick Robinson was formed for Kentuckians by Kentuckians, and he did not believe

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that it was the wish of the State that it should be removed."

"Well, by ——! after his promise. What did Davis say?"

"That if Kentucky opened the Northern door for invasion, she must not close the Southern door to entrance for defence."

"And dead right he is," growled the Major with satisfaction.

"Governor Magoffin asked Ohio and Indiana to join in an effort for a peace Congress," Chad added.

"Well?"

"Both governors refused."

"I tell you, boy, the hour has come."

The hour had come.

"I'm going away this morning, Major."

The Major did not even turn his head.

"I thought this was coming," he said quietly. Chad's face grew even paler, and he steeled his heart for the revelation.

"I've already spoken to Lieutenant Hunt," the Major went on. "He expects to be a captain, and he says that, maybe, he can make you a lieutenant. You can take that boy Brutus as a body servant." He brought his fist down on the railing of the porch. "God, but I'd give the rest of my life to be ten years younger than I am now."

"Major, I'm going into the Union army."

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The Major's pipe almost dropped from between his lips. Catching the arms of his chair with both hands, he turned heavily and with dazed wonder, as though the boy had struck him with his fist from behind, and, without a word, stared hard into Chad's tortured face. The keen old eye had not long to look before it saw the truth, and then, silently, the old man turned back. His hands trembled on the chair, and he slowly thrust them into his pockets, breathing hard through his nose. The boy expected an outbreak, but none came. A bee buzzed above them. A yellow butterfly zigzagged by. Blackbirds chattered in the firs. The screech of a peacock shrilled across the yard, and a ploughman's singing wailed across the fields:

Trouble, O Lawd!

Nothin' but trouble in de ian' of Canaan.

The boy knew he had given his old friend a mortal hurt.

"Don't, Major," he pleaded. "You don't know how I have fought against this. I tried to be on your side. I thought I was. I joined the Rifles. I found first that I couldn't fight *with* the South, and—then—I—found that I had to fight *for* the North. It almost kills me when I think of all you have done——"

The Major waved his hand imperiously. He was not the man to hear his favors recounted, much

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less refer to them himself. He straightened and got up from his chair. His manner had grown formal, stately, coldly courteous.

"I cannot understand, but you are old enough, sir, to know your own mind. You should have prepared me for this. You will excuse me a moment." Chad rose and the Major walked toward the door, his step not very steady, and his shoulders a bit shrunken—his back, somehow, looked suddenly old.

"Brutus!" he called sharply to a black boy who was training rosebushes in the yard. "Saddle Mr. Chad's horse." Then, without looking again at Chad, he turned into his office, and Chad, standing where he was, with a breaking heart, could hear, through the open window, the rustling of papers and the scratching of a pen.

In a few minutes he heard the Major rise and he turned to meet him. The old man held a roll of bills in one hand and a paper in the other.

"Here is the balance due you on our last trade," he said, quietly. "The mare is yours—Dixie," he added, grimly. "The old mare is in foal. I will keep her and send you your due when the time comes. We are quite even," he went on in a level tone of business. "Indeed, what you have done about the place more than exceeds any expense that you have ever caused me. If anything, I am still in your debt."

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"I can't take it," said Chad, choking back a sob.

"You will have to take it," the Major broke in, curtly, "unless——" the Major held back the bitter speech that was on his lips and Chad understood. The old man did not want to feel under any obligations to him.

"I would offer you Brutus, as was my intention, except that I know you would not take him——" again he added, grimly, "and Brutus would run away from you."

"No, Major," said Chad, sadly, "I would not take Brutus," and he stepped down one step of the porch backward.

"I tried to tell you, Major, but you wouldn't listen. I don't wonder, for I couldn't explain to you what I couldn't understand myself. I——" the boy choked and tears filled his eyes. He was afraid to hold out his hand.

"Good-by, Major," he said, brokenly.

"Good-by, sir," answered the Major, with a stiff bow, but the old man's lip shook and he turned abruptly within.

Chad did not trust himself to look back, but, as he rode through the pasture to the pike gate, his ears heard, never to forget, the chatter of the black-birds, the noises around the barn, the cry of the peacock, and the wailing of the ploughman:

Trouble, O Lawd!
Nothin' but trouble——

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At the gate the little mare turned her head toward town and started away in the easy swinging lope for which she was famous. From a cornfield Jerome Conners, the overseer, watched horse and rider for a while, and then his lips were lifted over his protruding teeth in one of his ghastly, infrequent smiles. Chad Buford was out of his way at last. At the Deans' gate, Snowball was just going in on Margaret's pony and Chad pulled up.

"Where's Mr. Dan, Snowball?—and Mr. Harry?"

"Mars Dan he gwine to de wah—an' I'se gwine wid him."

"Is Mr. Harry going, too?" Snowball hesitated. He did not like to gossip about family matters, but it was a friend of the family who was questioning him.

"Yessuh! But Mammy say Mars Harry's teched in de haid. He gwine to fight wid de po' white trash."

"Is Miss Margaret at home?"

"Yessuh."

Chad had his note to Margaret, unsealed. He little felt like seeing her now, but he had just as well have it all over at once. He took it out and looked it over once more—irresolute.

"I'm going away to join the Union army, Margaret. May I come to tell you good-by? If not, God bless you always. CHAD."

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"Take this to Miss Margaret, Snowball, and bring me an answer here as soon as you can."

"Yessuh."

The black boy was not gone long. Chad saw him go up the steps, and in a few moments he reappeared and galloped back.

"Ole Mistis say dey ain't no answer."

"Thank you, Snowball." Chad pitched him a coin and loped on toward Lexington with his head bent, his hands folded on the pommel, and the reins flapping loosely. Within one mile of Lexington he turned into a cross-road and set his face toward the mountains.

An hour later, the General and Harry and Dan stood on the big portico. Inside, the mother and Margaret were weeping in each other's arms. Two negro boys were each leading a saddled horse from the stable, while Snowball was blubbering at the corner of the house. At the last moment Dan had decided to leave him behind. If Harry could have no servant, Dan, too, would have none. Dan was crying without shame. Harry's face was as white and stern as his father's. As the horses drew near the General stretched out the sabre in his hand to Dan.

"This should belong to you, Harry."

"It is yours to give, father," said Harry, gently.

"It shall never be drawn against my roof and your mother."

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The boy was silent.

"You are going far North?" asked the General, more gently. "You will not fight on Kentucky soil?"

"You taught me that the first duty of a soldier is obedience. I must go where I'm ordered."

"God grant that you two may never meet."

"Father!" It was a cry of horror from both the lads.

The horses were waiting at the stiles. The General took Dan in his arms and the boy broke away and ran down the steps, weeping.

"Father," said Harry, with trembling lips, "I hope you won't be too hard on me. Perhaps the day will come when you won't be so ashamed of me. I hope you and mother will forgive me. I *can't* do otherwise than I *must*. Will you shake hands with me, father?"

"Yes, my son. God be with you both."

And then, as he watched the boys ride side by side to the gate, he added:

"I could kill my own brother with my own hand for this."

He saw them stop a moment at the gate; saw them clasp hands and turn opposite ways—one with his face set for Tennessee, the other making for the Ohio. Dan waved his cap in a last sad good-by. Harry rode over the hill without turn-

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ing his head. The General stood rigid, with his hands clasped behind his back, staring across the gray fields between them. Through the window came the low sound of sobbing.