

He went the right way down through the high woods and over the stepping-stones and little stone bridge, and by the stone quarry, and through the low wood, and down into the valley, then along the footpath and over the stile, along the road by the river side, and into the little town where the doctor lived, and across the great open market-place with the stone cross on the steps in the middle of it, to where the doctor's house was, that had in it the precious medicine for which he had come. From the market place he cast a passing look up at the broad white snows on the top of the big hill yonder, just below where his home was, where his father was coughing, and higher still at the black clouds which hovered like a big black vulture above it, then he rang the surgery bell. When the door was opened he almost darted through, and the next minute he stood in a room lined with shelves full of bottles, and was happy. They were to cure people. He told his tale, and they mixed him something in a great big bottle. He was glad it was big. It would be sure to cure his father. Big things were always clever. And he stood and warmed his hands and his toes at the blazing fire, but his heart was warmest, for he was already fancying his father better. He paid his mother's half-crown, and put the bottle inside the bosom of his little buttoned jacket, and set out with quite a light, brisk step home again, for happy hearts make nimble feet.

The woman at the toll-gate just outside the town spoke to him. Where was he going? "To Caterick's Tarn," he answered. She looked gravely at the heavy, frowning sky, then Teddy, then at her clock, and seeming after all to be in doubt what to say, she said, "Well, get along; your bottle will be wanted." He was a long way past the stile, and had crossed the low wood and the first stone bridge again, when little flakes of soft white snow came sailing down through the air, and by the time he was half way home the cart-track was quite obscured and the hill-side was one thin, wide sheet of snow. He was not frightened, for the snow ceased and the moon was shining right on the hill, and he could still see the familiar landmarks and away up there the straggling pines just below the tarn where his home was; and old Sandy led the way, so he trudged contentedly along. Then the moon was hidden, and it was dark, very dark. He stood still a moment and lighted his little lantern. It was a difficult task, for the wind was rising and lifting the snow and blowing it round in sweeping rings, but he was not frightened by the wind or the snow or the dark. He hardly gave them a thought, for he was feeling a bottle at his breast full of help for his father, and that filled him with joyous love—the kind of love which the Bible calls perfect love—love which does not seek its own, but another's good, and that, the Bible also says, always casts out fear.

The cold was intense, so at least said his toes and finger-ends, but because his father was at home, sitting up in his chair before the fire coughing, cold was nothing to him. The road was slippery. His feet, too, caught and stumbled against roughness on the ground, which made walking tedious and exhausting; but not until he tripped and only just saved himself from a fall did he feel distressed, for then the thought flashed like lightning through his little mind, "Oh, if I break this bottle!" Then he took the muffler off his throat, and took the precious bottle out of his bosom and carefully wrapped the soft muffler round and round the bottle, and put it back into his jacket again, which was no easy task, for it was a huge bundle now. He did not half mind tumbles and hurts for himself, but if he broke the bottle! The mere thought of it he scarcely knew how to bear. He was missing the road, too, and he knew it; for there were no walls or hedges or fences that he might feel to guide him. There was nothing but open, bare, wide hill-side, now one great breadth of snow, and it was dark. "Where is the road?" he said, straining his eyes into the darkness; and he felt about with his hands down in the snow, and tried to find signs of the track that way, but it was farther away than he thought. To have found it in the daylight would have puzzled him, and older heads than his, and now it was pitch-dark, and he was only nine years old.

If he could only find his home! In spite of himself he began to be alarmed. He was weary and bitterly cold, and how long he was; and the waste and the darkness and the silence seemed all against his reaching home with the physic. His poorly father was his sole anxiety. He pressed along his way. He wished that the moon would come out. It seemed days since he began his ascent. And what was the matter with the dog? The dog was becoming a nuisance, it barked and yelped and leaped at him and hindered him. A hundred times he bid it "lie down," but at every step he took, it more frantically leaped against him, and seemed intent on knocking

him down. He was angry; he had lost his path; the road was slippery and steep; he was tired and could not get along, and his dog seemed mad. Just then his feet slipped among the loose stones and he fell headlong, and his lantern-door flew open and the candle came out into the snow. Then he felt about for it, but could not find it. And now, bewildered, and angry with his dog, and sick at heart at the darkness and waste, and all alone, the little man sat down and cried. Then he recovered himself, picked up his lantern, and got on his feet again and set himself to the road. Then he found that he had left his staff behind him, and the dog began to whine again and to pester him more furiously than before. Whatever craze had taken it! But he thought of his father and his cough, and his father perhaps dying—perhaps dead—and all for want of this physic in his bosom there, which he was so long in taking; and he took heart and pushed the dog away and plodded on.

In two steps more he felt the snow yield under the foot he put out; it went down, down. He was falling through the air. He had scarcely utter his little "Oh," when, a heavy thud which filled him with pain, he reached the ground, and was lying on a deep boss of snow somewhere. He felt he was killed. Was the bottle broken too? He reached his hand to his bosom, for he still feared nothing on his own account. As his hand touched the bundle, he suddenly became stiff and unconscious and felt no more. The dog, which had been so frantic because its little master was making a dreadful mistake—was, indeed, wandering towards a yawning chasm—now found its way down to him by a side path it knew, hoping to lead him back to the top again; but it could make no sense of him. It only whined sadly over a little figure that seemed dead. Suddenly, with the instinct of a born shepherd's dog it darted off to its home, which, fortunately, happened to be very near, scraped furiously at the door, and whined and barked. At the sound the door flew open, and the dog made the mother understand that something had happened. She put a light to her lantern, poor soul, and went out into the terrible night, and the dog led its mistress heedfully to the cliff and down the path to where Teddy lay. And she took him up in her arms, and weeping carried him home, and the dog followed and seemed to be weeping too.

And Teddy lay on his little bed unconscious for all that long night; then in the morning he jumped up and said, as if in a dreadful dream, "Is it broke?" and before his mother could answer him he fell back again unconscious upon his bed. If she could only tell the brave little man that the bottle was not broken! She bent down her lips to his ears and whispered and spoke it to him; but all in vain. The little features lay still, the eyes and lips were closed, and gray as death. Days passed. He seemed at times to be passing through horrible hours, starting and muttering and crying as he lay with closed eyes. His father was sitting by his side. He had gently laid his hand on the little brow and held it tightly there, and the eyelids slowly rose, and a feeble smile stole across the pale face, and the child took a long breath and said, softly and kindly, "Father are you better?" and his eyelids fell again. "Yes, my grand boy"—thinking only of the little pined face and faint smile—"yes, my grand boy, I am better." His heart was in his mouth, and tears, tears of thankful admiration, would start to his eyes. Then Teddy whispered, "Was the bottle broken, father?" "No, no, my brave boy. It was that medicine that cured me." And the father bent over his little man and kissed him. Then Teddy fell into a quiet sleep. Weeks again passed before they knew all the damage of the fall, for a bone in Teddy's ankle had been broken; and when at length a doctor could be got, and the injury was discovered, it was all too late—yes, too late for ever to set it right again; and it grew stiff, and that is why we see him, now a grown man, go limping past our window to-day.

Now, is the horse and the rider the most splendid sight? Do even the little mountebanks seem more glorious than that plain limping man? I am sure they do not. You admire more, far more, that lovely, noble little heart. And that limp is the mark and sign of it. See, then, what is meant by the eyes of our understanding being enlightened. When we first saw him we saw him with the eyes in the sockets of our heads. Now we see him also with the eyes of our understanding.

And so Jesus looks, only a wayfaring man, rather sorrowful, till we know what it all means. Till then, men call him a root out of a dry ground, and say he has no form or comeliness, but then, when the eyes of our understanding are enlightened, we know that what his life means, plain as his dress, humble as is his lot, he is the sweetest, brightest, grandest glory the world contains.—Selected.