

**THE TWO SIDES OF
THE SHIELD, IN TWO
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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The Two Sides of the Shield, in Two Volumes, Vol. II by Charlotte M. Yonge

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CHARLOTTE M. YONGE

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THE SHIELD, IN TWO
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THE
TWO SIDES OF THE SHIELD

BY
CHARLOTTE M. YONGE

AUTHOR OF "THE REID OF REDCLIFFE," "UNKNOWN TO HISTORY," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

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THE TWO SIDES OF THE SHIELD.

CHAPTER I.

A HUNT.

DOLORES was glad to recollect, when she awoke, that Uncle Reginald was in the house. It was as if she had a friend of her own there who might enter into all the ill-usage she suffered, and whom she could even consult about Uncle Alfred, so far as she could do so without disclosing all the underhand correspondence. She called doing so betraying Constance, but, in truth, she shrank more from shocking him with what he *might* think very wrong—since, after all, he belonged to that hard-hearted generation of grown-up people who had no feeling nor understanding of one's troubles.

As she went downstairs she was aware of an increasing hubbub, and frequently looking over the balusters, perceived the top of Primrose's wavy head above the close-cropped one of Uncle Regie, as, with

her mounted on his shoulder, he careered round the hall, with a pack of others vociferating behind him. There was a lull, for Lady Merrifield came out of her room just as Dolores had paused; Primrose was put down, the morning salutations took place, and Dolores had her full share of them. She was even allowed to sit next her uncle at breakfast; but her rasher of bacon had not been half eaten, before she had perceived that, as to possessing him as she used to do at home, he was just as much everybody else's Uncle Regie as hers, for during the time of their being stationed at Belfast, he had been so often with them, that he was quite established as the prince of playfellows.

"Uncle Regie, will you have a crack at the rabbits to-morrow? Brown said we might have a day, and we have been keeping it for you."

"Uncle Regie, the hounds meet at the Bugle this morning, won't you come and see them throw off?"

"Oh, let me come too!" "And me!" "And me!"

"My dear children," exclaimed their mother, "I can't have the whole tribe of little ones and girls going galloping after your uncle. You will only hinder him."

"No, no, Lily! the more Merrifields, the merrier the field. I'll drill them well. How far off is this Bugle?"

"Not two miles over Furzy Common."

"Oh! not so far, Hal!"

"That's nothing, Who is coming?"

A general outbreak of "Me's" ensued, but mamma laid an embargo on Primrose, who must stay at home and "help her," while Gillian looked wistful and doubtful, knowing that more efficient help than the little one's might be desirable.

"You had better go, my dear," said her mother, "if you are not tired. I don't like to send Mysis and Val without some one to turn back with them if your uncle and the boys want to go further."

But whereas it was not nearly time to start, Uncle Reginald was dragged down to inspect all the live stock in the stable-yard, at their feeding-time, and went off with Val and Primrose clinging to his hands, and the general rabble surrounding him.

Nothing could have been more alien to Dolores's taste than going out to a meet on foot through mud and mire—she who hated the being driven out to take a constitutional walk on the gravel road or the paved path! But she had some hope that while all the others ran off madly, as was their wont, she might secure a little rational conversation with Uncle Reginald. So she came down in hat and ulster, and was rewarded with "That's right, Doll; I'm glad to see they have taught you to take country walks."

"It is all compliment to you, Uncle Regie," said Gillian. "She hates them generally."

"Are we all ready? Where are Japs and Will?"

"Gone to shut up the dogs; and Hal is not coming."