

THE SON OF BEN ALI

BY JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

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CHAPTER III.—CONTINUED.

"The sight of all this," said the gray pony, continuing his story, "arrested me so that I stood as if I were rooted to the spot. The road and came near treading tail and running back the way I came. But the Little Master was never afraid of anything. He stroked my shoulder and scolded me, too, and urged me forward. Now there was nothing about this wagon train to frighten me. I had seen wagon trains before. But this one looked up so suddenly and unexpectedly that it made me have a queer, shivery feeling, as when I heard a horse run in my dreams. I don't know where he is going to light. It happened that the wagons were on a sandy level, and neither the white nor the negroes' feet made a noise. The negroes were marching along as silently as the shadows that run on the ground when the moon is shining and the clouds are flying. It was the first time I had ever seen negroes going along the road together in utter silence. They were neither talking nor laughing and they seemed to be very far from me."

following every movement he made and always smiling. The Little Master kept his eyes on the White-haired Master and called out beckoned to him. "Somebody was afraid!" said the White-haired Master. "The White-haired Master appeared to be very busy. He was talking with a man who was talking to me. I did not hear him. The Little Master, and nodded and smiled at him. He kept on talking. I went toward him without any urging and when we got there he was talking about cotton and other government contraptions and seemed to be very warm over it. I was so disgusted that I morticed an often and as loud as I could, and if people had only known it there was more horse sense in one of my mirths than there was in all the politics I have heard from that day to this.

"I'm not carrying them to jail. They are for sale."

"Good morning," said the Little Master to the man. "Good day, sonny," replied the man, but he kept his eye on the negro at the head of the file."

"Whose negroes are these?" the Little Master asked.

"I don't understand you," said the man, "I am a white man. I have a horse to catch here."

"Then we went on in silence. The Little Master had a way when he was puzzled of reaching over the top of the wagon and wiggling his fingers. He did this now. He curled the wisp of hair on his forehead and uncurled it over so many times, as we went on, that I noticed that the negro at the head of the file had his arms tied at the elbows. The whole weight of the long rope, which was a big one, fell over his shoulders, and he was tall and strong and moved forward without sign of distress.

"The Little Master spoke to the man again. 'What have your negroes done that they should be carried to jail?'"

"The man laughed loudly, as he replied: 'I'm not carrying them to jail. They are for sale.'"

"You are a negro speculator," said the Little Master.

"That's what some hard work call me, sonny. Speculator or what not, I'll sell you a negro for what you want to buy one. I'll sell you that buck at the head of the gang. He's the finest of the lot, but I'll sell him cheap. He's worse than a tiger."

"The Little Master urged me forward until we came to the side of the man at the head of the file. That was my first sight of the Son of Ben Ali. I knew at once that he was no negro. The Little Master spoke to him, and he smiled as he answered."

"I'll sell him cheap, sonny," said the man, "name your price, give me the money, and take him."

"The Little Master slapped the pommel of his saddle, and I knew by that he was angry. But what he intended was not to catch the man, but to let the White-haired Master and the teacher come by in the buggy, going at a swiftest speed, and the Little Master gave me the signal to stop and overtake him, and he smiled as he answered."

"I have been living here fifty years, the White-haired Master told me, and that is the second time I ever saw it."

"The teacher said nothing more, and we soon entered the town, where there were a great many people. I noticed that the white man I saw at the head of the line was a vicious brute when we were in the drove together. He was poor enough now, and his ears hung down, but the Little Master had him read him a moral, but the Little Master made me go on, and I had no opportunity to speak to my old tormentor."

"CHAPTER IV. GRISTLE CONCLUDES HIS STORY."

"The Little Master gave me a drink of cool water. I drank it. I was very thirsty, and then he made me carry to a comfortable stall in the stable behind the old tavern. I don't know how long it was there, but by the time I had dropped off into a comfortable sleep, dreaming that I was nibbling sassafras buds in the orchard at home, an old horse, black as the stable and into my stall. He came upon me so sudden that I turned in the stall to get out of his way, and nearly smothered to death out of the stall. I stepped out and led me to the front of the tavern. There I saw the Little Master waiting to mount, and I went toward him gladly. He was waiting to get on home, but my thoughts jumped ahead of facts. I soon saw that the speculator's wagons and his file of negroes had stopped to stop and had stopped to rest on the public square, where a great crowd had gathered around them—some out of curiosity and some out of sympathy. I was very high, and blind in one eye, say to a companion tied near that such sights were seldom seen in these parts. The Little Master had been told by the speculator that by attacking my back, he would be as tall as any of the men."

"He rode me into the crowd that had gathered around the negroes. The person who made way for him, and I soon found myself so close to the Son of Ben Ali that he could touch my nose with his hand, although his elbow was pinioned. So that he was able to give me the sign, and I knew him and spoke to him and he to me; whereupon he knew that I had found two friends, for the Little Master stretched forth his hand, white as a dower, and touched the Son of Ben Ali's hand, and the white hand was the mark of a wound, saying, 'Poor fellow! I am sorry for you.' And the Son of Ben Ali reached up the bow of his head, his arms being pinioned, and took the white hand of the Little Master in his and pressed it to his forehead and then to his lips. After that he held his hand up, and the white hand looked over all that stood around him and beyond him, and smiled a little."

"But just then the man who owned him came bustling toward the negroes, and pushed him roughly through the crowd to the sheriff's block that stood near the court house door. This he made the Son of Ben Ali mount, so that all might see him. As he stood there, without a coat, the collar of his shirt thrown open, and the muscles of his chest swelling and falling, he seemed to be a man among men. When the white hand stood on the block beside him, the crown of his hat was no higher than the crown of the Son of Ben Ali's shoulder."

"The man made a speech to the people. I don't remember anything he said, but I could see he hated the Son of Ben Ali and was afraid of him. He was ready to jump from the block and run. But the Son of Ben Ali held no attention to him. He had his eyes fixed on the face of the Little Master."

"To get his head in my mouth, but he saw me coming and fell backward and rolled out of the way before I could reach him, nor could I jump him. His luck saved him. And then somebody caught my bridle and gave it a jerk that brought me to my senses. Whoever it was led me out of the crowd and away from the court house. I could feel the Little Master shaking in the saddle, and I knew he was crying, but I held my head down, not knowing what to do or where to go.

"Presently the White-haired Master, hearing of the commotion, came running toward us. His face was as white as a sheet."

"Why, my son, my darling boy! What is the trouble?" he placed his arms around the Little Master. "O, tell your father! Has any one dared to touch such a good little fellow? There, don't cry any more."

"No one knows what had happened except the Son of Ben Ali and myself. All eyes had been fixed on George Gossett and the White-haired Master. Some said Gossett had fallen in a fit of passion and that the blood had burst from his face. Some said that he had fallen on a horse and that he was injured by one of my shoes. I didn't see any one else. George Gossett always declared, so I've heard, that somebody jabbed him in the face with a forked stick, but his best friends tied to the rack and the time and fell on the horse and hurt himself. But there were some people who whispered it around that they saw the blood from his face as he was struck."

"I'll give you \$2,000," persisted the White-haired Master.

"What gentleman?" the White-haired Master asked me, as quick as a flash. He wheeled and looked around, as if searching for some one. The people were still afraid a fight was about to take place, and they stood out of some distance, but not so far that they couldn't hear every word that was said."

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TOMMY AND THE GRAND DUKE.

A True Story of a Brave Kentucky Girl.

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Tommy lived on a farm in Kentucky. She was a short, stoutly built girl of 14, with strong, heavy ankles and wrists, a rube of short hair, which was unusually brilliant. She spent most of her time out of doors, wearing no head covering except a discarded brim that had belonged to the hat of one of the farm hands. She had a contempt for dolls, and while she never shirked any household tasks that were assigned her, they were no sooner finished than she was off to the fields or woods, not to return until hunger or nightfall compelled her.

"Do not allow her among the farm hands," cautioned one.

"Dress her more as a young lady and make her take music lessons," suggested another.

"Send her to a convent," urged the fourth.

"Tommy heard their verdicts with firm set lips and flashing eyes, but her father, who had given her the masculine pseudonym, snapped his fingers and said: 'Let the child alone. You will see that she'll come out all right. The exercise in the open air is worth everything else to her while she is growing, and her work in the fields is worth twice that of her brother.'"

"What do you think of the Grand Duke, Tom?" asked the girl, regarding the brute with broken teeth. "He's a vicious creature, too. The men don't like to tackle him."

Tom was delighted for she loved horses.

himself and recalling how often he had found her nodding about the horse in the stable. "She's probably broken him in. Look how well she sits!" And a gleam of pride stole into his eyes."

"Tommy," he called, in a tone that she dared not disobey, "take that horse back."

Tommy had fastened him to a post while she adjusted the brim in the doorway, wondering what could have been the cause of the unaccountable chill of fear that had struck her a few moments ago, as she passed with her brother ran past, panting with excitement.

"Tommy, Tommy, father's foot has been run over by the harrow and we can't stop the blood."

"Where is he?" cried Tommy.

"Lying on the grass in the meadow." She paused a moment, then, entering the stable, filled one pulley with dense cobwebs, and snatching up some cloths, she shot away, as a speckling arrow. She pushed her way amongst the men kneeling beside him.

"Now, then, what you up to?" said the man who had previously called attention to her perilous position. She ignored his scowl and clotted the cobwebs thickly over her father's wounds, bandaging them as tightly as she could.

"She carried him to the house and Tommy looked about for her brother."

"He has gone for the doctor," said her mother, who sat anxiously beside her husband. She glanced at Tommy's calm and stolid countenance reproachfully.

"This never would have happened if you hadn't excited your father with that harmful scutum trick of yours," she said. Tommy did not reply, but went away to stable the Grand Duke. She could find no trace of him. Her heart beat wildly for a moment, then she slowly returned and seated herself upon the doorstep among some of the farm hands who had brought her father to the house.

There came a sound of clattering hoofs and the shout of some one from the dusty pike. Tommy, ever alert, leaped to her feet, straining her eyes and ears. It was the great gray, bearing toward the stable, completely beyond the control of her brother, who was braced back, hatless, his teeth set. She turned a grateful look toward his hand, who had brought her father to the house.

Her mother rushed out, screaming, "Stop him! Stop him!—if the bar is up he will be killed."

But there was fire in the Grand Duke's eyes, and none of the men could check themselves before the resistless body of the tremendous animal. The boy threw an appealing look toward the father, who had backed the Grand Duke out and led him into the barnyard. He no sooner found himself under the open skies than he made a grand plunge for the barn, running round and round, his legs, wrapping the rope on her wrists until the skin broke, staining it with her blood. Finding himself balked, he made a lunge toward her, rearing his great hoofs over his head. With the large cart whip in her hand she stepped back, looking him steadily and fearlessly in the eyes, the whites of which shone ominously.

"Don't you dare!" she cried, preparing to bring the butt end down on his head. His great legs wavered, and he brought them harmlessly to the ground, but he would not be lifted again, while he smothered angrily.

It was a struggle—a cloud of dust, a plunging animal, a flying whip and then she grasped him firmly by the mane and led him back for the barn. Her father's voice and the consequences if he should find her. The horse tried to catch her between his body and the wall, and was obliged to climb into his trough, sealing him a smart blow.

The barn was opened and her father came straight toward the stall.

"Tommy, Tommy," he called, "I heard you. Where are you? What are you doing in that stall? Come out instantly and don't ever let me catch you there again. Don't you want to save the viciousness of that animal? With a bound she reached his side, and he shook her severely.

But this did not prevent her from making daily pilgrimages to the Grand Duke; and familiarizing him with her, softly rubbing his back and allowing him to smell the saddle, until at last she was able to adjust it upon him, and rest herself firmly, making short trips to the barnyard.

Once, as she rode out of the stall, she saw that she had forgotten to put up the bar across the main doorway. The horse headed for the opening, and as she passed through she glanced at the bar, as if stooping leaping obliquely against the door jamb, and abated with a feeling of apprehension that she

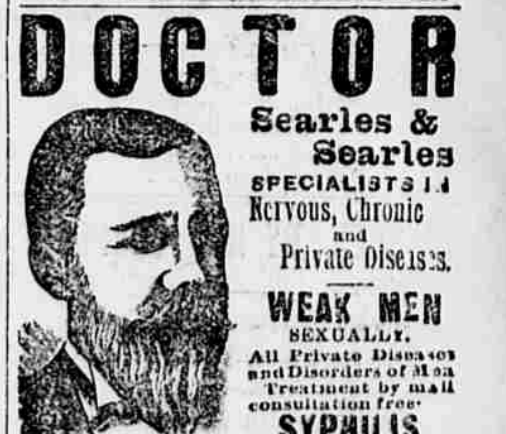
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"Many and many a time did I try to quit smoking myself into eternity, but I could not put through a day without suffering extreme nervous torture, which would increase hourly by hour till I was unable to save myself as it seemed from almost flying to pieces, I had to licit the little white pipe-stick and swallow the smoke."



"The effects were magical; it destroyed the nerve craving and desire for cigarettes. I did not believe I was cured until I saw the man who writes the line 'Don't Smoke' and 'Don't Smoke Young Men'."

"I have a baby boy now. We want to name our baby by after the man who wrote the line 'Don't Smoke' and 'Don't Smoke Young Men'."

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THE LITTLE MASTER URGED ME FORWARD UNTIL WE CAME TO THE SIDE OF THE MAN AT THE HEAD OF THE FILE.

SHE SPRANG AS A YOUNG PANTHER UPON THE HORSE.



A REMARKABLE VERDICT.

"Suppose the clock's short finger has worked around to 8; suppose that both his railroad trains are on time; and then suppose that I suggest he better go home."

"I don't know when he pleaded before our highest court."

"Mamma—Gracious! how dirty your hands are. You never saw my hands that dry, Elsie (aged)—No, mamma; but I 'spects grand'ma did."

"What did Belahazar do when he saw the handwriting on the wall?" said the teacher. "He said, 'I'll die.'"

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