

reached around and drew the axe from the bundle on his back and moved noiselessly to the left to intercept the thing that ran and cried—whatever it might be! A half-light, reflected from the red west, still touched the depths of the forest aisles.

Out of the gloom in front came Bobby, running slowly but desperately, stumbling weakly, hatless and bedraggled, his poor little face white as chalk. From his panting lips broke that toneless, pitiful cry.

"Bobby," called Bill, advancing with open arms. The child uttered a piercing scream, dodged and dashed away to the left. The man wheeled and sprang after him, clutched him and lifted him from the ground. The child was limp now and silent. He had fainted. Bill carried him tenderly, keeping to the low ground and tangled alder-bottoms in search of water. He found a spring at last, bathed the boy's face with the cool water and forced a little of it between his lips, using the brim of his hat for a cup.

"There's nothin' to be scart of, Bobby," he whispered. "It's only your Uncle Bill. I'll take you home, Bobby. I'll tote you all the way on my back."

A fluttering sigh escaped from the child's lips.

"It's only your Uncle Bill," repeated the man, fearful that he might take fright again upon the instant of his recovery. "It's only me. Nothin' in the world to be scart of, boy. I'll take you home. Uncle Bill will tote you home on his back."

"I—I was lost," sobbed Bobby. "An' I got scart—when I didn't know where I was. I wanted to fish Rocky Brook—so I left Line Brook—an' then I got lost. An' pretty soon I—I heard things in the bushes—runnin' after me—when it begun to get dark."

"Now don't you fret, Bobby," returned Bill, tenderly. "You just drink some more of this water, an'

then we'll light a bit of a fire an' have a rest. Then I'll take you home."

"I ain't scart now, not a mite," said Bobby, with quick recovery in his voice. "I guess you could lick the boots off'n anything in these woods if it follered us, couldn't you, Uncle Bill?"

"There's nothin' to follow us, Bobby—but I could sure lick it if there was," replied Bill.

A small fire of dry twigs and moss was lighted, just for the cheerful look of it. Bill found that one of the thick sandwiches still remained in the pocket of his coat. Bobby ate it with relish, remarking that it was much finer than the mean, thin sandwiches that his mother sometimes made. Then, comforted in spirit and stomach, though aching with fatigue, he announced his readiness to be carried home. Bill examined the compass and got his bearings, extinguished the fire, hoisted Bobby onto his back and struck out for the settlement. By now the night was black as the inside of a boot. Bill travelled slowly, for the "going" was bad, and rested often. Bobby proved to be heavier than he looked.

About half the distance between the spot where the child had been found and the settlement was covered when the toot of a horn, far to the right, halted Bill.

"The folks are out huntin' for you, Bobby," he said. "Like enough, the whole settlement has turned out."

To the left roared a shot-gun; and close in front rang out a woman's voice, crying "Bobby! Bobby!"

"That's Ma," whispered Bobby, his nerves somewhat shaken by the sounds to right and left.

"I guess you're right. She—must be a brave woman, Bobby," returned Bill. He let the boy slide to the ground, and, taking a deep breath, he shouted, "This way. Straight ahead. He's right as rain."

Flashings of red light appeared