

**THE WHITE HORSE
AND THE RED-
HAired GIRL**

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The white horse and the red-haired girl by Kenyon Gambier

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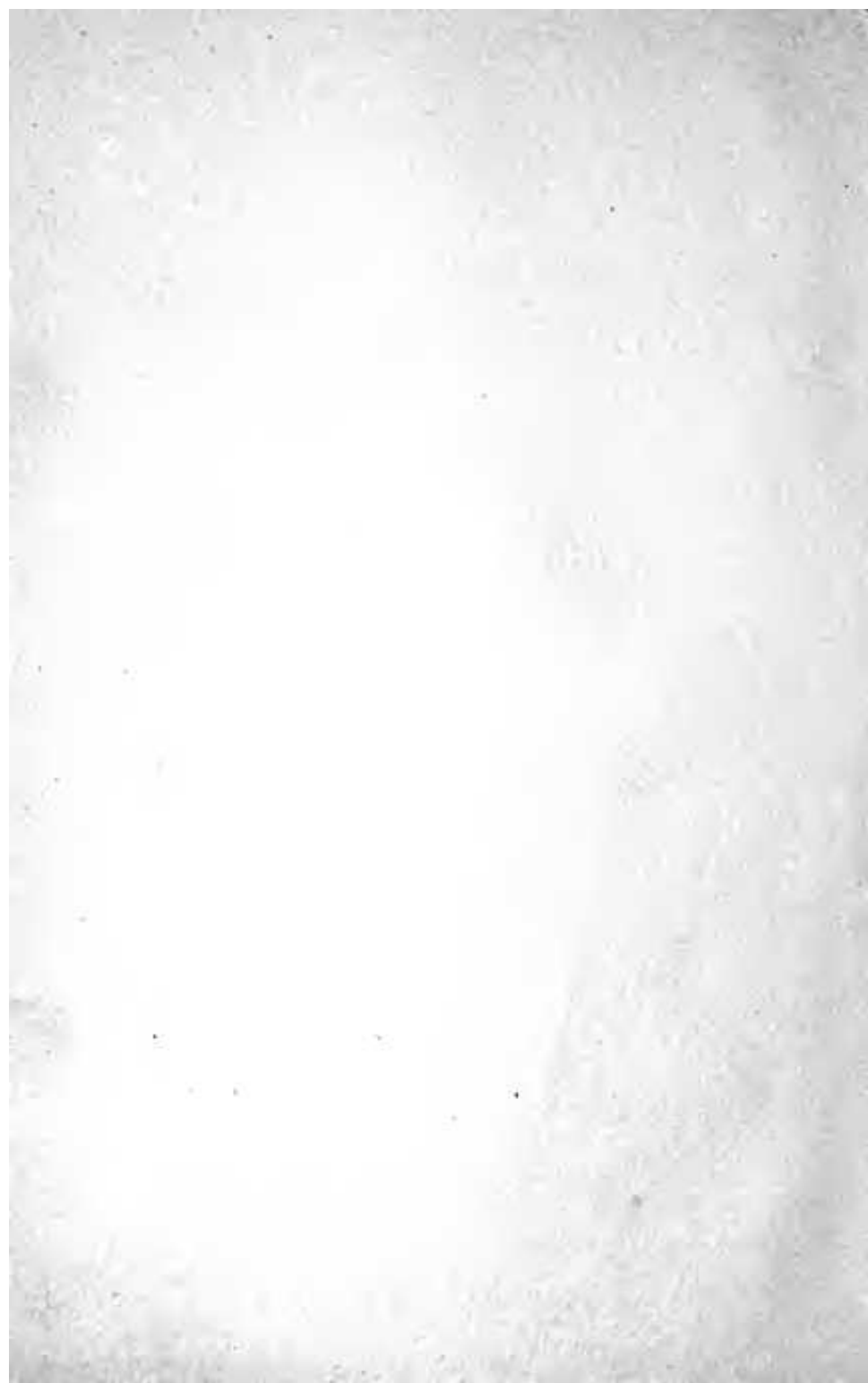
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I

There are no shepherds in the United States now. The word, with its kindly and tender associations, its suggestion of small flocks, of individual attention, of snug folds, of care at lambing time, has dropped unnoted from public use. Who could apply such a word to the man who drove ten thousand sheep along the dusty buttes of the Sierras? Who could found a parable on these men or associate spiritual leadership with them? And so we added a syllable and called them shepherders. But the word lives in England. The trouble there begins when the shepherd is a shepherdess; for if anybody called her that, people would laugh and think of Arcadia and Elizabethan poems; and if her crook was mentioned, thought would fly to May Day and colored ribbons.

So I shall simply say that Miss Margaret

Travers, of Tortholme Manor, Churwell, Berkshire, was driving thirty-one ewes along the road; that she was helped by a black sheep-dog with a tan ruff; and that she carried a cane five feet long, the head of which was greatly curved. She wore a belted coat, which below the waist became a skirt, ending at the knees. As she walked, and the short skirt waved, the buttoned ends of her breeches were to be glimpsed. She was a pioneer, a portent and a prophecy; for this was December, 1914, and no one dreamed of a shortage of food, or thought that the girls of 1917 would exchange tennis rackets for hoes, golf clubs for spades, and typewriters for ploughs.

She was young and slim and vital; but it was not because of these attributes that she found it impossible to linger in the rear of her deliberate flock. Unless violently active, thought and memory came; and these were bad company on a lonely road in the beginning of the early winter twilight; and especially on a road every foot of which was associated with the twin brother who had been reported missing at the fall of Antwerp.

She made a sign to her dog to remain as rear guard, and she went swinging past the sheep. A little misty cloud hovered always over their warm backs in the frosty air as they browsed

along on the grassy turf by the roadside. Her footsteps rang as metal on metal, for there were little nails in the soles of her shoes, and the sharp toes of passing flocks had so cut the earth from the macadam that the surface was a mass of tiny flints. Suddenly there came a rustling as of a well-kept saddle, pleasant to horse lovers to hear.

She was half a mile ahead when she opened the gate into Bigmonday field, and there she could not help but wait. It pleased her to see approaching down the field an old man leading a clothed horse, which danced on pipestem legs. She smiled; and then she gave a little start and glanced upward at the branches of the spreading beech. Its dry, persistent leaves still clung and faintly tapped on one another with a sound as of myriads of tiny pattering feet. To this tree Geoffrey and she had stolen more than once from the nursery in an awed moonlight search for fairies.

"Good evening, Tom!" she called. "Who's that?"

"Sachem Third, Miss Peggy; and chilled to the bone I should say, what with two hours on a siding for cannons to pass."

He was indignant. Blue-blooded horses had always had imperious right of way in that district