

heavy with unconquerable longing to go, too, and he made up his mind to do so. Consequently, when his mother, sorry to leave him alone, bent over him and lightly touched his forehead with loving lips, he closed his eyes tight and did not stir, so she left him with the impression that he was sound asleep and would not awaken until their return ; but as soon as her back was turned, the little lad was very wide awake again.

When he heard the street door close behind them, he sprang out of bed and started a hunt for his clothes which, owing to the darkness, was not very successful. He got his pants and blouse, but his warmly-knitted shirt seemed to have mysteriously disappeared, so he gave it up and put on the rest of his clothes as well as he could. His blouse happened to be turned wrong side out, but he didn't notice it in the darkness and put it on as it was. And, although his little fingers certainly tried hard, yet no button was exactly in its right place. To make matters worse, he could only find one of his stockings, leaning against the wall he drew it on so clumsily that the projecting heel prevented his sabot from going on properly, while the stockingless foot was even in a sadder plight. Imagine what he looked like as, groping his way, limping and strumbling, he reached the door, which opened easily, and crossed the kitchen, through whose curtainless windows the cold light of the bleak, stormy night streamed in. Wisdom beyond his years led him to avoid the front-door and go round to that leading from the kitchen to the stable. As soon as he opened it a cow jumped up, but he was not afraid and continued on his way until a pet goat licked his hands and tried to detain him. Pete hesitated for a moment, he almost thought the goat was saying in her own way : Stay with us, little laddie ; stay under shelter where it's warm and comfortable.

*
* * *

Like a white carpet the snow covered the path, the trees, the bushes, the fences, and still kept falling as if it never meant to stop. Pete plodded ankle-deep in its soft flakes, which soon filled his wooden shoes, making them uncomfortably heavy ; but he did not mind his trouble for at the end, in a huge golden light, he saw the child