

boys were playing ball, and their oaths rang out clearly on the crisp autumnal air. The crowd round the game outnumbered the congregation four to one.

The gulf between pastor and people widened. The men sneered at Paul's white hands, his fine clothes, correct speech, and what they called his 'airs.' The Sabbath-breaking, drinking, swearing and carousing went on. Shut up among his well-loved books, Paul prepared his sermons. When these were delivered he thought his duty done. That was all. No, not all. Notwithstanding the vigilance of Paul, Aunt Mary and the maid Gretchen, the friendship between Harold and Bobby grew.

One November morning the congregation waiting for Paul was smaller than usual. It was a dull, gray morning, the sky overcast and the east wind piercing. As yet there was no snow, but while walking along Paul heard one man say to another with an oath:

'There'll be sleighing to-morrow.'

The sermon was learned and logical. Paul Dutton went on to the end. With the customary prayer, hymn and benediction the service closed.

No sooner was the outer door opened than it was evident that there was some unusual commotion in the town. Men were gathered in groups, and there was much excited talking.

'Jim Pratt's kid is lost,' a boy announced, entering the church. 'His father has looked all over town, and he hain't here. Jim says he must have strayed off in the woods.'

Every one who heard these words understood their dread import. A child lost in the forest and a storm rising!

Paul laid down his books and hurried down the street. Mrs. Skinner had had a headache that morning, so she and Harold had remained at home. However, Paul did not go to the parsonage. Instead he joined the largest group of men and began asking quick, breathless questions concerning Bobbie's disappearance.

He was interrupted by Jim Pratt, who staggered up, his unshaven face ashen and drawn with pain.

'Lost in the woods! My little boy! Only four hours of daylight, and a storm comin' up. And I told Callie when she was dyin' that I'd take good care of Bobbie. My God! Parson, can't you pray?'

One moment's silence. Then Paul Dutton spoke, and there was a new note of sympathetic brotherliness in his voice: 'Yes, my friend, I am praying. But I can work, too. There is no time to be lost.'

The men were accustomed to the life of the frontier, yet Paul became their leader. A searching party was organized, the district round the town divided, and signals agreed upon. As they were about to start a man plucked Paul's sleeve.

'You hain't had your dinner, parson.'

'Dinner! Is this a time for men to think of eating? If it was my boy, would I wait for dinner?'

Those rough men drew long breaths. After all, the minister was a father and a fellow man. He proved another revelation as the slow hours wore by. He was brother to that sorrowing father.

Pratt and Paul walked together. Overhead the clouds grew denser, and the air seemed laden. Now and then a snowflake floated down, while the wind penetrated the thick clothing of the men. They filed along through the forest. The pine and spruce trees shut out the light, but with them grew oaks, maples and birches, and their branches were bare. Dead leaves crackled under

foot. Few words were spoken. They were intent on seeing and hearing.

The light began to fade. The snow was falling steadily. There had been no signals from the other divisions of the party, and the line of men drew together for a moment's consultation.

Jim Pratt sank to the ground, a groan breaking from his lips. 'He will be frozen to death in a few hours. I'll put a bullet through my own head if—'

'Hush!' It was Paul who spoke. 'Keep up courage, my friend. God is good. Bobbie is in his hands. Again I say, God is good.'

There was no dissenting voice. Paul uncovered his head and stood with his face upturned to the falling snow. The hearts of the men thrilled with a sudden realization that they stood face to face with a living faith.

'What's this?' and Dave Cook picked up an object that lay at his feet. 'It's a little rubber, and there is snow under it. Boys, we're on the trail.'

But Jim Pratt turned away. 'Taint Bobbie's. He wore boots.'

Paul Dutton stepped forward. His face gleamed deathly white in the twilight. 'It is Harold's. See, here are his initials he coaxed me to put on the inside.'

There was a moment's silence. Then Paul spoke again.

'God is good. Let us press forward.'

They went on. Each moment was precious, yet care must be taken that no trace was overlooked.

Suddenly a cry rang out. All rushed toward Jim Pratt, who had lifted the low-growing, drooping branches of a larch.

Under the branches, on a bed of dry leaves, lay Harold and Bobbie. They were clasped in each other's arms and fast asleep. It was light enough so that they could see Bobbie had removed his ragged jacket and spread it over Harold.

'Let us pray,' and at the minister's words each man of the little party dropped upon his knees. Some of them had last knelt at their mothers' side in far-away childhood, some had never before knelt, yet in that hour all gave thanks unto God for his goodness.

'I knowed you'd come, daddy,' Bobbie murmured as his father tenderly lifted him in his arms. 'Harold asked the Jesus man to send you.'

Through darkness and storm they made their way back to the village, their hearts strangely tender one to another. They were brothers.

Harold's presence in the forest was easily explained. Gretchen had been promised the privilege of taking him with her when she went to spend the day with her widowed mother, and Mrs. Skinner supposed he had gone. When Gretchen was ready to start she could not find Harold, and concluded his father had taken him to church. Thus the child had not been missed. Bobbie had coaxed Harold to go with him to hunt bears. They had lost their way and had wandered about all day.

The next Sunday morning the church was packed. Paul's text was: 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him,' and the hearts of his hearers were stirred as he—that father and brother—told of God's love and compassion. The sermon had been preceded by a week's intercession and fellowship with his people.

The harvest was ready for the reapers. Paul Dutton's work was at his hand, and he did it 'as unto the Lord.'

Five years have gone by. Paul is still

at Exter. Jim Pratt is a faithful Christian. The town has lost many of its olden evils. Together Paul and his church are working for the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom.

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