

CHOPPO

The Story of A DOG

By ARTHUR MADISON

CHOPPO'S life began really just as it was about to end—to end miserably, tied up in a gunny sack, in the river. But Ned happened to come along just as the "hired man" was lifting the last of five pups from the wagon to meet his watery end.

After some coaxing, Ned marched off home with his new possession, a real bull pup—which he hoped, for reasons of his own, would prove to be a "fighter." Even now, while his eyes were hardly open, the four footed foundling had the marks of a "fighter," as the one black spot on his otherwise perfectly white body was located over his left eye, giving him an unmistakably sporty look.

When Ned arrived home he did not meet a very kind reception from his mother, who did not like dogs. "The very idea!" she said, "of bringing a puppy dog to the place, and especially such an ugly little beast! You certainly can't keep him in the house; you'll have to find quarters for him in the barn, Ned, if you keep him."

"All right, mother. I'll raise him myself," and he started toward the barn.

"But how are you going to feed him, Ned? You'll have to take along a baby's bottle—the poor helpless little thing." Then unable any longer to resist a mother pity for the woebegone midget, she took him up in her arms; and when he began to cry, she hunted up a baby bottle, filled it with warm milk and sitting down with the pup in her lap, placed the rubber nipple in his mouth. Choppo, however, did not need much instruction in the art of getting milk out of a bottle, for he went at it like a professional milker, and as the white liquid joy flowed within, the short, stubby tail wig wagged the message that he was "well and happy."

Choppo waxed fat and sturdy under the care of Mrs. Merrill, who, having thus been completely won by Choppo's ugly charms, would allow no one but herself to prescribe his diet, and make his bed—which was not in the barn. After a few weeks Ned considered that Choppo was old enough to be initiated into the "third degree" of "bulldogs" and a mysterious visit to town was made, with Choppo under Ned's coat. When they returned, part of poor Choppo's tail and ears were missing, which horrified his mother so that she could hardly be convinced that it was perfectly natural that all bulldog fighters had their ears and tails cut short, that is to say, the dogman cut the ears and "bit" off the tail; and, anyway, it was necessary to have his tail and ears short to correspond with his name, as "Choppo" was the Spanish way of saying "Shorty."

As soon as Choppo got used to his tailless tail and his ears got well, he was started in on his training. Ned taught him the usual tricks of begging, saying his prayers, dead dog and jumps of others, but the sport that Choppo liked most was riding in the basket on the front of Ned's bicycle.

One day Ned thought he'd give Choppo a bicycle ride to town. Choppo wagged his stub with great glee as he was lifted to his seat in his observation car. Ned rode into the street and was about to pass the Days' house, next door, when Percy Day opened the gate and let out his big shepherd dog and began to "sic" him on the bicycle tourists. The shepherd rushed down the street, barking and whirling around in front of the bicycle, and finally Ned, wheel and pup were tripped up and thrown into a heap in the dust. Ned found his clothes torn, his elbows sadly bruised and his bicycle bent, but little Choppo, unhurt, was barking

furiously with his tiny yelp at the old dog who was disappearing into the house with Percy. As this was not the first time that Percy had played this trick, Ned did not feel very kindly toward him, and as for Choppo, he from that day was the sworn enemy of their unfair assailant.

Soon after this Ned and his father went into the mountains for the summer, and it was some months before they returned. By this time there was a great change in Choppo—he was now a beautiful, full grown bulldog—the pet of the Merrill family, and especially of Ned, in whose room he slept every night.

Ned was very proud of his dog and was anxious to show him off, particularly to his rival next door. One morning he got out his bicycle and wheeled it down the driveway—next the high hedge which separated the grounds of the Merrill and Day homes—and at the gate Ned drew a line across the entrance on the ground with his heel and told Choppo: "Don't come till I whistle, Choppo." Choppo sat down close to the line and craned his neck out to watch his young master ride down the street, where sure enough Percy was playing with Shep out in front. Shep's owner could not resist an opportunity of a little safe sport with his neighbor, so he opened the gate and let the big dog out and set him on Ned, who had great difficulty in keeping his balance on the wheel as the shepherd jumped and whirled in front of him. Ned then let out a shrill whistle and down the street like a streak came a white package with a black label that meant trouble. As Choppo came near enough he gave a long leap and landed a 50 pound broadside on the shepherd, bumping the bumps with him along the street for 10 or 15 feet. With growling,

whining and snarling they got up and went at it, with Choppo taking the lead. He grabbed Shep by the front leg and the bones crunched between his teeth. The bulldog got another hold and tore away part of the other dog's neck. By that time the shepherd was thoroughly whipped and was trying to get away, but did not succeed until Choppo had badly chewed an ear, when the big dog yanked loose and ran howling as fast as three legs would permit into the yard to Percy. As Ned walked modestly back home he ignored the threats of Percy and felt that Choppo had helped to teach the other two a lesson in sporting manners.

Of course the Day family sympathized with Percy and were very angry over the affair. In the course of two or three days Day came over to see Merrill to complain that the bulldog was stealing their little chickens and that he wanted Merrill to "get rid of the dog." Ned thought that Choppo was too much of a gentleman to steal a neighbor's chickens and said so, but Day said that it could not be Shep because he was laid up with a broken leg and there was no other dog in the neighborhood.

Finally Mr. Merrill agreed to watch for the next three days to discover where the chickens disappeared. The first day did not reveal any sign of the work of the thief, but on the second day there were the bodies of two or three little chickens lying in the corral. Curiously enough the chickens were not eaten after being killed. This happened again on the third day, although Choppo was watched closely. Notwithstanding the fact that he had no positive proof, Mr. Day insisted that the dog be gotten out of the way immediately or he would take the matter into his own hands. Mr. Merrill de-

clined to send Choppo over the mountains for a while to their Uncle John's in spite of Ned's protests.

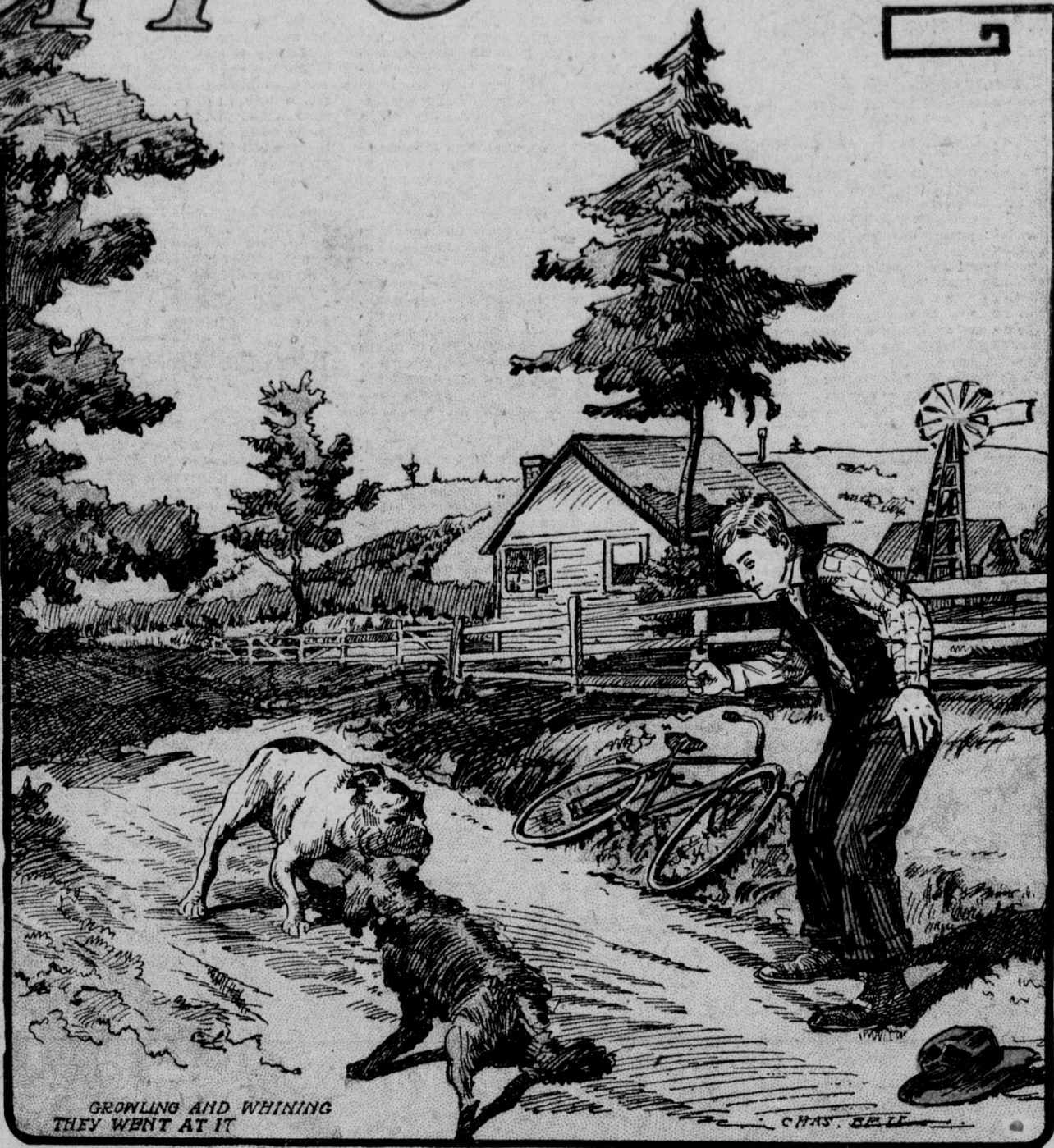
The parting was a sad one. As Choppo was lifted into the wagon and saw that his young master was not going with him he began to whimper and cry, which changed into a doleful wail as the wagon started off, while Ned ran into the house and locked himself in his room to conceal his grief.

The next morning—Sunday—Ned was sadly roaming about the back yard and stopped to look through the fence at the chickens that caused all the trouble. The chicken yard was next to the corral where Percy's shetland pony was kept, and this morning Punch, as he was called, was having a great time chasing around the corral the black calf, whose tail he held between his teeth; then the mischievous pony seized the big turkey gobbler by the tail and chased him round and round until they were both tired out. Ned was much amused and forgot his troubles for the moment and continued to watch the pony, which, standing in the sun near the dividing fence, was apparently dozing. Suddenly Ned called out to his father, who was in the garden, "Come here, quick," and pointing eagerly into the corral, said, "There's where the chickens go; I knew it wasn't Choppo." Mr. Merrill looked, and after giving a low whistle of surprise, walked over to the fence and called out to Mr. Day. As Mr. Day came down the walk on the other side a surprising thing happened—there was Choppo trotting eagerly but tiredly toward Ned. He had evidently escaped from the wagon and found his way home.

Mr. Day, as he came up, said, "I see you haven't gotten rid of that chicken stealing dog yet."

"No," said Mr. Merrill, "it won't be necessary. Look into the corral," and as they looked they saw the shetland pony holding between his teeth a little chicken by the head, which Punch lazily wagged back and forth until the body dropped off.

"There's the real chicken thief, Mr. Day," said Mr. Merrill, as he turned to watch Ned and Choppo hugging each other.



GROWLING AND WHINING
THEY WENT AT IT

CHAS. SEITZ