

## OUT IN THE COLD.

"Be careful, Chris, and not lose your way going across the plains."

Aunt Badger said this as she stood out on the doorstep, with her black silk apron thrown over her head, and with a little pail of maple syrup in her hand.

"You know there is the East Barton road and there's the West Barton road, and then there's the Joel Mack's wood-road."

"Oh, yes'm; I'll remember!" Chris said, briskly.

She was flying around the sleigh, tucking the robe about Johnny and getting her mittens on.

"I won't forget to remember."

Johnny was five years old, and he made this remark with great dignity.

"Make the old horse step along lively. It's most sundown, an' it's bixin' for a cold night. Wind's got round into the north. There, off with you."

Uncle Badger chirruped to Pomp, and he started at a round trot down the road.

"I say for it," remarked the farmer to his wife, "I didn't know it was quite so late or I'd have started 'em off an hour ago."

"Chris is a pretty common sensible sort of a girl. I'll trust Chris," answered Aunt Badger.

"Mother won't be 'spectin' us," said Johnny. He had an inj' red tone. "She said we might stay out to 'ne farm all night."

"I know it, and I should if Laura hadn't been coming down with the measles, and you've never been exposed to them."

Chris and Johnny had been out to the farm to eat warm sugar. It was March, but the ground was covered with snow, not deep but enough to make good sleighing.

"Chris," began Johnny, presently, "I think you might let me drive, seeing I'm the man."

"Of course you may drive. I didn't know you wanted to," and Chris good-naturedly gave up the reins.

"Sit up close, Johnny. The wind blows like a hurricane. There!"

From the farm-house was a three-mile drive—up hill for half a mile, then the long stretch of level plain, then down half a mile more into the village.

The horse and sleigh were Deacon Hyde's and if anyone knew the age of either was not the person now telling the story. Pomp was stiff as to his knees, stiffer as to his temper, and the sleigh was a kind of box with a high back.

Chris had on some gray squirrel furs, so old that they reminded one of a Maltese cat who had been a cat a great while. Her cloak she had worn to school for two winters, and as for Johnny, his overcoat was his mother's shawl.

"Just look at the white round Pompey's mouth!" cried Johnny. "Oh, and Chris, it's all round on your tippet, too. You look like an old man with a beard."

"Do I? Get up, Pomp! It's growing dark."

It was, and in the dusk, as they drove out of the cedar woods, the horse caught sight of an object crouching by the roadside. It was only a big stone, with some snow on it, and Pomp had seen it a hundred times, but that instant he forgot it for an old acquaintance, and—took it for an evil beast. He stopped, sharpened his ears, and arched the stiff slant of his neck.

"Pomp, Pomp!" said Chris, gently.

"Oh Chris! he's looking out of his ears!" cried Johnny. "You drive."

Chris bent forward to take the reins, when the horse gave a quick spring, and in an instant he was tearing along across the country, with his head high in air, and with the reins dangling about his heels.

"Whoa!" shouted Chris, standing up.

"Don't stir, Johnny. He'll stop when he gets tired."

She said it quietly, but she could feel her heart beat in the ends of her fingers and toes. There were no fences on the road, and Chris could only see that they had left the road, and that they were rushing on over knolls and across hollows, as fast as a runaway steam-engine. Midway between the borders of the plain there ran a deep ravine, which had been worn by a small stream. "The Gulf," it was called, and its banks were very steep. There was light enough still for Chris to make out the way in front of them, and she suddenly cried out:

"Hold on to me, Johnny! Hold tight! We're going down the gulf-bank!"

And before one could draw breath Pomp was plunging and stumbling down the rough steep, and then—a awful scene at the bot-

tom. A broken sleigh, a fallen horse, a shrieking boy, and a very white-faced, wild-eyed girl.

"O Chrissy, I shall die!" sobbed Johnny. "No, you won't. People don't die standing up, and walking round, and screaming. Come here."

Johnny went, and his sister felt his arms and his legs, and found him sound from head to foot.

Then she tried to get up herself, and sank back with a moan.

"I've hurt my foot or something," she whispered.

Then there was a little minute when Chris said nothing. She just sat there on the snow, her face growing whiter and the dark growing blacker, and this is what she thought:

"We've got to stay here all night. We're off the road, and nobody will come here to help us. The thills are broken, and Pomp is all snarled up in the harness, and I've sprained my ankle. I couldn't walk even if this snow wasn't all round, and even if I knew where we were."

She looked to where Pomp lay on his side, lay very still, for since he first felt the old creature had not moved. She looked at the shattered thills, and off at the bleak snow levels, and she shivered in a fresh gust of wind, and she said to herself:

"I believe we shall freeze here, but we won't if I can help it."

What would you have done, you who are fourteen years old, just as Chris was? Chris had never been to New York, never had a pair of kid gloves, never assisted at a dress party. She didn't play the piano, and her tongue wouldn't pronounce the French *ou*. But it was good on the English alphabet and its owner was a tower of wealth at spelling schools. She was just what Aunt Badger termed a "common-sense girl," and now she called Johnny to her side and said, very quietly:

"I've got something to tell you, Johnny, and I want you to hear it—every word."

"Yes," sighed Johnny.

"You know old Pomp has fallen down and you and I can't get him up. I've hurt my foot and I can't walk home, so I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll set the sleigh straight and we'll cover ourselves all up nice and warm—oh, so nice and warm—with the buffalo—and then we'll play and we'll tell stories, and we'll have just the nicest kind time you ever heard of."

"O jolly!" cried Johnny. "But, Chrissy, my feet are so cold."

"Yes, but you see we're not going to mind the cold, Johnny. We're going to play that it's warm—so warm that we have to fan ourselves to keep cold, you know. Now, then."

Do you think it was an easy thing for Chris, with her poor, sprained foot, to crawl round and draw up the sleigh, or to pick up the robe and blanket and arrange them, or to tuck herself and Johnny into the old vehicle? She thought she was going to faint once, but she said "I won't!" and set her teeth hard, and of course she didn't.

"Now isn't it nice, Johnny? So warm," she said.

To be sure the blast rushed down the gorge like a whirlwind. It blew up through the cracks in the bottom of the sleigh, and it circled about the children's ears with a shrill whistle, and the whole air seemed to get colder every minute.

"Let's creep clear under," said Chris, and then she pulled the buffalo robe over their heads. "This is our tent and we are Esquimaux."

"Esquimauxes live in huts."

"So they do, don't they? I forgot. Don't you like this, Johnny?"

"Yes—pretty well—only I'm so sleepy, Chris. I'm going to sleep right here—"

"No, you're not either!" cried Chris. She knew that sleeping was the most dangerous of all things in this bitter cold.

"You're going to keep awake, and I'll tell you a story about—oh, about the most beautiful cat that ever lived. She had blue eyes, and her hair was white, and it was twelve inches long. Oh!"

How her feet did ache! Chris had never been ill a day in her life, and pain was a new thing to her. But she talked on, and Johnny laughed to hear her. She told him of the fox, and the dog, and the magpie, and that wonderful "amorontholosphorus," and all those famous creatures you have read about, perhaps, in Bulwer's tale; and when she had finished Johnny's head was thumping on her shoulder.

"Johnny, Johnny Duncan, I can't have you going to sleep!" she cried out, shaking him.

"Let me alone!" snarled Johnny. "I'm so sleepy."

"Oh, you see here, Johnny! I've thought of the nicest play. Let's play 'The Cats of Kilkenny.' You shall be one cat and I'll be the other cat. Now wake up and tell me how it begins. I forget."

Johnny was awake now. He was cross, but Chris was rather glad of it. She thought he would keep warmer.

"Now begin," she said.

"There once were two cats in Kilkenny, And each thought there was one cat too many."

"All right. Go on, Johnny."

"So they growled, and they bit, And they scratched and they spit—"

"I don't know the rest."

"Never mind, I'll tell you:

"Till, excepting their tails, And the tips of their tails, Instead of two cats there—wasn't—any."

"Now 'll be cats, and we'll gur-r-rowl and we'll bite."

"An' I'll think you are one cat too many," laughed Johnny. "That'll be fun."

This fun lasted for an hour. It was played over and over, and the old sleigh heard such sounds of mewing and laughing and scratching and growling as it never heard before. "If I can only keep him stirring round!" thought Chris, "he won't be so sleepy."

"Chrissy, isn't it 'most morning!" whined the little fellow, presently. "I'm going to look out this crack and see if the sun isn't coming up."

"Isn't it?" asked Chris, who knew it was just about Johnny's usual bedtime.

"Something round and red is coming up over there. I guess it's the moon. What time is it, Chris, when the moon gets up?"

"Oh, along in the night 'most any time. It's not very regular, I believe. Let's sing, Johnny. See which'll sing the loudest. I can sing louder than you can."

"You can't, I say!" shouted Johnny.

"That's right," thought Chris. "Get his temper up and that'll keep him warm."

"Oh, bah! Little boys aren't anything at singing. They only squall a bit like very small dogs."

"Oh, you had Chrissy. I can sing louder than you. I'll ask Miss Judd to-morrow if I can't."

"I hope you will, then. Now sing. Sing 'Oh, don't be discouraged.'"

Johnny started the tune at the top of his voice, and roared it through with all his lungs, and it grew colder and colder every minute. It seemed to Chris that every inch of cold and every blast of wind went through and through that aching foot of hers like the cutting of knives. But she sang away time and tune with Johnny—

"Oh, I'm glad I'm in this army."

"Yes, I'm glad I'm in this army."

to the very end. Then Johnny whimpered out "Twain's any such thing. He wasn't glad, and he wished he was home in bed—that was what he wished."

"Oh, Johnny, I've thought of something."

"You're always a-thinkin' o' something. Folks think all the time."

"But this is really something. I'm going to put you into the sleigh-box. You're so little, you know, and I can tuck you all in, and you may go to sleep there."

"Ugh!" drawled Johnny, sleepily.

"Ugh!" groaned Chris, and she wrinkled her forehead all up into hard knots when she tried to move. But she pulled herself forward a little, and by leaning and holding on the side of the sleigh, she managed to reach the box under the seat.

"Oh, this is so nice!" she cried. "Here is some hay, and I'll lay the buffalo-robe in—there—so. Now you climb down in."

"But you won't have any buffalo, Chris?"

"Pooh! I shan't be cold. I'm a big girl. I've got the blankets, too. In with you. There, isn't that fine?"

Lured it was. The little fellow was tucked in as snugly as possible, then the cover was shut down, leaving a crack for the air to enter. Johnny was asleep in two minutes.

"Now there's one of us all right," sighed Chris, "whatever becomes of the other one."

"The other one" took the thin, old blanket, wrapped herself in it as well as she could, and sat crouching in the bottom of the sleigh.

"We're rods off the road. Even if anyone should pass, they wouldn't see us. Nothing can be done till morning, and then mother'll send for us when she finds we aren't home by school-time."

Morning! Chris wondered if the morning would ever really come, if she should be there to see it brighten over the hills.

"I don't think I'm afraid to die," said the brave little woman to herself, "but—I should never see my mother again. I'm not going to die, though, and I'm not going to sleep." So she roused herself with a sudden effort.

Chris had a small face, with great gray eyes. (Johnny asked her once "what color her eyes were before they turned gray!") Now her face grew very white, her eyes black and bright, as she sat there in the fearful cold. The night was as light as a full moon, all the stars and miles on miles of "crusted" snow could make it. To Chris the air seemed full of millions of frosty sparkles, with a blue glow shining across them—such a glow as one sees through frosted panes just before sunrise, winter mornings. For herself, she was only one shuddering bundle of pain and cold. She did not cry or utter a sound, only sat still a great while. By-and-by she felt a strange quiet stealing over her.

"This isn't sleep," she thought. "It's something else, something pleasant, that I don't know about. I'm not going to shut my eyes. I'll look at the hills."

Against the horizon the hills formed a range curving round in a sweep from north to south, fifty miles. Chris had been born and brought up among the mountains, and she loved them in a deep, warm place down in her heart, after a manner she never could have told to anyone. If she were sorry or glad, whether it was summer or winter, daylight or nightdark, under the sun and under the shadow, in all times the hills meant something to her, and something grand, full of awe and of loveliness, like the sublime parts of the Bible.

Now looking at them, and the same strange calm coming to fold her round, perhaps it wasn't strange that the mountains should come to her dream, and like the chanting of a choir, she should seem to hear in the air above her the old words:

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

Help! Would it come to Chris now in her sore need? But even while she watched the hills of her love suddenly flashed out in a warm, pink light. Softened, transfigured like mountains in a dream she saw them; and in a strange, dim way she was aware of a new sound in her ears, of bells that were ringing away down in the night somewhere.

"The bells ringing across the river!" she said to herself. "Who heard them? Was it Chris Duncan? Or was it the man in Bunyan? Who was he, and who was Chris? I can't—quite—remember," and she did not remember anything more.

It was midnight when a wild cry rang down the silent village street, and then the Stillwater bells all pealed out at once. There was a great fire up on the South Mountain—Joel Mack's saw-mill and tannery, with cords of wood and hemlock bark. All the hills glowed pink and warm in the light of it. The engine was coming home from the fire, and all the men, and Beppe, who never failed to go with the engine, when suddenly the old dog dashed off the road, down into the glee, and was heard a minute later, barking like several dogs.

"Something's up. Bep never barks that way for nothing," said Fred Hyde, the deacon's son. "You hold on a minute while I go down and see."

That was how they found them there in the fearful cold of the March morning. It was two o'clock. Johnny was asleep, warm and snug; Pomp had ended everything for himself with a stab of a thill when he fell; and Chris? Chris was seated, clutching her blanket with stiff fingers, and her face had something in it which threw a hush over them all.

"Poor Chris!" said one. "It's all over with her, I'm afraid. Where's Dr. Vance? He was up there at Mack's."

"Here I am," spoke the doctor. "Take Chris and put her into my sleigh, and I'll have her home in ten minutes. And, Fred Hyde, do you go on ahead, and get them up at Mrs. Duncan's. Ride, too, as you never rode in your life. We'll save her yet."

And Chris was saved, the dear, brave, little woman that she was. But there were long weeks of pain and weakness first, and she came out of them with a new look in her eyes. And to this date, remembering that bitter night, Chris never forgets to pray for those who are "out in the cold."

—*Youth's Companion.*

leave her that she would call mother in a family as in her: every circumstance and presence and presence for every indulgence and indulgence she is shows a white children she is duty; if she be self-appointed in picking opinion" and real welfare." ideal must be firmly on her actions of right to adverse criticism and child-moanously how or the children dutiful, whether all within her faculty does not ungovernable nearly or quite tepidly it is truly—it is hard er's place occur to essays to fill tact as well as husband's sons-er's wife deserve you! Do not your enemy and You may be ch good. Why application of English common held innocent rds to express the ing received the earnest care and from the years hood or woman-ting, disrespect- by the remark, nother." s all love, honor step-mother de-ut rather, more, goodness, benevo- s what the other I not withhold.—

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that he wished his company at meals, get enough to eat it him." This led y *Temple* to give a table. and girls do not ease as they might e table is because be perfectly polite sent but the ordin- first place we owe look very neat and Boys ought to be it is brushed, their air nails free from collars and ties in ach the table. A nd give them the ittle gentlemen. I e cautioned thus, things which y, but about which y. You know you knife. When you second helping, or moved, leave your ile upon it. yourself too gener- should be placed on never on the table- with a spoon in the e last drop. Bread the plate, and cut a in that way. Eating Nothing is worse ith the mouth while food with noticeable f yourself and fancy of attraction to your