

big grey horse was stolidly awaiting them, Jim helped Melissa into the pung and bundled her up warmly.

"The *first* thing, Melissy, I reckon," said he, "is to git you home to bed, afore daylight. I'll go back for your trunk an' things as soon as I see you safe with your mother. Meg'll have her Santy Claus all right, never you fear!"

With a sigh of relief and content Melissa snuggled down into the wraps and turned grateful eyes upon him.

"How thoughtful you are, Jim! And how you always seem to understand!" she murmured. And then, a little shyly—"Do you know, I somehow *thought* you might come after, in spite of what I said!"

"That there thought shows that you understand me, Melissy," he responded gravely. "And now, if you ain't *too* tired, what does it all mean? It was a knock-out to me, girl, when I come to the cross road an' see what had happened, an' your things all there in the snow, an' your poor little trail strugglin' on toward County Line. I don't want ever to feel like that again."

Pretending not to notice the way his voice