

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## Tracks in the Snow.

When the moon rides high and the snow is white,

And the air is frosty and chill,  
There's many a traveller out at night  
A-journeying over the hill;

Where do they come from? whither go?  
Making tracks on the midnight snow.

There's a path that leads to the squirrel's house  
At the edge of the hemlock clump;  
And here is the track of a bold, brown mouse  
On his way to a neighboring stump;  
Only the prints of their feet to show  
They passed this way on the midnight snow.

Here are the marks on the snow-covered rocks  
Of rabbit feet, light and swift;  
And there is the trail of a sly red fox  
Where a partridge hid in the drift;  
Many a tragedy comes, I trow,  
When the red fox prowls on the midnight snow.

Time and again in the morning light,  
When the air is frosty and chill,  
I see where a traveller's been by night  
A-journeying over the hill;  
And I wonder why he happened to go  
Out climbing the hill on the midnight snow.  
—'Wellspring.'

## On Initiation Night.

(James Buckham, in 'Classmate.')

'Say, Chapman, we want one of your father's horses to-night. We're going to run in young Miller, and part of the programme will be a fast ride around Stony Brook Bend with the blind-folded neophyte. He'll think he's being carried into the next county, sure, and will be all confused about locality when we rush him up into the hall. How is it? Can we depend on you to furnish a rig?'

The speaker was one of the initiation committee of the Delta Sigma Society in Melbourne College. Wilbur Chapman was a recent initiate, having been 'run in' to the Delta Sigma Society with the first selection of Freshmen at the close of the fall term. He was exceedingly proud of the honor of having been asked to join Delta Sigma, and was already an enthusiastically devoted 'Delt' man. There was nothing he would not do for the society, if the service lay within his power. Wilbur was the son of the leading physician in the town, and the 'boys' knew that Dr. Chapman's horses were the speediest and best to be had. One of these horses, with a light buggy, would be just the thing for the wild, confusing spin around Stony Brook Bend on the night of the initiation. Consequently, the initiation committee applied to Wilbur in the rather imperative fashion which fraternity men use when asking a favor on behalf of the society.

Wilbur promptly assented. 'I'll be glad to furnish a rig,' he said; 'the best one father has. Where shall I meet you with it, and at what time?'

'Back of the pump-house, at nine-thirty. We'll run Miller down there afoot from Mr. Allen's office, where we shall blindfold him. When we reach you, slip out of the buggy and hold the horse until I motion you to let go. Then we'll be off. Not a word must be spoken, remember.'

'No, not a word,' echoed Wilbur Chapman, solemnly. All this mysterious and ominous preparation was a matter of tremendous importance, it seemed to him. The glory and reputation of Delta Sigma were at stake. Her initiations were supposed to be models of impressiveness and artistic ingenuity. Not a single feature of them must be allowed to

fail. He would do his humble part to the best of his ability. And, after all, it was quite a distinction for a newly-initiated freshman to be allowed to furnish a team for the initiators, and be present when the panting, blind-folded and bewildered neophyte was hoisted into it.

Dr. Chapman was late to supper that evening. He had been very busy throughout the week, and on this Saturday night it seemed as if the calls for his service were so numerous that no one man could respond to them all. He glanced over the slate on his arrival with an exclamation of despair. But there was only one thing to do—he must snatch a mouthful of food as hastily as possible and be off again.

Wilbur had purposely postponed his supper that he might eat it with his father. He had a request to make, and a boy naturally likes to have his father in a pleased mood at such a time.

'Father,' he said, when the doctor had finished his first cup of tea and smacked his lips over its quality, 'I want to take Bess and the red-wheeled buggy to-night, if you'll let me. It's Delta Sigma initiation, and we want to use a team.'

'Sorry, my boy,' replied the doctor, 'but I can't oblige you. It's simply impossible, so I won't ask the questions that I otherwise should before letting a horse go for that purpose.'

'But, father,' cried Wilbur, in frank dismay, 'I've promised!'

'That was wrong, and foolish, too,' said his father, quietly. 'You did not know that I could spare a horse for such a frolic, or that I would if I could. You should have told your fraternity friends that you would ask me and let them know.'

A 'frolic!' Wilbur's heart burned within him at such a characterization of the solemn, portentous mystery of a Delta Sigma initiation. He loved and revered his father, but how could a newly-initiated fraternity man stand such a slight as this upon what seemed to him supremely sacred? His cheeks flamed, and he was on the point of making some indignant rejoinder, when the telephone-bell rang sharply, and his father sprang to the instrument. 'Another call—and an emergency!' he groaned, as he turned away. 'Wilbur, have James hitch up Bess immediately. She's the only fresh horse in. I want her in five minutes.'

Wilbur went out to the stable. 'James,' he called to the hostler, 'father wants a horse in five minutes.'

'Which one, sir?' asked James, appearing from his little room in the loft.

It was that question which opened a way for the tempter's swift suggestion into the boy's mind and heart. He did not challenge the sudden temptation; he did not even dally with it. He surrendered on the instant. 'Jes,' he replied.

'But Jess is just in, sir,' protested the hostler. 'She's tired and wet, and hasn't finished her feed. Bess is the only horse that hasn't been out since early morning.'

'I said, Jess, James,' cried the boy, angrily. 'Don't talk back to me. Harness Jess, and have her at the door in five minutes.'

Bess and Jess were a pair of small Morgan mares, so exactly matched in every respect that it would be hard for an ordinary observer to tell them apart. In the shadows of night, which had already gathered, Wilbur knew that his hurried and preoccupied father would not detect at once the substitution of Jess for Bess. He would start off on his evening ride, and then Wilbur would have fresh Bess harnessed, and would take her to the town house-sheds and hitch her there until it was

time to drive to the rendezvous. He had promised his father's best rig to the illustrious, the worshipful Delta Sigma Society—and she should have it, even at the expense of his father's duty to the community and his own moral integrity. The boy's head and conscience were both turned by an inconsiderate enthusiasm. He had become like one of the sworn and unscrupulous followers of some Oriental secret order. At the behest of Delta Sigma he could defy and deceive even his own loving, faithful father.

Wilbur carried out the plan which the tempter had suggested to him. Hardly had his father gone when he bade James harness Bess to the red-wheeled buggy. Then he drove the spirited mare to the town house-sheds, hitched her, and remained near by until it was time to drive to the rendezvous. There the proposed programme was carried out to the letter, and Wilbur was left standing alone in the dark as the light buggy bowled away, with two of the initiators, and poor young Miller, clinging to the seat for dear life.

It still lacked two hours of the time for initiation at Delta Sigma Hall, and Wilbur, too restless and conscience-troubled to join his light-hearted companions as yet, strolled down the hill to the railway station. Why he went there he could not say. Perhaps he felt that the mild excitement of the arrival and departure of trains might divert his mind from the anxiety and reproach that were beginning to prey upon it.

He hung around the depot until half-past ten o'clock, and was just about to leave for his Society hall, when the ten o'clock train from the South, belated for some reason, came rolling in. He pressed forward with a few others, to learn what the trouble might be. The conductor and three brakemen came down the steps of the parlor-car carrying a man on an improvised stretcher. A horrible, sickening dread, that, however unreasonable, had seized the boy irresistibly drove Wilbur forward, and the next instant his eyes fell on the pallid face of his father!

'Oh, father! father!' he cried with such bitter anguish that even the bearers of the stretcher made way for him to come closer. 'Oh, say he isn't dead! say that he isn't dead!' he appealed to the conductor.

'No, my boy, he isn't dead,' said the conductor, kindly. 'He fainted when we lifted him on the stretcher. Some ribs broken and an arm—we hope that's all.'

'The train struck him at Downer's crossing. His horse had just fallen on the track from exhaustion.'

Ah! those bitter hours and days that followed! The good doctor's life hung in the balance for weeks. He had suffered internal injuries that were far more dangerous than the broken ribs and arm. But the best medical skill, supplemented by such devoted nursing and tireless watchfulness as Wilbur and his mother gave to the loved sufferer, finally won the day, and the strong man crept slowly back from the verge of death.

When at last he was able to talk of the past, and hear the words which his son could have no peace until he had spoken, the boy knelt by the bed and confessed all, with tears and broken sobs. 'Father,' pleaded he, 'I do not ask you to forgive me yet, but only to bear with me until I have proved myself more worthy to be forgiven. I dare to trust that, by God's grace, I am better for all this. Will you wait a little while, and then forgive me if I am worthy, father?'

The pleading, earnest voice, the pale, sad, careworn face, were eloquent with sincerity. The invalid reached out and took his boy's