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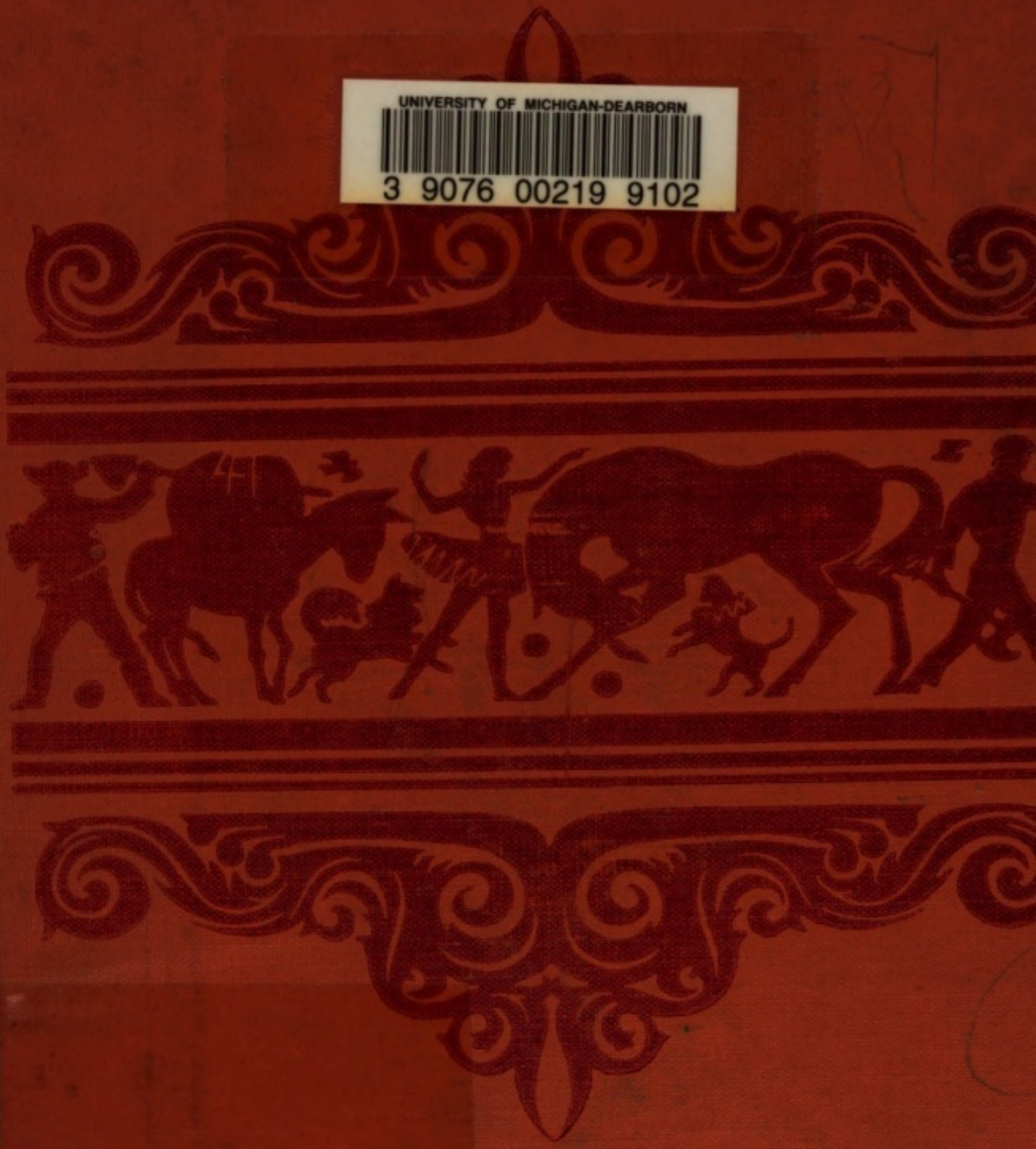

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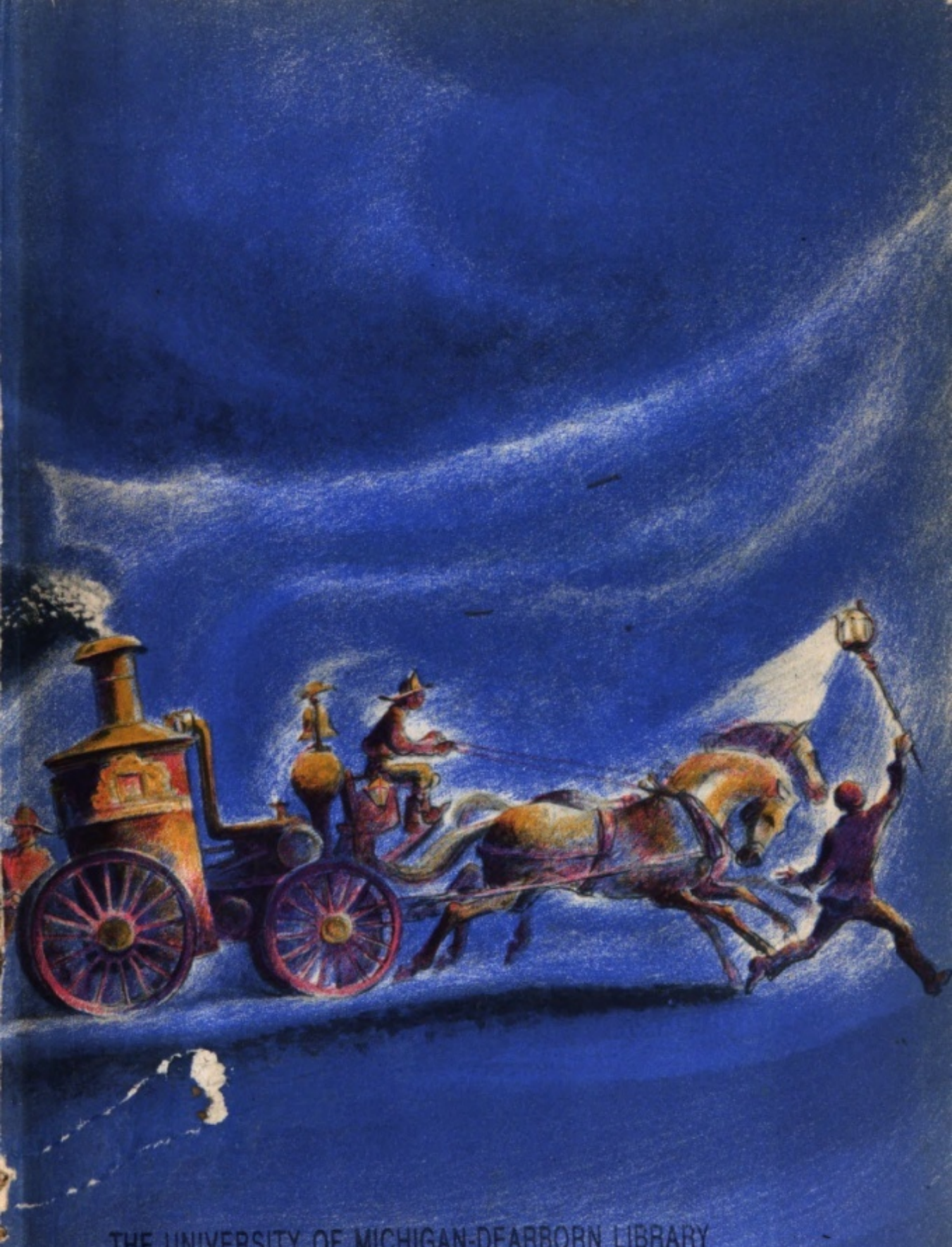

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The Golden Flash

This is the story of the astonishing adventures of a gold and scarlet fire engine, in a cross-country cavalcade of American life during the middle of the nineteenth century, when one of the first steam fire engines, named The Golden Flash, was bought by an insurance company and presented to the City of New York.

The initial trip of The Golden Flash began in a heavy rainstorm, which some persons claimed to be an omen of ill luck, but before long a ray of sunshine broke through the clouds, landing on the elaborate golden painting of King Midas which adorned the engine, and leading other persons to declare the future of the new-fangled contraption would be bright. However it was, on the night of September twentieth The Golden Flash mysteriously and completely disappeared. Reports eame in that the ghostly sound of its bell could be heard at times in various parts of the city, but there the records cease.

Now, here is the complete story of what happened to that magnificent engine, and to the strange personalities with whom it came in contact—men, women, children, pioneers, circus performers, gold miners. Lynd Ward has generously illustrated the tale with black-and-white and full-color illustrations in the true spirit of the times.

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The Golden Flash

BY MAY McNEER

Illustrated by

LYND WARD

NEW YORK

The Junior Literary Guild

AND

The Viking Press

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To

Nanda and Robin

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Note

The records of the Volunteer Fire Company of Engine House Number 13 show that, in September, 1858, one of the first steam fire engines was bought for New York by an insurance company and presented to the city. It was named the Golden Flash. But the records cover a period of only a little more than two weeks, and then end with the strange statement that, on the night of September twentieth, the Golden Flash disappeared. It records that a diligent search was made, but no trace of it was found, and that a meeting was subsequently held, at which the company voted to set about plans for getting a new engine.

And then, at the bottom of the page, as if the writer had hesitantly, and at a later date, added it: "A mysterious report of a ghost engine is growing in the city, that in the night the sound of its bell may be heard, first in one quarter of the town, and then in another."

The records tell this, and nothing more. The complete history of the Golden Flash, told here for the first time, was not that of the ordinary fire engine, living out its days in one locality. The Golden Flash shared the fortunes and adventures of different people, in different places, as its wheels rolled from the gaslit streets of New York to the mountains of the West.

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Onto the Long Highway

THE CARRIAGE shop was a great barnlike structure, where brown shadows clung to the cobwebbed rafters and hung, dark and somber, in the far corners. Carriage bodies rested on sawhorses, and wheels stood leaning against the walls. In the center of the building, in the middle of a cleared space, all of the workmen in the shop stood, rubbing their greasy hands on their leather aprons, with eyes fixed on a glittering wonder. Every small beam of light in the dim shop seemed to meet and gleam and glow here. It was a steam fire engine, newly built in a factory in Ohio, sent here to be painted. It glowed in its fresh coat of crimson paint, like the flames of a great city on fire. But the crimson was only a background for bands and scrolls and elaborately chased metalwork decorations, glittering like the grand palace of the French king. The workmen from the metal shop, who had finished the decorating of the wonder, stood there too, beaming with pride.

The boy helper in the carriage shop moved a little closer, and breathed, "Pure gold, ain't it?"

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The stout carriage maker shoved the boy back and went to the door, where he peered anxiously up and down the street, and then up at the sky.

"I've got a misery in my knee," he complained to a painter, "and that means bad weather."

The painter wiped his stained hands on a rag and craned his head around the open door. "Misery or no misery, it won't rain today. Bright as a new penny it is."

"But where are they? Why don't they come? It's long past the hour," grumbled the carriage maker.

"Yes, sir," spoke a metalworker to a carpenter, "I've helped decorate many an engine but never such a one as this."

There was a sound at the door. Into the carriage shop came the artist, holding up with the greatest care an oblong object covered with a white cloth. Behind him the foreman of the fire engine house and a fireman led two horses to the door, where they stood quietly while the men entered. As the carriage maker trotted forward to help, the artist placed the object gently down on the floor, and drew away the cloth.

The boy helper thrust out a hand.

"Ah!" he gasped. "What is it?"

"Now don't touch it," fussed the artist; "the paint isn't quite as dry as I would like it to be. Dampness in the air, you know." He looked all around at the interested faces and smiled as he explained, "This is a picture of 'The Golden Touch.' It is the final golden touch, if you will excuse the joke, for that magnificent fire engine there. See, here I have painted King Midas. You see him standing majestically with his long crimson robes and his golden

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crown. He is in his garden, where he has just touched the lovely red and white roses, turning them all to gold. He cared for gold, you know, more than for anything in the world except his daughter. There, before him, is his little princess, with tears on her cheeks, holding out the golden flower. The King has his hand on her shoulder—and his touch has turned her to gold."

He lifted the picture and, with the assistance of the smiling, broad-shouldered foreman of the enginehouse, fitted it carefully into a frame of golden roses, which was on the back of the engine boiler. Above the picture, in gleaming letters, was the name of the new fire engine, "*The Golden Flash—1858.*"

"All right, me boys," called the tall red-shirted foreman, who wore a golden trumpet hanging around his neck, "let's shove her outside, and hitch up the horses. We'll take her to her home."

"Who is he?" asked the boy helper.

"The foreman? Why, he's chief of that engine company. They did have a hand-pumped engine, but the insurance company has given this new-fangled steam engine to the city. This fire company was the only one that wanted a steamer. And the fire company paid for all that fancy decoration on it, though most of the money probably came from the foreman. His family's got a heap of money." The workman spit into a corner and then took a hand at pushing the engine to the door.

The two firemen jumped to the seat and waved their high leather hats gaily at the workmen and the artist and the boy helper, who smiled and waved back. The new fire engine rolled down the cobbled New York street. As

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the steamer drew up at the entrance to the firehouse a little knot of men and boys assembled around it.

"Huh!" grunted a man. "Mighty fancy contraption. But hand-pumped engines is good enough for us folks in this town. That thing will blow sky-high first time it's steamed up." He glanced at the sky.

"But it's solid gold," gasped a street boy.

The engine crew came closer to their engine, feeling the unfriendliness of the people. The foreman leaped to his feet on the seat and spoke:

"Today is a solemn occasion, boys. This is the Golden Flash, the finest engine this city has ever had. I know some other steamers have been tried, and have blown up. But the Golden Flash won't. She'll get to a fire fast too, for she's made of steel, and not iron as the first ones were. The Golden Flash has got adventures ahead of her—aplenty of 'em. I know that some folks don't like new ideas, and try to fight 'em. But new ideas win out in the end. Steam fire engines are coming. This one will save more lives and property than any hand engine can. Give her a cheer boys, give—"

His words were drowned in a mighty clap of thunder, as a streak of lightning flashed across the suddenly darkened sky. A downpour of rain drenched the little crowd, and the firemen, and the steam engine. The people ducked into doorways. "That's bad luck," squealed the street boy, "bad luck. A bad sign!"

Then, just as abruptly as the rain had come, the sun thrust its fiery face around the clouds. A ray of light, like a long golden finger, reached out and touched the crown on the head of King Midas.

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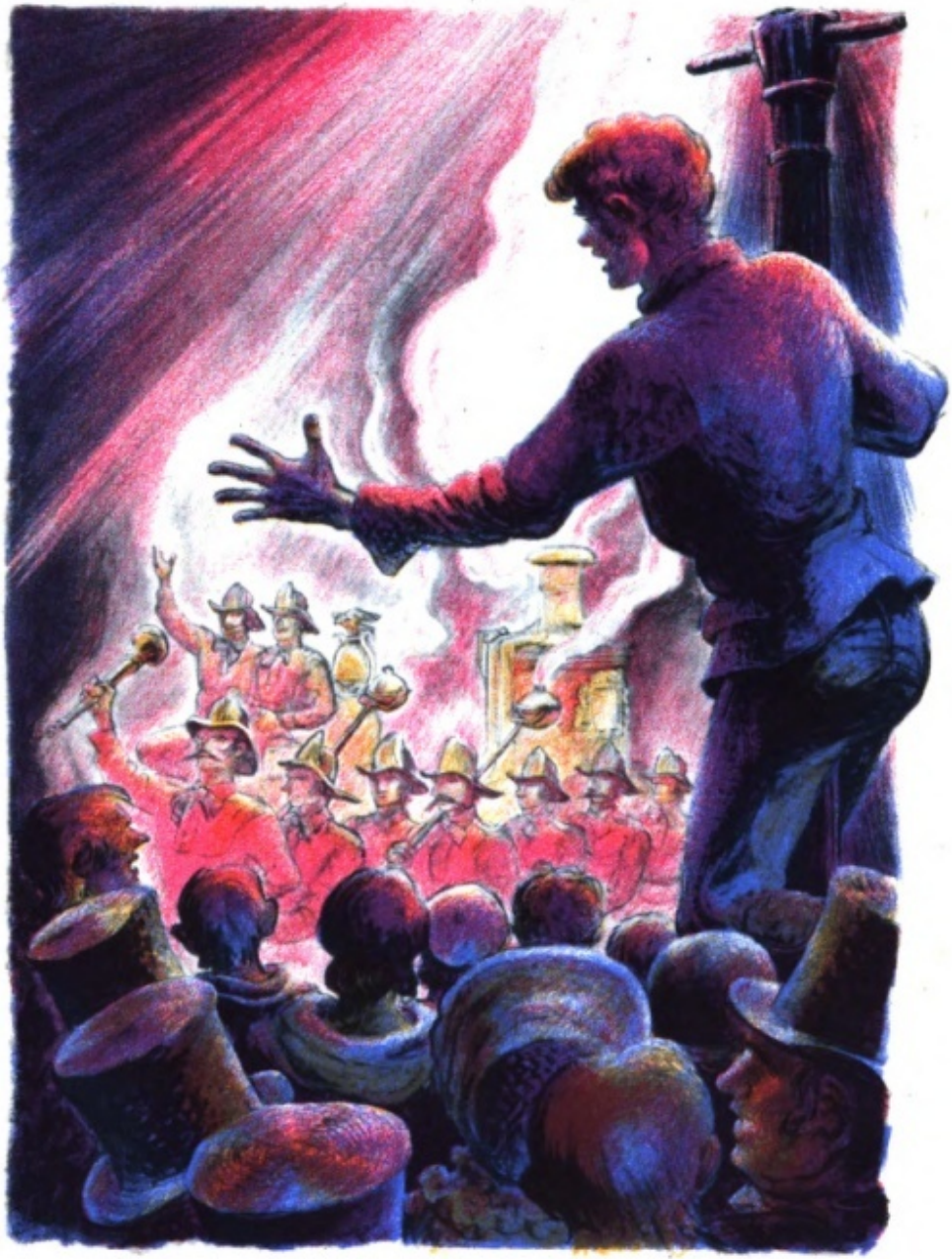
Adventure 1



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Step Lively, Smoke-Eaters!

IN THE crisp dusk of a late September evening, in 1858, it seemed as if all the people on Manhattan Island were rushing to the principal street, the Bowery. An old lamplighter had just passed along, turning pools of white gaslight onto the cobbles of the New York thoroughfare. Women were laughing under scooped bonnets, holding up their ruffled skirts as they crossed the dirty streets on the arms of shouting, whistling men in plug hats. Joyous expectancy crackled through the air, like fireworks on the Fourth of July.

Josh McTavish thrust his freckled chin up and jerked his short coat sleeves down, trying in vain to cover his equally freckled, gangling wrists. He yanked his red hair forward of his ears, striving to look like a "smoke-eater," with a "soap lock" on each cheek. He was cultivating a swagger, and carelessly spitting to right and left, hoping that the folks he jostled would not notice that it wasn't tobacco juice he spit. Josh was fifteen, but big and strong enough to look eighteen, if you failed to see the faint golden down on his upper lip, and the excitement snapping

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in his blue eyes as he grasped a lamppost and expertly shinned to the top.

"Hot corn! Come get yer hot corn," shrilled a little girl, tugging at her heavy cedar bucket with corn sloshing about in the hot water. "Sweep-ho!" The voice of a small Negro boy at the crossing rose about the rattling wheels and hoofs of carriages, carts, and horses, as he pushed his broom to clear the crossing in return for a few pennies. And all up and down the street was the sure sign of excitement on the Bowery, the crack, crack of peanuts.

This was Torchlight Procession Night. As the people packed and jammed themselves along the sidewalks, and dashed in and out between the horses' hoofs in the street, Josh could hear above the crowd noises the rat-tat-tat of drums. He was glad that he had copped this lamppost when he did, for there was a pushing, yelling mob of tough boys down there shoving each other around. Those were the butcher boys, and no friends of his either.

As a matter of fact, Josh really had no friends, for his old-fashioned Scotch father was strict. Josh must work in the draper's shop on weekdays, and attend the Presbyterian Church on Sundays. His father was determined to keep him from becoming one of the tough gang boys. Josh twisted his head around, looking down the block toward the shop, hoping that his father had not seen him. No need to worry, though, he thought; if he had seen me I would be in the shop now. For Hamish McTavish didn't like processions either.

The crowd surged to the walks. Carriages and carts drew into side streets. Here came the band, the men tooting on horns until their cheeks were blown up like ripe

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tomatoes. Here came the drums, the drummers proudly stepping out in their gold-braided uniforms. Behind the German band marched the white-aproned butchers, with cleavers over their shoulders, and hair greased tightly to their scalps. The butcher boys cheered and leaped up and down at the sight. Josh watched them enviously. He would give a lot to be one of them and be able to drive a meat cart wildly down the street, racing other carts. But they considered the McTavish family "stuck-up," and made fun of Josh whenever they saw him.

Next came a company of volunteer firemen, in high leather hats, tight trousers, and red shirts, carrying burning torches. The torchlight cast a golden glow on the boisterous crowd and the brilliant colors of the firemen's uniforms. Josh felt his spirits soar with the very sight of them. Firemen were taken from all walks of life—rich merchants, shopkeepers, and workmen. They all joined the fire brigades because this was the most exciting job in the city. It was an honor to be asked to join, and a volunteer fireman would stop his work, sleep, or meals instantly at the clang-clang of the alarm bell.

Here came the engines! There was the Old Maid, a famous engine pumped by the willing hands of the crew, who were now pulling her briskly, as they heaved and puffed between the shafts. Next rolled the Lady Washington, with a full crew of smoke-eaters yanking on the drag ropes. And behind it clattered the Pride of the Town. Josh hung over to stare at the other engines of different types, the gooseneck, the Philadelphia, the haywagon, all painted brilliantly with pictures on the sides or back. Smaller hose carts rattled by, gay with bright paint too. Brass glittered,

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leather shone. The boys in the street were already running along beside their favorite hand engine, cheering it wildly.

A louder sound came nearer, and as Josh got a good view of what was making it he sucked in his breath in utter amazement, and nearly fell off the post. Two horses walked down the middle of the Bowery, drawing a large crimson and gold engine. On a seat at the front of the engine were two firemen, who drove the horses and waved at the crowd. The rest of the engine crew marched before it. From a stack puffed clouds of white smoke, as one of the men on the seat reached for a bell rope and pulled it. Clang-clang-clang! The loud brassy sound echoed above the astonished oh's and ah's of ladies.

"Strike me dead! Solid gold, she is, pure solid gold!" muttered a ratty little man under the lamppost, flexing his dirty fingers back and forth as he stared.

At that moment Josh presented his loyalty to this marvelous engine. He would regard it as his own, and fight to protect its rights if necessary. He slid down the post, shoved through the crowd, and dashed into the street. It was then he noticed that, though there were throngs of boy runners cheering on the hand engines, he was the only boy running with this steam engine. As he came alongside it he saw that the name above the golden picture on its boiler was "The Golden Flash."

"Who is the chief?" called a woman, pointing to a tall man with a golden trumpet hanging around his neck, who marched in front of the crew.

"That's Tim O'Leary," shouted a man, "son of rich Mike O'Leary. He came here from Ireland without a copper in

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his jeans. Now he owns the biggest fleet of China clippers on the seas."

As Josh ran beside the steamer his chest swelled with pride in the engine. He knew that there had been much talk and resentment among the hand engine crews toward this steam engine, for it was thought that steamers would put the old engines out of business. Josh, catching sight of one of the slaughterhouse boys, who was running by, yelled:

"Hurray for the Golden Flash!"

The boy stopped short in his tracks and wheeled around on the cobbles. He stared a long moment at Josh with his black shoe-button eyes. Then he flung back his long black hair, doubled up hamlike fists, and began dancing toward

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Josh, sideways. Out of a mouth rimmed with tobacco juice he snorted, "So ye like that puffing whale, do ye? Come here to put our injines out of business. So ye don't like the Pride of the Town, don't ye? I'll learn ye to yell for that injine. I'll make your face look like a dime's worth of cat meat."

Josh stood his ground, squared off, with fists out. He was glad of his size and muscle, for he knew that eye gouging and stamping with hobnailed boots would follow if that boy got him down. The butcher boy landed a fist in his face, but Josh planted a return blow in his stomach, doubling him up for a second. The engine stopped, and the crowd drew in closer, yelling and hooting as the boys slugged it out. But most of the yells were for the gang boy, and most of the hoots for Josh, for the steam engine was unpopular, and Josh was its only champion. His hair stood on end in a blaze of orange rage, and he did not even know that his left eye was turning black and his lip streaming blood.

Suddenly both boys were caught by the shoulder and yanked violently apart. John stared through swelling eyes at big Tim O'Leary, who shook him once, then shoved him toward the sidewalk, saying, "Get ye home, lad. Ye've stopped the procession." Then Josh saw that the other boy was being hustled by another fireman forward toward the Pride of the Town engine ahead of them. Tim O'Leary chuckled. "If ye like the injine, me lad, ye can come to the firehouse Sunday morning and watch her shined up."

Josh grinned at him crookedly and watched him go back to the procession. The band started again, the brass bell on the Golden Flash clanged, and the engine rolled along.

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Josh swung himself around, dazed with joy at the prospect of being allowed to go to the enginehouse and watch her shined up.

"Fighting again, Josh?"

The boy jumped guiltily, and fixed his eyes on a stern old man wearing a high hat, with a plaid shawl across his shoulders.

"Ye-yes, Pa," muttered Josh, "I reckon so."

"Come to the shop. I want to talk to you."

As the boy followed the unbending back of his father through the crowd, he began to feel, quite suddenly, as if every bone in his body had been broken. He ached from head to foot, and realized then that both his left eye and his lip were swelling to a wonderful size and color. But he said nothing about it as he clumped up the steps and into the old wooden building, standing shabbily between two new three-story shops. Over the door hung a sign, "Hamish McTavish, Draper, Fine Stuffs in All Fabrics."

The narrow shop was almost as dark as the inside of a cave, in spite of the oil lamp standing in its circle of yellow light on a counter. Hamish McTavish would not have gaslight in his shop. He snorted, "Bosh!" to all such newfangled notions. Across from the long counter was a pot-bellied stove, red and jolly, sending shimmering heat waves out to the rows of shelves covered with bolts of fabrics along the walls. The shop was not open to customers at night, but it was always in use, for old Pennypacker, the ancient clerk, lived there in a tiny back room adjoining. He sat now in a split-bottom chair, just as close as he could push himself toward the warmth of the stove, as he snored gently and rhythmically. Josh grinned

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affectionately at the sight of the old man in nankeen breeches and half hose, of a style twenty years or so past.

Hamish McTavish unwound his plaid shawl from his shoulders, hung it on a hook, with his hat, which he first dusted carefully with a cloth he kept under the counter, and looked at Josh. Hamish McTavish drew his bushy red brows down fiercely over his eyes as he took in the battered appearance of his only son.

"Forty-five years ago did I come to this land from Glasgow country. Fifteen I was, as you are, and not so big. But I went to work, apprentice lad to a draper, and here I am now, free and not beholden in debt to any man." The old man reached behind his counter and drew a bolt of good serge woolen from a shelf, laying it as gently on the oaken counter as if it were one of the many babies his wife tended at home. He put out a square hand, and rubbed his finger lovingly over the fabric, back and forth, as he often did when his mind was troubled.

Josh's weary shoulders sank a few inches lower, as he leaned against the wall. His eyes wandered around the dim shop, and he thought of the carpet store next door, with its gay rugs hung from the windows, to brush the heads of passers-by in the street. He muttered sulkily, "But, Pa, the shop. It's old-fashioned."

"Bosh!" snorted Hamish. "The rich ladies and gentlemen care nought for that. They know the McTavish Shop sells the finest ell of goods this side the Atlantic. They come to buy from me for their farthingales and flounces, and their pantaloons and surtouts. Yea, all the way down from Washington Square." His voice growled up out of his throat angrily.

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Old Pennypacker, with his fringe of white hair standing straight out around his bald pink skull, woke to reach down and poke sticks of wood into the hot stove.

Josh took a deep breath. He reached for the lobe of his ear and twisted it until it was as fiery as his hair. With a sudden burst of courage he sputtered:

"Pa, I don't want to be a draper. I want to apprentice to a butcher on Christie Street."

Hamish thrust out his jaw and glared at his son, as if he scarcely believed that he had heard aright. "You want to apprentice to a butcher? You want to run with a gang of good-for-nothing Irish boys? You are my only son, and you have six sisters. You are apprenticed to me." His face seemed to swell and redden until it looked like the little red-hot stove roaring away in the corner. "And see that ye

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do more work here from now on." He leaned across the counter and shook a trembling finger violently toward Josh. "You stop chasing butcher carts. You stop running after processions. You stop hanging around firehouses. You stay away from those fighting loafers, the Irish. You are a hard-working Scotsman. Go home now, and to bed. You—" His words broke off abruptly, and he sniffed. Flinging himself around the counter he roared:

"Pennypacker! I smell cloth burning. Get away from that stove."

Both father and son dashed for the old clerk, who was dozing again, still snoring gently, with his coattails smoking carelessly against the stove. They leaped on him and beat out the smoldering coat.

"Hey, hey," squealed the old fellow, his few teeth rattling as they slapped his back. "Ye say the British are burning Washington? Hey! Let me at it. I was there in 1812. I saved forty women and twenty children and a dog from the roaring flames—roaring like all sixty."

Josh pushed the clerk back in his chair and moved it a safe distance from the stove. His father growled, "Penny, I tell ye again not to stoke that stove so hot. 'Tis not even winter yet. I don't know why I keep ye here, except for company when my lad's running after the engines."

Josh clumped to the door and out into the streets. The crowd had diminished now, though he could still hear the crackling of peanuts as Bowery boys and their girls went gaily along toward the Bowery Theater. Josh scarcely noticed the pungent smells from the doors of oyster houses, as he dodged the hogs wallowing in street mud and leaped away from flying hoofs of horses.

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The McTavish family lived in a precise little house three blocks uptown from the shop, just around the corner on a side street. By day the house overflowed into its tiny front garden with babies in flounced caps, with small girls in pinafores, and with little maids in ruffled pantalets, and with half-grown Scotch lasses in the new-fashioned hooped skirts. There was a constant sound of feminine voices about the place, like the chirping of birds in an aviary. And in, and among, and around them all fluttered plump, soft-voiced Margaret McTavish, wiping noses, straightening ribbons, criticizing lace patterns, directing the cook and the nurse. Pervading the house, and spilling out into the street, was the warm aroma of mutton soup and hot baked scones.

Even at night, with the smaller girls tucked into their trundle beds in a neat row of starched nightcaps, there was a subdued murmur of voices. It came from Roxanne and Julia in their room, candle still lit. Josh closed the gate with a little click, and went on tiptoe to the front door. Inside he saw with relief that the lower floor was dark, and so, without taking a candle from the closet, he stepped carefully up the stairs. He tried to avoid the fifth step, then—creak, he put his foot down upon it. Josh stopped to listen, heard nothing, and went thankfully on to his room. He didn't want his mother or sisters to catch him after a fight, looking like one of the Bowery boys.

Next morning Josh opened his eyes and reached out from his eiderdown to rub a chill nose tenderly. He craned his neck around to look at the window. Pretty cold for September. He threw off his covers and pulled himself painfully into his clothes. Josh reached out a finger and

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dipped it into the pitcher, then drew it back, thinking: Oh, well, I can do without a wash on a morning like this. But it's Sunday, and I hope Ma won't notice. He clattered down the stairs to the dining room, already rustling with flounces. Josh slid quietly into the kitchen, where he stood near the big stove, cupping his hands around a mug of hot tea. He watched the German immigrant girl as she stepped around in lively fashion. She was loading trays of hot tea and milk, buns and porridge, for the dining room. The nurse, Alice, a Scotch woman who had come over from Glasgow, was moving back and forth with food, feeding the baby gruel, mopping up spilled milk, helping serve the family. Josh grabbed a double handful of buns and escaped into the chilly hall, where he breathed a sigh of relief. Nobody had questioned him yet, and Pa was probably still reading his Sunday psalms in his room.

Josh stood first on one foot and then on the other inside the front door. He reached up and began to twist his ear. He was expected to go to church with the family, but a picture of that gorgeous golden engine rose to blind him. Big Tim O'Leary had asked him to come and see her shined up this morning. It was like being invited by President Buchanan to visit the White House. You couldn't turn down an invitation like that. It might never come again.

His boots clanked on the cobblestones as he crossed the street and walked north, chewing noisily on his buns. A small girl with hungry eyes stood shivering on a corner, holding her broom with red fingers. She was out early for sweeping the crossings, thought the boy, but probably the filthy tenement she lived in at Five Corners downtown

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was as cold as the street anyway. He handed her a bun as he passed, but not even the way she gnawed at it could lower his high spirits this morning. The street was almost deserted, for the Bowery spent Saturday night in public and Sunday morning in bed. Josh turned into Houston Street, and then walked on to upper Broadway. It was somewhat quieter here than on the Bowery, for this was a newer street, and houses and shops were still going up.

Josh hesitated at the firehouse door, twisting his ear again. Should be go in? Maybe Tim O'Leary wasn't there yet, and he might be thrown out. There was something very quiet about the firehouse. Then he realized what it was. This was the firehouse where the old Shamrock No. 10, one of the first of the hand engines, had been housed for so many years. Last August it had been turned shaft in because its crew and runners had got into a fight with another crew at the Crystal Palace fire. Now it was discarded and replaced by this new steamer, a gift of an insurance company. The place was quiet because there were no "crackers-and-cheese boys" hanging around the door.

That's all the better for me, thought Josh, and knocked loudly. The door was jerked open so suddenly that he almost fell in head first.

"Well, what do you want?" A tall fireman, rag in hand, scowled at the boy.

"Mr. O'Leary, he asked me to come—to come, and see her shined up."

"Oh, he did, did he? Hey, Tim!"

"Sure, and I did, Jake." Big Tim smiled, beckoning to Josh. "Come in, me lad. Come in."

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Jake stared at the foreman in astonishment. "I thought you decided that the runners were to be kept out of here, after the shenanigans we had in August?"

"Sure, sure, Jake. But this lad—he's the only one who cheered for the Flash in the procession last night. The roughs are like the hand engine crews. They'll not like our steamer no matter how lovely she shoots the water."

Josh stared, mouth open, at the glittering gold of the engine. "Why not?" he got up courage enough to ask.

"Because she's faster at her work than the hand engines. She uses only four men instead of sixty to man the pump at a fire. She is pulled by horses, and not by the crew and runners on the drag ropes, and she can't run on the sidewalk. Sidewalk running may hurt a few people, but the hand engine boys like it because the streets are so full of mud holes."

"Cricky!" breathed Josh, rubbing an awed finger over the gold scrollwork on the engine, "solid gold! She must be worth a million dollars."

"Sure," grinned Jake, winking at the other men sitting around. "Every time we take her out we're afraid somebody'll chip off a flake and buy the Town Hall. But she ain't been to a fire yet. She'll show 'em when she does. You want to clean off the wheels?"

Josh accepted a rag gratefully and went to work. He sniffed hungrily at the smells of leather and brass polish, and hot red flannel when a volunteer fireman moved his shirt too near the stove in the corner. He learned all about the Golden Flash, that she burned wood, that it took only eight and a half minutes to start her pumping a stream of water high into the air.

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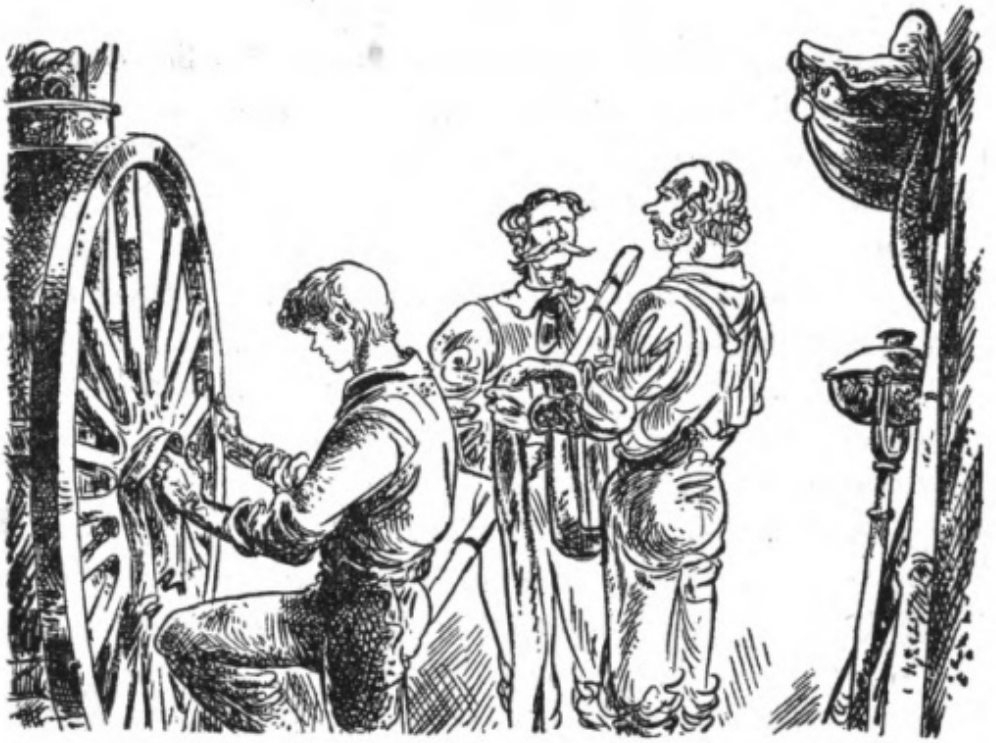

"Where are the horses kept?" asked Josh.

Big Tim gave his golden trumpet a final polish. "They are not our own, me boy. We hire them from a stable across the street."

Josh cleaned the mud from the wheels and then swept up the floor. He would do anything to be allowed to stay in here and listen to the talk of the eight firemen, who told stories about the old engine fights. They laughed about Sam over there, who had got to a fire first and sat on the hydrant until his hose company could get there, preventing two other hose crews from taking it.

Tim looked up. "A fine brave lad ye are, Sam, me boy. Ye won the fight with the other smoke-eaters, but the house burned down during the muss, didn't it?" He nodded to Josh. "If ye like the enjines, lad, fighting is out.

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Fighting turns enjines' shafts in, and divil a fire does it put out. If ye join to have a good time, ye can enjoy a muss, and ye can enjoy those fancy clubrooms some of the enjine crews are finishing, but ye can't save life and property that way."

Josh nodded, admiring the foreman's black boots and gay suspenders, looking with awe at his leather hat with the shovel brim hanging on a peg. That wreath of oak leaves around the crown meant that the owner had saved a human life.

All morning Josh worked with the firemen and listened to their tales of races with the other engines, of their fights, and of the wonderful exploits of old Shamrock No. 10. Around noon the men produced packets of bread and meat and cheese, and shared them sociably with their new follower. This was a world that Josh had never before entered. His father had kept him so sharply at work that Josh, who felt uncomfortably that he was different from the free and easy Bowery boys, was lonely without knowing it. Now he drank in the words of these exciting firemen and lost all track of time.

Then at last Tim looked up and said, "Time to shut up the firehouse, me lads. 'Tis going on for six o'clock." He slapped Josh on the back. "Come back whenever ye like. We like a boy who takes to our Golden Flash."

Josh was almost home when he suddenly remembered that this was Sunday. He had not gone to church, as was always expected of him, and he had missed the family dinner at three. He was hungry but decided not to try to talk the cook out of some food. It would be better to get in quietly, and upstairs so that his father would not hear him.

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As he went in he heard voices. His father was talking as the family had tea in the parlor. Josh started quietly up the stairs. Then—squeak! He trod on the fifth stair. A door opened downstairs, and his father stood there, looking sternly at him.

"Go to my room, Josh," was all that he said. But the boy knew what that meant. It meant the silver-headed cane. Since he could remember that cane had brought a shiver down his spine. Now he waited in his father's bedroom, a tall, gangling redheaded boy, pulling on his ear anxiously, staring at the washstand with the china basin painted in blue Chinese figures. His father came in, cane in hand.

Josh, at sight of the cane, felt about five years old and afraid. He never could look at that cane, even when it reposed proudly on the rack in the dining room, without a quiver of fear. But he felt ashamed too, when he heard his father's gruff voice:

"Josh, ye have been running after the engines again?"

"Yes, Pa."

"You didn't go to church."

"No, Pa."

"Bend over."

Josh bent his tall back, and had to bend his knees too, for he was taller than his father. Whack! Whack! Whack! He stood upright again, and drew a breath of relief. The cane hadn't hurt him as much as his swollen eyes and cut lip did, but he knew that he would rather have both eyes blackened and both lips cut than take a hiding from his father. But the worst part of it all was to see his father, with head bowed, go out of his room with a look about him as if he had taken the whipping instead of giving it

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to his overgrown son. Josh stumbled into his own room, and into bed, vowing that he would forget the fire engines, and the firemen, and even that golden steamer puffing behind its horses. He resolved not to go to the firehouse again to see her shined up. As for Hank, the butcher boy, maybe he wouldn't fight him if he caught him without his gang —maybe.

Monday morning Josh rose very early and went to the shop just as daylight was lightening the sky beyond the East River. He found old Pennypacker already stirring about, building a fire in the stove.

"Morning, Penny," grinned Josh, as the old fellow opened the door for him. "Want me to make the fire for you?" As Josh got a blaze going and closed the door, Penny was slicing bread and cheese on the table in his little back room, calling in a pleased squeak, "Come to have breakfast with me, have ye, Josh? That's fine, boy, fine."

As they sat by the stove and ate, Josh saw that Pennypacker was wide awake enough to be clearer-headed than he was likely to be later in the day. The boy took out his knife, wiped it on his knee, and cut slices from the Edam cheese.

"Penny," he asked slowly, "do you think it's right of Pa not to let me go to the firehouse? I'm near about as big as any other man."

Penny chuckled as he champed on a hunk of bread with his few teeth. "Laddie, ye are as big as a man, but ye don't act too much like one. Leastwise not like your Pa."

"But I don't think he's got a right to keep me away from the steamer."

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"He's got a right, boy. He's your pa. And ye're his apprentice too." The old fellow leaned over and placed his thin hands on his woolen stockings, speaking earnestly, "If ye work hard and please him, trying to learn the business, maybe he will change his mind. But neglecting your work won't put out any fires."

Josh pulled his ear thoughtfully, turning these things over carefully in his mind. He felt that nothing in the world could make it up to him if he couldn't go to the enginehouse again. But his father's sad face kept coming between him and the memory of the Golden Flash. He bit his lips and swallowed hard.

"I reckon you're right, Penny. I'll stop going there, and work harder."

And that resolution he held to, even when he met big Tim on the street that day, and Tim told Josh to come back whenever he wanted to. Josh made an effort to get to the shop on time, to do the errands and chop the wood and help Penny clean the place. Though Hamish said nothing about it, he saw that Josh was unhappy and restless, and that he was working harder than ever before.

"Josh," said his father, two days later, as he rubbed a finger over the edge of a bolt of blue satin, "I never thought ye steady enough to drive the cart down for a shipment of goods, but I'm asking ye to go in my place today. This is an important lot. An order from the mayor for material for three new suits, from England, and other stuffs for the ladies. It should be ready now. See Mr. Hill, at the Customs. He will attend to it properly for me and deliver the goods to you."

Josh grabbed his cap and went out of the door at a

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gallop, his boots rattling on the wooden steps. Hamish smiled and returned the satin to the shelf. Josh ran to the stable two blocks away and hitched up old Duncan. He drove the light cart through narrow streets below Chatham Square and across to the wharves and the river, whistling as he flipped the reins against Duncan's sides, trying in vain to make him trot. This wasn't like driving a butcher's cart, lickety-split, sending people and pigs squealing to the lampposts, but it was good anyway. His father must be feeling better toward him, to let him drive Duncan, for Josh knew that Hamish thought a lot of the horse and had never let anyone else drive him.

It was a crisp autumn day, one of those blue-bright days that Josh always tried to remember when gray March drizzles smote the windowpanes and turned the streets to quagmires. His cart rattled over the cobbles merrily, and he felt a friend to all the town.

Mr. Hill was pleasant too, and said agreeably, "This is fine stuff your father sells. Take care of it. Your father is an honest man, and he values quality."

Josh grinned at him and ducked his head twice in agreement, as he heaved the bolts of silks and woolens to the clean covered bed of the cart, and laid over them a big cloth to keep away the street dust. Going back he drove slowly, hating to end the trip and return to help sell materials and check receipts.

As Duncan clopped along, slower and slower, Josh noticed that people were all going in the same direction, laughing and chattering and pointing. The street was becoming crowded with wagons, carts, and carriages, until Josh found himself wedged in between a vegetable wagon

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and a dogcart driven by a swell in a fawn-colored coat. As he came to the place where he knew he should turn to go to the shop, he found it impossible to do so, for by now everything was moving toward a square where there seemed to be some kind of celebration. Josh clucked to Duncan and thought: Well, Pa won't worry. I'll get out of this jam a few blocks farther on, and get home before long. I'd like to know what all the muss is about.

Then he turned into the square, and stopped, amazed at his good fortune. Here he was at a water throwing contest. When he stood on the seat of the cart he could get a fine view over the heads of the other drivers. In the middle of the street, placed before a tavern, was a tall Liberty Pole. This was one of many poles where flags were flown

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and speeches made on Fourth of July and on Evacuation Day, which celebrated the withdrawal of the British from New York. Josh's eyes gleamed with excitement, and he yanked at his ear. For drawn up on either side of the Liberty Pole were two of the most celebrated hand fire engines of the town, ready for the contest.

Josh craned his neck to look up as he saw some boys pointing to the roof of the tavern. Those men in long-tailed coats up there must be the judges, getting a good view of the top of the pole. Then Josh stared again at the boys running about the engines. That fellow with the shoe-button eyes spitting tobacco juice . . . that must be Hank, the butcher boy who had fought him in the procession. Yes, he was over there near the green-and-silver Pride of the Town, the old gooseneck engine. The blue-painted Roarer No. 2 had been drawn up near the hydrant, where her crew stood ready to grasp the handles of the haymaker to start pumping when the word was given.

The starter stepped out in the street, raised his arm, shouted, "Ready. Set. Go!"

The red-shirted crew grasped the handles of the Roarer, and heaved up and down. Out shot the water from the brass nozzle, held by two firemen. It splashed against the mark on the pole, fifty feet, seventy-five, one hundred.

"Hurray!" yelled the runner boys for the Roarer. "Look at the Croton water go!"

Then the engine was pulled away from the hydrant and the Pride took over. Hank strutted about as if he owned the engine, thought Josh contemptuously.

"Way there, give way there. Way there, now!" yelled the butcher boy, shoving people back from the engine as

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the crew grasped the handles and began to pump. Up spurted the water, higher and higher. One hundred. One hundred and ten!

The crowd roared approval. Josh slapped the reins over Duncan's broad back and tried to get his cart out of the press. But that seemed impossible, for the other wagons and carriages were jammed in too close to him. He made a commotion that spread around him, and drivers shouted and swore. Just then Hank turned and saw the fiery red head of the Scotch draper's son, who was considered too good to mix with the gang boys. He swaggered up between the carts and yelled:

"How's that for injine work? Pride of the Town ain't the best injine? No, not much she ain't. Get your puffing elephant to throw water that high. This here's the best injine in the town. That steamer will be landed in the junk yard the first time she goes to a fire. She'll blow herself sky-high, she will."

Josh clamped his jaws together and glared ferociously. But he refused to be provoked. Hank, stung by Josh's silence, grabbed a tomato from the cart near by and flung it expertly at Josh. Josh, with red juice running from his chin, tried to wheel Duncan around, but the cart brushed Hank, sending him staggering backward. The butcher boy took a flying leap into the cart, and dragged Josh out by the neck. Suddenly the square was whirling, howling, fighting in a mob, for the disappointed Roarer crew and runners were spoiling for a fight now. The Roarer boys leaped like monkeys on the Pride runners. The crews of both engines pitched into each other. Men from the crowd joined in. Ladies screamed and grabbed their flounced

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skirts, fleeing down the side streets. Up on the tavern roofs the three judges stood shouting down at the crowd, trying to calm the uproar.

But this time Josh got the upper hand. He landed a blow on Hank's jaw that stretched him out on the cobbles, then leaped back into the cart. Hank pulled himself up and laid into the vegetable wagon, joined by a half dozen friends who were escaping from the Roarer's runners. Josh received a shower of vegetables, both hard and squashy. He flapped the reins wildly on Duncan's back, grabbed the old whip that had never been used on the horse, and snapped it. Duncan, stung to amazed fury by this unheard-of treatment, lifted his heels and sprang between the vehicles around him, sending the fighting crowd in all directions. He galloped across the square and into a side street. Josh hung on to the reins until the old horse began to wheeze, then he barked hoarsely:

"Whoa, there, Dunc. Whoa, now."

Duncan's hoofs pounded slower and slower, and then settled down to a weary amble. Josh pulled him up and got out to pat him gently on the nose and quiet him down. The boy's hair stood straight on end, and he was still shaking with fury, but he was worried now about the old horse. After a little rest Duncan's breath came more easily, so Josh heaved a sigh of relief and drove toward the shop.

As he drew up before the shop door he said to himself, "I'll take the goods in, and try to get Duncan rubbed down at the stable before Pa sees him." Josh jumped down and went to the back of the cart. He stared at it horrified. The goods! The cloth covering the bolts had been lost

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somewhere and there were the yards of fine English woolen for the mayor blotched and stained with tomatoes and oranges.

Josh just stood there, feeling as if the earth had dropped out from under him, as the shop door opened and Hamish came down to the cart. The two redheads, father and son, faced each other across the load of ruined materials in complete silence for a long moment; then Hamish asked sternly, "Fighting again?"

"Yes," muttered the boy, twisting his ear around, "but not exactly. I saw the engines in a water throwing contest. Some roughs jumped on me."

"The engines again. I see. Well, Josh, I've made up my mind now. Ye go to Herman Van Brugh's farm to work next week. Ye are not responsible enough a lad to work in a draper's shop. There, up in the Haarlem country, ye can use those big muscles and will have no need for brains." He turned suddenly and went heavily up the steps again.

Josh said nothing. As soon as he could move he began to carry the bolts of cloth to the back of the shop, where he got water and cloths and sat all afternoon trying to clean the fabrics. Inside the outer layers they were not so bad, and he knew that much of the material could be sold. But his father, having promised the mayor the very finest woolens, would not sell these to him. That Josh knew. The mayor might take some goods already in stock, or he might go to another draper.

Josh finished his job and went home, where he changed his clothes and sat on his bed, with his face in his hands. He had been born down on Cherry Hill and had lived on the Bowery nearly all of his life. He didn't like farms,

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knew nothing about the country. To be a hired man was the last thing on earth he wanted. Wild thoughts raced through his head. Maybe he would run away to sea. No, he didn't like the sea either. At last he dropped down and went to sleep, exhausted with unaccustomed worrying.

The next two days were as long as months to Josh. His father avoided looking at him, and his mother did not dare say anything for fear of her husband's disapproval. But she kept bringing Josh special dishes that she knew he liked, buttered scones and mutton pies, and her eyes were sad. When his father was not present saucy Julie teased him about milking cows, which sent Josh, muttering angrily under his breath, out of the house. There he spent most of his time wandering about the wharves, watching the clippers come in, or miserably roving the streets.

Then, late in the afternoon, just about dark, somehow he was standing in front of the enginehouse, looking through the open doors. He was going away to a farm tomorrow. What harm would it do to take a last look at the glittering steamer, with the name "Golden Flash" gleaming in the lantern light? What harm would it do to sniff the smells of leather, and brass polish, and cigars, and listen to the firemen's tall tales as they sat around the stove, with shiny black boots propped up on chairs? Somehow he had edged inside and was sitting on a bench, grinning with delight as Tim clapped him on the shoulder, and the smoke-eaters all welcomed him.

"Now I remember—" Bill was saying, spitting tobacco juice toward the big brass cuspidor, when Tim shouted suddenly, "What's that?"

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Clang-clang-clang-clang-clang! Five strokes of the alarm bell.

"That's us!" yelled Tim, leaping to his feet, reaching for his hat. The men moved fast, grabbing their axes and tools, hauling out the wood tender. "Jake," shouted the foreman, waving his golden trumpet, "go for the horses, and you, Bill, go with him. Way there!"

"Now steam her up, boys," he shouted, as his crew lit the fire always kept laid in the engine firebox.

Josh was dashing from one spot to another, helping with the fire, loading more wood on the tender, handing tools to the men. The whole active crew was here now—the men who tended the engine, those who drove the horses, and others who pulled the wood tender. Auxiliary firemen came running in as the fire bell rang.

Then Bill and Jake loped in from the stable across the street, shouting, "Tim, the horses are out with a carter. He hasn't brought them back yet."

Tim stood still a moment, frowning, biting his lip. He raised his trumpet and bellowed into it, "All right, me boys. We can't get the horses. Can we drag the Golden Flash to her first fire?" The firemen, sweating with their labors, struggling into coats and hats, yelled until the rafters rang, "Sure and we will, Tim!"

Tim raised his trumpet again. "Reach for the drag ropes, me lads. Come along, Josh. Pitch in with us. It'll take all the muscle we've got to drag this engine."

Josh leaped forward. The firemen snatched some long ropes from hooks on the wall and rapidly fastened them to the front of the engine. Some took their places in the shafts; others got hold of the ropes.

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Tim bellowed again, "Josh, take the first position opposite me. Man your ropes. Start her lively, boys." Then he slung the trumpet cord around his neck and reached for a drag rope himself. At the back of the engine stood Jake, the strongest man there. As the ropes grew taut in the hands of the firemen, big Jake gave a mighty push. The engine seemed to jump forward, and Josh ran with the others into the street and toward the corner with the wheels clattering behind them. Jake caught up and took hold. Behind the engine rattled the tender, carrying wood, hauled by four men. The Golden Flash, steamed up and puffing smoke, rolled over the cobbles and down a side street. Josh pulled so hard that the veins stood out on his forehead in cords. Sweat poured from him, as he ran, gasping like a fish on a dock. This engine weighed more than five thousand pounds.

Fire must be on the Bowery, thought Josh, as they approached the main street and saw smoke high above the buildings.

"Watch for the turning, lads," bellowed Tim, as they swung her around and into the Bowery. The engine gave a sickening lurch, and then her wheels straightened out and slowed. The crew gave a mighty heave and got her started off again. It was at that moment that Josh heard a clatter and a series of wild yells from the sidewalk behind them. Dashing down the sidewalk came the green-and-silver Pride of the Town, pulled by her panting crew. A big gang of boys ran alongside in the street, cheering it on. A hoarse familiar voice hit Josh's ears. He jerked his head around and caught sight of Hank, who howled:

"Hang me, if it ain't the old omnibus! A-snorting and

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a-raring. Look out, boys, she'll blow herself sky-high she will. Ya, ya, ya!" He leaped out into the street, spit a stream of tobacco juice toward the golden engine, and then hit out at Josh as he passed.

Josh felt something like an explosion go off in his head. He was filled with a flaming rage. Without knowing what he did he dropped the drag rope and aimed a blow at the butcher boy. They both went down in the street, threshing and flailing. Suddenly the whole gang of Pride runners came down on Josh like an earthquake.

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"Look out! Keep her straight!" roared Tim, as the engine swerved to one side when the release of Josh's hands on the rope threw it out of balance, and the crew jumped back from the fight.

Crash! There was a terrific smashing of splintered wood as the wheels on the curb side struck a lamppost. The crew went down in a tangled heap. The gang boys were up instantly and running to their engine, which had already passed. Hank slid away after the rattling Pride of the Town. Josh heaved himself up painfully from the cobbles and limped to the engine.

"Anybody hurt?" barked Tim to his firemen. "No. That's a miracle."

He stood and grimly surveyed the engine. There was a heavy silence. The crew looked sick. Just ahead of them a few blocks they could hear shouting and see a red glow in the sky. The acrid smell of smoke was all around them, as a few white ashes drifted down on the silent engine. Josh stared dumbly at the Flash. Her wheels on one side were smashed, so that she sagged into the gutter. But the fire in her firebox still burned, and little puffs of white smoke rose above her stack. The boy felt numb all over.

Jake strode up to Tim, jutting out his chin as he snorted, "That's what we get for taking that boy along. It was roughs and runners got the Shamrock turned tongue in last summer. Now our steamer's ruint. I've a mind to take a whip to that no-count rapscallion."

Tim scowled ferociously back at his friend.

"Let the boy alone, Jake. He was provoked into it by that Pride runner. Let him alone, or answer to me."

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The other fireman, glaring at Josh, subsided. He flung himself off toward the fire. Tim took a desperate look at the engine, saw there was no danger of her catching fire, for she hadn't turned over in the crash, and snapped, "Well, me lads, we can't put out the fire now. But we've still got our arms and legs. Come on, we'll see what we can do to help."

The firemen grabbed their axes and followed him as he strode rapidly down the street. Josh slunk along behind. It couldn't be true. This engine had never even been to a fire before. She was going to show them all what a steamer could do. The street was filling with excited people, and Josh was forced to push his way forward. It was not until he had reached the block next to his father's shop that he realized how near familiar ground the fire was. Near? Josh felt his heart rise into his throat. That red glow was coming from the very same block. He shoved wildly through the crowd and stared in horror.

The old one-story building was ablaze. Smoke hung over it and small flames were darting higher and higher from the roof. The fine new store next door was burning too. Strips of red and blue carpeting were dropping in flaming pieces on the heads of watchers who ran in too close. Josh saw Mr. Schultz, the proprietor, wringing his hands near by. His father—where was his father? Then the boy's breath escaped his lips in a deep sigh of relief. His father was always at supper at this time of night. Suddenly a thought hit Josh like a heavy blow in his stomach. If they had got the steamer here she might have put out this fire. Starting that fight had caused the

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accident. He, Josh McTavish, was responsible for the total loss of his father's shop.

Clang-clang! "Way there! Step lively now. Way there." Josh moved aside to make room for the firemen from the triumphant Pride of the Town engine as it moved near the hydrant and started pumping. But he knew that though it might prevent the fire from spreading, its crew could not save his father's shop now. How could this fire have started? Maybe old Pennypacker had stoked the stove too high again. Pennypacker! Josh swerved around in panic, yelling, "Where's Pennypacker?" The crowd took up the cry, "The old clerk. Anybody seen the old clerk?"

Josh knew as well as if he had been told that Penny was in bed in his room behind the shop. He leaped toward the narrow paved alley that led from the street to the back of the store.

"Stop him! Don't go in there. No use, boy!" The firemen were shouting at him.

A piece of flaming timber crashed directly in front of Josh. He edged around it and ran through the smoke. His eyes were blinded and stinging, but he knew his way, and his long legs carried him straight over the falling debris to the door of the little room. Inside, he could see nothing but felt his way across to the cot, sobbing with relief to find that the flames had not yet licked to that side of the room. He reached down and grasped the insensible old man, lifting him and stumbling out with him as if he had been a child. But when he came to the alley he saw that part of the roof had fallen into it and was burning fiercely. He couldn't make it. Josh looked

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desperately around him, then ran to the next burning house. There a high board fence barred his way to the side street. Just then he heard a crew of firemen chopping furiously at it, and the voice of Tim bellowing, "This way, boy. Have you out in a minute."

"Good lad," roared the foreman, as the fence went down under their axes. Two firemen grasped Josh and the clerk and dragged them through the broken fence to the street. Josh felt his legs buckle under him. As he let go of Pennypacker the earth and sky and faces around began to swim dizzily and then fade away.

Josh opened his grimy eyes and rubbed his fingers over them. They felt so queer. Why, his eyelashes and brows

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must be scorched to a stubble. He moved a little. He was very sore but not hurt. He rose on one elbow. His lips moved stiffly. "Where's Pennypacker?" Then his ears caught a sound.

"Yes sir-eee. I fought the Britishers in 1812. Washington's burned to the ground."

Josh smiled crookedly and looked around. Now he realized that the parlor where he and Penny lay on cots was filled with people. His mother sat beside him holding the baby. His father stood near by. Roxanne and Julie were fluttering around with basins of warm water and linen towels. All the little sisters stood staring anxiously. Was that big Tim in the dirty red shirt, with his hair standing on end? Josh looked at his father again.

"Pa," he muttered bitterly, "I got in a fight and wrecked the engine. It might have saved your goods."

Hamish McTavish drew his mouth together in a tight line. He didn't want to think of his stock and its loss. Then he said, "Josh, I took out insurance in that new company last year. I'll have the money to start another shop. We are going to have a new-fangled place on Broadway. And we may move there to a larger house, too. The only trouble is that it's too near that firehouse."

Josh stared until he saw that his father was smiling. Then he stuttered, "But I-I-I'm going to hire out to a Dutchman's farm."

Big Tim stepped forward and clapped him on the shoulder, making him wince. "Ye are not, me lad. Mr. McTavish and I have had a talk just now. We have had a difference of opinion too. He thinks you have learned sense enough to stop fighting and work hard in his shop.

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I think you have learned sense enough to stop fighting and be a real smoke-eater. We decided to compromise. So you will do both. Between us we mean to keep you busy, me boy. We're getting the engine fixed up all right, for 'tis the Pride crew that got turned shafts in this time. You see, they had the roughs running in a gang with 'em, which has been forbidden. We didn't. I just saw the mayor outside. You were the only runner with us, and I told the mayor that you have joined the crew."

Josh reached up and twisted his ear until it glowed fiery red. His mouth opened, but not a sound came out. He goggled at big Tim until the foreman doubled up and roared with laughter. Josh heard his mother begin to laugh, then his sisters, then the German servant girl and Alice. Then there was the sound of a chuckle from old Pennypacker on his cot behind him. Hamish smiled too, saying gruffly, "Go up, and to bed, Josh. I've got a big lot of stuffs coming in at the wharves. You will have to make three trips with Duncan to carry it to the new shop. And shut your mouth, lad," he finished irritably, "before ye swallow the baby."

Josh shut his jaws with a snap. Sharp pains were darting through his sore muscles as he started up the stairs. That fifth step! He lifted his big foot and plunked it squarely and deliberately down on the loose board. Creak, went the step, loudly.

"Cricky!" murmured Josh, and a wide grin spread across his freckled face.

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September, 1858

The Golden Flash was hauled back to the carriage shop, where it was examined carefully by workmen. It was found that the boiler, the pumping apparatus, and the suction pipe were in as good condition as when new. The workmen repaired the smashed wheels and axles, and the engine was delivered, at the end of the week, to Engine House Number 13.

The men of the fire company were more anxious than ever to show the town what their engine could do in putting out fires. The Golden Flash was kept polished and shining, with its firebox ready to set ablaze and its hose neatly coiled. The small tender cart used to haul wood for the engine was kept filled with fuel at all times, and the firemen delegated to pull it were constantly ready for the sound of the alarm bell. Above the firehouse was a room, where two firemen were stationed, taking turn and turn about, to sleep. Ready to hand were pegs on which they hung their shovel-brimmed hats and under which they placed their high boots.

Directly across the street was Brown's Livery Stable, where the horses were kept. The firemen were busy collecting a fund to buy horses of their own for the engine in the near future. And Mr. Brown's stableman had been warned to step lively at the first sound of the fire alarm bell.

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Adventure 2

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Run, Thief, Run!

TOM BIGG sauntered out of the stable and stood in the doorway, looking with interest at the fire-house across the street. The large doors were wide open, lamps were flickering into yellow light inside, and a tall redheaded boy was polishing shining scroll-work on the Golden Flash. The engine had new wheels, painted red, with golden hubs, and her big brass bell clanged musically as the boy climbed up with polish and a rag and began to shine it up.

Tom hitched up his red galluses and lowered his two hundred and fifty pounds of brawn to a squat three-legged stool placed on the sidewalk in front of Brown's Livery Stable, where he worked. Or, perhaps it would be more accurate to say where he was paid to work, for Tom never did anything that he could manage to get out of doing. At this moment a hazy recollection of something Mr. Brown had told him to do in the stable floated through his sluggish brain, but he would much rather sit there and enjoy the unusual September warmth, and watch the fire

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engine. Tom picked up a stick from the bricks beside him and drew a clasp knife from his back pocket. Inside the musty stable Ned and Bess, the heavy horses, stamped and snuffled over their feed bags, and Tom could hear the riding horses and the carriage horses behind them.

Tom put down his stick and pulled a plug of tobacco out of his pocket. Cutting off a corner he thrust it into his cheek, and then began to whittle the stick with long slow motions of the clasp knife. Shadows were lengthening along upper Broadway, stretching out from the browning leaves of the trees planted neatly before quiet family homes and sedate shops. Tom raised his shaggy head and listened intently. Over toward the lively Bowery horses and wagons, and buggies, and horse-drawn omnibuses rattled over the cobblestones. He knew that people shouted and cracked peanuts and wandered in and out of the Bowery Theater.

Gaslights made white circles on the pavement. Tom Bigg shifted his weight to one side and stared into the darkest shadow beyond the firehouse. What was that? Looked like a movement, caught by the corner of his eye. Like a rat creeping out of the dankest cellar in the Five Points slums, a small wiry man slunk across the street and leaned a shoulder against the open stable door.

"What're you doing here, Squills?" grunted Tom Bigg, chewing and whittling together. "Thought you'd be on the Bowery time the gas was lit."

"Wisht you was there, don't you, Tom?" grinned Squills slyly, twisting his head sideways over a dirty blue scarf, tied under his right ear. He listened, his long thin nose pointed toward the cobbles, to a steady clop-clop of horses'

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hoofs down the quiet street and the shrill sound of children playing in the grassy yards. Squills thrust out his long dirty fingers, flexing them back and forth.

"Hang me if I don't," scowled Tom, his stiff black whiskers quivering. "If I only had me a few golden guineas I'd cut a swell over there." He leaned back against the stable wall, his movement sending out a strong horsy smell from his clothing.

Two shopkeepers strolled by, on their way home to supper. Squills slunk back into the stable shadows instinctively, with that peculiar ability to make himself invisible that a lean tenement rat enjoys. When the shopkeepers had passed and a beer wagon had lumbered by, Tom saw Squills again in his old place, flexing his fingers back and forth. Tom stared at them, fascinated. He knew Squills slightly but was well aware that the small sly man was a clever thief from the less respectable district below the lower Bowery. Tom stared down at his own thick fingers, good only for grooming horses.

"You can prig silk handkerchiefs from the 'swells' pockets, can't you, Squills?"

A slow grin divided Squills' face. "Sure. And more than that too, Tom Bigg."

Tom's little eyes lighted with a gleam of greed. "Can you prig guineas?"

Squills nodded. "Sure. I can prig jewels right out of the stores too."

Tom's eyes popped. He dropped his clasp knife, unnoticed, to the brick sidewalk, and shifted his plug, spitting excitedly across to the cobbles. Squills leaned against the door, with his shifty eyes fixed on the dark and silent

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firehouse, for the boy had turned out the lights and gone home.

"I can prig anything, Tom, anything you can name."

"Hang me if I believe you. You can't prig that building over there."

"No, but I can prig anything I can move, and not get caught neither." Squills looked slyly at Tom. "I could prig that engine in there."

Tom goggled at him. "Prig that engine! You couldn't do it. Two of those firemen bunk upstairs over the engine-house. Besides, what would anybody steal a fire engine for?"

There was a slight sound of bare footsteps slapping the bricks, coming closer. Squills twisted around to look into the darkness beyond the nearest gaslight. It was only Sally's Kep, the baker's boy, not worth bothering about. Kep, so small and thin that he looked like one of Barnum's midgets, trotted by, balancing on his big head a huge basket of fresh loaves. He disappeared into the back entrance of the draper's house farther up the block.

Squills' small eyes darted up and down the street, and back to Tom. "That engine's covered with gold, pure gold, a half inch thick. That's what they say at the grog shop. Call her the Golden Flash, they do. Understand, Tom?"

"Hang me if I do," muttered the stableman, lost in amazement. "Why, hang me if I do know how you can prig a fire engine."

Squills slid like a thin gray shadow toward the big fellow, then leaned over and whispered in his ear. Tom's jaw dropped shut with a click. "I das'n't do it, Squills. They would all know I was in it."

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"No, they wouldn't," said Squills ingratiatingly; "they would think another engine crew did it to cause them trouble. You could go traveling a while, then come back to the Bowery. The cops wouldn't catch you. They never catch nobody. And who's going to bother anybody your size, with a pocketful of gold pieces?"

Tom stared toward the Bowery longingly, his slow mind turning the scheme around and around. Sally's Kep came slapping, slapping his bare feet back along the street, his lips puckered in a shrill whistle, his head light under an empty bread basket.

Squills leaned closer again, whispering, "That boy, Kep, he's simple in the head, ain't he? Is he light on his feet, quick, and can he run?"

Tom grinned widely. "Run? He ain't so simple as he looks. I saw him take out with Sally right behind the other day. He can outrun old Brown's best nag in the stable here."

Squills flexed his fingers in and out, then slid off along the fences behind the boy, silently. Tom saw him stop Kep, saw them talk a few minutes, and then watched Kep disappear around the corner toward the baker's. Tom jumped. Squills was standing there beside him again, as if he had never moved away.

"You say Bess and Ned are the horses always hired to pull the Golden Flash? And old Brown never comes down at night? You hitch up the nags and have them ready at one o'clock tomorrow night—and keep quiet about it."

Tom shifted his quid of tobacco uncomfortably to the other cheek, calling, "Wait, Squills. I das'n't do that." His hoarse voice trailed off into silence. Tom's huge bulk

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quivered with excitement. He picked up his stool, carried it into the stable, and threw himself down on a pile of musty hay for the night. Around him the horses made little quiet movements, and he was unaware of the familiar smell of their hides. Excitement! That's what he wanted. Excitement, and fine clothes, like a Bowery swell. Evenings in the pit of the Bowery Theater, yelling defiance at the villain in the play, with a pretty girl beside him cracking peanuts. It took money for that, golden guineas. Gold!

All next day it was, "Tom, do this, Tom, do that! Tom Bigg, take this nag. Gentleman wants his horse, Tom. Rub down Bess, Tom Bigg. Hey, Tom, clean out the stables." Tom went about his work, but he took care to spit tobacco juice over his left shoulder every time, for good luck. Maybe the scheme was off? Maybe Squills wouldn't show up after all? Maybe Kep wouldn't come? But at last the street was dark and silent, Brown had gone home, and the clock on the next street had clanged out one brassy note. Tom looked around as he finished harnessing Ned and Bess, and jumped guiltily at a noise. It was Squills leaning against the door, half in shadow, flexing his fingers, grinning at him slyly.

"What're you grinning for, you monkey," growled Tom Bigg; "is this a game you're playing on me? If it is . . ." He moved menacingly toward the little thief.

"No, Tom, it ain't. Why would I play games on you?" whined Squills. "Look, here's Kep." Tom saw the small boy, with the big head, just inside the doorway, staring at the huge horses.

"What do we do now?" asked Tom.

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Squills hunched forward, the knotted kerchief under his ear wagging with his words. "Tom, hold the horses ready. Soon as I get the doors open, lead them over, quiet as you can. Kep, you stay near the stable. If anybody comes, whistle."

Tom went to the horses' heads and stood, with a hand on each bridle, as Squills slunk across, his feet inaudible on the cobbles, toward the dark doorway of the firehouse. Tom had watched the lights go out in the room above the enginehouse more than two hours ago.

"Kep, go see if I left the back doors wide open," whispered Tom hoarsely. The boy darted into the stable and returned, nodding twice.

"Is the alley there clear to the next street?"

Kep nodded again, silently. Tom strained his eyes toward the opposite side of the street, where the dark doorway was silent and he could see no movement. Tom thought for a moment that Squills had run away. There was a slight metallic clink. That would be the lock giving way in Squills' expert fingers. Tom's breath hissed through his lips in relief. No sound from the room above the firehouse. The big doors were slowly opening. Tom's popping eyes could see a thin line across the cobbles as the doors swung into the street. Now the moonlight shone into the building, picking out the brass bell hanging on the engine and gleaming on the golden trimming of the machine.

"Sssssst!" hissed Squills from the street, like a thin wind sweeping through the trees. Tom stepped forward at the signal, leading Ned and Bess. He winced at the loud hollow sound of their iron shoes on the stones, glancing up

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fearfully at the windows above the firehouse. But the firemen slept on. If they heard the sound of horses hoofs at all, why that was too ordinary to be noticed. Just a milk wagon passing, no doubt. Tom turned the horses around, cursing under his breath as Bess stumbled and her harness rattled loudly. He backed them into the firehouse, between the engine shafts, and his fingers fumbled with the straps, buckles, snaps, and hooks of the harness as he made it secure.

Tom looked up at the engine, sweat pouring down his face. Squills was perched on the machine, like a dirty little monkey on a hurdy-gurdy, working furiously with his tools at the brass bell. The clapper was carefully wrapped in a piece of cloth, and there was scarcely a sound as the screws came out and the bell was handed down to Tom, who stood there staring at it as if stupefied.

Squills leaped down, landing on his toes like a cat. "Quick," he hissed, "give me the bell. Get the engine to the stable and shut the front doors."

Tom jumped as if he had been shot. "Gee up, Bess, Gee up, Ned." He grasped their bridles and jerked them roughly toward the street. The horses gave a sudden lurch, and the engine rattled out of the firehouse into the street and across to the dark stable doors. Squills was in the street, handing the bell, with the cloth jerked off of the clapper, to the small boy. Squills darted into the stable doors just before Tom pulled them quietly but hurriedly shut and drew the bolt inside.

From the next block came a clang-clang of the fire engine bell. Across the street windows banged up. A fireman yelled, "What's going on down there? Hey, Jake!"

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All up and down the street people were shouting, "What's up? What's up?" Tom stood as if turned to stone, but Squills ran to a small dirty window in the harness room, and grinned as he looked. The two firemen were leaping out of the empty firehouse in their red underdrawers, yelling and flailing their arms about wildly.

"Somebody stole the engine. Thief! Thief!"

Squills leaned his head to one side, and his grin divided his face now like a gargoyle. Again they heard the sound—clang-clang-clang!

"That's the bell. Around the corner. This way! Come on. Stop, thief!" yelled the firemen, their long red legs flashing in the brilliant moonlight, as the clouds rolled away from the face of the moon. They ran for the corner, followed by two of the shopkeepers who lived near by, in their shirts, the tassels of their nightcaps flapping.

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Clang-clang-clang! A little farther away now rang the fire engine bell.

"Hi, hi, hi!" screamed the crowd, as more men gathered, dashing for the sound. "Oh, my toe," yelled a fat man, puffing along in front of the stable, as he stubbed his foot on a stone. He grabbed his toe, danced wildly around and around with it clutched tightly in his hand, then dropped it, and limped back to bed.

Clang-clang-clang! "Hi, hi, hi! Catch them. Thieves!" Farther away it sounded, the ringing of the bell, the shouts of the crowd. Now to the left, up a side street, now to the right, then straight away toward the East River. The noise of the crowd was indistinct now, but the bell still sounded clear though far away. Tom was laughing too.

"That Kep, ain't he a slick one? He's leading them a chase."

Squills climbed to the engine seat. "Get a move on, Tom. Let's get it out of here before they find out Kep's got nothing but the bell."

Tom swung his legs up and grasped the reins. "Gee up, Bess. Gee up, Ned. Get along there." The gleaming red and gold engine rattled through the open back doors out of the stable, along a narrow dark alley, into the next street, and toward the North River. Squills cocked his ears. Far away he could still hear a distant clanging of the bell and shouting of the crowd. They must hurry. Any time now somebody might get a glimpse of the boy and realize that he was not on any engine, or might see the Golden Flash as it headed the other way. But the streets were dark at this hour, the clouds had swung back across the moon, and the excitement was on the other

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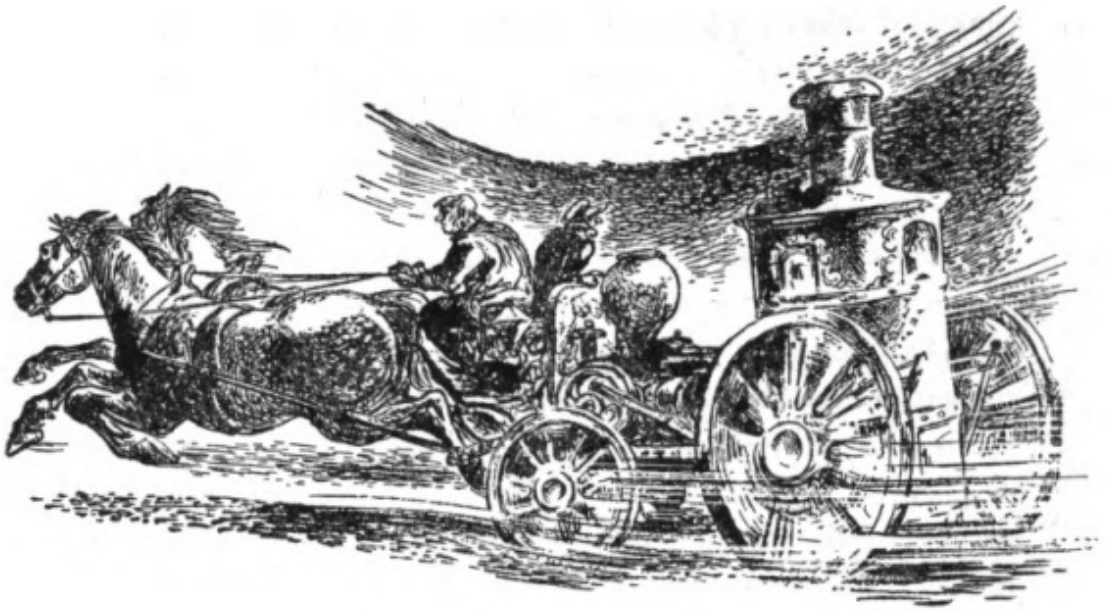

side of town with the boy. He would probably be able to slip away with the bell, which was to be his reward for the trick.

The engine clattered at full speed down toward the wharves. "Here, Tom, pull up over there by that dock," ordered Squills, bouncing about on the rocking seat.

"Whoa, there. Whoa!" Tom yanked back on the horses, stopping abruptly in front of a dingy little pier. On the gray river a wide band of silver moonlight flashed out again to outline the high masts and sails of a clipper ship, anchored in the deep water. Other vessels rocked gently with a swell from the bay.

A shadow moved toward them from the small dock and became a fat rolling man in dirty sailor dungarees. Squills leaped down, catlike, to the dock. "That's Dutch Pete. You ready for us, Dutchie?"

The squat sailor cupped a hand around an evil-smelling

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pipe and removed it slowly from his mouth. "Ja. Load the cargo to the dock, over"; he jerked the stem of the pipe toward the left. "But you've got to be quiet about it."

Squills crept forward on the planks, beckoning to Tom Bigg, who backed the horses onto the dock and along to the left side. Now Tom could see the bow of a sailing vessel, none too big either, tied up there, with a loading platform of planks leading down to it. Swearing in an undertone, he backed the horses around and slowly eased them to the runway. Squills held the platform on one side, while Dutch Pete grasped the other. Slowly the wheels of the engine rolled downward, then faster, until they hit the deck of the tubby craft, which was scarcely large enough to accommodate it. Tom held his breath as the boat rocked and rolled under the impact, then settled to an even keel.

"Quick, unhitch the horses, Tom," commanded Squills, "and lead them up the street a ways; then turn them loose to find their way back. And hurry; we've got to sail."

Tom grabbed the bridles and led them off, as he was told. When he returned he found Squills and Dutch Pete with long pitchforks, pitching hay from a great pile on the dock to the boat.

"Here," grunted Squills, handing Tom the pitchfork, "you finish covering the engine with hay. I'll go aboard and tell you where to pitch it." He dropped to the deck and crouched there, grinning, flexing his long fingers back and forth, but with his ears alert for every sound. What was that? It sounded like shouting, coming closer. Now he could hear running boots on the cobbles, coming this

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way. He leaped to his feet. "Get that going. We've got to get out of here. Move lively, Tom."

Tom stared down at the tiny boat, with hay piled so high on deck and around the mast that it looked like a floating haystack. "I don't like the water," he growled. Squills looked up at him with his evil little eyes and murmured softly, "Then go on back, Tom. Let them get you, Tom. They think a sight of that fire engine, those smoke-eaters do. You'll like the jailhouse, Tom."

Tom flung the pitchfork furiously into the vessel, missing the little thief by inches. Then he jumped in after it. Dutch Pete was raising the sail. The wind filled the canvas, and the little boat moved out into the river. "Down, Tom, down," hissed Squills, flattening himself on the deck. Tom crouched beside him, staring back at the city. Dutch Pete stood at the tiller, smoking his pipe, stolid and apparently unconcerned. The shouting came closer, and feet pounded the pavement of the waterfront street.

"What's that? Jake found the horses," came back to them from the shore. Tom kept his head down, hoping that nobody would wonder why a load of hay should cross over to New Jersey, instead of to the city from New Jersey, where it grew. But those people back there would never think of a boat. They would hunt for the ghost engine in the city, drawn by the clang of the bell.

Down the river the fresh wind caught the sail. The top-heavy little craft swung from side to side until Tom's insides turned over. On his left he could glimpse the low buildings along the Battery and the round immigration building standing out against the sky. On his right was the Jersey shore, dark and silent. Now they were passing

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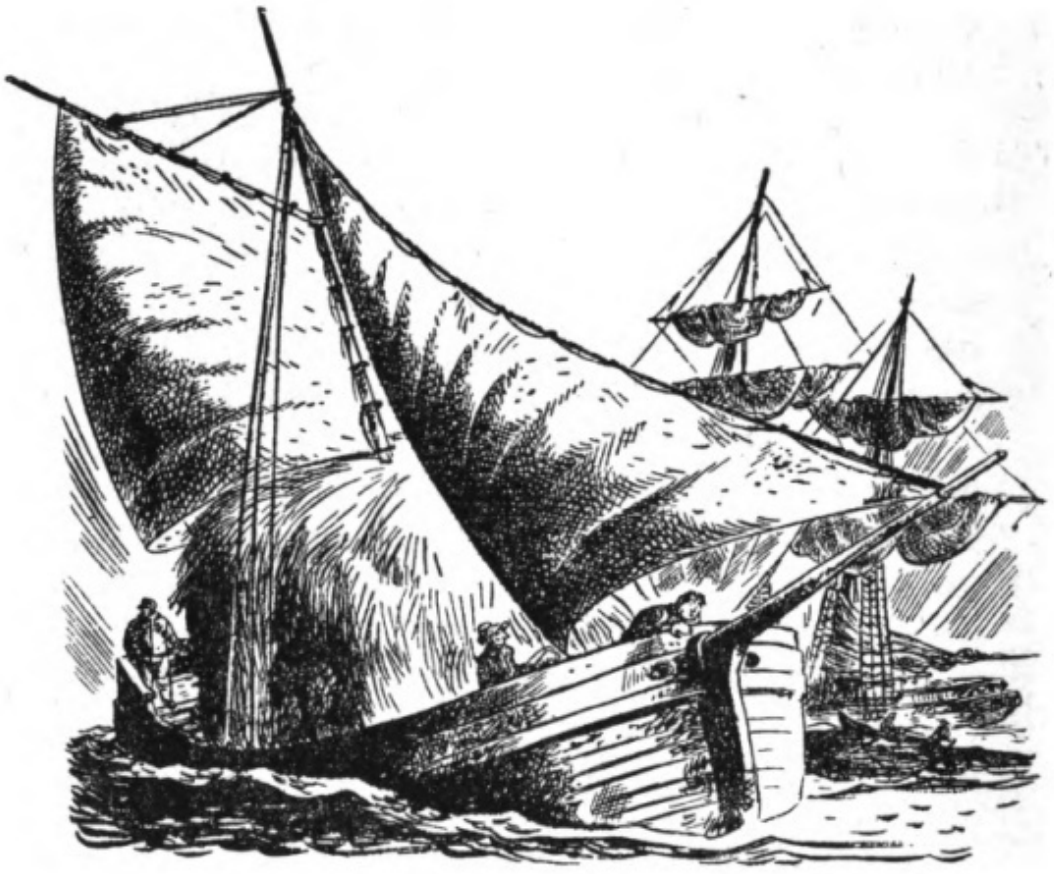

Communipaw, where the Indians had first traded with Henry Hudson. Past the tip of the Jersey peninsula and, through the Kill van Kull, into Newark Bay. Squills lay on his back snoring, and Dutch Pete stood silent, smoking his villainous pipe, with his hand on the tiller. Tom stretched out as best he could on what was left on the deck around the pile of hay, and at last added a deep bass snore to the rasping sound of the little thief. The Golden Flash rocked and rolled, tied to the deck, under a mound of odorous hay. And the moon, going down over the horizon, could not catch so much as a gleam from its shining scrolls.

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Next day the sun shone like a bright copper penny on the rippling waters of Newark Bay. The little vessel was sailing along at quite a clip, tipped far over by the wind bellying her sail, and was just rounding the point into the Hackensack River. Tom Bigg stretched his long arms, grunted sleepily at the sun in his eyes, and sniffed curiously at the unfamiliar smell of salt in his nostrils.

"Hang me if I know where I am," he muttered, rolling over, almost tipping his big body into the slapping waves. He sat up carefully, running his fingers over his bristly beard stubble, staring at the river and the salt grasses waving in the meadows on either side. A flock of wild geese passed over him, honking as they headed south. Squills was still sleeping, hunched into a corner of the deck against the rail, his dirty blue scarf slapping against his dirtier face. Dutch Pete held the tiller exactly as he had when Tom went to sleep, as if he hadn't moved throughout the night.

"When do we get there, Pete?" bellowed Tom.

Pete slowly withdrew his pipe from his mouth, as he boomed, "The wind is going down. Maybe tonight."

Squills twisted around and sat up. "How's that for prigging, Tom, and not get caught neither? And she's covered with solid gold too."

Tom's eyes glistened greedily. "Where're we taking her, Squills?"

"To a barn up the river. Place Dutch knows about. Nobody ever goes there, and it's right on the river, not too far from a town. I've got a man there who'll buy the gold."

Neither Tom Bigg nor Squills had ever been outside of New York before. Once Tom had driven a landau up to

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the green fields of Haarlem, and seen goats cropping the grass, but he had never expected to get so far as this from the noise and confusion of the Bowery. It gave him a queer, unsettled feeling, and he hoped that he would be back in the city very soon, and the chase for the engine thieves forgotten.

The sun was low beyond the meadows, bringing out a rank weedy odor from the marshes, when Dutch Pete slowly pulled his smelly pipe from his lips and pointed with it toward the right bank. "White Goat," he rumbled. Tom and Squills saw a low brick building, in a weed-grown yard, its back to the river. A dusty road could be glimpsed between the trees in front of it. A flock of ducks and geese, swimming lazily along the slow river, quacked and honked excitedly as they paddled for the barn and the innyard. There was no other sign of life, except the slow feeding of a glossy brown horse tied in front of a stable in the innyard.

As dusk darkened the marshes, Dutch Pete kept a watchful eye on the shore of the narrowing river, until not far beyond the White Goat Inn he pointed his pipe at the dim shore line and grunted, "There." Tom saw the outline of an old barn, built on the river's edge, with a small dock leading from the water to the barn doors, which stood open. Nothing else was visible, for the moon had not yet risen, and there was no sound except the constant hum of mosquitoes. Tom slapped at his face and growled:

"It ain't going to be easy, getting her ashore. Do we put her in that barn?"

Pete nodded briefly, shook out his pipe, and shoved

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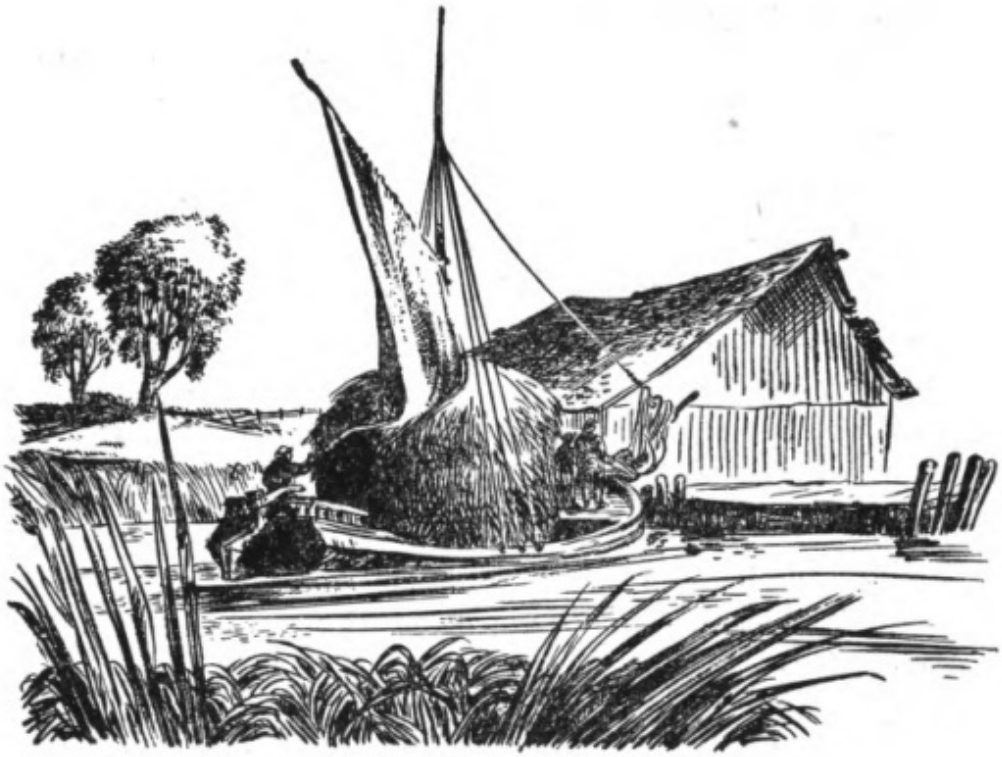

it into a pocket of his coat. The little *Juffrau* came in to the dock, and Pete jumped out to tie her to a piling. Then the three men got out the pitchforks and set to work piling the hay to one side of the dock.

Tom's face felt swollen and on fire by now. Squills, catching a glimpse of him, chuckled slyly, murmuring, "Mosquitoes seem to like you, Tom. See, they don't bite me. Too tough, I am."

When the hay had been pulled to one side of the dock, over near the barn Tom and Pete hauled out the platform and fastened it from the boat's deck to the dock. Tom got behind the engine and gave it a great push, swinging it

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around. The Flash rolled forward a little, and the small boat tipped alarmingly.

Tom steadied the engine hastily, shouting: "Pete, this won't work."

"Ja, I see it won't," answered the Dutchman. He leaped to the dock and went into the barn, returning in a few moments with a block and tackle. Pete fastened one pulley to the barn and the other to the engine tongue. Then, while Squills remained behind the engine to steady it, the two big men heaved mightily on the rope. It was a slow business, but at last the engine was on the dock and then in the stuffy air of the barn. Squills closed the doors and told Pete to meet him later that night at the White Goat Inn for his pay. The wind had died completely, so Pete had to pull on his oars to get the craft away, down to the White Goat.

Tom stood in the dim light of a lantern hung by a stall in the old abandoned barn and stared at the glitter of gold on the Golden Flash. He fingered his clasp knife, looking greedily at the gleaming scrolls. Squills squinted his little eyes in darting glances at the red and gold engine and flexed his dirty fingers.

"We've got to wait a while, Tom. There's a man in a town near here, town called Brughe, who owns a jewelry business. He was in New York yesterday, and I made a deal with him to buy the gold. I've got to meet him on the road a ways. You wait here."

Squills disappeared furtively into the shadows outside the barn, and Tom Bigg squatted down on the floor to whittle a stick he had picked up, and wait. After a while Tom grew tired of the musty barn and went out to the

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dock, where he sat staring across the dark water. The smell of rotten weeds and slimy undergrowth in the edges of the sluggish stream came up to him. He felt suffocated here away from the town, as if the shadows and the slime were creeping closer and closer to him. Tom's pleasure and excitement over the stealing of the engine slipped away from him. A slight chill crept up his backbone.

"Hoo, hoo, hoo!" screamed a voice close beside him. Tom leaped to his feet, clutching his knife. He could see nothing. Katydids rattled insistently in his insect-bitten ears. But Tom stood as if frozen. What was that? A shadow darker than the others moved slowly from the trees over to his right. Tom grasped the handle of his knife, poised to fling it. Then he sank back, his breath hissing out in relief.

It was Squills, and behind him a tall man in a cape and

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wide-brimmed hat, with nothing of his face showing but a spade-shaped beard. Squills grinned.

"Wasn't scared, was you, Tom Bigg?" He nodded sideways at the other man. "This is Mr. Oglethorpe, what knows a way of getting rid of the gold, at the highest prices, and no questions asked."

Squills got out his tools, and he and Tom set to work. Mr. Oglethorpe sat silently on an old box, watching. The lantern stood on top of the engine, like a yellow moon in the dark building. At last, between them, Tom and Squills had a plate of gold pried off. Tom lifted it carefully and handed it to Squills, whose small eyes glittered at the sight. Suddenly a hand reached around him and took the strip of gold. Mr. Oglethorpe, his hat on the ground and his bushy gray hair standing up like a brush, carried the gold to the lantern light and examined it carefully, on both sides. He got a small knife from a pocket and scraped the edge. His head jerked up.

"Squills," he snapped, "you swore this was solid gold on the engine. It's not. It's nothing but thin gold plate—on brass. Not worth the trouble of getting it off. You've brought me out here for nothing. Bah!" He spat out the words and dropped the piece of gold-plated brass on the floor. Then he yanked open the doors and strode out toward the road and his horse and carriage.

The little thief darted forward and picked up the metal, holding it under the lantern. As he stared at it his face creased and contracted, until in his rage he looked like an ancient monkey.

"Gold!" he hissed. "Everybody said it was solid gold.

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Liars! Thieves!" He shook all over, as if from swamp fever.

Tom stood stonily, dazed. No gold! He hadn't once imagined that. The worst he had thought of was being caught by the cops, or turning over the boat. Suddenly he saw his knife still clasped in his hand. With a wild movement he threw it at Squills. But the ratty little man ducked instantly, and the knife buried the tip of its blade in the wall of the barn, and quivered there. Tom growled, "I'm going back to the city."

Squills, crouched near the door, peered over his shoulder and hissed softly, "Oh, you are, Tom Bigg, are you? Going back, are you? You know what will happen to you there, don't you? I won't be blamed for stealing the engine. Pete won't be blamed. Nobody knows we were in it. But they know you took the engine away with the stable horses. They'll think a hand engine crew hired you to hide it. You can't wait till it blows over. It won't blow over for you. You can't go back at all, Tom." Squills chuckled and slunk out into the darkness.

Tom went wearily over to a stall and slumped down on the musty floor. He felt dazed, and his slow mind, never too good at figuring out problems, was as torpid as a mule on a hot summer day.

After a time—he did not know how long, except that the light of the moon was gone—he heard low voices on the road and the clop-clop of a horse's iron-shod hoofs. As the sound reached the barn, Tom did not even pull himself up to close the doors on the stolen engine. What did he care now? Just people passing anyway. The sounds drew closer, and then he realized that they were coming

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through the overgrown abandoned field, and to the barn door. Tom cautiously thrust his eyes over the top of the stall, and had to clamp his teeth down to prevent a sound of fury from escaping his lips. The little thief, with his scarf tied under his right ear, was standing there. Tom ducked down into the darkness of the stall, as Squills stared back and forth, looking for him. Apparently Squills decided that Tom had left for the nearest town, for he relaxed and went to lean against the door frame, exactly as he had done at Brown's stable that night, moving his fingers back and forth, grinning slyly. Tom cautiously raised his eyes again and saw that a stranger was with Squills, staring in astonishment at the red and gold engine. He looked like a farm hand, and a stupid one at that. He must be somebody Squills had met by accident on the road.

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"You didn't believe me, did you?" grinned the thief. "There she is, the finest fire engine in the country."

"A beauty she is, and no mistake."

"Now, take that engine," continued Squills, "she would sell for a lot of money to an up-and-coming town what hasn't got a fire engine."

"Why don't you sell her to a town, to Brughe here, across the meadows?" asked the stranger.

"I ain't got the time." Squills thrust his head forward earnestly. "I've got important business in Philadelphia, where that engine come from." He switched abruptly from his reasons. "Now that Golden Flash, she is worth a thousand dollars, or more. She's worth a lot more than your horse there. You could sell that engine for a thousand."

Tom heard a horse moving about outside the barn. The countryman seemed to hesitate. He raised his head and turned toward the road as if listening. Then he said hurriedly. "You own this engine? You got no partners?"

Squills spoke casually, "I'm not saying I didn't have help getting her here. But that was a deal I made with a man who was paid for it. She belongs to me. No, I got no partners."

Tom shook with rage, but he kept silent. He would fix that Squills as soon as the stranger had left.

"Well," said the fellow, quickly, "I'll trade you the horse for the engine. But you're getting the best of the bargain. That mare's a jim-dandy." Tom clutched the top of the stall, ready to leap around it at Squills, but the little thief went out with the stranger. Tom heard him saying good-by, and then the sound of the stranger going off and of

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Squills leading the horse in the other direction, toward the inn.

As Tom came out of the barn a stray thought crossed his confused mind: There was something queer about this trade. Why was that stranger in such a hurry to trade that he didn't ask more about where the engine came from? But his fury took possession of him, and he muttered as he stumbled through the dark field, into the road, "I'll wring that thief's skinny little neck. Hang me if I won't."

Tom moved faster. He must catch Squills before he reached the inn. But Tom was unfamiliar with the rough cart road, and the moon had swung behind a rack of clouds. He lurched in and out of holes and ruts, and swore under his breath. At last he heard the sound of the horse's hoofs clopping slowly along in front of him and a shrill whistle from the jubilant Squills. The moon moved slowly out from the clouds, to outline a horse and a man in the road. Tom took a quick step forward, and then stopped as if petrified. Recovering himself, he dashed to the roadside and crouched behind a bush.

Two bulky shadows had leaped from the roadside and were holding Squills and the horse. Squills squirmed and yelled, outraged at this violence.

"Help!" he squealed. "Help! Murder!"

"The help you'll get will come from this," growled one of the men, raising a club over the head of the little man.

Squills quieted instantly. He cringed forward, saying ingratiatingly, "What are you doing to me? I'm just an honest man walking home with his mare."

Down the road a little way a door was flung open at the inn, and a stream of light came bobbing toward them.

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Tom raised his head higher. The lantern was held by the fattest man Tom had ever seen. His three chins wobbled and shook as he jogged at his top speed toward the commotion, and his breath came in little gusts.

Recovering his voice as he approached, the fat man rumbled, "Did you get the thief? Is that my horse?"

He held the light higher, shouting, "*Blicksem!* What! It is my mare. My lovely Wilhelmina! Hold that man. He stole my horse."

The man who held Squills by the collar of his coat shook him a few times, until his teeth rattled. Squills grasped the man by a sleeve, gasping, "I never stole that horse. I swear to you I never prigged a horse in my life. I'm an honest man."

The other man raised the club again and shook it menacingly toward the thief. The lantern light shone on a leather apron that this fellow wore, and Tom took him to be the innkeeper. He handed the horse's bridle to the fat man.

"This is your mare, Mynheer Van Witt," he said. "I know her well, for I had her fed and tied in the stable yard by the river today." He growled at Squills, "What do you say to that?" There was a thick silence. Tom could feel the insects stinging his face and neck, but his mouth widened in a huge grin as he listened.

Squills' voice came out in a thin squeak. "I didn't steal her. I traded . . ." The sound died away in his throat.

"You traded what for this mare belonging to Farmer Van Witt?"

For once Squills was as dumb as one of the oysters sold on the Bowery.

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"Arrest him. *Blicksem!* Put him in the jailhouse," squawked the Dutchman.

The innkeeper turned to the burly stableman. "We'll take him to the inn and send for the sheriff. Lock him in the dairy and go for the sheriff."

Tom watched as if he had never seen so beautiful a sight before, as the party started to the inn. First waddled the Dutch farmer, leading his mare, clucking, deep in his throat, his anger at this outrage. Then came Squills, as limp as a bundle of rags, held by the rough hand of the stableman, and last of all marched the innkeeper. The two men had evidently just started out to look for the thief as soon as the loss of the mare was discovered and had heard Squills as he whistled in the road. Tom remained where he crouched until he heard in the distance the door and shutters of the dairy being securely barred. Then the inn doorway closed, shutting out the light.

Tom crawled out into the road and stretched his cramped limbs. As he thought of Squills, who had stolen so much and had then been arrested for a theft he hadn't committed, Tom burst into a loud guffaw. He slapped his thigh, as he moved back along the road, chuckling to himself. "He could prig anything, he could. He'd never get caught. But he got taken in by that country bumpkin. That's a game, that is. Hang me, if it ain't!"

But when Tom reached the dark barn and heard the water slapping against the piles of the dock, he stopped laughing. What was he to do now? He couldn't go back to the city for a long time, if at all. And there wasn't any other place he wanted to go. Maybe he could find Pete tomorrow and get away on his boat? Tom slouched into

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the barn and felt his way past the engine. The lantern had sputtered out, and he did not so much as glance at the Golden Flash. He threw himself down on the floor of a stall and went to sleep.

Suddenly Tom woke and sat up. He heard the sound of voices approaching through the field. He rose and looked cautiously around the stall. Out in front of a crowd of farmers was Squills, walking in the jogging lantern light, all his jauntiness gone. He was guarded by the burly stableman from the inn and another man. Behind them waddled the fat Mynheer Van Witt, puffing with the exertion, followed by his friends.

"This is the barn, Sheriff," shouted the innkeeper. "It's the only one with a dock hereabouts."

The man with Squills asked gruffly, "This it? Now show us this engine, if there is one."

"The engine's in there." Squills darted to the open doors and pointed, as the stableman held a lantern high. The crowd pushed inside, and Tom, who knew that he ought to run, pressed his ear to a crack in the stall and listened gleefully.

"Where did you get this engine? Who traded you the horse?" growled the sheriff.

"I bought that engine in Philadelphia. I was bringing it up to sell to some town that needed a fire engine. I never prigged a horse. I traded this engine for the horse, to a farmer."

There was an instant of astonished silence inside, then the sheriff roared, "A likely story! There isn't a farmer in these parts would steal Mynheer Van Witt's mare. I don't know where you got that contraption. Or how it works.

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But you did steal the mare. For that you'll get a term in jail from the judge, and you'll pay a fine for disturbing the peace, or we'll keep that engine in escrow till you do pay it. I'll send horses to take the engine to the village tomorrow. Come along here."

Tom dodged back as they went out, and he heard them disappearing toward the village. Then he thought that he had better start walking the other way, for he had no doubt that Squills would tell the sheriff about him. He passed the White Goat and followed the road. At last, just about dawn the road wound close to the gray river, and Tom saw a small dock. Was that a boat outlined against the lightening sky? He jumped on the planks and strode to the end. Sure enough, that was the little *Juffrau*, bobbing about in a stiffening breeze. Dutch Pete was putting up the sail. Tom sniffed the rank pipe smell.

"Hi, Pete," he called. "Will you take me back to the city?"

Pete slowly took the pipe from his mouth and pursed his lips. Then he nodded briefly, "Ja, jump on board."

"Squills traded the engine to a country hick for a mare —then got arrested for stealing the nag."

"Ja," rumbled Pete, "I know. I was at the inn last night, but Squills didn't see me. That's why I brought the *Juffrau* down here and got held up all night until the wind came up. I can sail for Hoboken now. Take a hand here."

As Tom Bigg helped him unfurl the sail, Pete spoke again. "There's an O'Leary China clipper in harbor. I heard at the grog shop they need deck hands. She sails day after tomorrow with the tide. You can sign up with her."

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Tom mopped his forehead and growled desperately, "I don't want to be a deck swab. Hang me if I do."

"They'll jail you if you don't," spoke Pete.

As the sun rose beyond the distant farms on the hills along the winding river and its marshes, the little *Juffrau* caught a steady breeze in her sail and bobbed along. She left behind the dark old barn and the White Goat Inn, and Squills sitting in the village jail. She sailed toward Newark Bay, and Manhattan harbor, toward the tall masts of the China clipper tied up at Hoboken. On the stern deck of the *Juffrau* squatted Tom Bigg, wondering miserably whether he would rather go to jail or join the rough crew of a ship where life was so tough that the master found it hard to get seamen. At the tiller stood Dutch Pete, his bushy brows drawn together, smoking his pipe. He was worried too, for Squills would certainly tell them about the help Pete had given him. That meant that Dutch Pete couldn't trade here again. And in the musty old barn early morning light slanting in from the rippling river touched a crimson and gilt fire engine, traded by a city thief to a country thief, for a stolen horse.

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October, 1858

The Golden Flash remained in the barn until the next day. Behind it the slow river lapped against rotten pilings, and a rank marsh odor was dissipated by the sun. The barn itself was dim in the stalls, and a fine film of dust seeped down on the engine from the sagging roof. But the engine still glittered, even under the dirt, and even with some of its plate removed.

Then the sheriff appeared, with two men and two horses. They backed the horses into the barn, hitched them to the engine, and led them through the weed-grown field. The Golden Flash passed by the burned-out foundation of a farmhouse, and settled into the ruts of the country road.

The old farm horses plodded slowly along with their strange load to the little village, where they drew the engine to the center of the main square. The sheriff came with a bundle of placards and tacked one of them carefully on a tree. Curious country folk gathered to read the bill:

TO BE SOLD, AT PUBLIC AUCTION, ONE STEAM FIRE ENGINE, IN GOOD CONDITION.

Nobody could think who might buy such a thing here, until someone remembered a millman who needed an engine, and thought that he might bid it in, just for the engine. As the Golden Flash stood on the town square the sun disappeared and a slow, soaking rain began to fall, until the people drifted away to shelter, and the engine stood alone.

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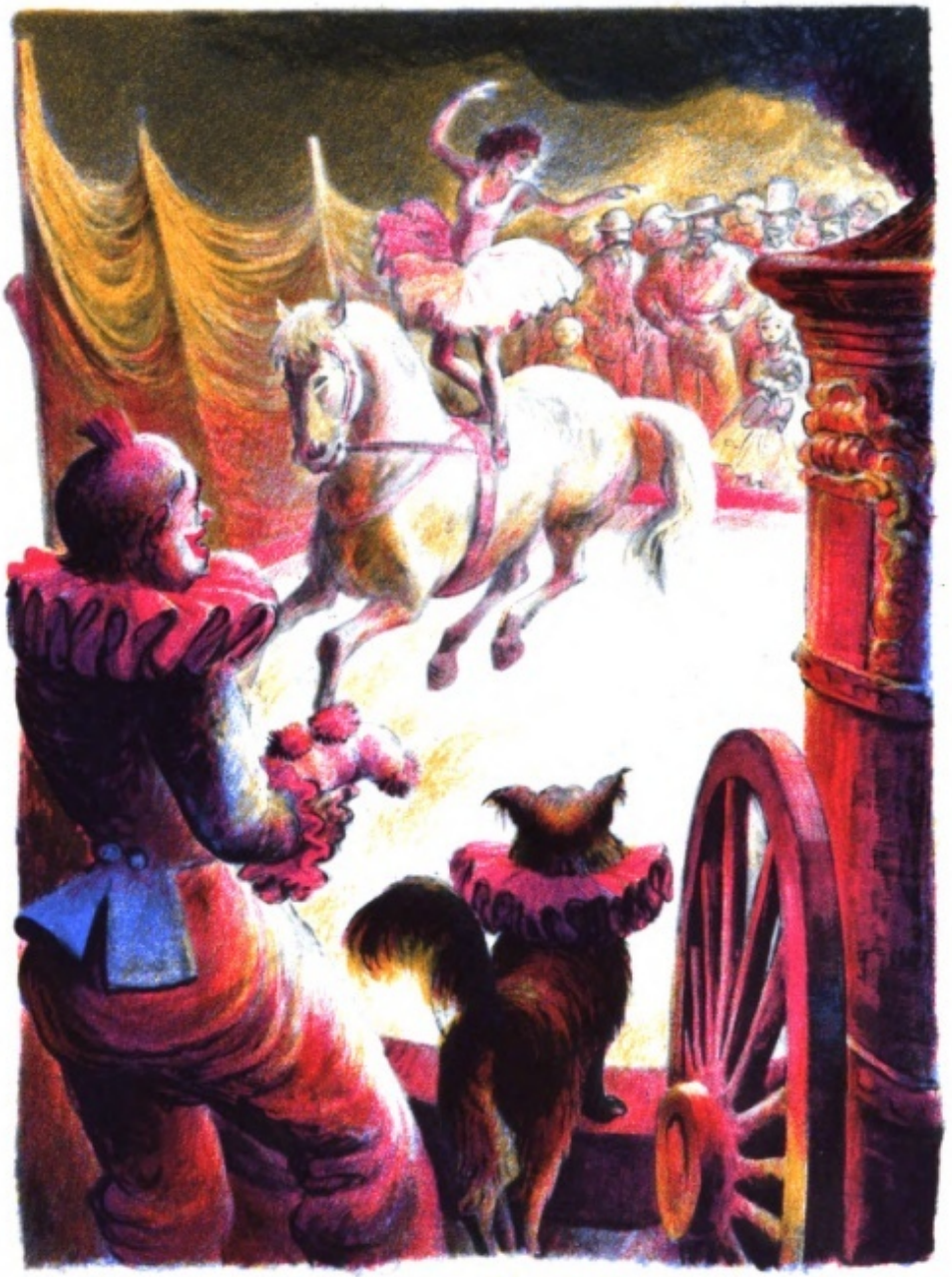
Adventure 3



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Come One, Come All!

THROUGH browning Jersey meadows the river flowed past neat farms of calm and comfortable Dutchmen, on its way to Newark Bay, and so to the sea. Salt grasses grew head high along the stream, and stood with wet feet in the spreading tide. The river wound like a gray ribbon, and a gray blanket of a sky hung low over a stand of dreary maple trees on higher ground near the cart road. Good Dutchmen were indoors on a day such as this, fat legs stretched out beside their own hearths, or smoking their pipes near a fire in the inn of the White Goat a half mile or so away.

A gentle steady drizzle dripped from the leaves on the heads of an old man and a black-haired girl, who stood beside two gaudy red wagons and stared with unhappy eyes at each other, and at the uncomplaining horses tied in the shelter of the trees. It was a day for gloom, for miserable thoughts, and for a dreary foreboding of

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disaster. They had returned within the past hour from a funeral. The funeral of a pig. But that was no joke. The Emperor had not been just a pig, the kind you might eat as sizzling slices of bacon. The Emperor had been, as their handbills proclaimed to each new village, "The Great Emperor, the Most Learned, the Most Educated, the Most Refined Pig in Christendom." The Emperor had been their most popular actor, and the Emperor was dead.

"Might as well try to sell off what we can, Susie. We're done for now," groaned Luke Waters, dropping down on the step of one of the wagons, oblivious of the puddle of dirty rain water already there.

His daughter pulled her kerchief farther over dripping curls and thrust her chin up. Whenever Pa gave up hope, which he did on an average of twice a week or more, Sue, out of a contrary streak in her nature, always plucked up some spunk. Not that she ever really lacked spunk, but today—well, today was about the bottom of the barrel of hope, she thought unhappily.

"Now, Pa, don't talk like that. We've had trouble before, and we've pulled out too. What if we haven't got the Emperor? We still have Wildfire, the finest high-stepping horse in the dog and pony show business. And we have Nip, Tuck, and Rollover, as good as any trained dogs in Barnum's Circus. And we've got my acts and Hi-Jinks. Where would you find a better Joey than Jinks?"

"Wall, yes, Jinks is a good clown, but what can he do without the Emperor? Why that clown took weeks to train the pig."

"Come inside the wagon, Pa. What's the sense in getting

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any wetter?" Susie was getting her dander up now, as her father called it, and it made him feel better too, though he wouldn't admit it to himself. Susie so seldom gave out on courage that Luke, who had a very small supply, depended on her more than he knew.

Luke sat down on a chair inside the wagon that he and Susie used as living quarters and propped his bony chin on a rough hand, as his clothes dripped gently on the floor. "But, Sue, you know we are going on the route of the big circuses, and the folk along this way, even in the little towns where we show, are used to riding acts and dogs. The Emperor brought 'em out, because he was different. Any farmer's got a pig, but not an educated pig like the Emperor. And the circuses haven't got one like that pig either." He sighed gustily. "We can't change the

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route now. Weather's getting bad, and we've got to get back to Wisconsin for the winter."

Sue stood by the little curtained window and stared miserably at the rain dropping from the wagon roof. Pa didn't say all he was thinking, but she knew what it was anyway. They had started out in the early spring from Baraboo, Wisconsin, the farming community where everybody worked in winter months refitting circuses. Pa had been a farmer there and had been talked into selling out and buying this little show. But Sue knew what he wanted to do. He wanted to sell off the show now that the Emperor was dead and the cash low, and get another small farm, maybe farther west where he could homestead. Sue thrust out her chin again. Not if she could help it. She could ride. Jinks, who had talked Pa into this business as a partner, was a real circus trouper, and he had taught her since she was old enough to stand up. She turned suddenly.

"Where is Jinks anyway, Pa? After the funeral he just disappeared. Where'd he go?"

"I don't know. Maybe he's in his wagon. You better go find him and tell him I think we had better get going. We can't put on a show in this rain, and, anyway, this is bad country. These Dutchmen won't turn out for shows."

Susie nodded and slipped out of their wagon into the downpour. As she lowered her head and ran for the other wagon, Jonathon, one of the horses, turned his mournful eyes toward her. She went over to pat the three big horses, and then sloshed through the mud to Wildfire, her sleek black riding horse. It made her feel bad to have to leave him out here under the dripping trees. Wildfire

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rubbed his cold black nose gently against her shoulder.

"Never mind, boy," she whispered, as she left him, "we'll be on our way soon."

Sue jerked open the door of the other wagon and ducked inside. She was almost knocked flat by a welcoming committee of Nip, Tuck, and Rollover, who were tired of being shut into a wagon all day, and who jumped and barked and licked at her face.

"Down, Nip! Down, Rollover, Tuck!" The dogs subsided, and she patted each one gently on the head as she looked around the wagon. It was crammed with tools, stakes, a long roll of canvas, and most of the simple props of the show. At the far end was a bunk, and over it hung a clown's costume, bright scarlet and white in the gray gloom of the day. A box on the left was filled with a jumble of grease paint and clown's white in battered cans. But Jinks was not there. Susie backed out and closed the door on three disappointed little yaps from the dogs.

Through the tapping of raindrops on the leaves came a sound, and it was a jolly, cheerful sound, bringing on such a day the kind of feeling to the ears that a cup of hot lemon tea would bring to the stomach.

"Do, da, do, da. Bet my money on a bobtailed nag. Somebody bet on a bay!"

Sue turned a glad and happy face to the sounds. Joey Jenkens splashed and slopped through the mud, swallowing the rain as he sang, his round rosy face looking like nothing so much as a Halloween pumpkin, cut across in a wide grin with two teeth visible. He caught a glimpse of the girl.

"Hi, Susie, what're you doing out in the rain?"

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"Hi, Jinks," called Sue, "where have you been?"

Instead of answering Jinks glanced up at the sky, then held the wagon door open for Sue, ducking inside behind her.

"Hi, Luke!" he called cheerfully, with the rain dripping around him. Luke bent a sour look toward the round little fellow.

"Where've you been? We ought to get away from here. Business is no good."

Jinks waved a pudgy hand, grinned gleefully, and said, "We'll get away tomorrow. My left eye itches. That means clearing weather, folks, and good luck too." He ducked forward, making a dive for a tin box on a shelf and then for the door.

"Wait a minute," roared Luke, bounding up from his chair. "What're you doing with the cash box?"

"Going to an auction, folks. Don't be alarmed. All for the good of the show. Be back in a couple of hours." Jinks slammed the door, and they heard harness rattling outside. For a long moment neither Sue nor Luke could move for their astonishment, and when they did get outside, shouting questions at Jinks, they found him mounting Jonathon, and leading Dobbs.

"Wait!" shouted Luke, striding forward in the mud. "Come back here with that money."

But Jinks slapped the reins against Jonathon and disappeared, surrounded by a medley of clinks and jangles from a lot of harness.

"Come on inside, Pa," called Susie. "It won't do any good to stand out there grumbling. We can trust Jinks. Maybe he is going to buy us another pig."

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"But there's two hundred and fifty dollars in the box," groaned Luke, now utterly disconsolate. "We're ruined if he throws that away. We're ruined."

Sue laughed and joked with him, but a small doubt hung at the back of her thoughts too, and brought a crease between her eyebrows. She tried to shove it away and was somehow cheered when she saw that the sun had broken through the rain, which had changed to a soft silvery mist and was disappearing. As Sue was serving their supper she thought that she heard something and lifted her head to listen intently. There was surely a rattling and jingling sound coming closer along the road from Brughe. Sue smiled and grasped her father by the arm. "Come on out, Pa. That must be Jinks."

As they stood in the mud waiting, their mouths dropped open and they were speechless with astonishment. Even Wildfire seemed to stare and prick up his sensitive ears in alarm at a strange object jolting toward them from the road. Dobbs and Jonathon were hitched to a big crimson and gold vehicle, and on the driver's seat was Jinks, reins in hand, grinning like a jack-o'-lantern on a pole.

"What's all this, Jinks?" growled Luke, when he had recovered enough to speak. "I don't call this no time for putting on an act."

The clown drew in his horses and leaped nimbly down. Susie walked all around the fire engine in amazement.

"Jinks," she muttered, "I just don't believe it. Where in heaven's name did you get this thing?"

Luke scowled, his long neck shooting forward suspiciously. "You paid out all our cash for it, didn't you?"

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Jinks waved away the thought airily, "No, of course not. Over in that village up the road they had an auction. This engine belonged to a man who stole a horse. He was arrested, and the sheriff sold the engine at auction. A millman there wanted to get it and use the engine for his mill. But I got it. I bid it in for only two hundred—and located a pair of shafts to replace the pole. Think of that! And I'll bet it cost a thousand, if it cost a penny."

"Two hundred," groaned Luke. "We're ruined. What will we do with a steam fire engine?"

"What'll we do with it?" Jinks bounced up to him, waving his arms, shouting in his excitement. "He wants to know what'll we do with it! Don't you see? It's the attraction we've been looking for, something different. We always play in little towns and villages, don't we? And have the audiences in those places ever seen a flashy engine like this shoot a stream of water sky-high? No. That's the answer, no, they haven't. Will they come and pay for it? The answer is yes. They will."

Luke looked unconvinced, but Susie brightened up. "I think Jinks is right, Pa. He's got something there. We'll work up an act for it right away, the big final act."

"Well," muttered her father, "now we've got it that's all we can do. But let's get going, away from this Dutchmen's country."

Next day dawned bright as a new golden coin fresh from the mint. Sue woke to the sound of barking dogs, as Nip, Tuck, and Rollover frisked about joyously in the sunshine. She could hear the rattling of wagons and harness as Luke and Jinks packed hurriedly. Sue leaped out of her bunk and dressed quickly. Her father had the fire going in

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the little stove already. As she cooked the coffee and flapjacks she could hear Jinks' high whistle—"*Gonna run all night, gonna run all day. Lost my money on a bobtailed nag. Somebody bet on a bay.*"

Sue shivered and reached for her red wool shawl as she ran out to call the men to breakfast. This was a chilly day, for all the sunshine, and the kind of weather that reminded the girl that it was time they hurried to their winter quarters. They would have to put on their show all the way to Wisconsin, to make enough money to see them through the winter when they couldn't travel. She shrugged her shoulders, standing on the wagon step, looking curiously at the brilliant fire engine, with its wheels sunk into the muddy field. "Well, if that won't do it, nothing will." She grinned and dismissed worry from her mind.

After a hurried breakfast they hitched the horses, called the dogs into the second wagon, and considered.

"How will we get that engine out of here, and on the road?" rumbled Luke, "and who's to drive her?"

"Now don't you worry yourself into a fit of shaking ague, Pop," grinned Hi-Jinks, bobbing about with a harness. "I've got it all figured out. You will drive my wagon, Susie will drive yours, with Wildfire on a lead rope, and I'll drive the engine. We'll leave Dobbs with your wagon; he's easiest for Susie to drive. You hitch Lige to my wagon, and we'll have Jonathon, who's strongest, pull the engine."

"Fine," Sue said and smiled, climbing nimbly to the wagon seat and clucking to Dobbs. "I'll take this one on out to the road and wait for you there."

"Hum," grunted Luke dolefully, "I misdoubt you can do it, Jinks. I don't believe Jonathon can haul that engine

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out to the road." But he swung his long legs into Jinks' wagon and flapped the reins against the brown flanks of Lige, who slowly clopped his way through the wet earth to the road. Then Luke returned to the field to help, while Sue watched from the road, frowning anxiously. Suppose, now that most of their money had gone into that red and gold contraption, they couldn't even get her out on the road? She thrust the thought back and kept repeating to herself, "It will, it will, it will."

Jinks had the great gray horse hitched to the engine and was on the seat, shouting, "Gee, haw, there, Jonathon. Gee!"

Sue thought, Lucky we have that extra harness for the wagon we had to abandon down in Pennsylvania in June, after it had gotten smashed up in the fracas with local rowdies. And lucky for us that we have three strong horses. She went over to pat Jonathon encouragingly on his nose and urge him on. He was a good horse for the ring, too, well trained by Jinks. Jonathon gave a mighty heave and moved his big feet slowly. The fire engine wheels churned forward. Jinks leaned over, shouting to the horse. Sue walked beside them, calling to Jonathon too, and the engine moved out of the mire, through grass and weeds, to the cart road. Sue looked up triumphantly at her father, shouting, "See, Pa, our luck is changing."

"Huh," muttered Luke, clucking to his horse, "don't talk, my girl, till you're out of the woods. The Emperor died. Trouble comes in threes. How do we know anybody'll come to see that thing? How do we know she will work even? And we can't eat red paint and gilt."

The two red wagons, followed by the engine, moved

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slowly along country roads southwestward, through New Jersey, with its Dutch and English farms, into Pennsylvania. From time to time children ran out to shout and point excitedly, but the stolid farmers and their busy wives paid little attention, even to the queer red and gold contraption. Show business would improve farther along, or so Sue fervently hoped.

Sue drove the first wagon, with the three dogs alternately sitting beside her on the seat and rollicking after squirrels along the road. Nip and Tuck were dependable terriers, black and white. But Rollover was the clown of the three. He was a long-haired dog, black, with tan legs and ears and a golden ruff growing around his neck, clown fashion. His cream and tan plume of a tail waved in the pleasant breeze as he frisked and ran between the horses' legs. At first old Dobbs, whose patience was long, paid no attention to his antics. Then Rollover began to tease him. Back and forth, in and out, between his hoofs, he ran. The horse shook his head, disturbed.

"Rollover," shouted Sue, "stop that this minute! You want to get stepped on?"

But instead of stopping, Rollover stood listening a moment, head on one side, one ear up and one ear down, then darted suddenly between the big legs moving above him, and nipped old Dobbs slightly. Sue threw the reins down and leaped to the road. She chased the mischievous little dog into the bushes, grabbed him by the ruff, and shook him.

"All right, you plaguey little rascal! Now you have to ride the whole day. It's just lucky that Dobbs is so good-natured." She plunked the dog down on the seat beside

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her, shook her finger in front of his nose, and said sternly, "Stay on that seat."

Jinks knew the route and what roads to take to avoid the Dutch counties as much as possible. One night they camped beside a tiny lake, and then went on next day through several small farming villages. On the fourth day, just after daylight, Jinks saddled Wildfire and rode off ahead into a little town to paste up their posters and make arrangements for a show that afternoon. Sue busied herself washing and mending costumes, hanging them on the bushes to dry. She was so happy today that no shadow of doubt crept into her jubilant thoughts. They had stopped yesterday to build a fire in the engine and try it out. And it worked. It was wonderful to see that stream of water shoot out of the brass nozzle, higher and higher. Then they had rehearsed an act for the engine, and even Luke had let a reluctant smile bring up the corners of his melancholy mouth. The weather was perfect, blue and gold, and Jinks, who had traveled this route many times before with other shows, knew every town and village. He had said that Van Orden would be a good town to show in. Lots of prosperous farmers around here.

At ten Jinks rode back and told them smilingly that the prospects looked good. He had made some new posters himself, three big ones, with quick pictures of the fire engine, surrounded by dogs and horses. Sue wondered if there was anything Jinks couldn't do. They had some smaller printed bills for posting, but the big ones Jinks always sketched out himself in fiery reds from a paint box that he carried. Beneath the new ones he printed in bold black letters:

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THE WATERS DOG AND PONY SHOW.
SEE THE TRAINED DOG LEAP THROUGH A BLAZING HOOP.
SEE WILDFIRE, THE WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL DANCING HORSE.
MADEMOISELLE SUSETTE, EQUESTRIENNE SUPREME.
AND HI-JINKS, RENOWNED CLOWN.
NEW ATTRACTION!
THE GOLDEN FLASH STEAM FIRE ENGINE.
THE WORLD'S CHAMPION WATER THROWER.

About noon the wagons rattled into the little town and drew up in a grassy field near the center of the store section. Luke and Jinks went to work driving stakes in a big circle and fastening wide strips of canvas to them. This was to keep the curious who had no tickets from seeing the show. Inside Jinks laid down a ring made of sections of red-painted wood and gathered the props for the program behind the canvas at the back. There were no seats, but country people were so hungry for entertainment that they thought nothing of standing all during the performance. Already children were crowding around the wagons, staring at the horses and drifting back toward the fire engine, whose smokestack puffed away with the fire Jinks had built.

"Time to dress, Jinks," called Susie from the door of her wagon. Jinks shooed the barefoot children back from the engine once more, then popped into his wagon like a jack into its box. She craned her neck around to look for Luke and saw him getting out the money box and tickets at the canvas flap at the front of the ring. She moved back inside the wagon and sat down before her mirror to finish combing her hair and arranging the orange feather headdress. Susie smiled at herself in the mirror as she heard Nip,

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Tuck, and Rollover barking excitedly in Jinks' wagon. They were being dressed for the performance too, and loved it. Those dogs were real troupers, she thought with pride. They barked and chased squirrels like any other dogs between shows. But just lead them into the ring, and they were as quiet and skillful as human performers. Now she heard the excited laughing and shrill cries of the children as they pushed into the enclosure, trying to reach the ringside ahead of the grownups.

Luke thrust his long face inside. "Come on, Susan."

Mademoiselle Susette sprang down the steps and joined Hi-Jinks, the dogs, Wildfire, and Jonathon at the back entrance. Jinks, in a long-tailed coat and high silk hat, entered the ring. In his hand he flourished a small riding whip, decorated with varicolored ribbons. He planted his feet firmly in the middle of the ring, snapped his whip briskly, and boomed out roundly:

"Ladies and Gentlemen! You are about to witness the most unique show on the face of the terrestrial globe. You will see the world's most talented equestrienne performer, and three famous trained dogs. You will roar with laughter at Hi-Jinks, a celebrated clown, formerly with Barnum's Circus. And for the grand climax you will hold your breath in wonder as you raise your eyes in the marvelous performance of the Golden Flash as it throws water to the very heavens. Now in the ring are the trained dogs, Nip, Tuck, and Rollover, assisted by Mademoiselle Susette." He made an elaborate bow and disappeared abruptly through the back flap.

Into the ring marched the three dogs. Nip and Tuck wore pink and blue tarlatan ruffles around their necks and

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tiny spangled caps tied on their heads. But Rollover entered to the laughter and applause of the crowd, for he was dressed in a red and white clown's ruff, with a jester's cap on his saucy ears. Behind them walked Susette, in a trailing flame-colored dress, with orange feathers bobbing in her black curls. Susette stood in the ring and put Nip and Tuck through their tricks. They walked on their hind legs. Then they solemnly jumped to two little barrels, painted red, white, and blue, and rolled them around the ring as they balanced on top.

Suddenly the music of a hand organ turned the eyes of the crowd to the back of the ring. There stood Hi-Jinks, the clown, in his baggy suit, with his face a wide red and white grin. On his head he wore a large cap just like the

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one on the head of Rollover. Susette bowed and smiled and led out the two little dogs, who had finished their act.

From the back Sue saw with satisfaction that the audience was pleased and that the enclosure was crowded. She sighed in relief, and peeped through the flap as Hi-Jinks bounced into the ring, turned somersaults, and juggled six golden balls in the air. Then Rollover stood on his back legs, and walked to the middle of the ring. Suddenly the crowd burst into a roar of laughter. Rollover was standing behind Jinks, waving his paws, mimicking the clown. Then Jinks brought out a hoop. Rollover leaped

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through it. The final performance for the little dog was a leap through another hoop, which Jinks set on fire. Sue peeping in, smiled as she patted Wildfire gently on the nose. The audience clapped and clapped for the clown and the little dog. With all of the hardships and worries of show life, this kind of crowd could put the heart back into them.

The rest of the performance went off as well. Luke Waters stalked out and did a whip-cracking act with a long bull whip. Mademoiselle Susette, in a short white skirt and tights, rode Jonathon around and around the ring, doing her specialty, which was a somersault on the horse's back. Then Hi-Jinks, dressed now as an East Indian magician, did simple magic tricks, to the wonder of the crowd. After him came Susette, in her nodding plumes and long skirts again, riding Wildfire sidesaddle and putting him through his dance, to the jolly music of the hand organ played by Jinks.

Then came the last act. The other performances they had done many times. But this one was new, and nobody knew whether it would be liked or scorned. Jinks brought out a stand and fitted a long pole into it. This was a straight sapling that he had cut the day before and painted in stripes of red, white, and blue. On the top he had placed a little pot of oily rags, which he lit before raising the pole. The audience clapped enthusiastically for the Liberty Pole and waited in great excitement, as Luke removed the back sections of the ring and several pieces of the canvas. In marched Luke and Susette, leading Wildfire, followed by the three dogs. They all lined up at one side. Necks craned toward the back, as Jinks drove into the ring the red and

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gold fire engine. A big fire was roaring and crackling inside the engine, and already steam was puffing out in clouds. Jinks jumped down and with great ceremony trained the shining brass nozzle of the hose on the lower section of the pole.

"Ah!" breathed the astonished crowd, as the stream of water shot out and splashed against the pole. Jinks raised the nozzle. The stream came faster and faster; higher and

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higher it hit the pole. And then, at last, it struck the very top, enveloping the little flame, which sputtered and went out.

"Hurray!" yelled the boys. "Hurray for the engine!" They clapped and shouted and roared approval, as the performers bowed and smiled.

After the audience had left the lot was empty except for the small boys who preferred to hang around the show to going home for supper. Sue, dressed in her blue merino frock again, walked to the entrance to find her father.

"Why, what on earth?" she gasped. There stood Luke by a pile of turnips, potatoes, apples, and onions, with a side of bacon, a ham, and a sack of flour at one side.

"Why, Pa," cried Sue indignantly, "did you take in this stuff in place of money? You know we never do that."

"Wall, Susan," mumbled Luke, "we can eat now anyway. And I got enough money too to buy feed for the horses." His long face grew more animated as he reached down and picked up a turnip, handling it fondly. "But I can grow better roots than this, girl. Why, one year I had the biggest turnips ever seen in Wisconsin. If I had a farm now . . ." His voice trailed off sadly.

Sue turned on her heel, drew her lips together stubbornly, and snapped out as she left, "We're in show business, Pa, and we're going to stay in it. We've got a good show. They like that fire engine."

The weather remained good. Harvest was over and the farmers in this part of the country had a little money. Their wives put aside the preserving for an afternoon to see the show with husband and children. Sue kept her

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fingers crossed and whistled gaily as she flapped the reins over Dobbs' broad back and heard the other wagon behind her, and Hi-Jinks' jolly voice raised in song as he drove the engine on the rough roads. They played in Creek Town and Nipico, and rejoiced at the rising pile of money in the cash box. Plumtree was the next stop, and they drove into it at sunset, pitching their wagons on a lot near the village. Jinks went out with his posters, returning a little later with a large honey cake in one plump hand and a huge steak wrapped in a cabbage leaf in the other.

"Oh, Jinks," squealed Sue, "what a supper we'll have! Where did you get it?"

Jinks tossed the steak expertly into the air and caught it neatly in the skillet. "Found a farmer who had just butchered a cow, and I traded his wife three tickets for the show for the cake." He reached for a knife and started for the honey cake.

Sue took it away from him and set it on a high shelf. "No, you don't. You'll wait like a civilized creature till the supper is cooked. I'll make you a johnny cake too, with lots of melted butter."

When supper was ready, and good hot odors filled the little wagon, Sue ran out to call her father. But outside she could find no sign of him. Only the little dogs barked and frisked around her, till she chased them into the wagon with Jinks and shouted to him, "I can't find Pa. Where do you suppose he is?"

"Last time I saw him he was rubbing down and baiting the horses," mumbled Jinks with his mouth full of johnny cake. "Come on in and eat, Susie. He'll be along soon. Your dinner will spoil."

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Sue took a last look around, shrugged her shoulders in the darkness, and went back to her supper. But when they had finished and she had put her father's supper in a covered pan on the back of the stove, still he did not come. Susie slapped the dishcloth on a hook, placed the few dishes on their shelf, and bit her lips, frowning.

"Jinks, you'd better go look for him. I've never known him to miss his supper before."

The round little man reached for his coat and started out, calling, "I'll find him, Susie. There's nothing to worry about." But the girl propped her chin on her hand and thought, Now, where in the world would Pa go? and why? At first she couldn't think of any reason at all. He didn't know anybody in this little town. Susie thought back over the day. Last night they had camped near a stream in the hills, but as the day wore on they had emerged from the steep hills into farming country, where the fields looked well cared for and productive. There had been one farm —her father had remarked on the fact that the soil looked good and the house and barn well built, but somehow the place had appeared neglected. He had said—now what was it?—oh, yes, "I could do something with that farm." A sudden thought struck Sue. She leaped up wildly and dashed for the cash box. She could see now that the top was flung back and it was empty. Sue grabbed for her red shawl and ran for Wildfire. He was gone. Now she was positive that she knew where Luke was. Jinks bounced up behind her.

"Quick, Jinks, hitch up Lige to your wagon and get going. Pa has taken the cash. I know where he is." A half hour later Sue, her face furiously red, marched into the

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farmhouse kitchen and confronted her father, who rose awkwardly from a chair by the stove. An old man, with his white beard hanging bedraggled on his dirty blue shirt, stood up too and goggled at her, amazed by her abrupt entrance.

"Pa," burst out Sue sternly, "what are you doing?"

"Wall, daughter, I just thought I would come over to visit with Si Higginbottom here. Had supper with him, too."

Susie clenched her fists, and Jinks, behind her, was laughing silently at her furious look. "Pa, what are you up to?" she demanded.

"Wall, Susan—" Luke frowned uncomfortably—"Mr. Higginbottom here has got a good farm, rich dirt on it, and the finest sow in these parts—with a litter of pigs. He can't run it right, he's getting too old, and wants to go live with his daughter. He's asking a mighty little for it. I thought—"

"Where's the money?" snapped Sue.

"Wall, er, right here in my pocket, Susan."

Sue heaved a huge sigh of relief. "All right, Pa," she said, "if you haven't yet closed the deal, come on. We're going back to the wagons. You can't buy a farm with the show money. How could we get back to Wisconsin without you? That would break up the show and leave us stranded. Show folks stick together."

Jinks rode Wildfire back to town, and all the way Sue and her father on the wagon seat said not a word. Luke felt guilty and miserable, and Sue felt miserable too. She knew that she was a fine performer in the ring. That was her talent. She just couldn't give it up. Yet Pa was

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unhappy. For all his big talk she remembered so well that he hadn't made a go of his farming back home. But maybe that was because his land had been so poor. Susie heaved a sigh as she climbed wearily into her bunk that night, behind the little blue curtain in the back corner of the wagon. Maybe when they got back they would have a good big sum of money, enough to get the show going next spring and enlarge it. Perhaps they could even take in Mr. and Mrs. Torinelli, old friends who had a good juggling act and who had said last year that they wanted to go with a little show. Then maybe Pa could go west and homestead a new farm. Susie sighed again and dropped off to sleep, too tired to worry any more.

Next day Sue was afraid that Luke would start talking about that farm again. Perhaps he thought that he had as much right to use the money as Jinks had had when he bought the engine? But Susie, glancing at her father out of the corner of her eye, saw that he realized that he shouldn't have tried to put them all out of show business without consulting them. Sue smiled a little and gave her father a reassuring pat as she passed him. Sometimes she felt older than he was.

Sue gathered up the dogs, after chasing mischievous Rollover into a blackberry patch to get him, and she went back to Jinks' wagon to put them into it. She tried the door, and it wouldn't open. Why, Jinks had locked it. That was funny. She frowned, calling, "Jinks, I can't get into your wagon." The round jack-o'-lantern face was poked around the fire engine. Jinks came and took the dogs. "You run along, Susie, to your wagon. I'll put the dogs in." He glanced up uneasily at the sky. "Clouds coming up, I think.

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It's going to rain. We'd better not put on the show here."

So far they had had wonderful luck—good weather, no trouble with the wagons, and no towns where rowdy boys wanted to break up the show. These people had not only never seen a steam fire engine, they had never even heard of one.

Sue refused to look at the clouds scudding overhead. But the mud was getting worse in the roads as they traveled. Evidently rain had fallen here during the night. Sue kept her fingers crossed and hoped that the engine would never get stuck in the mud. As they made ready for the show in Jonesville, their next stop, Sue asked anxiously, "Jinks, do you think we can put on the performance today?" He pursed his lips, looking upward. "The grass is wet, but these folks don't mind that. I don't think it'll rain before night. We'll take a chance."

But when Luke came back with the money box after selling tickets, he muttered to them, "Mighty few here today. They had a stereopticon lecture last night in the schoolhouse, and folks spent their cash." But just the same the show went well, and those who were there were as pleased and excited by the acts and the engine performance, as all the others had been.

The performers went into their wagons early that night, for a light drizzle had begun at dusk. Sue didn't sleep very well, and once she got up to look out of the little window.

"Hurray," she murmured to herself, "it's stopped raining. Maybe tomorrow will be better. Why, what on earth?" She stared over at Jinks' wagon alongside. His lamp was

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burning with a round yellow glow through drawn curtains at the small window, and she could hear, distinctly, the sound of the hand organ. Well, if that wasn't odd! Jinks must be getting a little queer, to play on his hand organ in the middle of the night. Sue snuggled back under the quilts. She decided to say nothing to him about it, or to her father. She certainly didn't want Luke to start thinking Jinks was queer.

Jinks had decided to put on their next performance at Beulah, which he remembered as a good little show town. But they had to travel four days to get there, under a cloudy, windy sky. That wind had a nip to it, reminding them that winter was on the way now, and they shivered under their coats and shawls. But they felt cheered as they entered the town and saw that it was larger than any other place they had played for some time. The people looked excited and interested as Jinks went about putting up his posters. They had a good crowd too, filling the canvas enclosure, which was snapping and popping in the chill breeze as Luke fastened the entrance flap.

Susette was pleased, as she entered for her first act, to hear a boy say, "Look, that's the mayor over there." As she put the dogs through their tricks she glanced where the boy pointed. Sure enough, a large pompous man, with a huge mustache, stood beside the ring. Susette bowed toward him, as she finished the act, and he clapped solemnly.

As Susette was getting ready for her somersault act, she thought of her practice hour the day before and was tempted to do something very special for the mayor. Even

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in the big circuses there weren't many girls who could do a plain backward somersault on a resin-back horse, and Jinks had told her that some of the female bareback riders in traveling shows were really boys dressed to resemble girls. Susette did the backward somersault easily, and she knew that she could do not only the more difficult forward-forward, but also the backward-back somersault. Jinks had gasped at practice when she had tried it, while tied to a practice rope for safety, and had told her that it was too dangerous. He ordered her to stick to her regular easy backward somersault. She thought of it again as her feet came down lightly and surely on Jonathon's broad back after her easy somersault. Someday, maybe, she might

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surprise Jinks—but it took real nerve and she didn't want to risk it now.

The wind was increasing, but it was not raining, and nobody left the show. As the gilt fire engine rolled into the enclosure there were excited gasps and cries. Jinks trained his hose on the Liberty Pole, and out shot the stream of water. He raised it higher. And just at that moment Rollover, who had been sitting in his clown's costume near the rear entrance, walked solemnly into the ring. Susette called him softly, surprised at this performance, but he paid no attention. She twisted Wildfire's reins about the wheel of her wagon and went quietly inside the canvas, whistling gently to the little dog.

"That scalawag," muttered Susie, "what's gotten into him?"

Jinks raised the hose a little higher. And just at that instant the mischievous dog gave a jump and dashed through Jinks' spread-out legs, upsetting him completely. The nozzle swished from his hands, and the stream of water hit the pompous mayor directly on the large mustache, sending a spray of water over the crowd. The whole place burst into an uproar—laughter, yelling, hooting. Jinks turned off the water and drove the engine out, leaving the mayor, dripping, shaking his fist, and yelling like a furious small boy.

"Get out of this town, you good-for-nothing tramps! If I catch you here two hours from now I'll have the sheriff clap you in jail."

All three of them ran about crazily, hitching and packing, and were on the road before the two hours were up. Sue was so worried she forgot, until they were well on

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their way, that they had eaten nothing since morning, but she didn't stop to cook anything. They camped some miles from Beulah, on the way to Ohio, and, tired and hungry as she was, Sue gave way to a peal of laughter at the thought of that dignified man with the tall hat dripping and shouting. She looked at Rollover sitting quietly in the wagon beside her, one ear up and one ear down, his brown eyes innocent, and she shook her finger sternly at him.

"You try another stunt like that and I'll tan your hide." But she couldn't suppress a smile.

As they left Pennsylvania and traveled into Ohio, the roads got rougher and the ruts deeper. "I thought New Jersey and Pennsylvania bad enough," groaned Susie, as her wagon wheels creaked in and out of mud holes, "but Ohio is worse. And I don't know how we'll ever get through to Wisconsin if this mud doesn't dry up."

The show avoided the main highways, except for a stretch on the old Cumberland Road, and played twice in small villages where the audience was made up mostly of children, and not so many of them either.

"Well, Susie," called Jinks cheerfully, as they dug the engine wheels out of a mud hole and got her started again, "we'll try Cincinnati. We've played only small towns and villages. We might as well play a city for once."

Sue smiled back at him, her heart leaping at the thought. But her smile was wiped from her face completely when she was back in her wagon, urging Dobbs to get a move on. She would never have let Jinks know, but there were other things besides mud and poor audiences worrying her. She felt badly about Luke. Anybody could see that

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he was unhappy and that he dreamed fondly of that farm back there with the good rich earth and the tight house and barn. It stood out all over his mournful face and drooping shoulders as he picked up a potato and looked at it lovingly. Tears sprang to her eyes as she thought of him. She pounded her fist on her knee, muttering to herself, "Oh, he isn't show folks. I am, and how can I give it up? Jinks is. But Pa isn't. He wanted to try it, but it just hasn't worked for him."

Then the round smiling face of the clown popped into her thoughts. There was a real showman. He could do anything, from putting up the canvas to throwing the crowd into convulsions of laughter. But he was a worry too. Why was his wagon always locked nowadays, and he so secretive about it? And why did his lamp burn at night, with the sound of music stealing out? Sue was strongly tempted just to come out and ask him about these things—but she didn't. There was something about Jinks that made her feel she couldn't pry into his secrets. Susie crossed her fingers and shivered in the wind. Luck had changed for the better with the coming of the Golden Flash. And it was still a fine attraction. But was their luck changing again? She pushed the thought out of her mind. Of course not.

Then it rained for three days. And then an axle on her wagon broke. They had to stop for two days to allow Luke and Jinks to get it mended. But Jinks called to her, "That's our third trouble. Our bad luck's run out. My left eye itches again."

Next morning they rolled once more, headed for the big town. But if Susie had thought the mud quite deep

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enough before, after all this rain, the rough roads through forests and farm lands were almost impassable. Traveling was very slow and very tiring, and when at last they saw the houses on the outskirts of Cincinnati, Jinks raised his voice, shouting in old circus lingo, "China!" Susie grinned. "China" meant the end of a hard road.

There were other carts and wagons on the road, all going toward the city. Susie was driving carefully between a big brewery wagon and the ditch on the other side, putting all of her attention on the horse, and none on the dogs sitting on the seat beside her.

There was a sudden snort, and one of the brewery horses reared up on its hind legs. The driver, a hard, red-faced man, roared as he yanked on the reins:

"What's this, blast you?"

His wagon tilted sideways violently as the horse came down on all four legs again and the driver got control. Sue, recovering from her surprise, had a terrible thought and glanced swiftly at the seat. There sat Nip and Tuck. But Rollover was running between the legs of the brewery horse. She pulled up Dobbs and jumped down. Just as she did so the driver lashed out at the little black and tan dog with his long whip, sending Rollover scurrying to his mistress. Sue grabbed him and held him tightly.

"You touch this dog," she declared, "and you'll wish you hadn't."

The big driver was in the road too, but before he could do anything other men jumped from their wagons and yanked him back. "Let her go, Ed. That's only a girl."

Sue heard Jinks' voice in her ear, "Come on, Sue, back in the wagon. Let's get out of this."

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The drivers went to their places, and the little dog and pony show pulled off into a field outside of town. Sue thought that surely this must be the most bedraggled show in existence. The wagons were caked with mud, and the beautiful crimson and gold engine was brown and ugly too.

"Well, here we are at last," said Jinks, trying to get out a cheerful smile. "And by all the wild men in Borneo, we'll put on a good show today and fill up the cash box again. Susie, you and Luke wash off the engine with some pails of water from the creek over there, and I'll go in town to pay rent on the lot and put up some posters. I'll be back in time to help with the canvas."

Susie made a fire in the stove and put on a pot of coffee and a pan of corn bread and some bacon. Hot food would start them out well. Then she and Luke began to wash down the engine. It was exactly one hour later when they saw Jinks tumbling down from Wildfire's back, looking utterly weary.

"Oh, Jinks," cried Sue, "what is it?"

Jinks spoke calmly. "Nothing to worry about, Susie. Some rubes in town jumped me and tore down my posters." He relaxed suddenly and grinned at her. "You see, the Webber and Clinton Big Top Circus has posters all over town. It will be here tomorrow. Those toughs are just looking for excitement." Then he spoke soberly. "Think we had better move on to a smaller place?"

Luke, who had become so indifferent that he never took a hand in any decision now, stared at Jinks, saying nothing. Sue thought a moment, her forehead creased, then thrust out her determined chin, saying firmly, "No.

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We're all ready to show here this afternoon. Look, the sun is coming out, too. The circus won't be here till tomorrow. We'll move on at daylight. There'll be some kind of an audience in a town this big."

Jinks grinned at her spirit. "That's right, Susie. We won't let 'em down us, will we?"

As Luke stood at the front canvas flap selling tickets, Sue watched from her wagon, in great anxiety. But she heaved a tremendous sigh of relief when she saw that the crowd was good enough, though not to capacity. It was, at least, larger than it had been since they had nearly drowned the mayor. Susie made up her mind that she would catch Rollover when his act was over and pop him into her wagon.

Mademoiselle Susette entered the ring gaily with her three performing dogs, and they put on a good act. But her breath caught in her throat before she had been there more than a few seconds. Standing in the front row was that brewery wagon driver, watching her impassively. There was a quick spatter of applause as she led Nip, Tuck, and Rollover out, but she noticed uneasily that there were a lot of tough men and fewer children than they usually had. She frowned and watched Jinks carefully as he went on for his act with Rollover. At the end another dash of applause, and some laughter. Hi-Jinks bounced out, and Susie saw with a sinking heart that he was uneasy too. He looked tense, keyed up for trouble.

When Sue came back from changing her costume she saw that her father was entering the ring. He looked like

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a farmer, she thought unhappily, even in the long-tailed coat and high hat. Luke could crack a whip over a team as well as any bullwhacker, but his act had never had enough dash to it to be much more than a filler in the program. Now Sue saw that her father was miserable. His long face was sad and his thoughts were not on his act. She glanced around at the crowd. There was a ripple of unrest there. Two boys yelled out in derision.

Suddenly that same brewery driver jumped into the ring and grabbed the long whip from Luke's indifferent hand, yelling:

"This is a rotten show! I'm a forty-niner. I crossed the plains to Californy. I'll show you how to crack a bull-whip." He lifted the whip high in the air and snapped it loudly around Luke's head. Sue saw her father standing stupidly there, as if dazed. The whip cracked again, taking off his hat. The toughs in the audience were howling with glee now. Then a tall man with a braided red beard leaped forward and took the whip from the astonished driver's hand. The red-bearded man turned, grinned at the crowd, and shouted:

"I'm a mule skinner too, boys. Let's see who can snap this whip better!" He whirled swiftly, and cracked it loudly around the head of the driver. Sue clenched her hands hard together. But Jinks, still in his clown suit, reached for his tiny whip and bounded into the ring. He bounced around the two men, flourishing his ridiculous whip, singing at the top of his lungs:

"Oh, Susannah, now don't you cry for me! For I'm off to Californy with a bull whip at my knee."

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With the quick-changing mood of a crowd, laughter rippled around the circle. Then everybody was roaring with mirth. The red-bearded teamster was doubled up and singing "Oh, Susannah," too. Everybody sang, and the burly brewery wagon driver moved sheepishly back to the sidelines. Jinks hissed in Sue's ear, "Time for your riding act."

Susie, still trembling, leaped to Jonathon's back and rode in, standing in her fluffy white skirt. Jinks held up his hand for silence, calling out, "Here we have Mademoiselle Susette . . ."

Although Sue was trembling when she rode in and wondering whether she could do her act, by the time that she had ridden around the ring once her poise had returned and her chin was up. Her easy somersault was perfect. She heard a loud round of applause. Then she did her difficult forward-forward turn. The clapping came again. Sue was flushed now with success. Maybe she could save the day! Should she try it? Yes, she would, though she knew that Jinks would almost have heart failure watching there at the back. Sue rode around and around the ring. Steady old Jonathon jogged along, unperturbed by the noisy crowd. All right. Ready. Set. Go! She made it. Mademoiselle Susette leaped lightly from the horse's back to the grass, bowed in all directions, kissed her hands, and skipped out.

The clapping was long and loud. But her uneasiness persisted, for she had caught a glimpse, as she stood bowing and smiling, of two solemn frock-coated men, one standing at each side of the crowd, watching her with great interest. One of them was a stout important-looking

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man, and the other a tall handsome fellow with a curled mustache. One of them might be the sheriff. Her heart sank. Those toughs were looking restless again, as if they were still spoiling for a fight. And that driver was scowling.

Jinks glowered at her as she skipped out, muttering, "I ought to take you over my knee, young lady, and whang you. You might have broken your silly neck." Then his eyes twinkled. "But it was marvelous, Susie. You did it grand."

The next two acts went well. Jinks brought in the engine and placed the pole with its little flame on top. Sue was outside, making for her wagon to change from the long orange-colored gown in which she had just ridden Wildfire. She heard a roar from the enclosure. For a second she thought it must be applause for the engine, and then an ominous sound came to her ears. It sounded like

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the crashing of waves in a hurricane. She grabbed up her long skirts above her ankles and ran for the ring. She heard Jinks yelling:

"Hey, Rube!"

That meant he had to have help. Luke burst through the crowd and in three long strides was inside with Jinks. Sue heard a roar.

"We want to see an elephant, not a fire engine! This is the town where we make fire engines. We've got better ones right here. Wreck it! Turn it over"

Sue shoved her way to the engine and glanced wildly

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around. Over at one side Jinks was battling with two men, and near the back flap her father had taken on three and, for all his age, was knocking them around. Where was that man who looked like a sheriff? Sue couldn't see either of the frock-coated men at all.

"Oh, I knew it would be a clem here. I knew we'd get into a fracas," she sobbed.

She saw the engine beside her, with Lige rearing and snorting in the shafts. Sue reached for the nozzle, and with her other hand she turned on the valve full force. She didn't know it, but she was yelling too, "I'll fix you! I'll fix you!" She turned the rush of water full on a fighting knot of boys and men, sending them sprawling on the ground. Then she moved the stream to first one place and then another. The crowd was soaking wet and leaving rapidly. Sue stood there, the water still pouring out of the hose, her satin skirt dripping, her hair plastered into her eyes. Jinks, wiping the blood from his nose, limped over to her to turn off the water. Luke was sitting in a puddle, holding his aching head. The sudden silence made their eardrums ring.

"Well, Susie," gasped Jinks, gingerly wiggling one of his two upper front teeth, "you did fix 'em."

"But what do we do now?" asked the girl mournfully.

"Get going, I guess." Jinks shrugged and called, "Come on, Luke. Let's get out of this town." They limped out of the sodden ring, to pack and hitch. Sue dropped the nozzle, feeling a bit dazed. She gathered up her skirt, wrung some water out of it, and turned to leave, wondering whether she could ever fix up this costume fit to wear in the ring again.

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"Wait a minute, young lady!"

Sue whirled about and saw the short man in the frock coat, standing behind her. He must have come in as she turned to go out. He spoke quietly but with a certain ring of authority in his voice. Sue stood and waited, unable to say a word. Through her tired brain unrolled a picture of the three of them in the town jail. The man came up to her and smiled a little. Sue recovered her voice, but it quavered as it came out, "I—I'm sorry, but we couldn't help it. Those men came here on purpose to start a clem. We'll go right now. Please don't arrest us."

His smile was broad now. "Arrest you? Why, my dear young lady, I couldn't arrest you. I'm a stranger in the town myself. Just got in this morning to make preliminary arrangements. I want to ask you whether you will join my circus. That somersault is the finest thing I've ever seen in any ring. And you a girl, too!"

Sue pushed her straggling curls back with a trembling hand. "You—you mean—you want me in a circus?"

"Yes, I certainly do. We'll give you top billing, for that bareback act. I believe I forgot to introduce myself. My name is Webber of the Webber and Clinton Circus." He bowed with old-fashioned courtesy and stood smiling.

Sue stared hard at him and then realized that he was all that he claimed.

"I always visit little shows when I can," the man continued, "looking for good acts. But you are the best I've ever discovered. I like your horse too. She's a beauty as a dancer. You can bring her with you."

Sue clenched her hands together with pure joy. Never, never had she even hoped for anything like this. Then

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over her happiness flooded the realization that she couldn't leave Pa and Jinks stranded. They didn't have a show without her. She gulped and swallowed hard, and tears sprang to her eyes. She blinked them back, thrust out her chin, and spoke calmly:

"Thank you so much, Mr. Webber. But I can't join your circus. I—I'm obliged to you, but show folks must stick together. Our dog and pony show couldn't go on without me."

The circus owner looked at her a moment, stared around at the wild mess, and then said quietly, "Well, you don't have to decide now. Make up your mind and let me know in the morning. I'll be at the River Hotel." He left by the front, and the girl went slowly out of the back to the wagons. This had been the hardest day in her whole life, but her mind was made up. They had better get going at once. She looked around for Luke.

Why, there he was with that tall man in the frock coat, the handsome fellow with the flashing diamond cravat pin. What on earth was Pa doing now? Sue ran toward the two men. Just as she got there the stranger saw her and bowed toward her, flashing her a dazzling smile. Luke, standing beside the fire engine, turned toward her.

"Susan," he said soberly, "this is Mr. Carter. He wants to buy our Golden Flash to take to California with him. It would bring us enough to buy that farm." He hesitated, then asked in a low voice, "What would you and Jinks think about that?"

"Oh," sighed Susie, sitting down suddenly on the wagon step. "Oh!" That was absolutely all she could say, absolutely all. Then a beautiful thought dawned on her. As

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the stranger's jaw dropped in astonishment, Susie grabbed up her soaking skirts and ran across the lot like a whirlwind. She dashed around the canvas enclosure, shouting loudly, "Mr. Webber! Oh, Mr. Webber!" He wasn't in sight. Sue remembered Jinks and stopped abruptly. What about poor Jinks? Perhaps she could talk that circus man into taking Jinks also. And then she remembered that he had seen Jinks' act, and had said nothing about it. Sue clenched her fists. She must try. She just must convince him that Jinks was the best clown in the whole circus business. She must and she would. She would change her clothes and go to the hotel now. No, she couldn't change her clothes; there wouldn't be time, or that man who wanted the engine might leave, without buying it.

Sue whirled around and stared hard at the ring. There was a sound of merry lilting music behind the canvas. That was coming from the hand organ, and it was "Old Dan Tucker," the song that she had heard so many nights in Jinks' wagon. That was queer, very queer.

Sue crept up and peeped inside the flap. In the ring was Jinks, still in a streaked, soaking red and white clown outfit, playing his hand organ for all he was worth. And in the middle of the ring was a small white pig, with a golden ruff about its neck and a golden feathered cap on its head. The little pig was on its hind legs dancing. Actually dancing. The music stopped. Jinks held up a hoop. The pig leaped through it. Then he held up a big card with a number six on it, calling, "What is the number, Lily?" The little pig ran up to it, stared at it solemnly with its tiny eyes, then grunted six times.

Sue edged inside and Hi-Jinks caught sight of her as the

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act ended. Mr. Webber stood there. His face was wreathed in a broad grin, and he was clapping. Jinks laughed aloud at Sue's funny expression of astonishment.

"Come right in, Susie," he said, "come in and meet Plumtree Lily, the most refined, the most brilliant, the most beautiful, the most learned pig in the world! Her education isn't finished yet, but she's doing fine. Mr. Webber here wants us in the circus, with you. We're in the big top, Susie, my girl, we're in the big top."

"So that's your secret, Jinks," snapped Sue, hands on hips, and then she burst into a laugh. "I'll bet you went back that night and got her at the farm Pa tried to buy."

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She turned to the circus man. "We'll be with you tomorrow, Mr. Webber. We'll be there with bells on."

And so at dawn next day they parted. Susie knew that Luke was happy, and Luke knew that Susie was happy, and that each must go his own way. They both had to swallow hard as they said goodbye, but Susie said, "I'll be there to see you, Pa, next spring before the show goes on the road."

And Luke said, "I'll look for you for sure, Susan."

Luke hitched up Dobbs to the wagon and rolled back along the muddy roads to the farm in Pennsylvania, his thoughts circling around potatoes, and onions, and hay. Jinks, who had one wagon and Lige as his share of the show, shut the door on Plumtree Lily and climbed up to the wagon seat beside Nip, Tuck, and Rollover. Susie, mounted on Wildfire, rode off down the road, not looking back but with her determined little chin thrust out and her head filled with all kinds of somersaults. Jinks, behind her, flapped the reins on the broad rumps of Lige and Jonathon. And as the wheels turned and bumped forward he sang blithely, "*Gonna run all night, gonna run all day. I bet my money on a bobtailed nag. Somebody bet on a bay.*"

Back in the field the Golden Flash stood, waiting for the flashy stranger with the long curled mustache. This man had bought her and was going to have her repainted here at a factory in Cincinnati during the winter and then taken to California. The sun went down behind the creek, and shadows fell across the picture of tall King Midas and his little golden daughter.

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December, 1858, to April, 1859

For two hours the engine stood in the soaking, trampled lot, utterly deserted. The show folk had gone their ways, and even curious children had left for home and supper. Then wheels rattled up the road, and the gentleman who had bought the engine jumped from his carriage. Behind him came a groom with a big dray horse, which he promptly hitched to the Golden Flash.

Preceded by the carriage and the new owner, the steam engine was pulled through the city streets and into a carriage shop, where two workmen took charge of it. One of the men said that this engine looked like the kind that was made at a factory on the other side of town, but he wasn't sure. Anyway their job was only to get it painted and the shafts replaced with a pole, so that it could be hitched to a team. This gentleman was planning to take it by rail, and then by wagon, to California in the spring.

And so, for all the winter months, the Golden Flash remained in the Ohio carriage shop, where it was scraped and repainted in brilliant colors. For, the gentleman said, this must

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be the fanciest engine ever made, since it was to be the first in the West. And when spring came and people poured through the city traveling from East to West, the engine was hauled to the railroad station, put upon a flatcar, and attached to the train in which the gentleman owner was to ride.

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Adventure 4

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Far Lands Across

MOLLY HAWKS stood, clutching her basket, like a small island in a vast sea of surging people. She stared all around the Cincinnati railway station with scared brown eyes. Molly wore her first store-bought dress, and hoped that nobody could tell that she was only ten years old and had never been out of her Kentucky hills before. She drew in her breath with a little gasp, as she heard the "iron horse" puffing on the track outside the waiting room, and realized that she was going to ride behind that terrifying thing as far west as the tracks were built, to St. Louis.

The basket moved from side to side. Molly lifted the lid a small crack and whispered into it, "Hush, Tabitha. Don't take on so. I'll take you out when we get on the cars." Then she set the basket down on the floor beside

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her and stared in astonishment at the big room and the ladies with their hooped skirts and beribboned bonnets, and the elegant gentlemen. Nobody else seemed to think the noise and smoke and crowd frightening, but Molly was anxious about Grandpap. He had gone to get the tickets, and she couldn't see him anywhere. Suddenly the crowd pushed toward her, and somebody kicked the basket, which fell over on its side and opened.

"Meouw!" yowled a large gray cat, bounding out, streaking between the screaming ladies and startled gentlemen.

"Oh, Tabitha, come back," cried Molly, running after her. But when she reached the other side of the station waiting room there sat the cat, hunched up on a high window sill, where Molly couldn't reach her. Molly's eyes darted about looking for Grandpap but not finding him.

"Tabitha, come down at once," coaxed Molly, but the cat's round yellow eyes blazed at her as if she were a stranger.

"May I help you, Miss?" Molly turned to see a tall handsome man, in a high beaver hat and fine city clothes, smiling at her with his teeth flashing under a curled mustache. She had never seen anyone look so grand, for he wore a diamond pin in his cravat and a shining ring on his hand.

She was unable to say anything at all, as the tall stranger reached up and grasped the terrified Tabitha.

"Ouch!" He dropped the cat into her arms and wiped a streak of blood from his hand.

"Did she scratch you? Oh, I'm sorry," gasped Molly.

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The man smiled down at her. "It's nothing at all, Miss Pigtails. Nothing at all." He turned and disappeared into the crowd, as Molly pushed her way back across the room to the basket and thrust the cat firmly inside, fastening it tightly against any further accidents.

"All aboard the cars! All aboard for St. Louis!" called the trainman importantly from the platform.

Suddenly Molly heard a hoarse voice shouting, "Molly! Where in tarnation are you?" She sighed in relief and stood on tiptoe to wave toward the sound.

"Here I am, Grandpap," she called, "over by the door."

A huge old man with a rifle over his shoulder charged

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toward her through the crowd and grabbed up their two carpetbags. Molly picked up her basket and the bundle of food, and ran after him as he strode out on the narrow platform to the door of a riding coach. She caught a glimpse of the puffing locomotive and saw the coaches and three freight cars behind it. Suddenly she stopped, and her mouth flew open.

"Grandpap," she cried, "what is that thing?"

The sturdy old man halted and wheeled around. Molly was pointing to one of the freight cars, which had on it a big crimson and gold contraption, reflecting the spring sunshine in a new coat of red paint and gilt scrolls. On the boiler was a picture, which gleamed so brightly that the people stood and gaped at it instead of finding their seats in the cars.

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Obediah Hawks snorted. "Don't bug your eyes out so, Molly. This must be the fire engine some rich fellow has bought to take to California with him. I just heard about it over there at the ticket seller's place. Come along, gal, get yourself inside here."

Molly felt herself shoved up a step and inside a coach, where she found an empty plush seat near a window. Grandpap put the carpetbags under the high seat and settled himself beside her.

Molly sat stiffly, holding Tabitha in her arms, her eyes fixed as if hypnotized on the window beside her. Chattering people filled the coach. The whistle shrieked. Molly clutched her cat so tightly that Tabitha gave a terrified howl. There was a sudden bumping and thumping, and the train began to move. Molly watched the shifting panorama outside the window as if it were one of those stereopticon shows she had heard about but never seen. Spring clouds seemed to float past her eyes in the blue sky, and she could see the pale green leaves bursting on the trees, and fresh-turned earth appearing and disappearing. Here and there, in long stretches of woodland, she saw lonely little log cabins standing resolutely in the dark shadow of forests. After a time Molly grew used to the sight and relaxed enough to look about her and listen to the other passengers.

Most of the people in the car were fancy-dressed city folks, who talked of taking the stagecoach to California. But there were others too, some rough-looking miners heading for Pike's Peak and the new gold rush, and some families who were planning to buy their covered wagons and teams and start on the long trail to find farming lands

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to homestead in Oregon. Grandpap twisted around and started a conversation with a stout man and his wife who sat behind them.

"Yes, sir, I've lived these twenty years in Kentucky, but now I've sold my store, and my granddaughter here and I are heading for Californy. My son Matt's out there. Writes that he is raising cabbages as big as barrels."

"It's a long trip, though." The stout man shook his head. "And when we leave Missouri we leave civilized country behind. We're going to Oregon ourselves. Been a bad year for everybody, and my farm was full of nothing but rattlesnakes and fever and stones."

A burly fellow pushed his way down the aisle, kicking aside bags and baskets. He shouted at Grandpap:

"Going to Pike's Peak?"

"No, sir," bellowed Grandpap, "Californy for us."

After a time conversation died down, and the rattling wheels became a drowsy hum. Tabitha curled up in Molly's lap, and the little girl, very tired from her journey, dropped off to sleep. When she awoke shadows were lengthening outside the window, and a trainman was lighting a small oil lamp hanging from the center of the coach ceiling. At first Molly did not know where she was, and a small panicky feeling seized her. Then she remembered and gave her head a shake and thrust out her chin, which Grandpap said was "a mite too stubborn for comfort, sometimes." Molly turned to Grandpap. The seat was empty.

For a moment she was scared, and then she decided that perhaps he was visiting with somebody in the coach.

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A sudden unpleasant thought struck Molly. She popped the protesting Tabitha into her basket and placed it on the seat. Then she rose and walked down the aisle. There was some loud talking and laughing from that direction. The hanging lamp swayed with the bumping little coach, and cast queer lights on the faces of these strangers. She heard a booming voice.

Then she saw Grandpap sitting with that burly Pike's Peaker and two other men. They had a carpetbag on their knees, with cards spread out on it.

Molly, choked with fear and rage, called in a furious whisper, "Grandpap, you promised me not to gamble."

Her grandfather scowled and bit his lip. It was then Molly noticed that the man sitting opposite him was the handsome stranger who had rescued Tabitha for her. He was smiling and was flipping the corners of a small stack of greenbacks, counting them. A terrible thought smote her.

"Grandpap, have you lost all our money?"

"Now, Molly," stammered Obediah, "don't take on. I just thought I would have a friendly game. I might have doubled our pile. You just run along now, and I'll be with you in seven shakes of a possum in a gum tree."

But Molly thrust out her chin and stood her ground, holding on to the back of a seat as the train lurched around a curve.

"Grandpap, have you lost all our money?"

"No, I've got a little left, Molly. You run along now." He looked sheepishly up at her from under bushy gray brows.

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"I'm not going till you go with me," answered Molly desperately. She knew that he would probably lose what little he had left if he stayed. The stranger turned amused eyes to Molly.

"Now see here, Miss Pigtails, no need to get so riled up about it."

Molly's face turned scarlet. She snapped out, "You—you thief! Taking my grandpap's money. Give it back to him, right now."

The smile left the gambler's face. He raised one eyebrow and spoke coolly, "He took his chance, and I took mine. I might have lost instead. It's all in the turn of the cards."

Before she could answer, her grandfather was on his feet, jerking her away. When they reached their places Molly asked despairingly, "How much have we left, Grandpap?"

He patted her on the shoulder. "Now don't you get so fussed up. I've got some left."

Molly stared at him suspiciously. "But not enough to buy our wagon and team to cross to Californy, is it, Grandpap?"

He bit his lip and ran his rough hand through his hair, standing it on end, "Wall, no, gal, no. But it's enough to feed us in St. Louis till we get started, and I'll manage some way. Don't forget, Molly, your grandpap hunted with Dan'l Boone and was the best rip-roarin' scout in the country when he was young."

"I know you were, Grandpap," muttered Molly sadly, trying to bat the tears back under her eyelids, "but we can't walk to Californy."

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When the train pulled into the St. Louis station, Molly was so cramped and weary from a night in the bumping coach that she stood on the platform with her grandfather and thought longingly of her old home behind the store in Crooked Corners. But Grandpap was brisk and cheerful, and pushed his way through the crowd into the street. Molly followed, trying to hold onto his coat with one hand while she held Tabitha's basket in the other.

This town was a brawling, moving mass of packed humanity. Her ears rang with the shouting of mule skinners and bullwhackers, driving their wagons and carts through the muddy streets. Pigs squealed and dogs barked, as they dashed between the hoofs of the mules and horses and oxen. There was a constant sound of long whips snapping and the singsong chant of fruit and fish peddlers mingled with the loud cries of clothing hawkers along the sidewalks. Everything seemed to be moving, or getting ready to move, westward. A wagon passed them, with a huge sign painted in red on its white cloth top, "Pike's Peak or Bust!" In fact, everything in the city seemed to be labeled for the gold fields. Stores sold Pike's Peak boots, Pike's Peak pans, Pike's Peak guns.

Yet Molly was glad to see that some of the prairie schooners had signs, "Oregon—God's Country," and that women in sunbonnets were perched high on the lazy boards while children thrust their towheads between the back flaps. There weren't many going all the way to Californy now, except the rich folks who traveled by stagecoach, and it wouldn't be easy to get passage in a wagon.

It was hard to find a room to stay in overnight in this city, but at last Grandpap located one where the people

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were just leaving. He told Molly to get some rest, while he went scouting. Molly curled up on a lumpy bed with Tabitha and went to sleep, too tired to worry any more about their plans. When she awoke it was dark, and she lay there a moment trying to remember where she was. The little room smelt close and stuffy. Tabitha was lazily stretching and yawning. Outside the window Molly heard the cracking of whips and the creaking and groaning of big wooden wheels, rolling from the river. She got up stiffly and lighted an oil lamp on the table. The small room was unfamiliar and frightening. Molly fed Tabitha and tried to eat a piece of pone with some cold cooked bacon, but found it hard to swallow. Just then she heard big boots tramping up the stairs, and a familiar bellow as the door burst open.

"Molly," cried her grandfather, "I've bought passage in a wagon rolling westward at daylight." A little sigh of intense relief escaped Molly's lips, for she couldn't bear the thought of staying in this town another day. The open country wouldn't frighten her, but this noisy place did.

In the gray dawn they went quietly down the stairs, paid their bill for the night's lodging to a yawning woman, and stepped out into the street. Grandpap guided Molly around the corner toward a hotel and pointed triumphantly to a covered wagon, which lurched a little sideways in the mud before the hitching rail. Squatting on the railing was a lanky man with a crooked nose. He was chewing on a plug of tobacco, with his big Adam's apple moving up and down, and every so often squirting a stream of brown juice from one side of his mouth out into the mud. Molly grasped her grandfather's sleeve.

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"But, Grandpap, we were going the Oregon Trail to California." She pointed to the side of the ramshackle wagon, where a crude sign read, "Pike's Peak."

Grandpap, with a frown between his bushy brows, patted her soothingly on the shoulder. "Now, gal, don't take on. I know we meant to go the Oregon Trail to California. But this way will get us there too. We haven't got any choice. I made a deal to help with the driving." A gleam broke loose in his eyes. "Maybe I can take a couple of bags of gold dust with me to help Matt out in Californy."

Molly's braids jerked violently, as she thrust out her chin and muttered furiously, "Grandpap, you know Uncle Matt didn't stay in the gold fields of Californy. You know he wrote that a farm was the place for all of us."

"Yes, but, Molly, we've got to get to Californy. It's the only way we can get there. And if I do a little digging and pick up some gold we can buy a wagon and team in Denver, where lots of folks are selling out, and go on ourselves."

Molly sighed and turned to climb into the wagon. She said nothing more, for what was the use? It was all settled. But when that man with the crooked nose slouched over and Grandpap introduced him as Jed Williams, the owner of the wagon, Molly's heart dropped into her new tasseled boots.

"I know that man's not much, and neither is this broken-down wagon," whispered Grandpap as he stowed their carpetbags inside with Molly, "but he's got two good oxen there. That's what's most necessary for a trip across the plains."

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The country was beautiful as they rolled across Missouri, with its farms and rolling green hills, and good weather held. Nights were cool and crisp and spangled with stars. Molly enjoyed the singing at the campfire, and watching jigs danced on the tailboards of wagons. She listened to tall tales told of Davy Crockett and how he grinned a coon down out of a tree, or of Indian fights, or encounters with grizzly bears. But when the talk turned to gold and the wonderful strikes men were making in Kansas Territory in the mountains near Denver, she got up and went to bed. Molly knew that the diggings were not for them. They had to get to California, and Uncle Matt.

Several times Molly caught sight of the gambler, riding on a fine chestnut horse, but though Grandpap was friendly with him, Molly felt her face burn with rage every time she saw him. She avoided this Mr. Lance Carter and hoped that he would leave their wagon train at the point where some of the travelers turned north to Oregon.

At last the wagons rumbled into the crowded little town of Westport, Missouri. From this place you could look to the west, and the plains stretching out endlessly, like a vast uncharted sea. Jed Williams turned the wagon over to Obediah Hawks to take to the camp grounds outside the town, while he disappeared into the saloons. Molly was glad to see him go and hoped that he wouldn't come back, until Grandpap told her that if he didn't arrive by leaving time they couldn't go without him. Molly got acquainted with a few women who were going with them to the gold fields and was thankful that she would not

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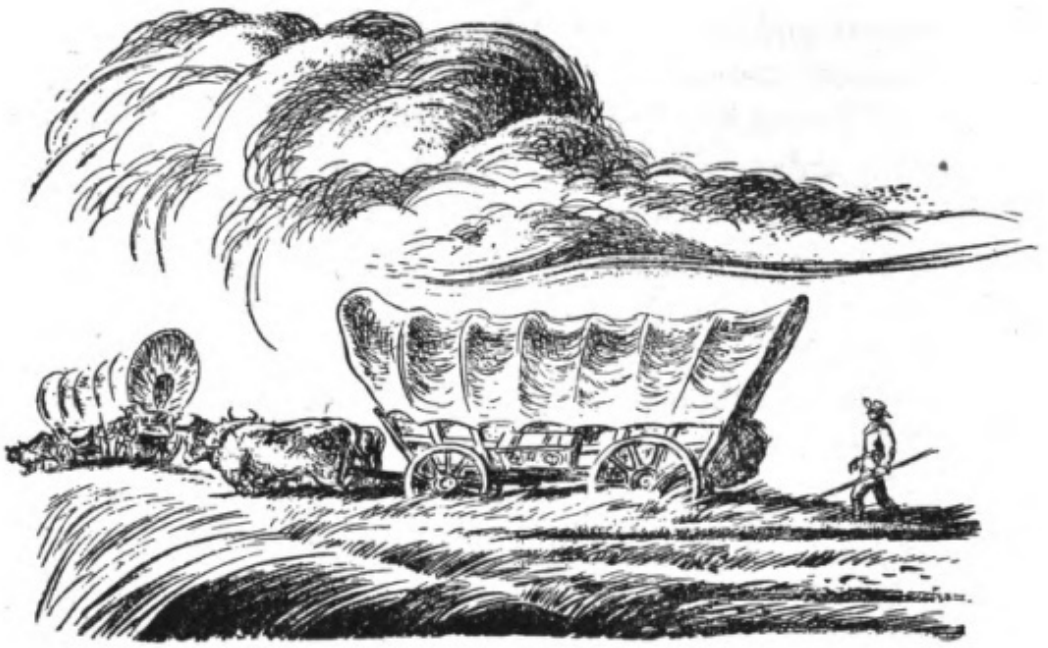

be the only female in a whole train of men. Most of the families were camping toward the north, making ready to leave on the Oregon Trail, while of those here in the grove she found that one group were traders who for years had ridden the Santa Fe Trail with their goods. The new gold strikes in the Cherry Creek region near Denver had brought swarms of reckless adventurers along this route. At Pueblo the trail turned south to Santa Fe, and it was possible to travel northward from there through the foothills, past Pike's Peak, to the gold diggings. This was April, and still cold on the northern plains. Many of the travelers had camped here for weeks waiting for the grass to spring up fresh green on the plains, to feed their stock on the way.

Early next morning, while the day was still a pale gray promise in the eastern sky, Molly shivered out of her

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quilts and heard bull whips cracking, the clanking of harness, men shouting, and the good smell of hot mush and bacon. She remembered, with a quiver of excitement, that today was leaving day. As she emerged from the wagon, Mrs. Adams, one of her new friends, called, "We're off to find the elephant, Molly."

"What's the elephant?" asked Molly, rapidly braiding her hair.

"Why, I thought everybody had heard of the elephant. When you go to a circus what do you go to see? The elephant, of course. That's the best thing to see, and the last. Well, folks starting west talk about seeing the elephant. Here it's gold they mean. . . ."

"Molly, where in tarnation are you? Get a move on, gal. We're ready to roll," boomed Grandpap a half hour later. Molly ran for the wagon and climbed in. Jèd Williams had returned the night before, and she could hear him now cracking his long bull whip on the seat beside Grandpap. As the wagons drew out to the trail and creaked and rattled off, Molly stared back with solemn eyes at the world she was leaving behind.

At Council Grove, on the Neosho River, the wagon train stopped for several days to pick up supplies and make repairs. This was the last town on the trail where anything could be bought. Molly walked down the main street with Obediah, looking fearfully at the Indians who idled about the place, though Grandpap told her that these were friendly Kaws from a reservation near by. When Molly returned to their camp outside of town she saw the Santa Fe traders just leaving with their long lines of laden mules and wagons. She thought that their own train was the

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worst mixture of people she had ever seen. Most of them were crazy for gold, headed for the diggings with very little thought for anything but getting there quickly. Those on foot were starting out ahead of the wagons, with packs and pans and picks strapped on their backs. Some pushed handcarts, and others rode horses, like Mr. Carter, or drove mule wagons. Their wagon was one of twenty canvas-topped prairie schooners, and Molly was glad that these had friends, such as kindly Mr. and Mrs. Adams in them.

As she sat in the wagon, peering out through the flaps at the back, Molly suddenly thought of poor Tabitha, shut in her basket. She crawled back to get her and then settled herself comfortably on a pillow with the cat in her lap. Molly drew the flap farther back and saw something that made her eyes pop wide open. Just behind them was a wagon drawn by four stout oxen, and on the wagon, with its glittering wheels removed and lashed on beside it, was the Golden Flash engine. Around it were piled supplies for the long journey. There was a clatter of horse's hoofs, and Mr. Carter pulled up his horse alongside the engine. His face was pale with suppressed anger, and his eyes glittered furiously. He spoke quietly, but each word was like the snap of a bull whip.

"Wooly, I told you to take my engine by the Oregon Trail, where I would meet you at Cheyenne Pass later. What are you doing here?"

There were two men on the wagon seat, one a burly old fellow with white whiskers, looking like a confused sheep, and the other a man with a long face, wearing a black frock coat, a high wing collar, and a tall beaver hat. The man with the whiskers leaned forward over the dashboard.

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"Wall," he said, "I figured that trail was too rough for the engine and too cold for me. I heard tell of Injuns too, didn't you, Reverend?"

The other nodded.

"Poppycock!" snapped Carter. "You don't expect me to believe that, do you?"

The head teamster champed for a moment on his plug of tobacco. "My contract called for freighting this contraption to Californy, in your wagon. I'll get it there, all right."

Lance Carter leaned over from his horse and snatched a bottle of greenish liquid from the Reverend's pocket.

"I see why. This pain-killer peddler hired out to me as a helper, but he's paid you to come this way where he can find good business in the mines." He gave a quick glance up and down the long line of wagons standing on the trail, ready to roll. "It's too late to send you the other way now. I was going to go on alone, without a wagon, living on the game I kill, and get to the gold fields soon." He gritted his teeth and then finished coldly, "But that engine means a lot to me. I've got to get her to California. So I'll have to ride along with you. You'd better see that nothing happens to it, if you know what's good for you."

As Molly stared at him her temper rose until she was as furious as he was. This was the rich man who could afford to take a thing like that gaudy engine all the way by wagon to Californy. This was the man who took all Grandpap's money, when anybody could see that Grandpap wasn't a gambling man. "With his fine clothes and his diamond pin. Humph!" snorted Molly, jerking the flap down so that he wouldn't see her.

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That night Molly asked her grandfather, as they stood watching the engine drivers, "Is that Reverend a preacher?"

The old man laughed. "No, he never was a parson, gal. He just looks like one. I saw him with that Wooly at the levee at St. Louis, hawking his patent medicine. I'll bet he never intended to go farther than the mining camps."

As the two lines of slow wagons bumped over the plains, they left the trees behind and saw small groves only close to some rivers. At night the women had to gather dried buffalo chips for fuel for the campfires. Molly caught her breath when she first saw antelopes, and watched the herds of buffalo in the distance. Her grandfather went out with parties several times, charging old Dan'l, his gun, with powder and ball, and came back with buffalo meat and skins.

One evening as the wagons rolled down to a river, Molly waved happily at a grove of cottonwoods. She had seen nothing but the endless plains for so long that trees seemed like old friends to her. When she jumped from the wagon she ran to the river and stood on the shore looking over, a little scared at the thought of crossing it. Obediah went down to the river bank too and looked intently across.

"Here," he shouted to the other men, "I can see logs and rafts lying up on the other shore, left by the Peakers who crossed last. We'll go over and bring them back. The rafts will get those hoofers over." He pointed to the group of foot travelers and pushcart men who had joined them when the wagons had caught up with them several days before. "And we can lash the logs on the wagons to float them over. But first we'll have to caulk up the cracks again."

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The men with horses swam them over and brought back the logs and rafts, but when Obediah got the tar and turpentine buckets from the wagon, where they hung on the sides, to caulk the cracks, Jed slouched over, grumbling. He was followed by some of the other Peakers, who scowled at Obediah.

"I could swim the wagon over without all this cussed time and work spent on caulking and lashing logs," muttered Jed, spitting a stream of brown on the grass.

"Maybe you could," said Obediah, "but you'd be taking an all-fired chance of sinking her. This is the deepest river we've crossed, and it's got the swiftest current." He pointed to a branch swirling downstream and turned to Mr. Adams thoughtfully, "Adams, I think it would advantage us to chain these wagons together. Keep 'em steady."

Jed glanced at Obediah and snorted. "Oh, you do, do you? What gives you the idea you know so much? You've been trying to hog the bossing of this wagon ever since we started out. Whose wagon is it, mine or yourn?"

As Molly stared at him, white-faced, and Obediah and Mr. Adams stood scowling, Jed leaped into the wagon, grabbed the reins, and snapped the bull whip over the oxen. They started downhill and splashed into the water before the astonished crowd could make a move.

"Whoopee!" yelled Jed, "Git up thar!"

"Jed," roared Obediah, "come back here! You can't make it. That wagon's too rickety." But it was too late, for the wagon was well out in the stream and was filling with water. Obediah flung himself into the river. The wagon swung around at a crazy angle, downstream, dragging the

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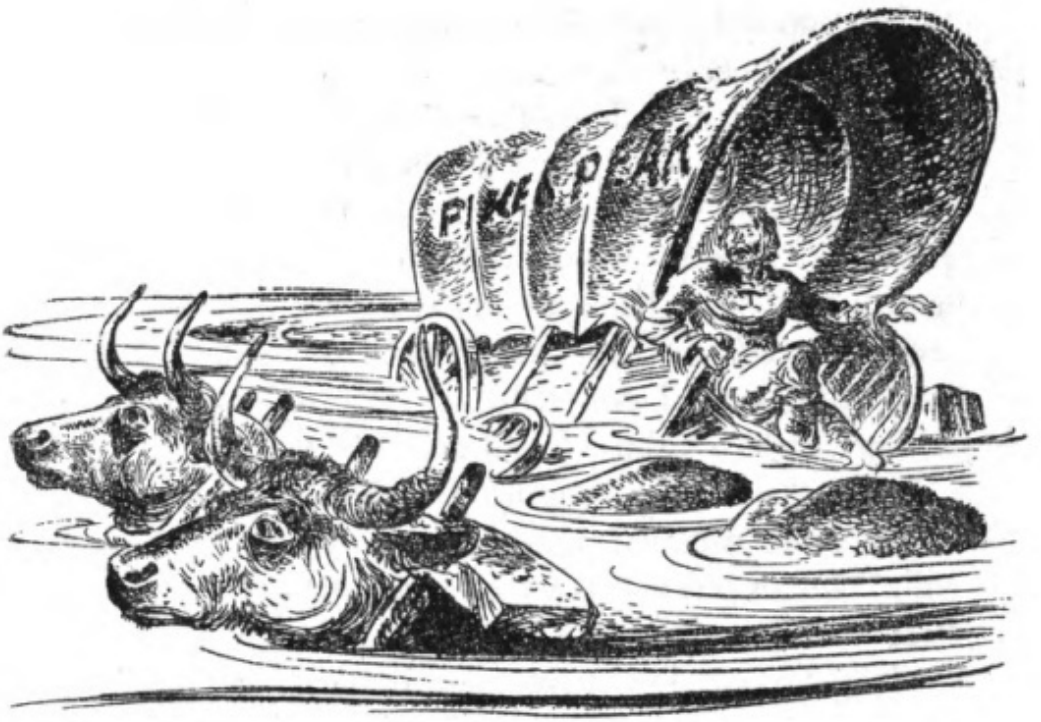

oxen with it. The dirty canvas top lay half submerged, and Molly could see their belongings tossing in the water. She cried out and thrust a quivering arm over her eyes. When she looked again she saw that her grandfather, swimming with powerful strokes, had reached the oxen, which were being pulled down by the sinking wagon. Jed was in the water now too, thrashing around.

Mrs. Adams, standing near Molly, shrieked, "Hawks is taking out the wagon pin. Hurray! The oxen are free."

Molly saw the frightened beasts swimming to the other shore. But as Obediah got the animals loose the wagon gave a lurch sideways and struck Grandpap a hard blow.

"Oh," she sobbed, "oh, do something, somebody."

But already two of the men were in the river. They grasped Obediah and pulled him to the shore. Molly ran

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to him and flung herself down beside him. He looked up and grinned cheerfully at her.

"I'm as fit as a fiddle on Fourth of July, Molly," he said; "that is—all but my right leg here. It's busted, I think."

Mr. Adams, who leaned over to examine it, nodded abruptly. "Sure is, Hawks. I'll have to set it. Grit your teeth." Molly shut her eyes, but when she opened them a second later Grandpap, though pale, was still smiling at her. "All done, gal. Now tear a strip from your petticoat and get a piece of board, and tie it tightly."

There was a shout from the river. Molly stiffened again, as she heard the men running that way and one of them call, "We got Jed out, but it's too late. He couldn't swim, I reckon."

Molly turned slowly around and then knelt to tie up Grandpap's leg with a homemade splint. Her lips tightened as she thought of Jed Williams, and she felt sorry, though she hadn't liked him. Obediah sat up and spoke soberly, all of his customary cheerfulness gone from his voice.

"Molly, I don't know what we're going to do now." Molly stared at the long line of wagons making ready to cross. They were all dusty now, but the red and gold engine still glittered in the line. A little knot of men approached them, as Mr. Carter strolled up.

Molly and Grandpap heard Hank Adams say, "Carter, these folks have lost their wagon. We've been trying to figure out what they can do to get to the diggings. There's no room in the other wagons. We kind of thought you might put that engine contraption on its own wheels and let them have the wagon that's toting it."

Carter's eyes seemed to close until they were slits. Then

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he opened them and smiled amiably, flicking his boot with his little fancy riding whip.

"Those wheels weren't meant to carry a fire engine across the plains. I doubt if they could do it—and if they did the Golden Flash might be wrecked. That engine is important to me. I've got plans for it. You can take those people along somehow, or let them go back with returning Peakers. Plenty of them come back this way." He sauntered back to his engine, where the Reverend leaned against the wagon, grinning. "Anyway," called Mr. Carter over his shoulder, "it would take too long to put the wheels on."

"All right," shot out Hank Adams, "if that's the way you feel about it. But you'll get the logs last to lash to your blasted engine. And you can travel alone. This wagon train can do without your company."

"Wall, gal—" Obediah grinned wryly at her—"Now we're in a pretty hogshead of brine. But I'll think of something."

Molly's chin went up with a jerk, flopping her braids. The blood was pounding in her head with hammer blows. She could see the diamond ring flashing on Carter's finger as he stood over there by his engine. Molly clenched her hands and marched up to him, muttering through dry lips, "You—you varmint! You know all the other wagons are full. We can't walk, and Grandpap with a broken leg. You've got our money. Now you'll leave us to starve."

He stared at her in astonishment and then fingered his mustache uncomfortably, for he had forgotten that they were without money. He reached abruptly into his pocket, drew out a roll of greenbacks, and walked over to Grandpap.

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"Here, you had better have your money back, to pay for a ride with a returning Peaker's wagon."

But the old man's brows drew together in an unbroken line. "No," he roared, "I'd see us starve before I'd take it."

It was true that there was no place for them in the other wagons, which were jammed to the canvas tops. Many of the men walked beside them all of the way. And it was true, also, that more and more of the irresponsible Pike's Peakers were returning with empty wagons, for they had turned around as soon as they found that gold did not lie on the hillsides and that it took a lot of hard digging and uncomfortable living to wash out a few flakes.

Three of the men approached and held out a pile of bills and silver to Obediah.

"You'll need this, to get you back to Missouri, Hawks," muttered Adams gruffly. "We've taken up a collection. You couldn't get along in the diggings anyway, with a busted pin and a little gal to look after."

Grandpap swallowed hard and put the money in his wallet, saying quietly, "Much obliged, folks. This will pay our way back to Westport in the next wagon coming eastward."

The rest of that day seemed a nightmare to Molly. She borrowed dry clothes for Obediah, as she hung his wet ones around a fire. She did not go to the funeral of Jed Williams, who was buried quietly under the buffalo grass beyond the grove of cottonwoods. By night all of the train had crossed the river safely, with the fire engine the last over, and had disappeared over the ridge toward the west.

"Wall, Molly," said Grandpap cheerfully, as they ate their supper, "we'll spend a while in Westport, where I

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can get a job mending harness, even with a busted leg. And in the summer we'll start for Californy again."

But that night they sat close about the fire, and not even Grandpap talked. Molly looked fearfully at the darkness, thick as ink beyond the firelight, and tried hard not to think of redskins. Several times, just before reaching the river, they had glimpsed Indians on the horizon, riding slowly along, and once had seen a line of statuesque figures watching them from the distance. These were fierce Comanches, who wouldn't attack a wagon train on the crowded trail. But two lonely whites, and one of them injured? That was different. Molly stole a look at Grandpap and saw that his hand rested firmly on old Dan'l.

"What was that?" Molly stiffened with terror at a sound from across the river. It was a rattling and jangling. Obediah sat tensely, gun raised. Then they heard a hoarse voice bellow across the stream:

"Hey, over there! Be you there?"

Obediah shouted back, "Yes, who are you?"

"Wooly, Carter's bullwhacker," came the answer. Molly and Grandpap stared at each other, dumfounded.

In a few moments the teamster slouched up to them. Grandpap held old Dan'l ready and aimed at the man.

"Put down the gun." The teamster's sheeplike face came into the firelight. "Carter sent me with his wagon to git you and bring you up. We'll cross the river at daylight. Him and the Reverend are putting the wheels on that engine, a piece up the trail."

Molly looked at Grandpap, and Grandpap looked at Molly. But Wooly was already stretched out by the fire, and so they rolled in their blankets and went to sleep.

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Molly's thoughts wandered off in a dazed dream, in which Indians, gamblers, and fire engines were chasing each other round and round a campfire.

Wooly seemed so unsociable that neither of them could talk to him. In the first gray light he was up and the three of them ate the cold leftovers of pone and bacon from the night before, and Molly and Wooly helped Grandpap hop to the river and climb on the raft.

"Oh, look," shouted Molly, pointing downstream as they landed. For there were Jed's oxen, quietly drinking. Wooly caught them and tied them to the back of the wagon. Molly felt a thankfulness so great that she couldn't talk about it. At last they were on their way again, to California and Uncle Matt, where the turnips grew as big as barrels.

Grandpap spoke only once as they rode: "Wooly, what makes that Carter so all-fired anxious to take a fire engine to Californy?"

Wooly turned his head. It gave Molly a queer feeling, for a small grin spread across his face, and Molly couldn't help thinking, Well, it's the first time I ever saw a sheep grin. "Dunno," he said. "Some folks do funny things."

The oxen made good time, and at last Molly saw a flash of gold and crimson beside the trail. When they drew up beside it, there stood the Golden Flash on its own wheels, with the pole ready to be fastened to two of the oxen. The Reverend was stretched out on the ground nearby, and Carter was saddling his horse. Obediah hoisted himself to the wagon seat and rode beside Wooly. Molly stared at the sight of the Reverend, in his black clothes and high collar, sitting on the high seat of the fire engine,

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flicking a whip over the backs of the slow oxen. Lance Carter mounted, and Obediah leaned out to shout:

"Much obliged, Carter. I hope your engine will make it all right on her own wheels."

The gambler nodded, and then, as Molly thrust her head out of the wagon and smiled at him, he raised one eyebrow and called out to her, "Maybe she will, and maybe she won't, Miss Pigtails. It's all in the turn of the cards."

That day they passed a whole crew of disgruntled Pike's Peakers, returning eastward. And in the lot was one wagon now labeled, "Pike's Peak—and Busted."

It was two days later that Molly saw far ahead of them a long line, like a narrow white-capped river.

"Look Grandpap," she called excitedly, "it's the wagon train."

From then on the trail grew more difficult. Mosquitoes stung them, as the wagons wound along the creeks, until Molly's face felt like one great red welt, and nobody could find enough wood to make a smudge fire. They had to sleep with covers over their heads, nearly suffocated. Mr. Carter rode ahead of the wagon train most of the time, but they saw him sometimes at night, when he came to get supplies, for their wagon had to carry everything for the three other men. Once Molly heard Carter cussing out the Reverend for spending more time selling his pain-killer and pills than looking after the engine.

"You double-jointed scoundrel! I'd fire you if I had anybody else to drive my engine."

"Well, you ain't," drawled the Reverend, grinning slyly as he strolled off to the fire.

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For days they traveled westward. They saw wandering Utes and Apaches several times but were not molested by them. But there were more and more disgusted Peakers returning. Then one morning Molly glimpsed ahead of them a group of gray adobe buildings, built within walls that looked to be two to four feet thick and at least fifteen feet high. The heavy plank and iron gates were open, for it was midday, and the wagons rattled into a large courtyard guarded by a square watchtower. Molly looked up, her eyes round with interest, to stare at the blue uniforms of the soldiers. This was Bent's Fort, where the Indians came south from plains and mountains to trade furs, and

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the traders came north from Santa Fe with their wagon trains. The courtyard was thick with wagons, mules, goods of all kinds. There were fierce-looking Indians, trading buffalo robes, and buckskin-clad trappers. Soldiers went about their business, as Peakers crowded the enclosure and Mexicans spread their bright goods from their mule packs.

This was the most exciting place Molly had seen. She stood beside Grandpap and heard him talking to a soldier, who wore the yellow scarf and wide-brimmed hat of a cavalryman. Lance Carter strolled up to them, and the trooper asked, jerking a thumb toward the Golden Flash:

"What's that picture on her boiler? Why is the girl golden?"

Molly drew in her breath sharply. That was something she had wanted to know ever since she had first glimpsed the engine on the railway cars. But she hadn't wanted to ask Mr. Carter.

He smiled, answering, "That is supposed to be King Midas, who got his wish when he asked that everything he touched be turned to gold. He touched his little daughter, you see."

"Oh," gasped Molly, glancing fearfully down at her red calico skirt as if she was afraid that she had turned into a golden statue. The men laughed, and Grandpap grinned at her. "Don't get fussed up, Molly. My wishes aren't answered that easy, and if they were I wouldn't want that sassy tongue of yours to turn to gold."

Carter asked about the Indians. The trooper shrugged. "Redskins? There's not much danger of a real uprising right now. The mountain tribes, the Utes, aren't exactly

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peaceful, but they usually fight the plains tribes instead of the whites. It's only the Comanches that have given us trouble lately. They sometimes attack small groups of Peakers and steal their stock. Let 'em alone and watch the stock, and they'll let you alone."

Carter, flicking his boot top with his riding whip, said, "If they come too close to my horse, or my engine, they'll get something for their pains." He strolled away, and Obediah frowned but said nothing.

Next day as they rolled out of the fort and toward the high mountains, Molly looked back at the thick walls and wished that they could have stayed there longer, where it seemed so safe. How long a road they still had to go, all the way to California! And who could tell what would happen to them before they saw the "elephant."

The road grew flinty and hilly as they climbed the Potato Hills and passed through sagebrush as high as their heads. Johnny, the little Phelps boy, was bitten by a rattlesnake when he wandered off into the sage, and Molly cried and turned away her head as the boy's father tied a cord tightly above the wound and sucked the venom out. But it wasn't long before Johnny was running alongside the wagons again, as well as ever.

Then they saw Pike's Peak. It rose, with its cap of snow, against a sky as bright as blue paint. The eyes of the Peakers glittered with joy, for they all believed that they were lucky and would find their fortunes in the mountains to the north. At Pueblo the engine party, as it was called, split up. Six wagons that had to have repairs laid over a day and a night, while all of the others whipped up their beasts and decided to make this lap of the long journey as

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quickly as possible. Wooly had to put in some new spokes in a wheel of their wagon, and the engine needed to have an axle mended. Molly saw Mr. Carter watching the blacksmith at Pueblo as he worked on it, and the gambler frowned as he saw the red paint chipped, and the wheel mended with unpainted wood.

Early next morning the wagons left the fort, followed by the Golden Flash, with Carter riding near by. Molly climbed down and thought that she would walk a while, for the air was still cool. Along the trail grew the strange plants called Spanish bayonet, or yuccas, with spiky leaves and white flowers. On her right the arid plains stretched away eastward, covered as far as she could see with curly buffalo grass. And over to the left were the foothills and the mountains, with Pike's Peak standing like a sentinel to the weary travelers. The little party journeyed into the foothills, until the landmark peak was behind their left shoulders and they entered a gulch.

This was a cool green place, with fragrant spruce and pine growing along a swift stream of clear water. The gulch led westward for a time, and then turned north into the hills. The wagons drew up under a high bluff, where a rocky trail led steeply to a plateau. The Reverend drove the engine to one side and left it near the stream. The travelers gathered around a big fire, to prepare their dinner, and as Molly worked she took deep drafts of the cool mountain air. Obediah sat near the fire, and Mr. Carter dropped down there beside him.

Molly turned her head as she heard a little rustling in the bushes and gasped. Three brown savages had calmly waded across the stream and were standing staring at the

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fire engine. The men and women of the party drew silently together, and the men reached for their guns. Molly could catch a glimpse of three ponies behind the bushes and wondered how the Indians had come so silently that they had not been heard. They must have crept up, leading their horses. Molly felt her heart thump violently in her chest. She saw Mr. Carter, on his feet now, watching intently as the Indians approached the engine.

"What's going on, Molly?" barked Grandpap gruffly. He was behind a wagon and couldn't see the engine.

"Indians," gasped Molly, "over by that engine."

"How many and what kind?" snapped Obediah.

"Three, but I don't know what kind. They left their ponies on the other side of the creek and are looking at the contraption."

Grandpap sighed in relief. "If they got down off their ponies and are just a-looking at that thing it's all right. They're friendly. But we had better get all our stock inside the wagon corral tonight and post a strong guard. They may have come to see how many oxen and mules we've got, so they can make off with them later."

He twisted around toward Mr. Adams, who was loading his rifle. "Adams, don't rile those savages. If they're friendly, give 'em a poke of sugar as a present. We'll post a heavy guard tonight."

Hank Adams nodded. "Good advice, Hawks. That's what we'll do. But I don't like it just the same. This is a dangerous spot, in the gulch. They could shoot down at us from the bluffs."

He moved over toward the engine, and Molly followed. Just as they reached the group they saw the three Indians

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move silently forward, their eyes fascinated by the sight of the glittering red and gold thing. One young brave, with more assurance than the others, stepped closer and reached out a brown hand, touching the golden picture of King Midas.

A gun barked sharply, violently. The Indians sprang across the creek to their ponies.

As the sound of their horses' hoofs died out, Grandpap roared, "You fool! You dad-blamed ornery idiot! Shooting at friendly savages! They'll massacre us."

"I didn't hit him," said Carter, shrugging. "I fired to scare them away." He went over to have his engine moved closer to the other wagons, throwing back over his shoulder contemptuously, "They won't come back."

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Obediah squinted his eyes up at the bluffs. He called Adams and the other men. "We can't camp here now," he said and pointed upward. "That's too good a place for arrows to come from. It's my judgment that we had better get out of this gulch, and before dark too."

"But the gulch here goes back some ways, along that creek. We couldn't get out of it before dark." Hank Adams frowned. "And it would waste a lot of time to backtrack to the plains and north that way."

Grandpap pointed again to the near bluffs. "That looks like a plateau up there. I reckon it would advantage us if we sent a scout to find out. It's due north, the way we are going. That looks like some kind of a trail up the bluff."

Carter, lounging behind the little knot of men, snorted. "Get our wagons up that steep trail? We couldn't do it."

Mr. Adams walked quietly over and stared up at it for a long time. Then he returned and nodded. "We could do it, but it wouldn't be easy. The trail's steep, but it's wide enough for the wagons, and it winds around between the boulders. We'd have a better chance in a fight with those Comanches up there. How do we know how many there are around here?"

Lance Carter laughed. "I'd make a bet on their not coming back. I'm not going to take my engine up that trail. It's too risky."

"All right," growled Obediah, "let's take a vote. Every man who thinks it wise to take the wagons up that trail right now, step toward the fire."

Molly bit her lips as she watched. There was a soft shuffling of boots on the grass as the men moved over. Carter stood alone. The men turned at once and went to

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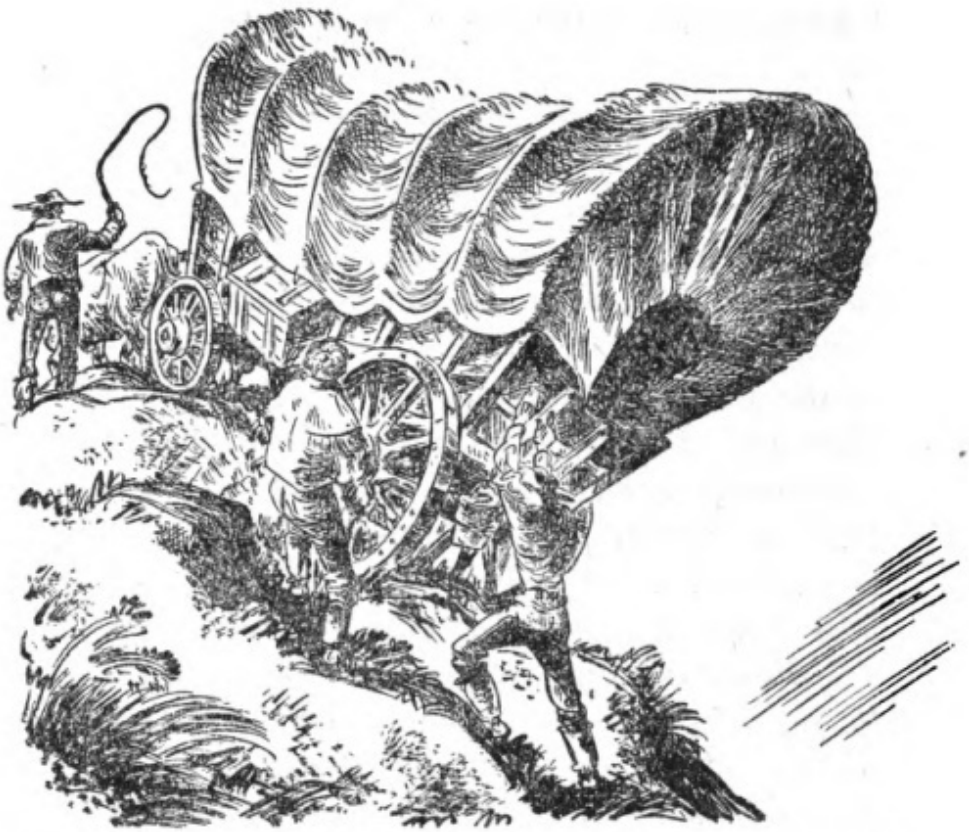

hitch their oxen, while Molly ran for the wagon and for Tabitha, to pack up. She glanced over her shoulder and saw Carter talking to Wooly and the Reverend.

Wooly was growling through his curly white whiskers, "You can stay here with it if you have a mind to. But the Reverend and me—we are going up with the wagons. I've crossed to Californy a many times, and I say it's dangerous here."

Molly stopped in her tracks to watch, for she had never seen such white rage on anybody's face as she saw now on the gambler's. Then Carter's tight muscles began to relax, his face smoothed out, and he shrugged.

"All right, it's all in the turn of the cards, and the

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majority rules. We'll take the engine up. Come over here and hitch her."

The six wagons formed in a line, with the men beside them. Molly and the women climbed up ahead. No one was to ride except Obediah. Wooly led their oxen, while the Reverend was waiting to walk alongside the engine with Carter. It had been placed last in the line. Molly crept out to the edge of the bluff, looking fearfully behind her at the grassy plateau, which extended some distance and then sloped gently to a rough trail north. But there were no Indians in sight, and so she turned to stare down at the white-topped procession below, followed by the gaudy Golden Flash.

"Gee! Haw!" shouted Hank Adams, as he started his oxen up the difficult trail, starting and stopping them when the going grew dangerous. But they made it, with no trouble except a shower of loose stones that cascaded down to the wagons waiting below.

"Gee up thar! Git along." The next wagon struggled up, around the boulders and safely to the top. Obediah came third, and Molly's breath escaped her in a loud hiss of relief when he was up and had crawled down out of the wagon. If that wagon had crashed down her Grandpap would have gone too. When the last wagon was halfway up the trail, Molly heard a loud yell from Grandpap, who had pulled himself to the edge of the bluff near her and had old Dan'l leveled at the gulch below.

"Injuns!" he bellowed. "Listen!" They held their breath as they listened. From far down the gulch came the thud of ponies. The other men dashed for the bluff.

"Hold your fire!" shouted Hank Adams, and to those

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still on the steep trail, "Come on, men, step lively. Get here—fast."

Molly was too paralyzed to run when Grandpap shouted at her, "Go get in the wagon, gal." The last wagon was coming up now, with the owner snapping his whip over the oxen, yelling at them at the top of his lungs. They made it. The wagon lurched around the top boulder and rattled across to the others.

The engine! Molly stared down, her nails biting into her palms. The engine was starting up. Around the gulch swept a band of Indians, and the air was split with their hideous war cries. Molly clapped her hands over her ears and watched in horror. The oxen were struggling upward, with Carter and the Reverend on either side. The Reverend was cracking a long bull whip, and Carter was yelling them on. The engine rocked sideways, once almost turning over.

Molly heard her own voice shouting, "Oh, hurry. Oh, hurry." It sounded strange in her ears, as if it belonged to somebody else.

"Hold your fire," shouted Adams again. "Wait till they attack."

The engine was at the top of the straight steep part of the trail, just before it curved around between boulders. The Indians bunched at the foot of the trail, reining in their horses sharply. Molly saw Mr. Carter give a long look upward.

"You can make it!" bellowed Obediah. "Come on."

Molly felt a cold shiver run down her back. If they hadn't come up they would be dead by now, all of them. And it looked as if they didn't have a chance up here

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either, for they couldn't hold off that many Indians, even in the open. Down below the Indians were staring in amazement at the engine, poised above them. What was Carter doing? Why didn't he come on? He and the Reverend were unharnessing the oxen. Now the beasts were free and struggling up the trail. The two men held the engine pole with all their strength. A brave let out a savage yell, flourished his gun in the air, and started his pony up the trail.

"Ready. Let her go!" yelled Carter.

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They gave the Golden Flash a mighty push. Down it rolled, faster and faster, its gold glittering. The horses reared up, terrified, and the Indians gave a wild howl of fright. The brave on the trail was thrown to the ground as his pony bolted with the others for the mouth of the gulch.

Crash! The Golden Flash turned a little sideways and struck a boulder at one side at the bottom of the trail. Molly whirled around to see the Reverend and Carter standing near her, staring down at it. Two wheels of the engine spun madly, then slower and slower. The other wheels were smashed to splinters on the rock. Lying against the engine was the body of the dead Indian. In the distance Molly could hear the pounding hoofs of the ponies, growing fainter and fainter. And below, looking up straight into the sun, was majestic, sad-faced King Midas and his perpetually smiling, golden princess.

Molly spoke through stiff lips to Lance Carter, who looked grimly at the wreckage of his plans. "Why did you wreck your wonderful engine? You could have gotten it up. Grandpap held a bead on that Indian."

He smiled slowly, and one eyebrow rose as he said, "Thought it would throw the redskins in a fit, and get rid of them for good. There were too many for us. Oh, I know—we might have held them off up here and made it to Denver all right. What's the difference? It's all in the turn of the cards." He walked away and was surrounded by the other men who were awkwardly thanking him.

"Get going, folks," warned Obediah, as he was helped to his wagon. "The savages might take a notion to try

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it again. They'll likely return to bury their dead brave anyway."

The wagons journeyed northward across the foothills without sight of another Indian, but when they rumbled into the dusty streets of Denver, Molly couldn't help shivering at the sight of friendly Arapaho braves standing before the stores. As Wooly tied their team to a hitching rail, Molly jumped down, staring pop-eyed at the noisy, pushing crowds. Then she glanced at Wooly, astonished. Could that be another little grin spreading across his sheeplike face?

"I'll collect my pay, Carter," he said. "I ain't got no engine to freight now, so I'm going out to the mines tomorrow."

"I'll go with you, Wooly," sang out the Reverend in his nasal twang, as he patted his bulging pockets and waved his hand at his carpetbag in the back of the wagon. "I'm going to sell my calomel and corrosive sublimate to the miners. That medicine's full of mercury, and works better at trying out gold for the boys than at curing them." He waved again jauntily, took his pay from Carter, and, with Wooly slouching alongside, stepped into the nearest supply store.

Obediah spoke warmly, "We're much obliged, Carter, for bringing us here in your wagon. I've got the money the folks took up for us. So we'll leave you now and find us passage north to the Californy trail. Must be some of these folks want to go on."

Lance Carter smiled at them, one eyebrow raised. Then he slowly took the flashing ring from his finger and placed it carefully in his vest pocket with the diamond stick pin.

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He held out both hands, and looked at them critically.

"Do you think, Miss Pigtails, that these hands can do some real work with a pick and pan?"

Molly was too astonished to say a word.

He continued, "That's just what they are going to do. I came here thinking I would pick up some gold dust at a few games at the faro tables, and then go on to outdo a gambler rival I had in California. He put up a fountain with a silver angel on top in front of the town hall." He gave her a sheepish glance. "It seemed a smart thing to do to take the first fire engine into California, and a golden one at that. I thought it might elect me mayor." He shrugged and glanced at the wagon. "The wagon is a gift from me to you, Miss Pigtails, and may you go on in it to that farm where the cabbages grow big as hogsheads. I'm off for the diggings to stake out a claim." He waved a friendly hand at grinning Obediah, who was shouting thanks at him, and strode off down the rattling board sidewalk. Molly jumped forward, her braids bobbing up and down, and ran up behind him.

"Thank you, Mr. Carter," she called, her eyes glowing, "and I hope you dig up a fortune in the mines."

He turned and raised one eyebrow, and smiled a little. "Maybe I will—who knows? It's all in the turn of the cards."

Next day the oxen plodded out of the roaring shanty town, northward. Grandpap, with his leg propped on a cushion, cracked his long bull whip in the air. And Molly, holding Tabitha on the seat beside him, called out:

"We're off to see the elephant, Grandpap. We're off to see the elephant."

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June, 1859, to September, 1859

Down at the foot of the steep trail, resting against a large boulder, was the fire engine. Above it towered the steep sides of the gulch and around it grew low bushes, some of them crushed by the leaning bulk of the engine.

Several days after the engine had hurtled down the slope the Indians had returned, quiet and sure-footed. They tied their horses along the stream and solemnly carried their dead warrior up the steep trail to the plateau at the top. There they built a high raised platform of cut sapling poles and placed their dead upon it, for burial. Each red man avoided the flashing broken engine, walking carefully around it, not daring to touch it. And then the Indians mounted their ponies and disappeared as quickly as they had come.

Summer changed to autumn, and from time to time a few weary pioneers rode past the engine, mounting the steep trail northward. But most of the travelers went easier ways, for that trail had been made by Indian ponies and was not meant for covered wagons.

Winds blew down from the mountains, and rain washed over the golden plates of the engine. Squirrels ran up and chattered from the slanted boiler, and field mice built their nests under the wheels. The engine leaned crookedly against the boulder, as if for all time, under the shadow of the high cliff.

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Adventure 5

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The Little Swallow

As the sun rose from the plains, it touched with pale golden light waving grass and a few scattered clumps of trees on the flat top of a plateau in the foothills of the Rockies. The light grew and broadened, and gray shadows disappeared as two men squatting around a small campfire gulped their hot coffee from tin cups and crammed the last pieces of last night's pone into their mouths. They looked around at the campsite, which had been invisible to them when they had rolled into their blankets there late the night before.

"Carambal" shouted the short dark man, his black eyes snapping. He leaped nimbly to his feet. "Look! See what we have been sleeping almost under." He pointed excitedly to a scaffold built of sapling poles near by and hurriedly touched his finger to his embroidered jacket in the sign of the cross.

The other man turned his big heavy head slowly around to stare solemnly at the odd-looking platform. He nodded

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quietly and boomed out, "Ya, I see it. What's it for?"

Pablo, the Mexican, pointed again. "*Si, si.* You know what, Big-Foot? We have snoozed in the spot where the Comanche buries his dead. That platform up off the ground—they put the dead warriors there for the birds to pick their bones. They think the braves cannot go to the happy hunting grounds if buried decently beneath the earth." He shivered and began to kick the burning embers about with his boot, to extinguish the flames.

Big-Foot Nick turned to his companion. He raised a great hamlike hand to brush the lanky yellow hair out of his eyes.

"How do we get down from here, Pablo? You talked me into going south to Santa Fe for the winter. You think we got enough grub to last us till we get there?"

"Grub? *Si, si.* Oh, sure, we got enough grub. We got plenty flour, saleratus for rising the bread, beans, bacon, and coffee." He shrugged his shoulders and screwed the corners of his mouth down. "I do not like the rising bread, but you bought the grub, and if I got no frijoles, no tortillas, I eat the bitter bread that rises." He placed his thumb and finger together and blew a kiss toward the south. "But soon I will have frijoles. We will be warm, so warm and happy in the golden sunshine of Santa Fe."

"Umph!" snorted Big-Foot, "warm but hungry unless we find some work down there. Don't forget we're out of money."

"But," shouted Pablo, "we were almost the millionaires up there in Gregory Gulch near Denver. By just a little bit we were almost rich. We will come back—and next

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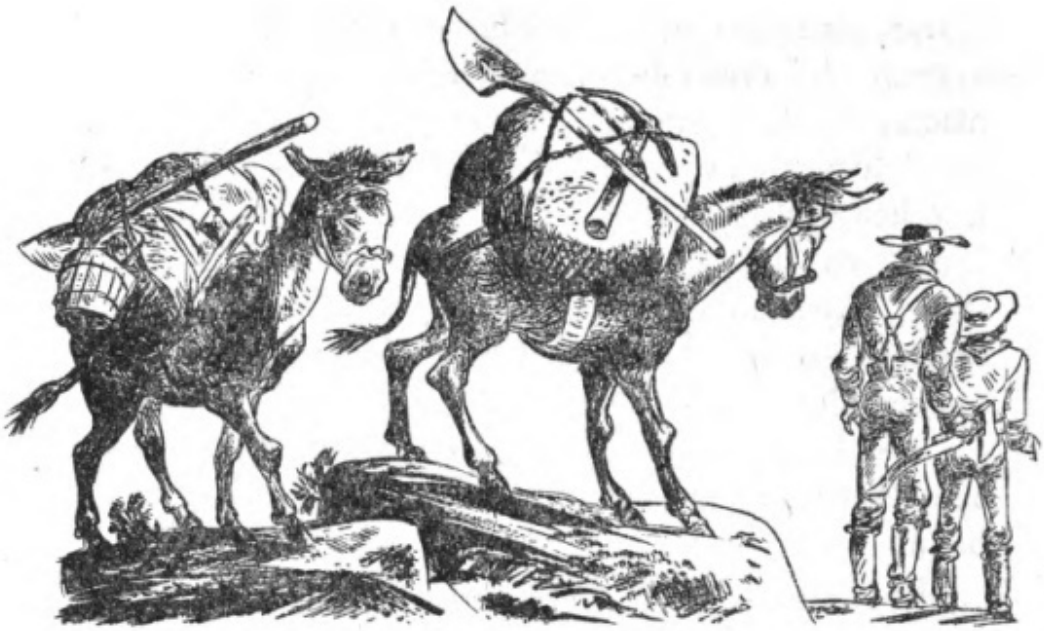

time—ah!" His teeth gleamed as if in anticipation of the gold Pablo hoped to dig up.

Big-Foot spat disgustedly on the grass. "Ya, we were almost rich. We panned all summer, got nothing. Then you talked me into coming south to Santa Fe for the winter, where you could be warm, and Walker and Riley took our claim and struck it rich before we had left Denver. Let's get going. We'll have to get jobs down there, to make enough to grubstake us for next spring." His big mouth closed, as if astonished that so many words had come out of it at one time, and he went to get his burro.

Pablo, always quicker on his feet, got his donkey ready and was at the bluff first, calling, "Here is a trail downward. Shake the foot, Big-Foot. We will descend ourselves into the gulch from here."

The big man and the little man, leading two pack

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burros, walked over to the edge of the bluff and found a steep trail down between boulders. Pablo went first, placing his feet carefully, shouting to his donkey, "Do not slide down on my back, Golondrino. *Si, si.* Remember, I go first. You go second."

As Golondrino descended second his hoof dislodged a stone, which hit the little man a whack on the leg. He bounced up into the air and came down shaking a fist, screaming:

"You throw a stone at me, Golondrino! You bite the hand that feeds you! *Muy malo,* very bad—you ungrateful beast."

The donkey, unable to go on down because of the furious little man in his path, braced his hoofs among the stones, raised his head, and emitted a loud, "Heeeee-haw! Heee-haw! Heee-haw!" The raucous bray rolled in waves of earsplitting noise across the gulch.

Pablo's angry face spread itself into a wide smile. Over white teeth, his little mustache curled upward, and his eyes snapped with pleasure. He climbed up a few steps and patted the burro tenderly on his gray nose, murmuring, "Ah, for your beautiful song I can forgive you, Golondrino, my little swallow."

Big-Foot Nick, with his enormous boots planted securely on the top of the trail, bellowed down, "Pablo, get going. You and your donkey! Ya. At this rate we won't get to your Santa Fe before snow flies."

As Big-Foot came down the trail, which curved around big stones and ended in a steep, straight slope to the gulch, he saw Pablo standing at the foot staring at a strange object lying against a boulder at one side.

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"Big-Foot," shouted Pablo excitedly, "see what my little swallow has found! I do not know what it is, but it glitters in the sun like a golden dream."

Big-Foot pricked up his ears at the world "gold" and moved down faster. He peered curiously over Pablo's head at a queer contraption lying on its side, with two wheels in the air, and two smashed under it. It was large, and bright red, for all its scratched paint and dirt, and it had an odd golden picture on its side, surrounded with golden roses.

"What you think it is?" asked the little Mexican.

"Some kind of wagon, ya," answered the Swede slowly, pointing to the wheels.

Pablo turned his head from side to side in bewilderment, as he walked from one end of the contraption to the other, staring at the golden picture.

"That looks like the pictures in the Church of Saint Cecilia, in my village in Mexico. You think she's a church something or other?"

The big Swede frowned until his brows almost touched his nose.

"Ya, she might be." He leaned over and touched the boiler. "But what's this?" He squatted down and pulled open the firebox door. "Looks like a place to build a fire."

The little Mexican leaped forward and poked his head into the firebox. Drawing it out so suddenly that he cracked his skull resoundingly against that of his friend, he danced up and down, yelling, holding his head with his hands. Then he smiled.

"*Si, si.* Now I know. That is a stove. A great, beautiful stove such as they use in the palaces of Mexico City."

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"Ya, a stove," murmured Big-Foot. "We have big stoves in Minnesota. But, by yiminy, I've never seen a stove that looked like that. What's it got four wheels on it for?"

Pablo bit his lip and screwed up his eyes, thinking hard. That was a poser all right. Why should a stove have wheels? Then he beamed, "*Muy bien*, she's a stove for a king." He spread his hands wide, moving them slowly around him. "The palace is so big, miles and miles of marble. They put wheels on the stove to move it about. The king, he say, 'My feet are cold—bring my golden stove,' to his flunkies. The flunkies they bow, and they wheel in the golden stove. *Si, si.*"

"Umph," grunted Big-Foot, "I never heard of a stove like that. What king would that be? How would it get here? What's that long hose thing for?"

Pablo looked stumped this time. But he shrugged indifferently. "Maybe it came from Europe. They've got kings there as thick as flies in a bowl of mining camp gravy. How do I know how it got here? People bring funny things out West. Remember that chest with the heathen idols carved on it we saw once on the Oregon Trail? *Si*—" he shrugged again—"but what could we do with a king's stove? It's no use to us."

Pablo looked around for the donkeys, which had wandered down to a clear stream and were contentedly grazing on the long grass near by. But when he had straightened the packs and tightened the cinches, he saw the big Swede still standing before the contraption where he had left him.

"Señor Big-Foot! Come on!" shouted Pablo impatiently. Big-Foot turned his head slowly toward him, and Pablo

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saw with astonishment that his companion had an idea growing in his brain, slowly but surely, like a pumpkin in spring earth.

"That stove ought to be worth something, if we could fire it up. Ya. If we could get those two broken wheels fixed? If we could take it to a town? If we could sell it to that new hotel they're going to put up in Denver? Ya." He swung around, his mind made up. "I'm a carpenter. I can make wheels out of that scrub oak over there, and axles too. We could hitch the burros to her and take her to Denver. That new hotel would pay us enough to grub-stake us for another claim."

Pablo dashed over to him. "*Caramba! Muy bien.* Good for you, smart boy. How long will it take you?"

"Maybe a few weeks. I'll start now."

The little Mexican's face fell. "A few weeks! But this is September. I do not like the mountain cold." Then he smiled again. "But you can do it faster than that. We will get it to Denver before snow falls. I will unpack the grub."

Big-Foot got out his saw and axe, and prowled around looking for good straight tree trunks, while Pablo unpacked their supplies and frying pans, which also served as gold-washing pans when they were prospecting, and built a fire. From a clump of scrub oaks came the rhythmical sound of chopping. Pablo laid their bedding rolls beside the fire and sang a gay song about a Mexican *caballero* as he mixed up the flour, saleratus, and water for their pone. As Big-Foot came back and sat down to strip the bark from his trees, Pablo called to him, "Indian-bone Gulch. That is what we call this place."

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"Come here, Pablo. Help me move the stove away from the rock," shouted Big-Foot.

So the two men took hold, and with much grunting and grumbling from the little Mexican, and much heaving and lifting from the big Swede, they managed to raise and pull the contraption away from the rock a few feet. Big-Foot found stones to prop the axles up on, and then stood a long time contemplating the broken wheels, figuring in his slow mind the best way to repair them. Then he nodded in satisfaction and went back to his chopping in the grove of trees.

For a while the work went well. Big-Foot got his trees cut and peeled, and Pablo cooked their meals, built the fires, sang gaily, and talked companionably to his burro. Ole, the other pack animal, stood by quietly cropping grass, paying no attention to anyone. The pile of peeled tree trunks grew higher and higher with the energy of the big Swede, who kept cutting all day and stripping the bark off until after dark.

Pablo helped with the peeling until at the end of a week he looked at his sore hands and said, "Señor Big-Foot. Why do you cut so many trees? This pile of logs, it is as high as my head now. You have enough spokes in these logs to make wheels for all the golden stoves in all the palaces of the Sultan."

Big-Foot, hauling in more logs, wiped the sweat from his face and answered, "Ya, but I got to have straight spokes. Every sapling has a curve in it. I'm a good carpenter. I won't make wheels with curved spokes."

"*Si, si,* Big-Foot," said Pablo hastily, seeing his friend working up a slow anger. "But we must get the king's

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stove to Denver. I do not want to travel with frozen feet. Do not take so long finding your spokes."

And then it rained, a slow cold drizzle that soaked the men to the skin and made it impossible to keep a fire going. Pablo looked, under his poncho, like a miserable chicken huddled inside its bunched-up feathers. He no longer sang, but only mumbled to his Golondrino, in an unhappy undertone. Big-Foot caught some words, however, that sounded to him like, "stubborn Swede, mule-headed, dough-foot," as well as Spanish that he couldn't understand but could guess. Then the wind began to blow. Great gusts swept down the gulch from the Rockies, driving the rain into their faces like sharp cold needles.

Pablo sloshed over to Big-Foot, yelling, "*Caramba!* Do I stay here and drown by the little act of opening my mouth? Do I grow web feet like a duck? If you do not

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find those spokes and get the stove fixed soon I will take my Golondrino and vamoose to Santa Fe."

Big-Foot nodded, pointed to a neat pile of straight poles, and rumbled, "I've got plenty now, Pablo. But I been thinking. We'd better build a shelter for the stove, or the rain will ruin it. It'll rust."

The little man danced on the wet grass, waving his arms furiously. "A shelter for the stove, he says. We build a shelter for the stove. And I drown myself in the water from the skies."

Big-Foot looked around. "Ya, we'll build a shelter for the stove, and for us too. We'll make a shanty around the stove."

So they set to building. At the end of the second day the rain stopped and the sun shone brightly on the soaking gulch. Pablo was ready to stop work when he had dried himself out and was able to keep a fire going. But Big-Foot had decided to build a shelter out of the saplings, so build it they did, though with much grumbling on the part of the little Mexican. At the end of a week they had a rough log shanty constructed with one side against the cliff. Then Pablo, standing off to gaze at their house admiringly, noticed that there were cracks between the small logs where the wind whistled through. He dashed to the upper part of the gulch, where he had seen a clay bank, and returned with wet clay, which he plastered in the chinks. They put on a roof of logs, covered with large squares of sod, leaving a hole at one end for the smoke of their fire to drift through. Pablo was exhausted from all this labor. He was ready now to lie around and watch Big-Foot working on the wheels for the engine, which took

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up half of the house, for they had built it around the fire engine.

Big-Foot was very, very thorough. For long periods of time he would sit and stare at the broken spokes and splintered wooden rims lying on the earth floor of the shanty, cogitating on the best means of repairing them. Then he would pick up the iron tires and gaze at them. He had supported himself for years doing odd jobs of carpentry when other means of making a living failed, and so carried his saw, hammer, brace, and bit with him. Then he had to make wooden pegs for fitting the spokes into the rims, for he had no nails.

Pablo kept prodding him with remarks such as, "Why do we not carry the stove on our backs to that new hotel to go up at Denver? That would be quicker than your making of wheels."

But if Big-Foot heard him he gave no sign, but only

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went on working, or thinking, in his own slow way. After a while Pablo got tired of sitting around and began to wander up and down the gulch aimlessly, shooting what small game he could find. One day he came in, beaming.

"I know what I do, Señor Big-Foot. I will pan that creek. Tomorrow morning I will start washing out the creek bottom in my pan."

"Umph," grunted Big-Foot, "there's no gold in this gulch."

Pablo, filled with enthusiasm, got out his pan and went to work. For several days he panned near the upper end of the gulch, where he thought it to be a likely place for gold. But with no luck whatever. On the third day he woke with the idea in his mind that he would try farther down. The shanty had no windows, and so it wasn't until Pablo went to start the breakfast fire that he noticed the little patch of white just under the smoke hole.

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"Snow!" he shouted, dismayed. "Big-foot, come look! It snows, and we are not yet ready to drag the stove to Denver."

"Ya," muttered the Swede, "ya, it snows. But what's a little snow? I will soon be finished with the wheels."

But instead of speeding up his work the big fellow seemed only to grow slower and slower, until the excitable little Mexican felt as if he would burst a blood vessel just by watching him. He went up to him, holding out his hands imploringly, moaning:

"It grows freezing cold here, *amigo*. Hurry, speed the work, pronto. Do not you know what the word faster means?"

"Ya," said Big-Foot amiably, "ya, faster means quicker. But fitting the spokes to the hub takes time. I will hurry." Then he squatted on his heels and stared for a long time at the stove. "Now what would that long hose be for?"

Pablo spread his hands out despairingly. "I do not know what that long hose is for. But I know that I shiver and shake with the cold."

The big Swede pursed his lips, then nodded. "Ya, she is a stove. I will build a fire."

Pablo rushed about gathering firewood. Big-Foot made another smoke hole in the roof over the engine stack and carefully laid the fire in the boiler. When it blazed up and began to warm the shanty, Pablo smiled and rubbed his hands together, and Big-Foot went back to his work.

But after a time the little Mexican got tired of sitting around. He talked incessantly of Santa Fe and the beautiful Mexican girls in the market place, of the warm sunshine, and the juicy fruits for sale. Big-Foot said nothing,

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but continued to work carefully on the wheels. At last Pablo could no longer bear to watch him, so he got his spade and began to dig in a corner of the shanty. Big-Foot was squatting on the ground squinting at the bottom of the engine when some of the dirt that Pablo was digging dropped down his neck. He turned his head and saw what his companion was doing.

"What are you digging that hole for?" he growled.

"Gold," sputtered Pablo, "Who knows, maybe there's gold here?"

"Bah!" snorted the big fellow. "I told you this isn't the kind of dirt for gold. Fill up that hole, Pablo. If you want to dig, go outside."

But it was cold outside, and Big-Foot had his back turned as he worked on the engine, so Pablo picked up his spade again and went quietly to work once more. He was very careful not to throw any more dirt down his friend's neck. After a time he got the pan, put in a handful of dirt, and added water from the bucket. As he sloshed it around and then poured the water off, he stared intently at the heavier deposit left in the pan. But there was no gold. So he sighed and dumped it out. Just as he turned around, Big-Foot stepped backward, and one foot went into the hole. He lunged forward, to get his balance, and fell against the hot engine.

"By yumping yiminy!" howled the Swede, as he rubbed a scorched shoulder. "If you dig any more I will crack your skull on the wall."

"*Si, si, señor,*" agreed Pablo with a smile, thinking it best not to annoy such a large man again.

But it continued to snow in little occasional gusts. The

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white flakes scattered down from the cold sky and piled against the sagging doorway, drifting underneath the poncho Pablo had hung there. And still Big-Foot worked on the wheels, and hammered and sawed away. One morning they heard a hoarse noise and looked up to find Golondrino's chilly nose thrust around the poncho.

"Ah, my poor little swallow," cried Pablo, leading the burro into the shelter. "And the patient Ole, he shall come in to warm himself, too."

Big-Foot turned and bellowed at his companion, "Now you bring the donkeys into the house, do you? How can we stay in here?"

"*Si,si,*" murmured Pablo soothingly, "the quiet creatures will stand to one side. We can roll up here beside the warm golden stove at night."

So then Pablo sat and stared at the corner of the shanty, where he had taken out a little earth. He couldn't look at the slow motions of the Swede and not feel as if ants were crawling all over him, for the thought of going to Santa Fe was like a beautiful dream.

"Why did I agree to stay for the fixing of this stove?" he groaned. "It might make us some money, yes, but what will be the good of it if we stay here until we freeze? I had trouble enough persuading the Big-Foot Nick to go south to Santa Fe for the winter. Now how will I get him there at all?"

As he gazed disconsolately at the small hole, which he had failed to fill in again, in the corner of the shanty, Pablo saw that a stone was showing through the earth. He waited until his companion had left the shanty to look for another straight sapling, and then he went to work.

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"I could sit in the sun where flowers bloom, and dream away the day. But I cannot sit here and do nothing," he grumbled to himself. So Pablo got his pick and spade, and dug and pried the stone loose. As he lifted it out he thought, now to carry it outside.

When the stone had been left in the brown grass outside the shanty, Pablo went back and contemplated the hole with satisfaction. Now it was much deeper, and he could pan out a little from time to time without annoying the Big-Foot by digging when he was present.

That afternoon Pablo blew on his hands to warm them, took a despairing look at Big-Foot Nick, who was squatting again staring thoughtfully at the wheels that he was constructing, and reached for the flour sack to cook dinner. Pablo peered into the sack, then shouted:

"Big-Foot, the flour for the rising bread is almost gone. We have no bacon but only beans." He marched over to the other man and planted his feet firmly on the ground beside him.

"Now what do we do? You fool away the weeks with work on that stupid stove. *Caramba!* Am I to starve while you construct wheels? Today I killed the rabbit, yes. Yesterday I killed the rabbit. The day before I killed the rabbit. Soon our shot will be gone. Already I feel like the rabbit. I duck into a hole when I hear a noise, like the rabbit." He leaned over and snapped furious fingers in the impassive face of the Swede. "Tomorrow I take my Golondrino and start for Santa Fe. You are a great stupid fool. A thickheaded Dutchman."

The big man got slowly to his feet. His face turned as red as the engine, and his huge hands were doubled into

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fists. He opened his wide mouth and a bellow like that of a bull roared forth, shaking the walls of the shack.

"Ya, a thickheaded Dutchman, am I? Ya, a great stupid fool?"

His fist shot out in a blow that would have knocked the little man through the wall—if he had been in the same spot when the fist got there. But he wasn't. He sidestepped nimbly, leaping over the almost completed wheels and axles, jumping wildly up and down, squealing and yelling, "*Si, si.* I am the small man. But I wring your neck in one twist, like the rooster for the fiesta feast. *Si.*"

Big-Foot lunged at him, touched his flying jacket, and missed him. Pablo got in a blow on the Swede's jaw, but

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the big fellow did not even wince. Pablo leaped aside, and then Big-Foot boomed, "Got you in a corner now. I'll make pulp out of you, ya."

"*Ca-ca-caramba!* I think you will, too," said the trembling Pablo, wedged into a corner of the shanty, beyond the hole he had dug, his back pressed against the logs. The enormous Swede, his face purple with rage, reached for him with hands that looked to the Mexican like bone crushers. Pablo's popping black eyes were fixed as if hypnotized on the big man's violent face, and so he did not see a black nose and a pair of gray ears thrust inquiringly around the poncho. It was warm inside. The burro edged himself in and turned around. Just at that moment Nick's big boot jabbed him on the leg. Golondrino heaved out with a sharp kick, which landed square in the seat of the big Swede's pants, as he advanced on Pablo.

"Ahhhh!" bellowed Big-Foot Nick as he pitched forward and landed, head first, in the hole that Pablo had dug in the ground. Pablo's breath came in a great gasp of relief, then he doubled up with laughter, until the tears ran weakly down his brown cheeks and his tiny mustache trembled with glee. There, for a long moment, was Big-Foot, stuck in the hole, with the seat of his trousers up and his great feet kicking the ground. Then the little Mexican jumped nimbly aside as his companion yanked his head out. Pablo thought it safe to back to the other side of the golden stove and peer around the smokestack. But Big-Foot's dive into the hole had cooled him off. Underneath a coating of heavy black sand his face was resuming its normal pink color, and his eyes looked quiet again.

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Golondrino stood by the engine, casually chewing a twig she had found there. Pablo, seeing that his friend was no longer furious, dashed over and with great concern began to wipe the sand from Big-Foot's face, murmuring soothingly:

"*Amigo*, are you injured by the bad antics of my little burro? I will beat him with a stick, if you have opened a crack in your skull by your dive into the hole." He wiped energetically at the sand, and then raised his hands to brush the dirt from Big-Foot's coat. Abruptly he stopped and stood transfixed with astonishment.

Big-Foot, still dusting himself, grumbled, "What's the matter, Pablo? Do you have to stand there like an idiot?"

Big-Foot's head had stirred up the heavy black sand in the hole, and Pablo was staring straight down into it. Big-Foot moved closer, and stared too. Then Pablo sprang forward. He dropped to his knees, reached in, and plucked out a hard lump, which he rubbed energetically on his trouser leg. Then he dashed to the doorway and yanked the poncho to the ground. In the late-afternoon light the sun reached in and fell on the lump. It glittered and sparkled like the sun itself.

"Gold!" shouted the little Mexican, dancing up and down, singing, "Gold, gold. We have found gold, *amigo*. The nugget must be worth a thousand American dollars."

Big-Foot took the lump, and his jaw, hanging open, closed with a snap. "Ya," he muttered in a stupefied voice, "by yumping yiminy, it is gold."

Pablo suddenly stopped dancing and shouted, "Get the spade. We'll dig. There must be gold dust there too. *Si*."

The wonderful king's stove was forgotten. All day they

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dug and washed out the dirt, and for the next three days until there wasn't room to move around the holes. Then they decided that the foolish stove was in the way. Pablo no longer cared about the cold. He dug so furiously that he sweated as in summer heat. The wheels were finished now, so Big-Foot hastily got his tools, and this time he really did hurry. He hammered at a great rate, while his partner dug and panned out the golden grains from the dirt behind him.

When the wheels were on, the two men pulled down one side of the shanty, hitched the burros to the Golden Flash, hauled her outside and some distance away down by the creek. There they left her, her new wheels looking clean and fresh on the snowy ground, and her red and gold paint dirty and tarnished above them.

A week later Pablo led La Golondrino to the top of the bluff, and there, beside the scaffold where lay the bones of the dead Indian, he mounted his burro. With the nugget and a bag of gold dust in his pocket, he was off to Denver to buy supplies and register their claim.

Down below, in Indianbone Gulch, Big-Foot Nick dug and panned in the shelter of the makeshift shanty. He raised his head and a slow, wide grin split his big face from ear to ear. From the northward trail he heard the raucous voice of the "little swallow," lifted in a loud, "Heeeeee-haw! Heeeeee-haw!"

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October, 1859, to May, 1860

Now the Golden Flash had two new wheels, complete with new axles. They were not well made, as the rest of its body had been, and they looked raw and unsightly without red and gold paint.

Throughout the winter, as the two prospectors built themselves a stronger log shelter, and dug and panned as much as they could manage in the bitter cold, the engine remained not far from them. Freezing winds swept in, rocking it back and forth in their fury, and the snow came down like a thick soft blanket. Beyond the little log hut, where smoke poured out by day and night from a newly built clay chimney, the engine gradually became a great white mound. Snow piled up about its picture until only the crown of King Midas showed above.

At last the skies softened to a gray mist and rains washed the snow down the gulch, to make of the stream a roaring miniature river. News of the gold strike had got around. Prospectors, with their picks and pans and tents, came in by hundreds, to stake little claims and dig in the mud. The Golden Flash was again hauled out of the way of the digging, farther up the gulch, and down to the bank of the creek.

The gulch was light with campfires at night, and roaring

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with shouts and curses and songs and the sound of tools by day. The men who had made the first strike had the best of the claims, and dug out enough gold that spring to exhaust the small yield and leave for better fields. Nobody else had found much more than enough to buy grub at the little town which had sprung up at the entrance of the gulch, and which provided a trading center for all the new strike locations. Then strikes were made in adjacent canyons, and the men left this one. One day the place rang with noise, and the next day it was left to the birds and the squirrels—and the deserted engine.

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Adventure 6

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Faith

It was Sunday, on a bright spring day in 1860, as a dusty prairie schooner rumbled into the little mining town of Sweden, in western Kansas Territory. Jude Abbott, with his flaming red braided beard flopping on his red flannel shirt, cracked a long bull whip like pistol shots over the backs of the weary oxen. His wife, Faith, sitting stiffly on the seat beside him, peered out from under her blue sunbonnet brim somewhat fearfully at the small town built against the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. She called to a tall, freckle-faced boy who walked alongside the wagon:

"Sammy, do you see any place for us to stay?"

"Looks like a hotel up the street there a piece, Ma. Anyway, there's a longer hitching rail there than anywheres else."

From a crate tied to one side of the wagon came a

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clucking of hens, and then a long "Cock-a-doodle-do!" Sam grinned around at a skinny red rooster's head and neck thrust between the slats.

"Hold your noise, Nebuchadnezzar; we're most ready to stop."

This was a real mining town all right. Jude Abbott's face was swathed in a grin as he saw miners' supplies stacked up on the plank porch before a general store, and watched the men swinging little bags of gold dust as they bought shirts and boots and hats from hawkers and auctioneers along the wooden sidewalks. But Faith's eyes clouded, for she was looking at the log and plank shanties, daubed hastily in the chinks with mud, and at the piles of trash and garbage that littered the small yards and the street. Pigs dashed squealing between the hoofs of mules and oxen.

They passed a larger house with the mournful strains of a hymn issuing from the open door and window. It had a sign on the front: "Church today, and next Sunday too, if in the meantime I do not find new diggings." It was signed, "The Parson." Faith winced as she heard raucous voices singing in a saloon, and then the sounds of a fight as they rattled by. Just as their wagon passed the place a hefty miner sailed through the door, propelled by several booted feet, and landed in the dusty street. Nobody paid any attention as he scrambled up, dusted himself, and limped away.

Sam's eye was caught by a thimble-rigger, who was tricking the men out of their pokes of gold dust with his little wooden thimbles and a pea on a barrel top. Then the boy jumped closer to the wagon as two horsemen

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galloped wildly down the street, firing six-shooters into the air, yelling like Comanches.

With some difficulty Jude drove his wagon to the hotel hitching rail, through the crowded street. He was just getting down from the wagon, as Sam tied the oxen to the rail, when he wheeled around. Men were running from all directions into the street. Sam dashed to his father's side as they heard a wild pounding of horse's hoofs coming toward the town from the foothills that rose just beyond.

"Whoopee! Gold! I've struck it rich," yelled a dirty old man and fell off his horse in the middle of the street. More men were pouring out of houses, yelling and bellowing

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toward the sound. They took up the cry, and from all sides Sam heard howls of glee.

"Strike! New strike at Sage Creek."

The hymn broke off in the middle of a word, and the preacher got out ahead of his congregation, for he leaped through the window. The excited old prospector dashed for the claims office, and then for a supply of flour and bacon and beans. Sam stood bewildered at the violence and the suddenness of it all, for in the space of what seemed to him only a few minutes the prospector was back on his horse again and was pounding toward Sage Creek. He was followed by a stream of men, hastily slinging picks and pans and flour and beans onto their horses or mules, onto their own shoulders.

Sam's ears still rang with the hoarse voice of the prospector, as he had climbed back on his horse, yelling, "I'll call it Strike-It-Rich Gulch, boys."

Sam heard a noise at the wagon and turned to it. Faith was sitting on the wagon seat, staring in dismay over her shoulder at her husband, who was throwing his tools and some food supplies over his back.

Jude's blue eyes were blazing with excitement as he called to his wife, "Faith, you go in the hotel and stay there till I get back. 'T won't be long. Girl, I'll dig you a pile of gold as high as that mountain over there. Sam, you look after your ma, and the team." He handed Faith his wallet.

Already horses, mules, and wagons had disappeared in a cloud of choking dust. Jude joined the mob of men starting off on foot. Sam and Faith watched his red shirt and red head until they could no longer see it. Suddenly

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they realized that a great silence had dropped on the place. There was one short sharp bark from a mangy yellow dog, and then the animal curled up on the hotel step and went to sleep.

"Well, Sammy," said his mother dryly, compressing her lips together, then suddenly breaking into a little smile, "I reckon that leaves you and me and old Nep here to get settled in this town."

Sam followed his mother into the small hotel. The place was nothing more than a jerry-built shack, with bedrooms on the second floor and one large room downstairs. As Sam came in he saw that it was an eating room and got a glimpse of a lean-to kitchen and a Chinese cook moving around in it at the back. Near the foot of the rickety stairs was a table, with an old man behind it propped against the wall, feet resting comfortably on the table.

The man opened his eyes and drawled, "What can I do for you, lady?"

Faith approached timidly, to ask, "Can we get rooms here for tonight? My husband will be back tomorrow, after he has staked a claim out."

"Wall, yes," muttered the fellow indifferently, "you can. All our rooms is full, but the new strike has emptied them for a spell. It'll cost you five dollars a room, for every night, in gold."

"Oh," gasped Faith Abbott, clutching the wallet, "I can't pay that."

"Of course she can't pay that! Those rooms of yours are so filthy they aren't worth twenty-five cents a night. You rapscallion thief, you!"

Sam jumped at the strange voice behind him and turned

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to see a man, and a wiry little girl of about his own age, whose hair was cropped very short so that it stood out in a dark mop around her face. It was her voice berating the hotelkeeper, and she was now pounding on the table with a small but energetic fist so hard that the old fellow's feet came down with a thump. He tried to regain his balance, tipped sideways, and his chair slipped out from under him. As he hoisted himself to his feet he mumbled at her in an undertone. Faith and Sam couldn't help laughing, and the man behind them chuckled too, though he spoke reprovingly to the girl.

"Now, hold your fire, daughter, hold your fire. What you are declaiming so eloquently is true, so true. But it will do you no good to yell it at Barnaby here. I shall write an editorial today about the outrageous high prices and the deplorable condition of this town." He turned to Sam. "You may read it in the Sweden *Weekly Bugle*, young man, tomorrow."

"Oh, no, he won't, Pa, for the *Bugle* won't be printed tomorrow, and you know it. Spike left for Sage Creek with the other fly-by-nights. Without our printer you and I can't get the paper out for three days."

The editor straightened his black string tie over the high collar, and groaned. "Tina, you are right again. I had forgotten that Spike took out with those other idiots. But we will do it, girl. My editorials are all that make this a decent town. They must be printed."

Tina whirled around to Sam's mother, who smiled at her, for Faith Abbott was overjoyed at the sight of another female in this masculine town, and looked it. Tina smiled back, with a quick grin that included Sam.

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She said impulsively to her father: "Papa, why can't this lady sleep with me? My bed's big enough, and our house is clean. That's more than it is here." Her black eyes twinkled at Sam. "He looks husky. We need a helper in the shop."

The man advanced with hand outstretched. "Good idea, Tina, my girl. Good idea." He pumped Faith's hand up and down, and then the hand of the surprised Sam.

"My name is Russell Gardner. This is my daughter, Clementina. Young fellow, how would you like a job? As Tina says, we need a new helper. I can teach you to set type and operate the press. Your mother can stay with Tina, and you can have Spike's bunk in the shop."

Sam said nothing but looked at his mother. She stared a long moment at their new friends, then smiled warmly. She liked their looks. The girl was impulsive, but likable, and her father's eyes were kind as well as intelligent. She nodded to Sam.

"I think that is a good suggestion, son. Your grandfather was a printer. I've always had a notion that you would like printing."

"All right, Ma—" Sam turned to his new employer—"but I can only work for you till my father needs me. I reckon he will want my help later on his claim."

"Hurray!" cried Tina. "Come on. Our house is next to the newspaper office. Right across the street."

Sam looked at Tina as if he had never seen anything like her before, as indeed he never had. She wore a red dress with bright yellow stripes around the skirt, and her bare feet skipped around so fast that it made him quite dizzy. Sam was used to his mother, very neat, and very

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gray and blue and quiet in her linsey-woolsey gowns. "That girl's a highty-flighty," muttered Sam, glancing at her out of the corners of his eyes.

When he had brought in their things, and Mr. Gardner called him into the *Bugle* office, Sam was annoyed to see Tina perched on the desk, gaily swinging her bare toes and humming a little tune. The editor waved his hand toward her as if to say, "She's too much for me," and explained, "Tina's mother was Spanish, you know. But she died when Tina was only three. Now, boy—" he got down to business—"I'll start teaching you." He ran his hand through his long gray hair and began to stride up and down the little room.

"No, I must write my editorial now. Last week I wrote on 'Gambling for Gold.' This week it must be on the high prices and the unsanitary conditions of this town—breeds disease you know. Tina," he said, "you teach the boy to set type. Thoughts are crowding me, yes, sir, crowding me right now." He flung himself into his chair and seized a pen and a large sheaf of foolscap.

Sam looked at the girl with such an expression of consternation on his freckled face that she laughed aloud. She knew he was thinking that this was man's work and that he would be ashamed to have to learn a man's job from a girl. Tina leaped down from the desk and danced into the print shop at the back.

"Come along, you lunkhead," she called teasingly, "you look stupid enough, but I'll teach you typesetting."

Sam's face slowly reddened. He followed her and stood obediently looking at the type cases, trying to memorize the bits of metal type and to learn to line them up

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together in the stick. His fingers all felt like thumbs, and he was uncomfortable because he suspected that this girl really did know how to set type, and expertly too. Sam thrust out his lower lip, as he had done when he was a small boy back in Missouri and his mother had made him do a job that he disliked, such as raking out the chicken coop.

"All right," said Tina Briskly, "you take the metal letters out of the type case and line them up in this little box, which is called a stick. Like this—with blank metal spaces in between words."

Sam took the stick, and slowly found the letters, and fitted them into the stick. When he had it almost finished he found that he couldn't quite get a space into the last line. Annoyed, he grasped the small piece and tried to force it in. And when he did that the whole collection

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of bits of metal seemed to fly out at him and scatter all over the ink-stained floor.

Tina raged, "You silly lunkhead, now see what you've done! You've pied the type. We have it all to do over."

She fell to gathering up the type from the floor and angrily putting it back in its proper compartments in the case. Sam bit his lip and turned on his heel to stamp out. Then he remembered his mother. He swallowed his anger and got down on his hands and knees too. Tina's temper sizzled out as quickly as it had flared, and she showed him quite patiently how to do it over.

"All right," she said at last, "you just keep it up. I'm going home to cook supper." She disappeared in a flying streak of red and yellow.

When Sam and Mr. Gardner came into the little house next door they found supper on the table, and fell to with good appetites. But Sam had taken only one bite of his pie when he shot a glance at his mother, and found her frowning at him. She knew that he was thinking, Maybe that girl can set type, but she makes a piece of pie that would choke a mule.

Faith only said, serenely, "Tina, you are so clever in your father's office, and have so much to do there without the printer, suppose you let me do the cooking from now on."

The next few days were miserable ones for Sam, for he had to spend most of his time as the unwilling pupil of that Tina. She taught him skillfully, but she teased him unmercifully. There were only two reasons why Sam stayed there at all. One was, of course, his mother's circumstances, and the other was the fact that he liked the

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smell of ink and paper in the print shop. He liked the Washington flat-bed press, and he got satisfaction out of poring over the editorials, setting them laboriously in type, and then printing them.

There was one time when he was able to laugh at Tina too, when Faith's first luscious dried-apple pie appeared on the table, and Russell Gardner exclaimed, "This is a heavenly concoction, Mrs. Abbott, food fit for the gods. Clementina, by comparison your pie tastes like a piece of leather from a miner's boot."

Tina had flung herself out of the house like a young whirlwind and had not returned in a subdued mood until dark.

Every day Sam and Faith expected Jude to come back, for some of the miners were returning to town now. They all reported that the strike wasn't so good after all, that the mountain rat, old Sourdough Duke, hadn't panned out as much as he thought he was going to. There was some luck, but mostly by those who had got there on mules and horses and taken up the best claims along the creek. But there was no word of Jude Abbott. Sam saw a worried crease on his mother's forehead as she bent over her cooking. "What's the matter, Ma?" he asked.

"Why, Sam, I had expected your father back before now. It's been more than a week since he left. I've been paying for what we eat, but our money's gone." She gave him a desperate look. "If he doesn't come soon, I'll start baking my pies for sale again, as I did that time he was freighting cargoes across the plains for Wells-Fargo, and didn't get back for so long. Folks seem to like my pies."

"They sure do, Ma," said Sam heartily; "they're the best

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pies in Kansas Territory. Don't you fret now. Pa will be back soon."

But she did fret, and Sam knew it. He started looking for somebody from the diggings who had seen his father. At last he found a man who said:

"That big fellow with the red braided beard? Sure, I've seen him. For a while he was up at Sage Creek, then he started roaming around. Last time I saw him he was over in that worked-out Indianbone Gulch. Said he thought he could find a claim there deserted by some prospector who hadn't worked it out enough to get the gold that might be in it."

Faith said sadly, when Sam told her, "Sam, your pa's got the gold fever. It's raging around in him so tempestuous that he can't remember we're alive hardly. But he must need something to eat by now. You take him out some things tomorrow."

She set to work baking corn pone and pies, and packed them up with a slab of bacon. Sam looked at her unhappily, for he knew that his mother wanted, more than any amount of gold, a small house painted white, with verbenas and sweet william growing by the door. She had hoped that Jude would be satisfied to leave the gold fields after a little try at them, and travel on to the far Oregon country.

Sam went back to the newspaper office and got to work helping Tina and Mr. Gardner get the paper printed. This was the second issue that he had helped bring out, and already Mr. Gardner had said, "Boy, you have a true hand with that press. You're going to make a real printer."

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Sam grinned, pleased, and rubbed a spot of ink off the end of his nose with the back of his hand. He had always liked machinery and back in Missouri had spent all of his free time hanging around the steamboat engines on the river.

Early next morning, as the sun touched the tops of the far hills, Sam set out with a pack on his back toward Indianbone Gulch. Tina had told him exactly how to find it, for it was only a few miles around the next hill, and Mr. Gardner had said that he need not hurry back. All the way into the lovely green canyon, and up to the gulch, Sam thought about their family problems and wondered what they could do. At last he came to the same conclusion that his father had reached. They must have money, and the quickest, though not the surest, way was to locate gold.

Sam followed the course of Golondrino Creek from the town into the green valley that led westward through the hills, until he entered Indianbone Gulch. As he stepped along with the long slouching walk that had brought him across the plains beside the oxen, he turned his eyes upward to a high bluff on his right. At the top of a steep trail up the rocky slope he could see the bare outline of a scaffold where he knew that the bones of an Indian brave were lying. At the base of the bluff, not far from the trail, was a series of deep excavations, and a pile of weather-stained logs that had once been a shanty, with a board lean-to. Lying on the long grass near by was a battered sign, reading, "La Golondrino Gold Mine." Sam saw then that the ground was pitted all along the creek, and back to the hills, with holes, now abandoned by

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the miners, and some of them already overgrown with weeds.

The boy stood a moment and considered. Then, from a little farther up the gulch, he heard a sloshing sound. Sam pushed forward and presently got a glimpse of broad red flannel shoulders and a braided red beard bent over a pan. Jude glanced up, and then frowned.

"What are you doing out here, Sam? Did your mother send you?"

"Yes," Sam spoke quietly, "she thought you'd want some grub. We're staying with the editor of the Sweden

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Bugle now, and his daughter. Ma's taken to baking pies for sale, and I got hired to help print the paper."

Jude scowled and snapped angrily, "You seem to be doing all right for yourselves. But you and your ma won't have to do that long. I've found signs of gold here, and I was planning to come back to get my tools and build a sluice box to get along faster. I can use those old boards from that broken-down lean-to up the gulch. I want to register my claim too. Those fly-by-nights who dug up here last year just scratched the surface. I think there's a vein here, if I work hard to find it. The Mexican and the Swede struck it rich. I don't believe they got it all. I haven't found much, but I've got hopes for this claim."

The two sat down to eat, and Jude talked about his plans for a homemade sluice box, called a long tom, which would wash down a lot of dirt at once, leaving the flakes of gold caught with sand in the riffles of the box. Suddenly Sam pointed toward a gleam of crimson that he could see in a clump of bushes.

"What's that, Pa?"

His father shrugged. "Oh, that's just an old fire engine somebody dumped down here. They say that's what the Swede and the Mexican were using for a stove when they found a nugget as big as a potato. Maybe it wasn't that big, but that's what they say."

Sam went over to pull the branches of the bushes aside and stare in amazement at the engine.

" 'The Golden Flash.' It's kind of rusty and dirty, but it's got fresh-made wheels on it; leastways they are newer than the rest of the contraption. It's on a slope here. If I

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dig out some of these rocks holding the wheels I think we could roll it down to the creek, Pa."

Jude got to his feet and roared out at Sam, irritably, "Leave that thing alone, Sam, and come down here and start digging. What's the sense in wasting time on that contraption?"

Sam stiffened, and his face paled. In all of his thirteen years he had never heard his father speak like that to him. He walked silently down to the creek and picked up the spade. Jude, holding the pan, suddenly flung it away from him. It hit the ground with a clang.

"This panning's no good. I've got to work harder and faster. You'd better go back to town and get my tools, so I can make a sluice box." Sam turned without a word and started down the creek.

"And Sam," called his father, "bring the team and wagon back with you. And go to the claims office and register my claim. What'll I call it?"

Sam faced him, and then asked, "How about the Golden Flash Mine? That's a good name."

Jude answered carelessly, "Oh, I reckon so. That's as good as any name."

He shrugged his big shoulders again and strode off up the creek, picking up handfuls of dirt here and there, staring at them intently. Sam went back to town thoughtfully and not too happily. He decided not to tell his mother what a bad humor his father was in. Jude had always been easygoing and good-natured, always as far back as the boy could remember.

When Sam had seen his mother and collected the tools and hitched up the oxen, he went into the shop.

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"Mr. Gardner," he said, biting his upper lip between his teeth, "my pa needs me for a few days. I'll be back by the time you need help to print the next paper, I reckon."

"All right, boy," said the editor, scratching away at his writing.

Sam turned back as he was leaving, looking eagerly at the two wrenches in the shop, thinking, If I take them along, maybe I can see how that engine works.

"Can I borrow those wrenches for a spell?" he asked.

"All right, my boy, all right," replied the editor, trying to keep his thoughts on his article, "take what you need."

When Sam drove the wagon into the gulch Jude got up from the ground, and was so absorbed immediately in starting his sluice box that he hardly spoke to the boy, beyond saying, "That's good," when Sam told him that Faith was well.

Sam spoke diffidently, "Anything I can do to help, Pa?"

"No, not now," answered Jude, as he hauled out his tools and started to work, "a little later."

Sam wandered over to the engine and pulled back the bushes. "She's a wonder to behold!" he breathed admiringly, "a jim-dandy wonder." He walked all around the engine, looking at the workings of it. Then he glanced back at his father, working down by the creek. Suddenly the boy stiffened, and his eyes almost popped out with an idea. He felt scared to say anything about it. But he had hung around the steamboat engines so much back in Missouri that he knew he could do it.

"Pa—" his voice sounded remote to him—"looka here. I can figure how this engine works. You build a fire in the

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firebox. That heats the water you put in the boiler. The steam starts her to pumping water from the creek here, and out it squirts from the hose. Pa—" his voice rose shrilly and then deepened suddenly, in his eagerness—"Pa, if I can get her to pumping we can use her with the sluice box. We can pump water down the long tom so fast if there's gold in that creek dirt we'll get it out like a streak of lightning."

Jude straightened his back and stood up. He stared as if he thought his son had gone silly. Then he looked at the engine again. His eyes lit up, and he slapped Sam so hard on the back that the boy staggered and had to catch his balance.

"Sonny," roared his father, "that is a rip-roaring scheme. Think you can get her to going?"

For three days Sam worked carefully and patiently, while Jude made the long tom. Sam took the engine apart with the wrenches and got the grease pail from the wagon. It required a lot of rubbing with sand to get the corrosion from the brass pistons and cylinders, but he worked harder than he had ever done before. He carefully wrapped the breaks in the hose with strips torn from his other shirt and smeared them with tar. Sam labored until it was so dark each night that he couldn't see to do more.

Both of them were up at daylight. When Jude had finished his long tom and Sam had the engine oiled and cleaned, they hitched the oxen to the Golden Flash and hauled it to the bank of the creek. There they backed it down into the water until the hose, which was supposed to be screwed to a hydrant, was out in the stream. Jude

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was unhitching the oxen when he heard a wild yell from Sam and looked up.

"Yippee!" yelled Sam, "I've done it, Pa."

Jude grinned, then cocked his head to one side. "Now you turn her off, boy, and stir your stumps back to town. Your ma'll think a grizzly has got you by now. And you promised to get that paper out. I'll work it till you get back."

Sam reluctantly shut off the engine, wound the hose back on its hooks with great care, and started to town. He heard Jude calling to him, "Come back soon as you can, Sam. We're going to make a gold strike here that'll make the Golondrino Mine look like piker's stuff."

Sam's thoughts were swirling with engines and huge piles of gold. As he loped into the shanty town of Sweden, he found he was starting to run in his excitement. He decided that he would tell Mr. Gardner that he was quitting. They could get along without him. He dashed up the steps and into the house, calling:

"Mal Ma, where are you?"

Suddenly Tina popped out of his mother's room and closed the door gently. Sam's next shout died on his lips, for Tina's whirlwind movements were gone. Her dark clouds of hair framed a face as white as milk, and she spoke quietly, soberly.

"Sam, your ma's been taken sick, very sick. Pa says it's mountain fever, and that the filthy conditions of this town are responsible. He's out now looking for old Doc Turnipseed. Trouble is, if the Doc's sober he's in the diggings, and if he's in town he's drunk. But Pa says if you can catch Doc sober he's the best sawbones in all Kansas Territory."

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Sam, without a word, crept into his mother's room. One look at his mother's face shook him so that Tina, suddenly quite grown-up, for all her gay dress and bare feet, took him gently by the arm and pulled him out.

"Now you go look for Pa," she said firmly, "and help him find Doc. Then you'd better get your own pa from the diggings."

Sam stumbled out of the house and stood in the bright sunshine, feeling dazed. He didn't know where to look for Mr. Gardner. Abruptly a sound hit his ears, a shuffling and stumbling sound. Down the street came Russell Gardner, his string tie hiked up under one ear. He was dragging along by the arm a stout man in a dingy black suit with a long-tailed coat. The man had a high beaver hat stuck on the back of a bald pink head, and little wisps of cottony hair stuck out around his ears. He clutched a battered black bag in one hand and was mumbling in an annoyed undertone. Sam sprang forward, and helped get the old doctor into the kitchen, leaving the door open to take care of the strong fumes of whisky.

Then they took turns, Sam and the editor, shaking and pounding the doctor, telling him over and over about Faith's sickness, asking what to do. Tina slipped out of the bedroom and rushed at the doctor like a small cyclone, shaking him until his teeth rattled. But all they could get out of him was a mumbled sound:

"Grease the gal. Grease the gal."

"Tina," snapped Russell Gardner, "there's a big bottle of bear's grease in the shop that Spike left there. Go get it, and grease her. Sam, go for your father."

Sam stumbled out of the door and started back up the

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creek. He was so weary that his head throbbed like an engine, but he scarcely noticed it. He reached the gulch at dusk. Jude listened to the news in stupefied silence and then leaped into the wagon with Sam, grasping the reins and the long whip. All the way back to Sweden, Sam's ears were popping with the crack, crack of the bull whip over the oxen.

When they entered the house Jude's face was as white as Tina's. Nobody said much, but Jude took a hand at shaking the doctor. He had no more luck than the others, and all he got out of him was, "Grease the gal. Grease the gal." Finally Mr. Gardner had to persuade Jude to stop, for it looked as if the doctcr might not survive Jude's furious shakings.

Nobody went to bed. But Sam's head dropped over on

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the table, and without knowing that he had slept at all he opened dazed eyes to see pale light filtering in through the kitchen window. Suddenly he heard a hoarse voice, a sober voice, snapping:

"What's the matter here? Who's sick?"

Jude and the editor grabbed the old doctor, who reached for his bag, and hustled him into the bedroom. Sam clenched his hands together and waited wordlessly. Presently the door opened again and Jude and Mr. Gardner came out. They said nothing but slumped down on kitchen chairs to wait too. After a time that seemed endless to Sam, the door opened again, and the old doctor, with his little white tufts of hair standing on end, appeared.

He nodded, saying calmly, "She's going to be all right. Fever's going down fast now. Keep her in bed, and feed her soup, chicken soup." He rolled out of the front door and disappeared toward the other end of town.

A great sigh seemed to escape Sam and Jude at the same moment. They all got up and went creaking on the toes of their boots into the bedroom. There lay Faith, pale and with her eyes dark smudges.

But she smiled at them and said weakly, "Lor, I'm just like a greased pig in fair time."

Tina laughed. Then Sam laughed. Then Jude gave Sam a clap on the shoulder that sent him staggering forward a step. Then Jude laughed, a joyous roar that brought another smile to Faith's face. But Tina hustled them back out again and told them all to go to the shop while she cooked some breakfast.

In a few days Faith was able to sit up in bed and eat more of the chicken broth that Tina brought her. Every

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other morning Jude killed one of their hens, and they all rejoiced that Faith was getting well so rapidly. Since Tina was so busy in the house, Sam went back to the newspaper shop and worked hard all day with Mr. Gardner. The editor was saying again, "Thoughts are crowding me, boy, thoughts are crowding me."

The thoughts came to Sam for setting up in type, and he read the editorials with interest. There was a fiery one on the unsanitary conditions of the town, one on the fact that the buildings were ramshackle, and the miners careless, and that the place could be a firetrap. There was one called, "Why Not Build for the Future?" foretelling that, unless the people of the town got down to hard work and building and planning instead of this wild scrambling around for a few flakes of gold, they would soon have nothing here but another ghost town.

Sam frowned when he read that and looked across at Jude, who was getting restless and morose now, with the gold fever gnawing at him again. Sam knew that Mr. Gardner thought there was no real vein of gold in this region. Once he had asked the editor why he came here if he didn't want to prospect for gold himself.

"Boy," exclaimed the editor, "I hauled my press out here in a wagon behind teams of oxen because I like new places. I wanted to start a newspaper here. This is a fine country, best in the world, I believe. 'T won't be long till we're part of the United States, and have schools and real churches and courts of law. There's a sawmill already built up north of here, put up last year. As for the diggings —not for me. I don't chase butterflies, however bright they gleam."

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But now Sam saw Jude getting restless with the itch to get back to the diggings. Sam was getting restless himself. He had wanted all of his life, he thought, to have some kind of contraption to tinker with himself. Now he had it—the Golden Flash.

One day Faith was at the dinner table again, and looking first at Sam and then at Jude. They were eating the last hen, which Tina had cooked with dumplings at Faith's direction. Jude turned to Sam and spoke gruffly. "Sam, old Nep has to go next. Doc said to give your ma chicken, and old Nep's the last one we've got."

Sam bit his lip hard and turned his head away. Nep seemed like a member of the family. But he said nothing. He just stopped eating the chicken dumpling.

"Go on, eat your dinner, sonny," said his mother, smiling. "I'm well now. I've had all the chicken I want to eat for quite a spell to come. We'll eat some of the bear meat Poky Moss is selling over at the store, or rabbits. We couldn't eat old Nep. He's too tough."

Sam picked up his fork again, his appetite suddenly returned.

"And Jude," said Faith quietly, "you and Sam better get back to that mine before somebody jumps your claim. Sam's itching to start that engine again."

Early next morning as they were getting ready to leave in the wagon, Sam said to Mr. Gardner, "I'm sorry to leave you, sir. But I reckon Tina can do as well as I can on the paper."

The editor pursed his lips, and then shrugged. "You'd make a good printer, boy. I'm sorry to lose you." He turned on his heel and went to the shop.

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Jude was saying to Faith, "Now take care of yourself, girl. Sam and I are going to work like a streak of lightning with that engine and a long tom sluice box. This is no kind of a town for you to live in all winter, weak as you are. I'll soon have enough dust to send you back to Missouri for the cold months. And next spring we'll all roll in gold."

Faith's smile was a little sad and her eyes full of unsaid things as she waved goodbye and then went back to the stove to bake more pies to sell. It made Sam unhappy, but he cheered up as Jude began to talk of his plans for work in the gulch.

Sam felt like a conqueror as he directed the stream of water from the brass nozzle into the dirt.

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"Look at it run, Pa. Look at it run," he shouted.

Jude bent over eagerly to look for gold. He found a few specks in the sand held by the cleats he had nailed in the box. These he collected carefully, and then grasped the spade and started to throw more dirt into the slanted runway of the sluice box.

The work did go fast, faster than Sam had thought possible. For a week they dug and washed, and Sam made fires, collected wood, and built up steam pressure. They cooked one meal a day and ate the others cold, scarcely taking the time to swallow their food. Every muscle in Sam's body ached, but he kept on working.

At first the gold yield increased, and Jude was jubilant as he looked over his bag of dust. Then the glitter in the dirt grew less and less frequent. At night Jude would joke about it and say that he felt it in his bones that tomorrow would be the best day yet. And then the gold gave out entirely. For three days' running they got nothing, even when they had moved to a new location. Sam thought of what Mr. Gardner had said, and also of a miner he had heard saying that that crazy red-bearded fellow, Abbott, was wasting his time in a panned-out gulch. Jude stopped joking, and on his face was a perpetual sour frown.

The next day when they started work, Jude said bitterly, looking away toward the hills, "Sam, I reckon we got ourselves fooled this time. Your ma wants to go on to Oregon. She calls it God's Country. I reckon we'd better hitch up the team and start before winter catches us."

Sam stared hard at the engine. "We'd have to leave the Flash, wouldn't we?"

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"Yes, son. We've got no way to haul that contraption to Oregon." He pulled himself heavily to his feet. "But let's give her a last good try today. We can drive in town tonight."

Sam scrambled around the rocks, gathering more wood for the fire. He stoked up the firebox and set it going with his flint and steel, watching miserably as the steam pressure mounted.

His father looked over at him, calling, "You wash down all day today, Sam. I'll do the diggings."

Sam stared so hard into the riffle box looking for the glittering specks that his eyes hurt. It wasn't gold that he cared about so much as keeping his engine. He had worked and sweated to get her going, and been pretty smart about figuring it out too, and now he had to leave the Flash to the rain and sun to ruin. He sighed and turned the nozzle into the sluice box again.

Jude, who was a little farther down the creek toward the east, raised his head suddenly, listening. Sam listened too. Horse's hoofs were pounding up the gulch, clattering wildly on the stones. They saw a flash of red and yellow, and that was Tina, her hair flying and her vivid skirts billowing on the back of a black horse. She was shouting something as she pulled the horse to an abrupt stop.

"What did you say?" bellowed Jude. "On fire! Town's on fire."

Sam sniffed. He realized now that there had been a smell of burning in his nostrils for a while, but he had paid no attention to it.

"Look!" shouted Tina, pointing to the hill that stood between them and the town. Soft gray smoke rose above it

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and disappeared in the clear sky. "Those drunken miners knocked over a lamp in one of the saloons. Pa wants you to help move his press. Looks as if the whole town's going."

Jude made a dive for the wagon, and the oxen and the harness. Sam stood, looking rather foolish, holding the nozzle of the hose with the water streaming out on the ground around his feet. Suddenly he seemed to come to life, as an idea hit him.

"Pa," yelled Sam, "Pa, we'll take the engine."

He dropped the hose, ran to turn off the valve, and then grabbed the horse's bridle from Tina's hand, as she stood beside it.

"Pa," yelled Sam again, "can we hitch this horse to the engine?"

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Jude had the oxen hitched by now. He wheeled around and arrived at a lope.

"We can try. But it'll be slow driving, one-side you know, with that pole. 'T isn't far though. We'll do it."

Tina climbed into the wagon and drove the oxen back, while Sam rode with Jude on the engine seat. That was a ride Sam never forgot. The trail was rough, and the engine lurched wildly from side to side, with the firebox roaring and smoke puffing from the stack. Sam, looking back anxiously each time the engine turned on two wheels and nearly keeled over, could see Tina bumping along in the wagon.

As they approached the little shanty town Sam drew in his breath sharply. On the one long street, which ran along the course of Golondrino Creek, the center of the town seemed to be afire. Orange flames spurted skyward from the saloons and the hotel, and dark billows of smoke rose and drifted across the street. Men were racing around with ineffectual rawhide buckets of water from the stream, yelling and coughing with the smoke in their lungs. Before the hotel stood the Chinese cook in his blue coat, his long pigtail bobbing up and down with the frightened shaking of his head. Dogs barked frantically, and the pigs, accustomed to living in the dusty street, dashed squealing to the grassy plains beyond the town.

"Make way!" shouted Jude, his voice a mighty roar above the yelling and the crackling of the blaze, and the crashing of the walls as the flimsy buildings fell in.

"Make way for the fire engine!"

People, dogs, pigs, all scattered to one side as Jude pulled in the black horse, so terrified his ears were held

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flat against his head and his nostrils flared. As they backed the engine down to the bank of the stream, Sam saw that Tina had arrived with the oxen and had left them outside the town. She was flying toward them like a red and yellow flash, black hair blown from her face.

"Where's my wife?" roared Jude. "Where's Faith?"

Russell Gardner ran toward them, so out of breath he could only point toward his house and shop. The shop was not yet aflame, but they could see smoke pouring from the back of the house. His breath came in a little gasping sound.

"I think she went in the shed out back, to get that rooster."

Jude gave a leap toward the shed, where the roof was smoking. Sam started to run that way too, then he wheeled around and thrust the brass nozzle of the hose into Tina's hands. He leaped to the second hose and shoved it into the stream. Then he ran for a wood pile, grabbed up an armful of sticks, and yanked open the firebox door. He stoked it up until the boiler was red hot, and twisted the valve. Tina stood, bare brown feet braced in the dry dust, holding the hose pointed straight at the shed. Sam let out a yell of pure joy as water shot out of the hose, drenching the shed roof, running in long streaks through the dry dirt below.

At that moment Faith and Jude burst headlong out of the shed. Jude was carrying his wife, who in turn clutched the scrawny red rooster. The crowd, now pushing around Tina and Sam, who had grabbed the hose away from her, howled approval as the red-bearded man set his wife on her feet.

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"Are you all right, Ma?" called Sam.

Faith smiled through a layer of soot at him, and nodded.

"Faith," cried Jude angrily at her, "what in tarnation did you want to risk your life for that cock for?"

"We brought him all the way from the States," shouted his wife, "and he looks like home to me."

Jude shook his head furiously.

"Women! Women are the unlikeliest critters that ever walked the green globe." He wheeled around, "Sam, you and Tina've put out her pa's shed fire."

"Can we get that engine up to the street to turn the hose on my hotel and saloons across the street?" yelled a man in Sam's ear.

Sam shook his head. "No, we can't do it. To shoot the water we've got to have this other hose in the creek."

He walked as far as he could stretch the hose and kept the water trained on the buildings on this side. They had to watch the buildings on the other side of the street burn to crackling ruins. But they kept moving the engine along the creek, turning the hose on the buildings on the rear side. The general store, which was next to the newspaper office, was partially burned when they got the water to it, but they put out the flames and saved the main building.

"Look!" called Tina, grabbing Sam by the arm. He turned to look up the street. The men were still hauling barrels and boxes from the store, wiping their hot faces with the backs of their hands. Everybody stopped work and turned their eyes to the street too.

"Oh, the poor fellow!" gasped Faith.

Weaving down the middle of the littered street, his feet dragging in the dust, with his high beaver hat perched

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over one eye and black bag in hand, was old Doc Turnipseed. And behind him his long coattails swung out in the breeze, burning merrily. He was just coming alongside the crowd, and as he passed he waved his hand, calling uncomfortably:

"It's a warm day, boys. The sun's terrible hot on me, behind there."

Tina grabbed the hose from Sam, calling gleefully, "Quick, Sam, turn on the water."

A stream shot out and hit the doctor a resounding whack on the back. Down he went in the street, his fire extinguished but his temper ablaze.

"You varmint, you! You critter! I'll give you thunder and lightning stewed down to a fine pizen."

Jude ran out to haul the old fellow to his feet and wipe him off, as the crowd roared with laughter. Across the street the flimsy buildings were a pile of blackened odds and ends of boards and logs. In their nostrils was a rank smell of water on charred embers. But the flames were gone, and half of the town had been saved.

Suddenly they stopped laughing to listen to the rolling tones of Hezekiah Hookers, the parson:

"Well, boys, and what do we do now? The town's half burnt out, and the gold's all dug out, I reckon. Folks been packing off northward every day lately. What's there to stay for?"

Sam turned his head to look all around him. Now he realized that many of the sharpers and thimble-riggers and roisterers were gone, looking for better diggings, where the miners come in with gold to throw away. The people were sober-faced, and very weary.

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"I know what I'm going to do," muttered a prospector, slinging his pick and pan over his shoulder, "I'm going to stop this jaybird jabber and head for Denver and the real mines. How about it? Anybody going along?"

Out of the store slouched Poky Moss, the burly storekeeper, shaking his head, muttering, "That store's ruined. Water all over everything and the porch burnt off. I'm going to Denver too, and for a half a poke of gold dust anybody who wants it can have the store. Wait for me, boys."

Men broke away from the crowd and separated, to collect what food and tools they could salvage from the wreckage. Sam watched silently as the miners formed small groups and tramped out of town, northward, up Indianbone Gulch, climbing the trail up the bluff. They would spend the winter in Denver, which was a rip-roaring miners' town much larger than little Sweden. In the spring they would head for Clear Creek and Gregory Gulch, with thousands of others pouring in each season.

Sam heard his mother's voice, speaking softly, and saw her standing beside him, her face streaked with soot, but still holding the old red rooster. She was saying to her husband, near by:

"Do we go too, Jude? Do you want to look for better gold fields?"

Sam fixed his eyes on his father. Jude was standing, his feet apart, his hands in his pockets, staring around. The big man looked at the mountains in the distance and the stream wandering through the little town. He looked across eastward toward the far plains, and then back to the houses left standing. Sam's eyes wrinkled up suddenly

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with joy as he saw that Jude's face had lost the anxious frown it had worn most of the time since they had arrived here. It was spread across with the old-time grin. It was just as if a fever had left him, Sam thought, as the mountain fever had left his mother, and he was himself again.

Jude's voice roared out, as he took one of his three small bags of gold dust out of his shirt and thrust it into Poky Moss's hand as he tramped by.

"I'll take you up on that, Moss."

Jude turned to his wife and spoke quietly. "It strikes me this is a good country for living, Faith. Maybe this is God's Country."

Russell Gardner was smiling too, and the little knot of steady folk there turned to listen as he spoke:

"Folks, what Jude Abbott here says is the truth. This is a fine country to live in, and work in too. 'T won't be long till this part of Kansas Territory becomes a real part of the United States. While the fly-by-nights go into the high mountains to dig for gold, we can build a real town here. Yonder on Golondrino Creek, we can put up a sawmill. Folks will come in here next summer. There's lumber in the hills, and mighty fine farming land hereabouts, if a man will take the trouble to dig ditches and let the water through the fields from the streams. How about it, Parson, will you start a real church here, and a school?"

Hezekiah Hooker shot his cuffs down over his bony wrists, sent a disgusted look toward the departing miners, and drew his heavy brows together.

"Mr. Gardner," he intoned sonorously, "I will take you up on that. That girl of yours needs some real schooling,

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and the boy here, when he is not engaged in the noble art of printing, should learn some Greek and Latin. I am teetotaciously fed up to the teeth with the golden will-o'-the-wisp called, so falsely, mining for gold. Henceforth, every weekday will find me dispensing intellectual learning, and every Sunday the Gospel, in the hall over there which I shall now name the Mountain Tabernacle. I am pleased to see that the fire spared it."

"Good," roared Jude. "We'll build a town."

Jude raised his arm and gave the little editor an approving whack on the back, one that sent him sputtering forward. But he settled his string tie over his white collar and smiled amiably at Jude.

"Yes," said Faith Abbott soberly, "maybe this is God's Country. God's Country is where you build it."

"We've got faith in this country," boomed out Jude. "Let's call the new town Faith, and put up the new buildings on the other side of the creek. We've got a fire engine too."

Sam's eyes lit up until they glowed like the golden image of King Midas's daughter.

"What other town west of the Mississippi has a fire engine?" asked Jude. "We'll organize the first fire brigade in the western territories. Sam," he said, "how would you like to be first Fire Chief, and look after the engine?"

Sam was speechless, as his father laughed at his expression. "As storekeeper my first order will be red shirts and firemen's hats." He patted the Golden Flash on the side. "And now to work, everybody. We've got a mighty audacious lot of cleaning and building to do before snow flies"

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Sam tramped into the newspaper office to ask, "Is the press all right, Mr. Gardner?"

"Yes," said the editor, "yes, my boy, it is."

An impudent voice spoke gaily from the desk, where Tina sat in her sooty red skirt trimmed with yellow bands, swinging her bare feet. "Did you come in here to pi some more type, lunkhead? You want me to teach you to print?"

Sam gritted his teeth, and a slow red spread under the freckles. Mr. Gardner sucked in his cheeks and spoke dryly, looking from one to the other:

"Hold your fire, Clementina. This is going to be a real respectable town. And you are going to wear shoes on those bare toes of yours, every day."

Tina was frowning now, and a small grin started at the corner of Sam's mouth.

"And," Mr. Gardner spoke solemnly and sternly, "what is more, you are going to take lessons from Mrs. Abbott and learn how to make pies that your father can sink a tooth in, instead of those slabs of untanned leather you mistakenly call pastry."

Tina flew from the desk like a red and yellow cyclone. She gave them one of her "wild critter" looks and dashed out of the door. Sam grinned at Mr. Gardner and Mr. Gardner grinned back at him.

"I think with your mother around, Samuel, we'll tame her down yet."

Sam went to the store and pitched in to work with his father and mother. The place was a mess. As he heaved hogsheads of molasses and flour about, cleaning out the ruined goods, and sweeping up the floor, he could hear

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Jude hammering and whistling. The store had rooms behind it that they could live in till Jude could get time to build a house. Sam leaned his brush broom against the wooden counter and thought of it all . . . he was going to school, he was going to be a printer, and he was going to be chief fireman of the first fire department in all the western country. Outside Jude was moving cans and boxes around, looking them over.

"Faith," he roared, "Faith, come here and see what I've found!"

Sam and his mother ran outside. Jude was holding up a large can in one hand. In an opened box were a dozen more of them, just alike. They were labeled, "White Paint." In his other hand he held a box of flower seeds.

Sam grinned at his mother. Faith laughed.

"Lor," she chuckled, "that sight makes me feel like the wife of the President. I'll live in a white house myself, come next summer."

Down by the creek the red and gold engine stood, with two of its wheels in the stream. And on top of the boiler perched a scrawny red rooster. Though it was late afternoon, and dawn long since past, he stretched out a skinny neck and gave out a joyous, "Cock-a-doodle-dol"

As the sun went down behind the mountains, a warm light deepened and spread and touched the faded picture until the cheeks of the little golden princess caught and held a rosy, living glow.

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