T ON THE MOUNTAIN

WILLIS BOYD ALLEN

MOUNTAINEER SERIES No2.

"Oh," said he, "I see what keeps off the wind; it 's this big stone." — Page 44.

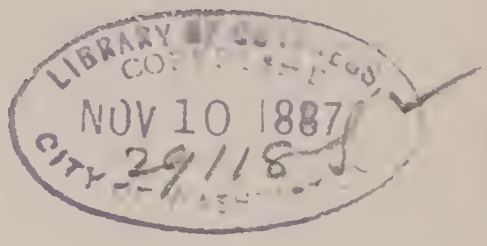
Mountaineer Series. No. 2.

LOST ON THE MOUNTAIN.

BY

WILLIS BOYD ALLEN,

AUTHOR OF "CHRISTMAS AT SURF POINT," "PINE CONES," "SILVER RAGS," "THE NORTHERN CROSS," ETC.



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TO

FLORENCE.

CONTENTS.

LOST ON THE MOUNTAIN.

CHAPTER I.

BANKING THE HOUSE.

In the first volume of this series you have read about Robert Alden and his wife Polly: how they took their children, King, Stella, and Winthrop (or Winnie, as the youngest boy was generally called), to the mountains, where Mr. Alden kept a little store near the Fir Mountain railroad station; how they found in the woods an abandoned logging-hut, in which they were able to live, rent-free; and how the people who lived

down by a large saw-mill half a mile away loved them and called them the Mountaineers.

One morning in early October, King, the oldest boy, was feeding Whiteface, in her log stable near the house. Whiteface, you will remember, was the cow which they had brought with them from their old home in Selborne.

"Whiteface," said King, pulling down a good armful of hay from the little loft over the cow's head, "Whiteface, do you know the winter is coming on?"

Whiteface lifted her head and looked at King a moment with her great mild eyes; then gave a long sigh of content and went on with her breakfast.

"Because," continued King, "it 's going to be pretty lonesome for you, out here alone. You 'll have to be shut up for months, you know."

Whiteface made no answer, but moved her soft, moist lips to and fro steadily.

"She 's just like a snow-bird, only bigger," said Stella, coming in at that moment. "She believes she 'll be taken care of, any way, so she does n't worry about it — do you, old Bossy?"

The cow turned her head around slightly, and gave the bright-faced girl a look which said plainly that she quite agreed with her.

"We must bank up the stable as well as the house," added Mr.

Alden, who was just starting for his store. "The winter will be cold and long, I expect."

"How do you 'bank up' a house, father?"

"You 'll see, my boy. If I can get away from the shop early this afternoon — perhaps after the three o'clock train passes — we 'll begin this very day. The snow may come any time."

The Montreal train was on time that afternoon. As it passed, the mill-men stopped work for a moment and children waved their hands. It brought Mr. Alden two cases of fruit for his store. As soon as these were safely locked up, he started for home. The path lay almost directly up the side of

the mountain, following pretty closely the course of a brook. King came half-way down to meet his father, and they finished the trip hand in hand.

"I wish you had been at the station to-day," said Mr. Alden.

"Why, father?"

"There was a dog on the afternoon train, traveling as freight. There was nobody on board to take care of him, but it was understood that he was to go to Fabyan's."

"I should think he would get thirsty!"

"That was the funny part of it. He had a label tied on his collar, with these words plainly printed on it: 'Please give me a Drink.'"

"That was capital!" exclaimed King, clapping his hands.

"Yes; all the train men took excellent care of the dog, and gave him all the water he wanted."

Talking in this way, they soon arrived at the hut.

"Now," said Mr. Alden, briskly, after he had kissed Polly and the children, "we must fly around and work like bees. There's only an hour of good clear daylight left."

"What shall I do, father?" asked Stella, her eyes shining like the stars she was named for.

"Take Winnie a few steps into the woods and gather all the moss you can. Your mother will give you two large bags that the coffee

In the Freight Car.

came in for the store. Those will do nicely for the moss."

"How much shall you want, father?"

"As much as you can bring. Oh, twenty bags full."

"Shall I go too?" asked King, who had run into the house for the bags.

"No; I shall want you to help me."

With these words he led the way farther into the forest, until he reached a growth of small, straight spruce-trees. The larger timber had been cut off and sold by the loggers who had built and occupied their house several years before.

"Now, King, you drag out the

poles as fast as I cut them down. Look out for them when they fall!"

Down they came, one after the other. Mr. Alden cut them in such a manner that they fell in a direction away from the house.

"What is that for?" inquired the boy.

"So you can drag them home more easily. I shall lop off most of the limbs, but if one of them happened to be left, and stuck out a little, it would catch in all the other underbrush, unless you carried the tree butt-end first."

"I see," said King, as he started off with his first load. "It would be like stroking a cat the wrong way!"

It was great fun pulling the light, sweet-smelling poles to the heap near the house. The shouts and laughter of Stella and Winnie could be heard close by, as they emptied their bag-fuls of soft green moss beside the spruce trees. A column of blue smoke, curling up from the chimney, told that their mother was preparing a good supper for the workers.

Winnie helped wherever he could, but his eight-year-old strength could not do very much. Mr. Alden smiled to see the little fellow tug one end of a pole into place, or throw his small armful of moss on the pile; as God must smile, I think, when we try to do very hard things for Him: and the

father was glad, for the earnestness and love that made the boy do his best; as God must be glad whenever a boy or girl lovingly does what Jesus told us to do.

All too soon the darkness came down, and they were obliged to stop work for that day. After Mrs. Alden's nice supper, they gathered around the great, open fire-place as usual, to talk, tell stories, or read aloud before bed-time.

"How was business in the store to-day, Robert?" asked Mrs. Alden, rocking to and fro with Winnie in her lap.

"Pretty good for this time of year. I took thirteen dollars and a half. Some of the Slabtown people were in and bought tea

and coffee. No matter how poor they are, the women all want tea."

"Do the men drink it too?"

"Yes. They say that when they are at work in the woods, it is a great deal better than any thing stronger — any liquor, I mean. They carry a handful of tea in their pockets, and make it in camp."

"Did you ever camp out?" asked King.

"Yes, indeed; many a time, when I was younger. I remember one night when we were camping on the shores of Lake Umbagog. We had only a small shelter, just high enough to sit up straight in. It was built of fir-boughs and was entirely open in front."

"I should think it must have been very cold," said Stella.

"It faced the south, and then we generally kept a good fire going, while we were in camp. On this particular night there came up a heavy thunder shower."

"Oh, were n't you dreadfully afraid, sir?"

"Afraid? No, indeed. It was my Father's thunder and lightning, and I was in his woods. I knew he could take care of me there just as well as if I were in a snug house."

"Who was with you, Robert?"

"Only one man, a tall, broad-shouldered Norwegian guide. Well, the sky grew blacker and blacker, and pretty soon the thunder began to growl, off among the mountains. The wind died away

and then rose again with a rush. And the lightning! The sky seemed fairly blazing with it. Then the rain came down in torrents. I never in my life heard such an uproar in the woods — thunder, wind, and rain all sounding together. The lightning struck a huge tree near our camp and shivered it into splinters. After a while the force of the storm had spent itself, but the rain continued to fall as hard as ever."

"Did you keep dry, you and the guide?"

"Well, about half-dry. We laid a rubber blanket over our roof of boughs, and by curling up our feet, kept pretty well within the shelter. It was not long before

we fell asleep. When we awoke, it was midnight. It had cleared off, and the stars were shining. But meanwhile we had uncurled, in our sleep, and were soaking wet from our knees down. The wind was blowing from the north. Oh, how cold it was! We fumbled round, to make a fire, but every thing was wet through, like ourselves. At last I remembered some pieces of birch-bark which we had tucked under us when the storm came on. These were still dry. We struck a match with shaking fingers, the bark sputtered and blazed, and soon we had a fire that would have done your heart good, as it did ours. Now, what reminded me of that story?

Oh, I know; the tea. We put a heaping handful in the quart can which served for our kettle, and in ten minutes it was boiling. We had no milk or sugar, but the tea was hot, and I never tasted any so good before or since."

"I should n't think you would have slept much the rest of the night," laughed Mrs. Alden.

"Ah, Polly, that 's the fun of living in the woods. We slept like tops. Now, chickens, it 's time for bed. A short chapter about mountains, and then off you go."

The old leather-covered Book was taken from its shelf, the beautiful One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Psalm read, a prayer offered

by Mr. Alden, asking for rest and sleep and good dreams, that should fit them all to help to make the world better on the morrow, and with a merry "Good-night!" six little feet pattered and stamped up the stairs to the loft where the bed-rooms were divided off for the children.

CHAPTER II.

KING AND WHITEFACE.

It was several days before the Mountaineers had a chance to finish banking their house and stable. The children, meanwhile, increased the supply of moss until Mr. Alden said there was plenty for both buildings. He himself managed to find time to cut some stout stakes and a few larger trees which King was not strong enough to carry. One bright afternoon they all set to work once more. The stakes were driven into the ground about two feet from the four walls of the house,

and the tree-poles were piled up against them, the largest at the bottom. Then the space between the poles and the house was filled with moss, packed solid, until there was a bank of it about two feet deep entirely around the house, and kept in place by the poles and stakes.

Old Whiteface was allowed to stray about, now that the scanty crops were gathered. She watched the progress of the moss-bank with great interest, especially when they began to build it around her own shelter.

"I really believe," exclaimed King, "that she's afraid of it. What a foolish old cow!"

Whiteface was gazing intently

WHITEFACE'S YOUNGER DAYS.

at the moss, and tossed her head two or three times in a puzzled way.

When all was finished, it was milking-time, and the cow was invited into the shed. She stepped in very slowly, looking from side to side, as if she did not at all like the appearance of things. All animals and birds are timid about being fenced in in any way. One of the best kinds of scarecrows, for instance, is a simple piece of twine stretched around the corn-field. The crows think it is a sort of snare, and rarely venture within it.

Perhaps old Whiteface had the same idea about the new bank around the shed; for she continued to fidget and step about nervously,

so that Stella had hard work to milk her.

The next morning was cloudy; so dark, indeed, that Mr. Alden, who had special business at the next station beyond Fir Mountain, and had to leave the house very early, was obliged to take a lantern in his hand, to see the way down the steep path to the store. It was nearly an hour later when King went out to feed and milk the cow. A moment afterward he came rushing back into the house.

"She 's gone!" he gasped.

"Gone! Who 's gone?" cried Mrs. Alden and Stella at once, while Winnie began to look frightened, over his bread and milk.

"Whiteface. I believe — I 'm

afraid"— here King hung his head and the tears came into his eyes.

"Afraid of what?"

"That it's my own fault. Last night I didn't fasten the stable door. We were so busy that I forgot it. And I didn't remember it till I had gone to bed."

Mrs. Alden looked grave.

"Do you think she has run away?"

"Yes, mother. The door is wide open, and I can see her tracks leading up the path."

"I wish your father was here!" said Mrs. Alden, anxiously. "He isn't coming back till to-morrow morning, and it looks like snow. I am afraid the cow will freeze, or

wander off on the mountain and die."

"I 'll tell you what, mother," exclaimed King. "I 've had breakfast, and I know just where she started off. I believe I can find her in half an hour. Just let me have something in my pockets, in case I should have to be away a little longer, and I 'll hunt her up, see if I don't!"

"She can't have gone very far," put in Stella. "I 'd go with you myself, King, only I ought to stay with mother and Winnie."

At first Mrs. Alden did not want to let her boy go; but he pleaded so hard to be allowed to make up for his carelessness of the night before, that at last she consented.

"Be sure to keep in the path, dear," she said, as she filled his pockets and then kissed him good-by.

"It's so plain I can't miss it, mother. Good-by! You'll see me leading the silly old cow back to her stable before dinner. Good-by!"

"Good-by!"

"Good-by!" echoed Winthrop, waving his little hand to his brother, who paused a moment at a turn of the path, just above. Then he went out of sight in the forest.

During the next hour or two the children were very busy. Stella had some plans for Christmas, which I must tell you about

in a later volume of the Mountaineer Series. She had just begun to gather bits of moss and twigs and fir cones, to make gifts for the poor mill children, who were to be invited to the Christmas party on the mountain. Winnie helped her very nicely in this. He brought cones to his sister, and then held them in place while she glued them upon tiny frames and brackets. The gifts were very pretty indeed. They looked, Winnie said, almost as if they grew on the trees.

"How nice it would be, Stella," he added, "if there was a frame-tree, so we could pick presents off, all made!"

"Not half so nice as it is now,"

said Stella, cheerily. "Because then we should n't have the fun of making them."

Winnie was silent for a moment, watching the girl's nimble fingers. Then he asked, in a puzzled way: 'Why don't the Lord give us things all made, Stella? Could n't he make apples and potatoes and houses all finished up, right off?"

"Yes, dear. But if we did n't have to work a little bit ourselves, I should be very sorry, for my part."

"Why?"

"Well, in the first place, I think it is very loving of God to let us *help* make the things — working with him — when he could make them all at once if he wanted to.

And then, if we did n't do it, we should be a miserable kind of folks; more like dolls than real boys and girls."

"What are cones good for, Stella? — besides frames, I mean."

"Why, they 're just seed-boxes, Winnie. Every one of those little scales has a seed tucked into the bottom of it."

"What for?" Winnie did love to ask questions!

"To keep them safe and dry till the wind carries them — the seeds, I mean — to a good place to grow. That 's what makes squirrels nibble the cones so: just to get at the seeds, which they are very fond of eating."

In pleasant work and talk of this

kind the hours swiftly passed, and the children could hardly believe their ears when their mother called them to dinner.

"Where's King?" they both asked in a breath.

"He has n't come home yet," said Mrs. Alden, quietly. "I suppose old Whiteface walks very slowly, and the path is steep in places."

She was really beginning to be worried about the boy, but she said nothing of this to Stella or Winnie.

After dinner two or three of the mill children came to take their lessons, as usual. Every few minutes Mrs. Alden went to the door, but no King or Whiteface was in sight.

The little strangers returned to Slabtown. Stella took her seat by the window and read aloud to Winnie from a picture-book she had brought from Selborne. It was about curious stories of cats and dogs.

By four o'clock it was nearly dark on the mountain.

Mrs. Alden was going to and fro in the room, preparing for supper, when suddenly the little boy uttered a cry of delight.

"Look, Stella!" he shouted, springing to the window. "It's snowing! It's snowing! What splendid times we shall have!"

Sure enough, the air was full of tiny flakes, which could just be seen in the gathering darkness.

To Winnie's great surprise, his mother buried her face in her hands and began to sob as he had never seen her before.

"Why, mother, mother, what is it? What is the matter?"

Mrs. Alden tried to control herself as she put her arm around her little son and held him tightly to her.

As she did not answer Winthrop, his sister now came forward, and knelt beside her mother's chair.

"Are you afraid—about King?" she asked in a whisper.

The poor mother nodded but could not speak. She had been worried all day, and she was sure she ought to have aroused the people at the depot or the mill, to

hunt for King. Now it was too dark for any one to venture down the steep path, and her husband would not return until the next day. Meanwhile, King, her brave boy, whom she loved better than her own life, was lost, yes, lost on the mountain — perhaps freezing to death that very moment in some bleak crevice among the high ledges where the terrible wind was sweeping down from the north, ice-cold and loaded with snow.

"Mother," said Stella, with quivering lips, "we can't go ourselves, but can't we pray a little? Perhaps God will go instead."

And in the little log-cabin, with the storm roaring through the lonely forest about them, the three

knelt together and asked their Father to be with the lost boy in the tempest, the cold, and the black night.

CHAPTER III.

LOST.

When King turned and waved good-by to his mother, from the bend in the path, and started upward once more, he felt his heart growing lighter every moment. In the first place, he was glad, like all healthy, hearty boys, to have a little adventure, all by himself, on the mountain. He felt older than ever before — quite a man, indeed — as he trudged along the rough trail. Secondly, he was comforted by the thought that, although the cow had been lost through his own fault, he was

now doing his very best to find her again. When we have done wrong and are really sorry for it, it always gives us great satisfaction and pleasure to undo, as far as we can, the mischief.

"I 'll get up early for the next month," said King to himself, "to make up for being so careless. I 'll get up and start the kitchen fire and milk Whiteface before mother is awake. I 'd just like to know where she is this minute!"

He was thinking of the cow.

"Co'! Co'! Co' boss!" he called two or three times, stopping between to listen. But no answering *Moo!* came.

The path lay through the thickest part of the forest, for King had

now left the cleared spots where the lumbermen had once worked. It was a pretty straight course uphill, following the bed of the brook, which he could always hear bubbling and laughing not far away. Now and then a smaller stream crossed the path, and then the boy would stop and drink, using the little tin dipper which he always carried on his belt when he walked in the woods.

It was very still; except the rush of the brook, there was scarcely a sound in the air; now and then a squirrel chattered overhead, or sprung away lightly through the evergreen boughs.

The cow's tracks were plain enough, so far. She must have

started early in the night, for King had already walked over a mile, and he could see where she had fed on raspberry leaves and the short, bright green grass that grew in tufts along the path.

It was now nearly noon, but he could not tell about time very well, as the sun had disappeared in a heavy bank of cloud. King began to feel hungry and a little bit discouraged and nervous. He had never been so far up the mountain before, even with his father; and now he was all alone.

"I wish," said he, aloud, "I had brought more doughnuts."

His mother, you remember, had filled his pockets, just before he started. He had four good-sized ones left and two apples.

"I guess I'll save these," he went on, still talking aloud to keep up his courage, "till I find Whiteface; then I can have some milk with them."

He trudged ahead, and soon found he could not talk and walk at the same time, for he needed all his breath for the climb. He was now so high that the trees, he noticed, were shorter and all their branches twisted in one direction, where the terrible northerly storms of winter had blown and beat upon them year after year.

It grew colder. Little icy blasts began to rustle down from the high peaks beyond. He could see only a little way ahead, the trees were so thickly crowded together. He

shivered, but thought of Winnie crying for milk, and kept bravely on.

"Co' boss! Co' boss!" he called, with all his might.

Her tracks were in the path, but not a sound could he hear.

Suddenly he stopped and turned pale. A curious thing was coming towards him in the path. It looked like a puff of white smoke, as if a cannon had been fired, without making any sound. Silently it rolled along the narrow passage between the trees, until it reached him. In an instant his jacket was whitened with snow, and his ears pinched with a biting wind. Almost as suddenly it was gone, and the air was clear again.

King knew well enough what had made him so cold and snowy; what this thing was, which he could hardly realize was not a dream until he saw the snow on the limbs of the trees and the dead leaves about him. It was a small fragment of *frost-cloud*, such as are driven to and fro in the ravines and along the desolate slopes of the higher mountain-peaks.

He knew how dangerous they were, for his father had told him of travelers who had been overtaken by these terrible clouds, had lost their way, and frozen to death before help could come. Ought he to go on? There was danger — but he did want to find the cow, and he was sure she must

be near. He would not give up now, almost at the end of his journey.

Buttoning his little jacket tightly around his throat, King struggled ahead, facing a strong, cold wind which blew steadily down upon him. He felt something soft and light strike against his face. A glance at his sleeve showed what it was — a snow-flake with six beautifully crystalled points.

Another and another. Faster they came, and still faster, seeming never to fall at all, but to be driven straight on by the furious wind. The ground was soon white, however, and a new trouble arose; the cow's tracks could no longer be seen.

King saw that it would not be wise to hunt any more — at least, after he had turned that one corner, just ahead. When he reached it, he stopped, in surprise and awe at the wonderful view spread out before him. He was fairly above the "tree-line" as it is called; that is, he was on the high slopes of the mountain where it was so cold and stormy throughout the year that no tree ever grew there. The few straggling clumps he had just left behind were scarcely higher than his head. Before him, stretching away for miles in every direction, was a gray waste of rock, broken and tumbled about in desolate confusion. On both sides, there were steep ravines, reaching down to

the valleys below; in front, the ridge rose, until it was lost in rolling cloud and white, tossing snow. The wind blew so that he could hardly keep his feet, and swept past him with a dull roar that made his heart sink with dread.

"I guess I 'll go back now," he said to himself, taking one last look over the wild scene, and then — "why, there 's Whiteface herself!" he cried out joyously, as his eye fell upon a dark object with a white front, on the mountain-side a short distance beyond.

He felt his weariness leave him for a moment, as he sprang along the path, trying to call to the cow. The wind blew so hard that he could make no sound loud enough

for her to hear; the dark object remained motionless. It was farther off than he thought, and he was nearly half an hour in reaching it. What was his bitter disappointment to find that what he had taken for Whiteface was only a large rock, with a snow drift in one of its crannies. Stopping suddenly at the sight, he felt one of his feet slip, and a sharp twinge shoot through his ankle. He sank to the ground, crying with pain and fright. The clouds swept down, and the snow thickened in the air around him. Lost, lost on the mountain!

CHAPTER IV.

THE NINETY AND NINE.

As King half sank, half fell down upon the rocks in his despair, he could not help noticing that the storm seemed suddenly much lighter. Indeed, he hardly felt the wind at all, though he could hear its loud roar, like the beating of the sea upon a rocky shore. The snow, too, did not reach him, but swept up into a little drift, shaped like part of a circle around him. This was very comfortable, and he soon began to feel more hopeful, and to look about him.

"Ah," said he, "I see what keeps off the wind. It 's this big stone."

He remembered hearing his father read somewhere in the Bible, about the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

"That 's what this is," he said to himself. "Only it is n't exactly a shadow. It 's just a quiet place; but that 's better."

King was right. A calm is the shadow of a storm.

As the boy remembered the verse, he felt very much comforted and cheered.

"God is up here, in the snow," he thought, "so I need n't be afraid. He sent me to this rock, so that I could get rested and find a good place to eat my dinner in."

For dinner he ate one apple and a doughnut. He was thirsty afterward, and sucked bits of ice and snow, but these did not help him much. Oh, how he longed for one drink of sweet spring water!

"I guess I 'll start for home," he said to himself. "It must be two or three o'clock, and as many miles between here and the house."

In fact he was becoming so numb with the cold that he knew he must be moving, if he did not want to freeze.

Once more he faced the storm. The clouds had settled down on the mountain, so that he could hardly see a rod before him. The wind seized him so furiously that he had to drop again and again,

and cling to the rocks. He staggered along in this way, through the deepening snow, his ankle paining him more and more, until something large and dark filled the air before him. He cleared the frost from his eyelashes as well as he could, and looked eagerly forward. Then he was thankful that he had not gone further. The dark appearance was simply space, the broad, open air, instead of the rocks and snow on which he had been gazing. He had come to the top of a lofty precipice, over which a dozen steps further would surely have carried him.

We may be pretty sure that King thanked his Father once more

for His care over him, as he crawled back, further and further from this new danger.

He kept on, very cautiously. It seemed to him weeks and months since he left home that morning. He was so cold and tired that he felt that he must lie down and go to sleep. But something told him that if he did, he would never wake again in this world. Thinking one little prayer after another — they were hardly more, I think, than the one word "Father! Father!" — he dragged one foot wearily after another, through drifts and over rough, icy rocks.

And now it grew dark before him again. He trembled as he thought of the dreadful precipice;

then gave a delighted little sob, for here was the forest once more. Any thing was better than those dreary ridges of bare rock where there was no living creature but himself. In the woods, among these dear, soft fir-trees, he knew, there were hosts of tiny furred and feathered things, their soft, bright eyes looking out contentedly at the storm, while they were safely cared for by their Father.

"He means to take care of me to-night!" thought King. "He's brought me into his great out-door house, where he keeps his sparrows, and he'll take care of all of us together."

A few steps further, and King ran plump into a large stump,

tripped over a log, and fell toward what looked, in the stormy dusk, like an immense, snow-covered bowlder. As if by magic, the rock opened and let him in.

"Moo-o-o!"

King could hardly believe his eyes and ears.

"Whiteface, you old darling!"

"Moo-o-o-o!" again.

Then two or three long sighs, and a comfortable sound of munching.

King jumped to his feet and looked about him. It was no rock at all. He found himself in a sort of log shanty, roofed with bark, and carpeted with fir-boughs. He now dimly remembered hearing his father tell about a small shelter

that had been long ago built for belated travelers on this high and lonely mountain-path. Indeed, Mr. Alden had once passed a night there himself.

The boy's first act was to hug the cow; then to kneel down on the boughs, which sent up their sweet, dried fragrance, and say "Our Father" through, from beginning to end.

"And now, Whiteface," said he, jumping up briskly, "we'll see what sort of a house we're in." There the idea struck him funnily. "What a great clumsy red sparrow you are!"

Whiteface looked at him in silence for a moment, with as near a smile on her face as a cow could

possibly have; then remarked "Um-m-m" softly, and went on with her cud. It was evident that she was greatly pleased to have company, in her lonely stable.

There was just light enough left for King to discover that one side of the hut was all fire-place, made of broad, flat stones, kept in place by clay. He had been about with his father enough to understand about fire-making, and he had some matches in his pocket; with a handful of dried boughs for kindling, he started a small blaze, which soon grew to a fine large one. There were two or three armfuls of dry wood stowed away in one corner of the hut, for the use of any one overtaken there at night.

Whiteface at first hardly liked the fire, not being used to having one in her sleeping-room; but as King paid no attention to her doubtful looks, she concluded it was all right, and yielded the point gracefully.

King now closed the shutter of a small square opening, through which the snow had been blowing. He shoveled out the snow from the door-way as well as he could with a piece of bark, and closed the door, too. The leather hinges had long ago broken away, but he managed to prop it up firmly in its place, so as to keep most of the wind out.

"Now, old cow," he said cheerily, "I guess its about milking-time."

Kneeling down by her side, he milked his little dipper full, again and again. He was obliged to throw most of it away, because he had no pail; but Whiteface promised him some more for breakfast.

Milking done, he took out a couple of doughnuts and an apple, and with his dipper of milk at hand, sat down before the fire. The hut was now very warm and comfortable indeed.

I forgot to say that what Whiteface was munching was some straw that had been left in the hut for a bed, by somebody who did not know how much better fir-boughs were. It was not a very good supper for her, but King knew she would not suffer seriously before to-morrow.

At length he finished his own meal, milked one last dipper full, for the night, built up the fire with the largest sticks he had, said his prayers, patted Whiteface and kissed the star on her forehead, curled himself up on the boughs, and in two minutes he was fast asleep.

Once or twice he woke up in the night, threw more wood on the fire, and went to sleep again, feeling very contented and happy. All through the long hours, the wind and storm roared around and above the little hut, but no harm came to God's two sparrows within.

King was pretty cold when he got up next morning. The first

thing he did was to build a fire. Then he milked the cow and ate for his own breakfast the last of the scanty provisions he had brought.

On looking out of the window opening, he found that the sun was shining brightly, and all the trees sparkling with the new-fallen snow.

Hardly a breath of wind was stirring. A flock of pretty gray and white snowbirds fluttered up close to the hut, to say good-morning.

"Come, Whiteface," said King, throwing back the door. "We must be going. Let's see if you can find the way."

The cow walked gravely out,

rubbing her sleek sides against the door-posts and blinking a little at the glistening white world.

Then she started in a straight line through the low trees, King following. They had not taken twenty steps before they were in the path.

"Hurrah!" cried King. "Now for home!"

Whiteface started down hill with a good will. It was a hard walk, and a hungry one; but with home and love ahead, all journeys are short.

"My darling, my darling!" was all Mrs. Alden could sob, as she held her boy in her arms; for Mr. Alden had not yet returned. Stella had gone to the mill settlement to ask for help.

Whiteface was glad to get back to her own stable again. By noon the whole family were united once more, about the dinner table, King talking eagerly of his adventures, and the rest listening.

This was by no means the last of the exciting things that happened that winter. If you care to spend more time with the Mountaineers, you can find them in the next volume of this series, called

"WINNIE'S BLACK DOG."