Our Boys and Girls.

THE STORY OF AN APPLE.

Little Tommy and Peter and Archy and Bob
Were walking one day when they found
An apple; 'twas mellow and rosy and red,
And lying alone on the ground.

Said Tommy, "I'll have it." Said Peter, "'Tis mine."
Said Archy, "I got it, so there!"
Said Robby, "Now let us divide it in four,
And each of us boys have a share.

"No, no," shouted Tommy, "I'll have it myself."
Said Peter, "I want it, I say."
Said Archy, "I've got it, and I'll have it all;
I won't give a morsel away."

Then Tommy he snatched it, and Peter he fought.
('Tis sad and distressing to tell;)
And Archy held on with his might and his main,
Till out of his fingers it fell.

Away from the quarrelsome urchins it flew,
And down a green little hill,
That apple it rolled, and it rolled, and it rolled,
As if it would never be still.

A lazy old brindle was nipping the grass,
And switching her tail at the flies,
When all of a sudden that apple rolled down
And stopped just in front of her eyes.

She gave but a bite and a swallow or two,
That apple was seen never more!
"I wish," whimpered Archy and Peter and Tom,
"We'd kept it and cut it in four."

—*Early Days.*

HUGH.

By Sydney Dayre.

"Hurrah! Off for home! It's jolly, hey, Hugh?"

"Jolly," agreed Hugh.

"But I've seen jollier faces than you have worn all the morning. Seems as if you didn't take in all the glory of the day."

"You do, I guess, Ralph."

"Don't I, though! Don't I realize with all my heart and soul that it's the very cream of a winter's day. That the sun shines and the snow glistens and that Jack Frost keeps toying with the air, just holding it at a point where it makes a boy's limbs tingle. That it's Christmas holidays and all we boys going home. You're in it all, Hugh."

"Yes," admitted Hugh.

"Well," half impatiently, "some boys don't work up to the conditions. Why, I could scream, jump, run up a telegraph pole."

The lively boy, among half a dozen high school pupils who had at the last station boarded the train with a rush and a whoop, changed his seat to get near to some one more likely to respond to his rollicking mood and left Hugh to his own thoughts.

They were not pleasant ones, and all the sunshine of the day, all the harmony with it in his own bounding health, all the spirit of the festive season could not make them so. He said nothing to even his closer friends of the weight on his heart belonging with the knowledge that when the others returned with minds brightened by enjoyment and relief from study to the school routine which some of them loved, some did not, he would not be among them.

He and his companions lived in different small towns in the state within easy reach of the school. As the others enlivened the car with their overflow of schoolboy fun. Hugh took a letter from his pocket and read, commenting and communing with himself.

"Yes, just what I've been fearing. The dear mother can't in justice to the younger ones see her way clear to my going on just now. I wonder she's been able to let me have these two years—bless her unselfish heart. Thinks if I go to earning for two or three years I'll be able to go back to school. That never works. Leaving now I shall leave for all. O—O—I'm almost as big as a man and every bit as strong as one, and yet there's no way for me to keep on, though I'd work my big hands to the bone. Well, so goes the world. The sun will shine on and the boys will laugh on just the same as if I could have my heart's desire. Well—am I going home to cast a cloud on their Christmas? Carry home this face?" a glance at the mirrow reflecting his face from the opposite side of the car, "with which I seem to have frightened all the boys away from me? Not if my name's Hugh Russell."

"Ho, ho—look how the ice shines."

"If it wasn't just the day it is we'd be on it all the morning."

"Wouldn't we?"

"But we can't skate and—O, to think of the other thing."

Two boys, with the raptured eyes of twelve and thirteen, looked out from the windows of a house built close to the lake over the wide expanse of the glistening ice.

"I say, Jack—why *can't* we skate?"

"Why can't we? Because at 10.30 we are to be at the station to meet father and mother. O my! Three months since we have seen them And they coming home for Christmas. What if we can't skate? Who cares?"

But Jack had his thinking cap on.

"See here, Mert, some fellows have that kind of mind that they can think of only one thing at a time. That's you. Then, again, some can think a lot of things at a time. That's some one else. Now, what if we can have a good skate this fine morning and see father and mother just the same? Just at the same time. O—Aunt Harriet!"

A pleasant-faced, gray-haired lady was passing the door, but came in at his call.

"Say, Aunt Harriet!—now, you're just the very dearest ever—if you were not it would be no use to ask you, but you never said no to a boy yet—when you could help it. Seeing you never were a boy, auntie, you can't of course imagine what it would be to skate over that shine out there, but you always could understand what a boy likes, and so, if you'll only let us—we ought to be off inside of ten minutes—Mert, you better be moving."

"But, my dear," Aunt Harriet looked a little perplexed, as well she might. "I thought that in a little more than ten minutes you would be getting into the sleigh to drive over to meet your father and mother—"

"Just another way of fixing a delightful thing, auntie. We want to skate acros the lake, away over to where the railroad crosses the little bay. We skate under the bridge—watching all the time for the train. It'll come, and father and mother—looking out far over the ice to get a peep at your house, wondering where two little rascals of theirs may be—will catch a glimpse of them blinking up at them, tossing up their caps and hurrahing! Please say yes."

Aunt Harriet looked undecided. It was as Jack had asserted, difficult for her to say no to boys.

"If only I could be sure it would be perfectly safe—"

"Mert, get your skates. You dear Aunt Harriet, don't you know it's been down below zero lots of times lately? And how often have we skated from our house over here?"

All this was true. The boys lived in another part of the beautiful town around which curved the lake alike in summer and winter. Across it, between the two homes, ran a viaduct over which would pass the train on which father and mother would arrive. Certainly there seemed no reason why the boys on this bright, sharp, morning should not skate across. Aunt Harriet yielded and they were soon ready .

"Good-bye, good-bye, dears. You will have plenty of time before the train is due."

Who but skaters could tell of the joy of that swift glide over the glittering ice?

"Hark! There's the whistle——" as a sound broke over the low hill on the lake shore.

"Quick, quick! We haven't made it as fast as we thought. Dash ahead now, —Jack."

Around the bend and on to the viaduct sped the train, again loudly trumpeting on the clear air its advance. Bending to their work the skaters strove to lessen the distance between them and the point at which father and mother would surely be looking from the window.

They were. At first with a general glance over the ice. Then at two small figures speeding towards them. Then—*not* the smiles and the enthusiastic hand waving in glad recognition.

At sound of shriek of alarm inside the car every occupant had sprung to the side next the ice. A window was smashed and a man wildly gestured with arms at full length. But the skaters kept swiftly on—in sight now the bright inquiring smiles on faces glowing with the invigorating air. They could not see the dark patch ahead of them on which the eyes inside the car were fixed in despairing horror. Ice had been cut there the day before and only one night's freezing covered the fearful gap.

"There!" a groan as the mother fell back, insensible. A violent jerk upset everyone as the brakes were applied as few brakes were ever worked before, bringing the train to a standstill in a surprisingly short time.

There were plenty on it who did not wait for the full stop, and foremost among these were half a dozen or more well grown schoolboys.

"Hurrah, little fellows! Chee r—cheer —we'll help you—" encouraging shouts arose as the faces, so quickly changed to agonizing appeal, arose after the first frightful dash into the icy water. "Hurrah-h-h—Hugh!—That's it—catch him. This way now——" and Hugh Russell. just off the car, throwing aside his coat as he ran, had thrown himself into the water near the struggling boys and within a few seconds was holding up the smaller one.

"Catch hold of me," he cried to the other boy. The thin ice cracked continually as he strove to climb upon it. With still encouraging shouts his companions stamped on it, gradually breaking it away until the edge of stronger ice was reached.

"Now, then—" quickly throwing themselves at full length on it the boys made a chain, the nearest one holding out strong hands in help.

"Almost as big as a man and every bit as strong—" never before had it occurred to Hugh Russell to send up fervent thanksgiving for his size and strength. It was taxed to its unmost. The numbing cold seemed to grasp his limbs as if to paralyze his efforts as he strove to place the almost helpless boys beyond danger. The thanksgiving changed to a cry for help—help in this cruel strain, as with roaring in his ears, blackness before his eyes, he gave his last effort to the raising of the second small form.

His companions clung to him and by main force drew him upon the solid ice, when, with a supreme effort, he rallied his forces and staggered on, scarcely conscious of being pulled, pushed, supported up the steps of the sleeper.

Within it all was helpful confusion. The boys were being well cared for, and vigorous hands now dealt with Hugh and his necessities, putting him through a series of energetic rubbing, which, with hot stimulants, soon set the chilled blood coursing. Hand baggage was searched for articles of wear, and in less time than would have been imagined he was beginning to realize that warmth and comfort still existed.

A man among the passengers had quietly interested himself in the matter,

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