

The Orphans' Friend.

VOLUME I.

OXFORD, N. C. WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 1875.

NUMBER 25.

From the Companion:
CHASED.

A Frontier Story of To-Day.

BY THEODORA R. JENNESS.

"Everybody ought to know it's the hoppers that's to blame, and not Johnnie and me. We never begged before, sir, and please God, we never will again."

The Relief Commissioner looked kindly down in Bess Nelson's pleading face, and answered,—

"Bless you, sis! there isn't the shadow of an apology due. We're all alike in Kansas this year,—prairie chickens, as it were, with our pinfeathers picked clean out; fighting our way through the coldest weather, too, that has been known for thirty years."

"Always bad luck in Kansas. I blame the day that ever I squatted on its onery soil," grumbled a settler, who stood behind Bess and Johnnie.

"Look here, sir," said Johnnie, turning upon them with disapproval. "Kansas isn't busted yet, not by a long way round. She's the best State in the Union, all things considered. I reckon if the grasshoppers had lit down in the valley of the Connecticut, they'd have cleaned things out as neatly as they did here. The only difference, the people there'd have back crops to climb up on. We haven't; but we're going to have, sometime. Then we'll invite the hoppers down again, and tell 'em to pitch in and stuff themselves."

"That's the right kind of talk, my boy. Better days for suffering Kansas. We'll try her again next year for better luck," said a thinly-clad but noble-looking frontiersman, laying an approving hand on Johnnie's shoulder.

Johnnie and Bess Nelson had come up to Fort Dodge from their father's claim, fifteen miles away, to apply to the Relief Commissioner for supplies to carry to their destitute home. Shivering under their scanty garments, "with stomachs big as Mammoth Cave," all afternoon they had waited for the train which was to bring the needed aid sent by the good people Eastward. About them stood a band of anxious, care-worn farmers, all having come upon the same pressing errand as Bess and Johnnie.

Late in the afternoon the train arrived. The wintry twilight had almost set in ere Johnnie and Bess had received in full the liberal share of supplies allotted them. But a more jubilant boy and girl never started on a homeward trip. They had flour, hominy and ham, tea, coffee, sugar, and other articles of food; shoes for the little barefoot brothers, and baby Bell, at home; woolen clothes, and even medicine for mother's chills and father's rheumatism.

Johnnie drove his own red Mustang, Prancer, harnessed to a hickory jumper,—a rude but serviceable affair, made by Mr. Nelson.

"Now, then, we must travel lively," said Johnnie, as they glided over the snowy prairie between Fort Dodge and Smoky Hill timber. Fifteen miles home, and after sunset.

"'Twould be no matter only that pa and ma are sick, and they are all so hungry at home," said Bess. "It's bright moonlight, and we have a big buffalo robe to keep us warm. I'm so glad the grasshoppers couldn't eat this up anyhow."

Wrapping themselves snugly in the robe, Bess and Johnnie fell to eating eagerly the supper of crackers and dried beef they had spared themselves,—small, indeed, because of the hungry loved ones waiting in the prairie cabin. When they had finished, Bess took a nap, while Johnnie whistled softly and made future plans, into which grasshoppers, drouth and chinch-bugs did not enter.

The road home led most of the way through Smoky Hill timber. The trees were thick on either side, but the moon shone brightly overhead, and stars glimmered in the cold, clear sky.

In the loneliest part of the timber tired Bess awoke. Prancer had settled into a lagging gait.

"Poor little Mustang! how weak he is!" said Bess, pityingly. "He's been so nearly starved all winter, I'm afraid the trip will use him up entirely."

"Hush, Bess!" was Johnnie's only answer.

He had thrown off his buffalo robe, and was sitting in an erect and listening attitude.

Bess pushed back her brown hood from her ears, and listened, too.

"Johnnie," she said, at length, "I hear something howling behind us. Rover didn't go with us to Fort Dodge. Do you suppose there's a strange dog following us?"

Johnnie only listened more intently.

Bess gave Johnnie's hand a nervous clutch.

"It sounds nearer now, and there's a lot of 'em howling together," she said, in a low, frightened tone. "They say the wolves are unusually fierce this winter. Wolves sound some like dogs, don't they?"

Johnnie's answer was quick and resolute. "You can be a brave girl, Bess. The wolves are after us. Get down in front and, hold the reins. Whip Prancer hard, if need be,—into a dead run."

As Johnnie said, Bess could be a brave girl. She quickly saw the fearful danger that threatened. Slipping down in front, she seized the reins and cruel stick, with which to whip the tender little pony, whom she loved almost as well as Johnnie. Holding in his hand a loaded revolver, which he had brought along as a precaution, Johnnie turned his face towards the backward road.

At the first touch of the whip, to which he was so unused, Prancer leaped forward into a desperate run, but the terrible pursuers gained upon him rapidly. Soon a violent panting could be heard, and the leader of the pack appeared in sight. Nine wolves were closely following at his heels.

Almost in a twinkling the foremost wolf was tearing at the buffalo robe, one end of which had fallen from the sleigh behind. Johnnie fired upon him. With a

howl of rage and pain the savage creature released his hold and fell backward in the snow. The scent of blood maddened the remainder of the pack. They paused in the pursuit to rush upon the wounded wolf, quarreling ferociously as to which should taste the last drop of blood.

This gave Johnnie a temporary rest, although he knew the wolves would be after him again when they had finished tearing their leader in pieces. Prancer, with true animal instinct, felt his danger, and sped with almost supernatural strength along the frozen road. Bess, uttering no sound of the alarm that filled her heart, held tightly to the reins, and did not feel the cold that cut her hands and unprotected ears with cruel sharpness.

Again and again the wolves renewed the attack, and often did brave Johnnie repeat his firing, killing or wounding one of the pursuers with nearly every shot. These were quickly torn in pieces, as the leader of the pack had been, thus making fortunate intervals in this horrible chase.

"Faster, Bess! faster! I've got to reload my pistol," exclaimed Johnnie, during one of these short intervals.

"Prancer's giving out. I'd rather die than whip him any more," cried Bess, despairingly.

Johnnie's hands had become so stiff with cold that he could scarcely remove the cylinder of the pistol to reset the charges. If he should fail in that, one chance remained. The hams might serve for brief delays; but that would rob the hungry ones at home—almost as hungry as the wolves themselves, he thought with sudden pain.

He made a desperate effort, and reset the charge; but when he had replaced the cylinder, through some mismovement, an accidental ball took flight and lodged in Johnnie's hand. With a loud click the pistol dropped into the snow beside the way, while the wounded hand fell paralyzed.

Dropping Prancer's reins, Bess threw her arms about her brother, with a cry of terror.

"Don't hold me! See, they're coming on again! There's a hatchet in the bottom of the sleigh that I'd forgotten," said Johnnie, with a desperate impatience.

He stooped and seized the hatchet; but the hand that tried to raise it fell as powerless as the wounded one, from which the blood was flowing fast.

"Bessie," he said weakly, "I can't do any more. Throw out the hams, and then—"

Poor Johnnie faintered ere the sentence could be finished.

Brave little Bess! Her courage rose to meet the peril of that moment. The wolves were gathering hard upon her. She could almost feel the breath of one upon her face. Taking the hatchet from Johnnie's hand, she dealt a blow that spilt another victim's blood in the pathway of the clamoring pack.

Bess now prepared to throw the hams if more attacks were made, but a new circumstance rendered this unnecessary. Prancer, whose pace had grown slow-

er and slower, suddenly came to a dead halt, uttering a long, loud neigh. Bess turned her head, expecting to behold some new danger meeting her, but experienced joyful relief instead. She was within a clearing in the timber, not far distant from a little cabin, in the door of which a bright light glimmered.

"Help!" called Bess, with all her voice, and then sank down almost as powerless as her wounded brother. The settler who owned the cabin heard the cry; and hastened out with two stout boys. When they reached the spot the wolves had vanished.

Johnnie and Bess were taken to the cabin and kindly cared for, and as soon as possible were carried to their home, some five miles distant. The next morning the settler and his boys went through the timber on a prospecting tour, and found that six wolves had met their death in the fierce combat of the night before.

A Touching Incident.

In traveling, we often meet with persons of different nationalities and languages. We also meet with incidents of various character, some sorrowful and others joyful and instructive. One of the latter character I witnessed recently, while traveling upon the cars. The train was going West, and the time was evening. At a station a little girl about eight years old came aboard, carrying a little budget under her arm. She came in the car and deliberately took a seat. She then commenced an eager scrutiny of faces; but all were strange to her. She appeared weary, and placing her budget for a pillow, she prepared to try to secure a little sleep. Soon the conductor came along collecting tickets and fare. Observing him she asked if she might lie there. The gentlemanly conductor replied that she might and then kindly asked for her ticket. She informed him that she had none, when the following conversation ensued: "Where are you going?" She answered, "I am going to heaven." He asked again, "Who pays your fare?" She then said, "Mister, does this railroad lead to heaven, and does Jesus travel on it?" He answered, "I think not. Why did you think so?" "Why, sir, before my ma died she used to sing to me of a heavenly railroad; and you looked so nice and talked so kind I thought this was the road. My ma used to sing of Jesus on the heavenly railroad, and that he paid the fare of everybody; and that the train stopped at every station to take people on board; but my ma don't sing to me any more. Nobody sings to me now, and I thought I would take the cars and go to ma. Mister, do you sing to your little girl about the railroad that goes to heaven?" "You have a little girl haven't you?"

He replied weeping, "No my little dear, I have no little girl now. I had one once, but she died some time ago, and went to heaven." Again she asked, "Did she go over this railroad; and are you going to see her now?"

By this time every person in the coach was upon his feet, and

most of them weeping. An attempt to describe what I witnessed is almost futile. Some said, "God bless the little girl." Hearing some persons say that she was an angel, the little girl earnestly replied, "Yes my ma used to say I would be an angel sometime."

Addressing herself once more to the conductor, she asked him, do you love Jesus? I do, and if you love him he will let you ride to heaven on his railroad. I am going there, and I wish you would go with me; I know Jesus will let me into heaven when I get there, and he will let you in too, and every body who will ride on his railroad—yes, all these people: Wouldn't you like to see heaven, and Jesus, and your little girl? These words, so innocently and pathetically uttered, brought a great gush of tears from all eyes; but most profusely from the eyes of the conductor. Some who were traveling on the heavenly railroad shouted aloud for joy. She now asked the conductor, "Mister may I lie here until we get to heaven?" He answered, "Yes, dear, yes." She then asked, "Will you wake me up then, so that I might see my ma, your little girl, and Jesus? for I do so much want to see them all." The answer came in broken accents, but in words very tenderly spoken, "Yes, dear angel, yes; God bless you." Amen, was sobbed by more than a score of voices.

Turning her eyes again upon the conductor, she interrogated him again,

"What shall I tell your little girl when I see her? Shall I say to her that I saw her pa on Jesus' railroad? Shall I? This brought a fresh flood of tears from all present, and the conductor kneeled by her side, and embracing her, wept the reply he could not utter. At this juncture the brakeman called out, "H—s." The conductor arose and requested him to attend to his (the conductor's) duty at the station for he was engaged. That was a precious place. I thank God that I was a witness to the scene; but I was sorry that at this point I was obliged to leave the train.

We learn from the incident that out of the mouths of even babes God has ordained strength, and that we ought to be willing to represent the cause of our blessed Jesus even in a railroad coach.—*Christian Expositor.*

Howard Crosby truly says: I do not care what the subject is, I believe that the child can always be made to love the subject in which he is instructed, and that the fault always lies in the teacher if the child is not delighted with his instruction. This may be hard doctrine for some to endorse, but it is the true doctrine, nevertheless. If our children are not pleased with our instruction in the Sunday school, it is because we are not proper instructors; we have not seized hold of this principle, and from it derived our practice. There must be something wrong in our methods if we cannot represent to the young heart, in a delightful manner, this grandest of all truths.