

VARIOUS

HARPER'S YOUNG
PEOPLE, DECEMBER 9,
1879

Various

**Harper's Young People,
December 9, 1879**

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Содержание

TWENTY MILES AN HOUR	5
BURIED TREASURE	8
THE BRAVE SWISS BOY	10
V.—WALTER HAS A NEW ADVENTURE	11
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	13

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TWENTY MILES AN HOUR



ON THE ICE-HILL.

It was the 6th of January, that great holiday in Russia, when the river Neva is consecrated with pomp and ceremony, when soldiers parade and priests say mass, and the Emperor is visible, and the cannon roar. And it was a gloriously bright and beautiful day; but Ivan and Olga, looking out on the broad street and the glittering pinnacles of the palace chapel, watching the sledges fly by with people all muffled in furs, were two very disconsolate children. They had an English governess—for Russian children have to study English as Americans do French—and they had been so unruly, so impatient, and indifferent to lessons, that Miss Stanley had forbidden their going out to see the sights. This was hard indeed, but it was needful: that the children could not understand, and they walked from the great porcelain stove, which reached to the ceiling, over to the double windows, all packed with sand, and having curious little paper cornucopias of salt stuck in it to keep the frost from making pictures on the glass, to and fro, to and fro, in great unhappiness. Outside, the thermometer was away below zero, but inside, thanks to the stoves and the great copper heaters, it was as warm as toast.

"Now, Olga," said Ivan, after an hour or two of this tiresome way of spending time, "I am not going to stand this any longer; if I can not go to the Neva, I am going to have a ride on one of the ice mountains, and if you want to, you may go with me."

"Oh, Ivan, how would you dare? You know we are not allowed to go alone, and Marie is at church, and we have no sledges."

"Tut, tut! have I not fifty kopeks [about fifty cents], and can I not hire an isvochtchik [driver] to take us? and we can be home again before they come from chapel. Come, Olga, let us have some fun."

Olga's conscience said "no," but the temptation was overpowering, and after repeated urging from Ivan they both crept down softly to the little apartment in the large hall where were kept their fur cloaks and bashlyks, or cloth hoods, which are put over hats and ears. No one saw them. Every one was at church, and the dvornik, or porter who guarded the front door, was snoozing soundly, wrapped up in his sheep-skins, near the heater. They got their fur mittens and tippets and cloaks down from the pegs where they were hanging in the heated air, and put them on in silence. In silence, too, they lifted the huge bolts, and slipped out into the street. It was too cold to speak, for the air would have frozen on their lips, and they hurried to a corner where usually there were to be found sledges, whose drivers can endure any amount of cold, and who even sleep out at night at theatre and opera while waiting for their masters. Here Ivan found what he wanted, though the man's dull gaze seemed to question the propriety of taking two children to the pleasure-garden which Ivan indicated. The kopeks, however, were forth-coming, and that was all he cared about; so in they jumped, and tucked the furs about them, and away they went over the broad street, flying past troiskas, with their three horses, and gay little sledges of every description. Their route took them away from the Neva, where was the greatest crowd, and they soon reached the entrance of the pleasure-garden, climbed the great flight of wooden stairs to the pavilion on top, where Ivan hired a sled, and paid for a glass of tea hot from the big brass samovar, which is always boiling and ready for use. Olga had scarcely time to think what she was about before she was seated behind Ivan, and away they flew down the side of the frozen mountain, all as hard as glass. But now it began to snow fast, thick, and furious, and the people could not keep it off the ice. Ivan was getting tired, too, and his hands were cold. This fun of going twenty miles an hour had filled him with glee; but Olga lost her bashlyk, and he found it hard to guide his sled. Suddenly he made a swerve to the left, and, with a fearful jerk, over they went. It was a dreadful blow, and had it not been for the kindness of the people in charge, both might have been badly injured; but they were picked up and carried to the pavilion, rubbed with snow on their noses and ears, and finally packed in a sledge and driven home. How differently they looked at the glittering crowd, and watched the animated scene! They had gone out full of excitement and daring; resolved as Ivan was to resist authority, he now was full of shame that he had gotten himself into a scrape. His fingers ached, and Olga was crying and complaining of her ears. As they neared their home a troiska drove up with ladies wrapped in sables, and their mother and Miss Stanley alighted.

"Ivan! Olga! where have you been? what have you been doing?"

They told their story when they got in-doors, and Ivan had begged some kopeks with which to pay the waiting isvochtchik—for his money had been exhausted; and it was settled that they had been sufficiently punished when it was discovered that Ivan's fingers and Olga's ears were frost-bitten.

Both were sent to bed for fear of further harm from the cold, which is considered by Russians the root of all evil in the way of disease; and as they sipped their hot tea again, and nibbled the slice of lemon which floated on the surface, Ivan said to Olga: "It is great fun to go twenty miles an hour, but it don't pay to be bad. I'm going to work to-morrow at those old English verbs, and I'll conquer or die."

The Trap-door Spider.—One of the most singular specimens of insect life is the trap-door spider of Jamaica. His burrow is lined with silk, and closed by a trap-door with a hinge. The door exactly fits the entrance to the burrow, and when closed, so precisely corresponds with the surrounding earth that it can hardly be distinguished, even when its position is known. It is a strange sight to see the earth open, a little lid raised, some hairy legs protrude, and gradually, the whole form of the spider show itself. These spiders generally hunt for food by night, and in the daytime they are very chary of opening the door of their domicile, and if the trap be raised from the outside, they run to the spot,

hitch the claws of their fore-feet in the lining of the burrow, and so resist with all their might. The strength of the spider is wonderfully great in proportion to its size.

BURIED TREASURE

Upon a time—I do not know
Exactly when, but long ago—
A man whose riches were untold,
Silver and precious stones and gold.
Within an Eastern city dwelt;
But not a moment's peace he felt,
For fear that thieves should force his door,
And rob him of his treasured store.
In spite of armèd slaves on guard,
And doors and windows locked and barred,
His life was one continual fright;
He hardly slept a wink by night,
And had so little rest by day
That he grew prematurely gray.

At last he dug a monstrous pit
To hold his wealth, and buried it
By night, alone; then smoothed the ground
So that the spot could not be found.
But he gained nothing by his labor:
A curious, prying, envious neighbor,
Who marked the hiding, went and told
The Sultan where to find the gold.
A troop of soldiers came next day,
And bore the hoarded wealth away.

Some precious jewels still remained,
For which a goodly price he gained,
Then left the city, quite by stealth,
To save the remnant of his wealth;
But now, by hard experience taught,
A better way to keep it sought.
Broad lands he bought, and wisely tilled;
With fruits and grain his barns he filled;
He used his wealth with liberal hand;
His plenty flowed through all the land;
And, hid no longer under-ground,
Spread honest comfort all around.

Thus calm and prosperous pass the years,
Till on a fated day he hears
The Sultan's mandate, short and dread,
"Present thyself, or lose thy head!"
Fearful and trembling, he obeys,
For Sultans have their little ways,

And wretches who affront their lord
Brave bastinado, sack, or cord.

Before the dreaded throne he bowed
Where sat the Sultan, grim and proud,
And thought, "My head must surely fall,
And then my master will seize all
My wealth again." But from the throne
There came a calm and kindly tone:
"My son, well pleased am I to see
Thy dealings in prosperity;
May Allah keep thee in good health!
Well hast thou learned the use of wealth.
No longer buried under-ground,
Its comforts spread to all around.
The poor man's blessings on thy name
Are better far than worldly fame.
I called thee hither. Now, behold,
Here are the silver, gems, and gold
I took from thee in other days;
Receive them back, and go thy ways,
For thou hast learned this truth at last—
Would that it might be sown broadcast!—
That riches are but worthless pelf
When hoarded only for one's self."

S. S. C.

THE BRAVE SWISS BOY

[Begun in No. 1 of Harper's Young People, Nov. 4.]

V.—WALTER HAS A NEW ADVENTURE

Toni Hirzel recovered but slowly from the injuries he had suffered, and the entire winter passed away before he found himself able to make use of his limbs again. But the doctor's fears that he would never be able to resume the life of a mountaineer were unfortunately confirmed. He never properly recovered the use of his foot; and Toni often cast a sorrowful glance at the gun now hanging useless on the wall. To this cause of regret there was added anxiety for the future. The chase, which had hitherto so materially assisted in supplying his wants, could no longer be followed; and although Walter had grown tall and strong, he was not experienced enough to take his father's place. In addition to this, Hirzel had expressly forbidden his boy to have anything more to do with hunting, which sooner or later would be sure to lead to a violent and dreadful death; and in order to remove temptation as much as possible from him, he sold his gun to one of his neighbors.

"Now, Watty," said he, putting the eighty francs which he had received into a drawer, "we have got nearly money enough for another cow, and we must see if we can't raise the remainder, that we may have at least milk and butter."

"We have got plenty of money, father," replied Watty. "There is the hundred francs that Mr. Seymour gave me lying useless in the desk, and I insist upon your taking the half of it at least, to replenish the byre. But," added he, with a sigh, "without chamois-hunting I do not see how matters are to go with us. Do you know, father, I have been thinking that I might do something to earn my living."

"In what way, Watty?"

"Well, I might go down to the inn every day, and offer my services to the visitors as a guide. I know all the roads, and can show the people the way to the Blue Grotto, or conduct them to the peaks of the Wellhorn and Engelhorn; and as the landlord is always so friendly, I'm sure he would recommend me."

"Not a bad idea," replied Hirzel. "To be sure, it is only for the summer; but as there are always a good many travellers, you might be able to save enough to carry you through the winter. Turn guide, then, Watty," he added, after a little more consideration, "and I will stay at home and attend to the house and the cow. Let us be thankful I'm strong enough for that, at any rate."

The plan of operations which was thus arranged was not, however, destined to be carried into effect, for the next day Frieshardt came to pay a visit to the cottage, with a proposal of quite a different kind. He had shown himself very attentive and neighborly since Hirzel's accident, and had given him proofs of kindly feeling during the period of his convalescence. The old friendship had therefore been fully restored, and the affair of the cow and the borrowed money had been long since forgotten. Hirzel rose as Frieshardt entered, and gave him a hearty welcome, in which he was cordially joined by Walter.

"I have got a suggestion to make to you, neighbor," said the well-to-do farmer, seating himself near the fire.

"To me!" exclaimed Hirzel. "What can a poor man like me do to serve you?"

"I don't mean you so much as Watty," continued Frieshardt. "He has grown a tall, sensible fellow now, and I know he is honest, every inch of him."

"Ah! you are right there, neighbor, although I say it to his face," replied Hirzel.—"You don't need to blush, boy. It is nothing more than your duty to behave honestly.—But what can Watty do for you?"

"Well, the long and the short of the matter is this," said the farmer. "I've got sixty head of cattle down in Meyringen, which I am going to send to France to sell. A drover has been recommended to me who understands the business, but I should like to send some reliable person with him to look after the money, and see that everything is properly attended to. I think Walter would be the man for me, if he will agree to it. He shall have good wages, and everything done to make him comfortable."

Father and son exchanged looks, and each saw in the countenance of the other that the proposal was a good one. "If my father is satisfied," said the youth, "I shall be delighted to go."

"Well said," replied Frieshardt, evidently pleased. "Now let's hear what you want for the journey."

"I would rather you would say what you will give," answered Walter. "I don't understand such things very well."

"Well, then, I'll pay all your expenses there and back, and give you a hundred francs into the bargain. Are you satisfied with that?"

"Yes, more than satisfied," replied the boy. "But I should like it better if you would give father a cow now, instead of giving me the money afterward. I should be glad indeed if he could get one before I go away."

"But what would you want for yourself when you come back?"

"Nothing, neighbor. If you will only grant my request I shall be quite contented and thankful."

"Well," said Frieshardt, "you are a dutiful and kind-hearted son, and I'm sure you will be a faithful servant. You shall have my cow Black Elsy, and your father can fetch her whenever he chooses. Meanwhile, you must be ready to go to Meyringen to-morrow morning," continued Frieshardt. "I will go with you, and give you all the instructions you will require. It won't be a difficult affair, and I'm sure you will manage it easily. Adieu, till morning."

With these cheering words the farmer left Walter and his father to talk over the unexpected change in their fortunes.

Shortly afterward Walter repaired to Frieshardt's farm, and came back leading Black Elsy in triumph; and after taking farewell of his father, returned to Frieshardt's house on the following morning. The route which Walter's employer chose led them past the splendid waterfalls of the Reichenbach to the charming village of Meyringen, where the cattle were collected. When they reached the village they found a drover of the name of Seppi waiting for them; and to the latter, as well as to Walter, the farmer gave the necessary instructions regarding the treatment of the herd during the ensuing journey.

Our young hero entered upon the journey actuated by the best of motives, the duty of looking after the cattle absorbing so much of his attention that he had very little opportunity for increasing his acquaintance with his travelling companion. The fact was, however, that he did not feel himself much drawn toward Seppi, from whom he had received anything but a very friendly welcome when they first met; the drover had, moreover, a rough and uncultivated manner, which was somewhat repulsive. His treatment of the animals was unduly harsh when any of them became restive and obstinate, and he seemed angry when Walter checked his cruel behavior, and pointed out to him that the dumb animals intrusted to his care should be treated with kindness and patience. But by degrees the young men became more reconciled to each other; and as Walter accustomed himself to the ungainly appearance of his companion, he came to the generous conclusion that Seppi had an honest and well-meaning heart in spite of his rough and unpolished ways.

They soon reached the French frontier, and after a long journey found themselves in the outskirts of Paris. Walter had arranged the stages so well that the animals were in admirable condition, and warranted the expectation of a good and prompt sale. Seppi was of the same opinion, and said he thought they would sell for even more than the price Frieshardt had named.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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