

**MARSE CHAN: A
TALE OF
OLD VIRGINIA**

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Marse Chan: A Tale of Old Virginia by Thomas Nelson Page & W. T. Smedley

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THOMAS NELSON PAGE & W. T. SMEDLEY

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A TALE OF OLD VIRGINIA ✧
BY THOMAS NELSON PAGE
ILLUSTRATED BY W. T. SMEDLEY



CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK, 1908 ♪ ♪ ♪

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"I see Marse Chan read dat letter over an' over."

Frontispiece.

"He kr. w I don' mean nothin' by what I sez."

Page 1.

*"Now, Sam, from dis time you belong to yo' young
Marse Channin'."*

Page 7.

"I mek you a present to yo' fam'ly, seh!"

Page 27.

*"De moon come' out, an' I cotch sight on her
stan'in dyah in her white dress."*

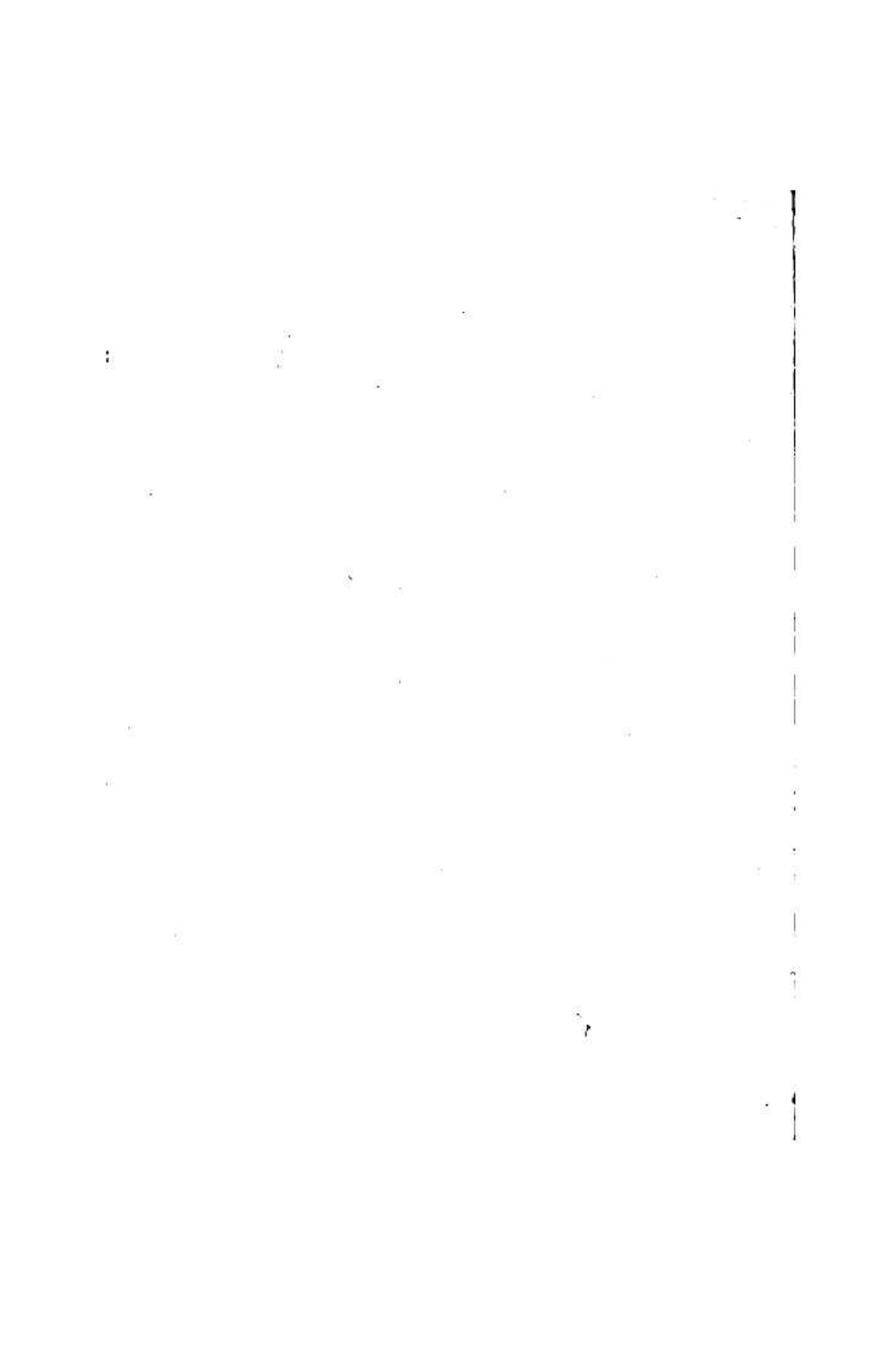
Page 35.

"Miss Anne she hed done tu'n away her haid."

Page 43.

"Fudy, have Marse Chan's dawg got home?"

Page 53.





ONE afternoon, in the autumn of 1872, I was riding leisurely down the sandy road that winds along the top of the water-shed between two of the smaller rivers of eastern Virginia. The road I was travelling, following "the ridge" for miles, had just struck me as most significant of the character of the race which had dwelt upon it and whose only avenue of communication with the outside world it had formerly been. Their once splendid mansions, now fast falling to decay, appeared to view from time to time, set back far from the road, in proud seclusion, among groves of oak and hickory, now scarlet and gold with the early frost. Distance was nothing to this people; time was of no consequence to them. They desired but a level

path in life, and that they had, though the way was longer, and the outer world strode by them as they dreamed.

I was aroused from my reflections by hearing some one ahead of me calling, "Heah! — heah — whoo-ooop, heah!"

Turning the curve in the road, I saw just before me a negro standing, with a hoe and a watering-pot in his hand. He had evidently just gotten over the "worm-fence" into the road, out of the path which led zigzag across the "old field" and was lost to sight in the dense growth of sassafras. When I rode up, he was looking anxiously back down this path for his dog. So engrossed was he that he did not even hear my horse, and I reined in to wait until he should turn around and satisfy my curiosity as to the handsome old place half a mile off from the road.

The numerous out-buildings and the large barns and stables told that it had once been the seat of wealth, and the wild waste of sassafras that covered the broad fields gave it an air of desolation which greatly excited my interest.

Entirely oblivious of my proximity, the negro went on calling "Whoo-ooop, heah!" until along the path, walking very slowly and with great dignity,

appeared a noble-looking old orange and white setter, gray with age, and corpulent with excessive feeding. As soon as he came in sight, his master began :

“Yes, dat you! You gittin’ deaf as well as bline, I s’pose! Kyarnt heah me callin’, I reckon? Whyn’t yo’ come on, dawg?”

The setter sauntered slowly up to the fence and stopped, without even deigning a look at the speaker, who immediately proceeded to take the rails down, talking meanwhile :

“Now, I got to pull down de gap, I s’pose! Yo’ so sp’ilt yo’ kyahn hardly walk. Jes’ ez able to git over it as I is! Jes’ like white folks—think ’cuz you’s white and I’s black, I got to wait on yo’ all de time. Ne’m mine, I ain’ gwine do it!”

The fence having been pulled down sufficiently low to suit his dogship, he marched sedately through, and, with a hardly perceptible lateral movement of his tail, walked on down the road. Putting up the rails carefully, the negro turned and saw me.

“Sarvent, marster,” he said, taking his hat off. Then, as if apologetically for having permitted a stranger to witness what was merely a family affair, he added : “He know I don’ mean nothin’ by what I sez. He’s Marse Chan’s dawg, an’ he’s so ole he