

said Jack to himself, bridling up, and bracing up his conscience against the godly conversation of his relations. "He'd fix 'em now," he said, with a slight nod of his head.

It was not until late in the afternoon that the boy's grist was ready; when the old mare was brought out of the shed, the bag hoisted on her back, and Jack and David both mounted on her—bag, boys, and mare homeward bound. "You've got a longer ride ahead than I wish you had, boys," said the miller, casting his eyes toward a black cloud which was rising and darkening the western sky. "There is plenty of water up there for my mill."

The mare set briskly off, and was soon lost to sight among the windings of the forest road. But the gloom gathered quicker than the horse trotted, and it was quite dark when they reached the fork in the road, where it might make a very considerable difference which path they took home. One was the travelled road. This way there was good bridge over Bounding Brook, a mountain stream, which was often dangerously swelled by the spring rains. It was the safest, though the longest way home. The other was a wood path through the pines, often taken in good weather by the farmers living on the east side of the town, to shorten the distance to the Corner. In this road Bounding Brook was crossed by fording.

"Father told us to be sure and take the travelled road if 'twas late," said David. "Going to," said Jack; and the mare stopped at the fork as if to let the boys be sure which to take. In fact Jack was a little confused. The windings of the road, with nothing but woods on each side, and, of course, no distinct landmarks to govern him; the gloom of the night hiding what objects that might have served to direct him, together with his small acquaintance with the road, did puzzle

the boys, although Jack, being the older of the two, with a dash of pride about him, would not own it. As the mare stopped he came to a conclusion, and whipped up. "All right," he cried.

"Are you sure?" asked David. "This way, I know," answered Jack. "I don't know," said David; let me jump off and run down to that light yonder, and ask: there must be a cabin there, and folks." "Oh, we can't stop for all that," said Jack. "I honestly believe this is the travelled road, David, and that's enough; can't you trust me?" "But your honestly believing it don't make it so," muttered David. "I haven't a doubt of it, Dave; you be still," cried Jack angrily. "I think we ought to ask, so as to be sure," persisted David. But Jack whipped up, and poor David's fears and words went to the winds, as gust after gust of the coming shower roared through the forest, and Jack urged the horse to all the speed which her heavy load would allow, on and on through the dark woods. Jack was well pleased with the correctness of his hasty decision about the way; and the farther he went, the more and more confirmed was he that it was the right way.

Presently the roaring of Bounding Brook arose above the rattlings of the woods. A switch over the mare's haunches, and "we shall be over the bridge in a moment," cried Jack; "then what'll you say?" David privately muttered, "He'd like to feel himself over," when, a few more canthers, and—Jack, David, meal, and mare were floundering in the raging waters of the swollen stream, pitch dark, the storm on them, and miles from human help. The first few moments of horrible suspense it were vain to paint. Jack at last found himself anchored on a log of drift wood, the icy waters breaking over him, and the bridle still fast in his hand. "David!"