

Bill hadn't been long asleep when a thunderous knocking came at his door. He jumped up and ran to open. A figure burst in. It was Tom's boy, Martin, breathless with running.

"Lizzie's sick—horse—lame—doctor!"

Bill rapidly dressed while Martin lighted the lantern. They hurried out to the stable, flung the harness hastily on to Nell, and in a few minutes had her hitched up to the cutter. The night had grown dark and snow was beginning to fall. Bill sprang to his seat, and Martin clamored on behind. With an imperative twitch of the lines which Nell understood, Bill drove rapidly away. The gloom among the trees was deep, but a few minutes brought them to the section line. Martin dropped off and Bill turned through the gate into the Craigmont road. Then Nell experienced a surprise. A couple of swift cuts descended on her flank. She gave a mighty bound and then stretched out into a gallop.

Bill's eyes were bent steadily and keenly on the road and his grasp on the lines was firm and strong, but his heart throbbed with a strange fear. Martin had said she was "Chokin' for breath." What if he should be too late! Another impatient stroke fell upon Nell.

The cutter sped swiftly down the trail. The great fire-blackened stumps that dotted the snow rushed swiftly by. The cutter swayed and bounded over the road. Nell raced on at angry speed. Little hills she despised: down the slopes she went headlong regardless of the swinging cutter behind. But Bill sat alert, his feet well planted; his body bending to keep the balance.

Now they swept into the forest. The gloom was deep, but Nell's pace never slackened. The trees slipped by like a black wall. Great clammy fingers stretched out and seemed to clutch at Bill flying along. Dead pines leaning over the road looming suddenly above him, made Bill duck his head involuntarily. The snow deadened Nell's hoof-beats, but clods from her flying feet rattled on the dashboard.

On, on, on! Through the swamp, over the bridge, round the lake. Now the dark walls opened out and they were on the brow of the long slope down to Craigmont.

Down the hill Nell threw herself, swiftly, madly, swept round the curve at the foot of the hill, Bill leaning far out of the cutter, dashed into the little village and drew up, foaming, at the doctor's door.

A few knocks sufficed to wake him. Bill unhitched Nell and harnessed the doctor's team while he dressed. In a few minutes more they were off on the race for home.

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Lizzie was ill for many days. "Acute diphtheria, critical case," was the doctor's verdict. "Too many late choir practices," was his comment. Bill called to enquire about her every day, but was not permitted to see her for a long time.

At last she was able to receive him. She sat before the parlor stove, wrapped in shawls. Bill occupied the rocking chair. Both were silent for a long