

A ROMANCE OF BILLY-GOAT HILL

help me wrap them around him," said Miss Lady. "There! You carry him and I'll hold the umbrella. Keep your mouth shut, Chick; don't you dare open it until I tell you."

The bewildered Chick, encased like a mummy, was rushed out to the wagon and deposited between two ice-cream freezers, while Miss Lady knelt beside him, trying to shield him from the wind. Just as Phineas was driving away there was a call from the cottage.

For the first and only time in her life Maria Flathers had collided with an idea. In vain she reversed her mental engines and tried to back off, but the collision was head on, and she and the idea were firmly welded together.

"Here's the whip han'le!" she called wildly, as the wind caught her skirts and twisted them about her. "I been usin' it fer a thimble. An' here's the whip itself — Take 'em along! Take 'em fer a witness!"

Once again the red-topped wagon got started, this time in earnest. Through the mud and slush of Bean Alley, past the Dump Heap, across the Common, the sturdy little mare dashed furiously.

"Don't breathe through your mouth, Chick!" implored Miss Lady. "And don't be afraid. All you have to do is to tell what you saw. Don't keep back anything, tell it just as you told it to me."