

Kit : an American Boy

By Jennie A. Eustace

I

HIS sponsors had called him Christopher Bainbridge Bryce. The boy would have preferred something shorter and simpler, perhaps even "a rusty name unwashed by baptism" so that it had been just a good, comfortable mouthful for the other boys to designate him by.

It is not surprising therefore, that at an early age various curtailments were adopted; Kit, and Chris, and Crit; and some boys had fallen into the way, at one time, of calling him Stub. But his mother, resenting this on the ground that perhaps it had been suggested by the fact of his being such a little lad, and having such short, sturdy, round little legs, remonstrated with him on the subject to such effect that Stub enjoyed but a short-lived popularity.

"I don't want any one to call me Stub again. My name is Kit." Being the respected leader of the majority of his fellows in spite of short legs, small bones, and few years—he was only twelve—that settled it. Kit he was to every one from that day.

With one exception.

Brawn and muscle yield unwillingly to diminutive superiority.
The Yellow Book—Vol. XIII. Goliath's

Goliath's cry, "Give me a Man, that we may fight together," was uttered in contempt of David's size. But in the days of the Philistines, no less than now, a very small hand, directed by an accurate eye and a powerful conviction, was found quite large enough to inject a fatal significance into so simple a weapon as a slung-shot.

Neil Morgan was only one year older than Kit, but he was several years larger and heavier, and he scoffed at Kit's peaceful rule of his followers. He himself went in for tearing off his coat at the slightest provocation, and, in the parlance of the boys, "squaring up," calling out as he did so :

"Come on ! If any one wants to fight, let him come on !"

His combative fists had long burned to belabour Kit's calm, well-tempered anatomy, and Kit's attitude towards the use of his sobriquet furnished the opportunity. He publicly announced that Stub was in every way a suitable name for such a stub of a boy, and declared his intention of distinguishing him by it whenever he saw fit.

This coming to Kit's knowledge, he resolved upon Morgan's early downfall.

"Of course she will feel sore about it," he reflected, "but that fellow must be settled."

Kit, like other leaders the world over, through all the ages, exercised his generalship, as he did all else, with the consideration of one fair goddess ever in his mind. He called his goddess Judy. Church records witnessed that she had been baptized Helen Judith, but Judy fell in with his theory regarding easy, comfortable names.

Judy was the passion of Kit's life, the lode-star of his existence. He knew no childish ambition whose realisation was not to benefit her ;

her ; he indulged no roseate dreams in whose radiance she did not shine pre-eminent. Every boyish triumph was incomplete until her approval crowned it, and her rebuke could rob the proudest victory of its glory.

No boy ever lived who despised effeminate qualities in his sex more than Kit did, but whenever the service of Judy required it he could perform the offices of a maid with incredible delicacy.

He knew a dozen little secrets of her toilet, and took pleasure in seeing that she always performed them to the enhancement of her beauty and her comfort.

He had acquired the knack of arranging her veil to please her. He studied the weather to know what wraps she required. He buttoned her boots. If her head ached and she was tired, he brushed her hair with a soothing hand. And he took the fondest pride in carefully opening the fingers of her new gloves by gently blowing his warm breath into them before she put them on. This last was a special invention of his own which had found much favour in her eyes. He made her the trusted confidante of every secret of his heart, and her judgment on all subjects was as an oracle to him.

And Judy, on her part, paid back this wealth of homage and devotion in equal measure and greater ; for Judy was Kit's fair young mother, and Kit was Judy's all.

Any serious difference of opinion between them was extremely rare, and when—as in the case of Morgan—the possibility of one arose, Kit knew no peace until, to quote himself, he had “had it out” with her.

“It will have to come to it,” he announced to her one day.

“What is it this time, Comfort ?” Whenever Kit appeared particularly troubled Judy called him Comfort. She knew that it flattered

flattered the proudest boast of his little life, and was a bit of strategy which never failed to reassure him.

“Morgan ; he insists on ‘Stub,’ and wants a fight.”

He sat down on the side of her chair, coiled his arm about her neck, and with his round, red cheek resting comfortably against her shoulder, described the situation. Judy acknowledged a thrill of sympathy at the condition of affairs, and agreed to enter no protest against their better adjustment.

His mind at ease respecting her attitude in the matter, his next move was to cultivate the society of a half-dozen doubtful spirits, respected only for their skill in sundry tricks of boyish warfare. With these he held frequent council in the roomy loft of the barn, greatly to the alarm and annoyance of Annie, the beautiful chestnut mare, in the stable below, who was Kit's particular pride and special property. He had no foolish confidence in his own prowess as opposed to that of the young giant he proposed to lay low, and the purpose of this first step in his plan of action was to make himself master of the honourable science of wrestling—that potent art in serving the ends of agility against amplitude. Becoming familiar, however, with the startling efficacy of certain not altogether legitimate manœuvres of which his youthful instructors were the proud exponents, he found himself possessed at moments of a moral fear lest he should be tempted to resort to similar irregularities with Morgan in case honest means should get the worst of it.

And when, during one unusually exciting session, little Ted Wilson, overhearing an uncomplimentary allusion to himself, suddenly brought his detractors sprawling to earth by a sly play of the tip of his boot, Kit could not control his enthusiasm, but threw up his hat and gave utterance to the most emphatic expression of approval in his vocabulary :

“By

“By Jove! But that is ripping!”

Annie was not the only member of the family who was puzzled and distressed by Kit's mysterious devotion to the barn loft. Judy had found it impossible to look with full favour upon his, to her, unaccountable devotion to his present associates. It had never been her plan to insist upon any confidence from him until he chose to give it. But for the first time this negative mode of procedure seemed about to fail.

And so, on the morning of a certain May day, observing his impatience to bolt his breakfast and be off to the barn for an interval before school, she determined to follow and to learn as much as she might without positive eavesdropping. When she entered the barn she heard no sound but Annie's familiar whinney. Above in the loft everything seemed quiet. She began to wonder if Kit could be alone, when a heavy sound like the quick falling of an inert body reached her. Kit, mastering a difficult turn, had thrown little Wilson forcibly to the floor. This was followed by shrill yells of approval, and Judy found herself hearing fragments of speech never intended for delicate ears, and of such a nature that for an instant she stood transfixed with angry indignation. Then, without pausing to consider any result but the desirable one of being rid of the young barbarians overhead, she went swiftly to the foot of the stairs, where, in sterner tones than he had ever heard from her, she called him:

“Kit!”

There was no mistaking the meaning in that call. To every boy who had been guilty of an oath or any other contraband expression it meant that she had heard him, and that in her judgment Kit was responsible.

And Kit himself was so bewildered with the surprise of her being there, that for one swift moment he felt almost like a culprit.

This

This state was followed quickly, however, by a series of reflections which left him ill-natured and sullen, and for the first time in his life, disappointed in her.

"She didn't trust me. She sneaked!"

That was his mental summary, and to do him justice it had some show of truth. He stood stubbornly at the head of the stairs waiting for her to call again.

"Kit!"

"Well?"

"I want you."

He walked slowly down, followed by his abashed coadjutors, who lost no time in making their escape. Judy in the meantime had walked over to the stall, where she stood quietly stroking Annie's soft nose. Kit remained by the door watching her, his hands thrust doggedly into his pockets, his hat on the back of his head, and a look of unmistakable mutiny in his eyes. Judy felt that her task was both delicate and difficult.

"I am disappointed, Kit! That language, those boys! What can you see in them?"

He had never known her to manifest so much displeasure at anything before.

"I cannot understand it, Comfort."

A lump came into his throat at the name, but the sense of his disappointment in her still mastered him and kept him silent. At this point the school bell rang. The situation was becoming extreme.

His mother realised it, and waited—devoting herself to Annie, talking softly to her and calling her by the pet names which Kit had invented for her from time to time. But all to no purpose, for when she looked toward the door again he was gone. She could see him disappearing in the direction of the school, his hands

hands still in his pockets, but his hat now was drawn low over his eyes.

“Poor little man!” she sighed. She knew there were tears under the brim.

The mid-day recess did not improve matters. Kit continued to maintain his sullen silence, and this time Judy did not attempt to break it. He found her busy finishing a flannel blouse which she had made for him to wear in some athletic sports that were to take place on the next day. They had modelled this garment between them, and the sight of her thus employed brought up the troublesome lump to his throat again. He made no overture to a peace, however, but finished his meal and hurried back to his lessons. Judy followed him to the door, and watched the little figure out of sight. When he reached the corner whose turning shut him from her view, he looked back and saw her standing there.

“Oh, Judy, Judy!” It was a genuine sob that burst from him as he hastened on.

“Dear, dear little Judy! But she finished the blouse just the same.”

Altogether it was proving the most miserable day of Kit’s young existence, and he could never look back upon it without a certain degree of suffering.

When school was dismissed, he set out for the athletic grounds with several companions for an hour’s final practice against to-morrow’s contests. Within hearing distance behind him were Morgan and his cohorts, bound for the same destination and with the same object in view. Kit was bent on excelling to-morrow—partly, to be sure, to outdo the other boys, but more than all just now to make Judy proud of him again. She would be there to see him, seated in the comfortable little phaeton behind Annie.

Indeed,

Indeed, what event had ever taken place in his little life at which she had not been present—and, for the matter of that, Annie, too, provided it had been any function at which a self-respecting horse could appear? After practice he would go home to her and straighten out the wretched affair of the morning, and tomorrow with everything between them smooth and right once more, why— A glad little sigh at the happy prospect was escaping him, when his ears caught an expression from the crowd in the rear that sent the angry blood into his cheeks. He felt his fingers suddenly tingle with a desire to clutch something, and even his sturdy little legs began to tremble with excitement.

Could it be that on this of all days he was to settle scores with the enemy? It flashed upon him that no day could be fitter. His quarrel with Judy, her distress, his own miserable heart-ache—nothing could suit him better than to avenge these, and to accomplish Morgan's downfall in the same hour.

It is in the young male blood to scent battle and to gloat over it; and a significant silence had fallen upon both groups of boys. Kit himself strode on, waiting for the repetition of the attack which he felt would soon come.

“His—mother's—little—Stub!” He heard it drawled forth a second time. The words were Morgan's, and there was a challenge in them. Quicker than it takes to tell it, Kit turned and faced the foe.

“Come on!” It was Morgan who spoke again, but the words were no more than uttered, when, with the rapidity of lightning, out shot a determined little fist in a left lead-off for Morgan's head, instantly followed up by a cut from an equally determined little right. And then, faster and faster, and more and more determined with each succeeding play, now here, now there, first for Judy and then for himself, his blows fell like hail
on

on face, on head, on ribs ; and Kit seemed transformed into a living incarnation of physical dynamics. In vain did Morgan try to recover himself. Kit realised that it was the opportunity of his fighting career, and at the first return blow he proceeded to put into practice those arts which he had learned from his now deposed trainers. The hold, the heave, the click—it is not to be supposed that he knew them by these technical terms, but he executed them all with an effectiveness that was maddening and bewildering. Morgan would have been glad to cry quits, but nothing would satisfy Kit now but to see him literally in the dust ; and watching his chance he suddenly sprang upon the other's bulky frame, locking himself firmly about his waist by the knees, and with a quick downward and backward movement of his hands and arms, he pulled Morgan's legs from under him and sent him to the ground an inert mass, himself falling with him and literally pinning the young blusterer to earth.

For a few quiet seconds the two combatants eyed each other curiously ; Morgan, still dazed from the concussion of the fall, stared at Kit in a half appealing way, while Kit, burning with excitement and conscious of victory, returned the look with one of calm disdain.

“What is my name now ?”

“K—K—Kit !”

Then he calmly rose—and went home and made his peace with Judy.

II

Need it be told that Kit was a victor in the next day's sports ?

When a boy has thrashed his enemy and become good friends with his mother, who and what can beat him ?

But

But his victory was not an altogether easy one, nor was it an assured one until the very finish. Four lads besides himself—each a winner in at least one previous contest of the afternoon—were pitted against each other for the final affair of the day, a mile walk.

The four were all taller than Kit, with longer legs and capable of greater stride. But he was known among the boys as a stayer. Moreover he possessed the faculty of keeping his wits about him notwithstanding much weariness of the flesh. Frequent practice had made him familiar with every foot of the track. He knew at what turns it declined and where it ascended, and just where over-tired feet would be apt to trip and fall.

The five boys had circled the half-mile course once, and as they passed the judge's stand each one was holding his own. Kit, Neil Morgan, and little Wilson were ahead and abreast, the other two slightly behind. In this order they continued for the next three hundred yards. Then Morgan pushed ahead, lengthening his stride and quickening his pace until he opened an awkward gap between himself and the others. Kit felt keenly the disadvantage of his short legs, but no effort he might make could disarrange geometrical certainties. The base of a triangle could not be made to measure more than the united length of its two other sides. He kept pluckily on, however, side by side with Wilson, neither gaining nor losing until they both reached a point on the track directly across from the grand stand, where for a distance of fifty feet a thicket of willows shut off their small figures from the judge's eyes. When they emerged from behind this screen, Wilson was seen not only in advance of Kit, but leading Morgan also by several feet.

Knowing his opportunity, he had taken advantage of it, and as soon as they were well within the shade of the trees he had broken
into

into a quick run for a space of twenty feet and more. Kit, not altogether surprised by this manœuvre—memories of the barn-loft were still with him—was unmoved by it save for an ominous tightening of the lips and a deepening of the red in his cheeks. But poor Morgan, certain of victory, and over-elated by the safe lead he had honestly won, was so confounded by the vision of Wilson passing him that tears of disappointment blinded him, and he ambled from side to side of the track, thus permitting Kit, doggedly plodding on in a straight line, soon to overtake and pass him.

The fourth and fifth boys having fallen behind, the race now lay between Wilson and Kit. The former, jubilant over the advantage he had unlawfully gained, was swinging along with an air of great confidence, his head well up in the air and his eyes straight ahead. The crowd in the grand stand had already awarded the race to him, Kit's followers no less than the others. Judy, sitting behind Annie over among the carriages at the right of the stand, felt her heart beat a little faster than usual at the prospect of Kit's defeat, but not all her fond ambition could shorten that dangerous lead.

Kit alone had not given up. He kept resolutely on, his eyes fixed on Wilson, and every muscle strained to its utmost. He knew that thirty feet this side of the wire there was a treacherous dip in the track. Twice in practice he had encountered it, and in emerging from it the unexpected rise under his feet had thrown him to the ground. Did Wilson know of it too?

Kit based his one final hope on the answer to this query.

And now the forward boy was directly in the line of the pitfall; nearer and nearer, and still he had given no sign of attempting to avoid it. Kit's anxiety was becoming painful. And now Wilson was within half a dozen paces of the spot. Would he go straight into

into it? Would he swerve to the right—to the left! But even as Kit calculated the chances, the other had reached it. He tripped, he stumbled, he recovered himself. He tripped again, again he stumbled, and with an angry oath which reached Kit's ears and recalled with comical force Judy's shock of yesterday, he fell his full length on the track. By the time he had well regained his footing, Kit had passed him and was under the wire.

Half an hour later Annie was speeding Judy and Kit up the avenue toward home at a rollicking pace. No one knew better than Annie that Kit had won. Indeed, had he not told her so himself as he rubbed his cheek against her nose before climbing in beside Judy?

"Did you see me get there, old girl?" And she had replied with a happy and intelligent neigh that she had seen him get there, and was proud of him.

III

The world was not quite right with Annie. Down in the large pleasant pasture field she spent much of her time in sad rumination. She had little else to do these days and might be seen standing for hours at a time with her chin resting lazily on the gate, which shut her in from the highway stretching along by the river. Sometimes Judy stood there too, looking out on the road, with her arm about Annie's neck.

But even Judy's arm could not console her. Perhaps it only served to remind her more forcibly of how sadly she missed from her neck another arm, a smaller one, and two dear little stirruped feet from her sides, and a dear little figure from her back. What a time it seemed since she had felt them. How she longed for a race down the road with that light buoyant weight on her back.

She

She was becoming a veritable sluggard. Were her days of usefulness and activity over? Should he never need her again?

At this point in her daily musing there usually came in sight at the bend of the road the cause of all her dolour. At first it looked each time to Annie like an immense ball rolling very fast. But as it approached it invariably resolved itself into that well-loved and sadly missed little figure mounted on what she felt convinced were two of the phaeton wheels, and working the dear little legs up and down with the vigour and precision of a trip-hammer.

When it came quite in front of them Judy would laugh and clap her hands and cry, "Bravo, bravo," as it sped by. And then Annie, recognising an obligation, would try to toss up her head with her old spirit and to follow with a glad neigh. But the stupidest horse in the world could have seen that she made a miserable failure of it, for there was no gladness in it—more of a sob, if a horse knows anything about a sob.

To come to the point, Kit had surrendered to a bicycle.

Morning, noon, and night, for the past two months, it had absorbed every spare hour. There had been a rather difficult argument with Judy at the first, but having once yielded, she became as enthusiastic a partisan as Kit himself. It was a distinguishing trait in her that she entered into every experience of his with as much active interest as though the experience were her own. She speedily made herself an authority, therefore, on gearing, and adjustment, and saddles, and pedals, and all the rest, that he might enjoy an advantage at every point. She took the keenest pride in his riding. It was not enough that he could make the best time and the longest distance; he must be the best to look upon as well. And so she devised the trimmest of costumes and the neatest of caps. And he must sit correctly and he must pedal properly, until, taking it all in all, Kit's bicycle period

period developed into the most engrossing one yet known to either himself or to Judy.

And in the meantime Annie continued sad and neglected. Joe, the stable-boy, noticing her moping condition, said one day to Kit :

“’Pears like she don’t feel first rate.”

Then Kit went into the stall where Joe was grooming her and rubbed her nose and talked to her.

“You are getting proud, old girl, and lazy. That is all that ails you. That ‘bike’ is the greatest friend you ever had. You can take it easy now for the rest of your natural life—a nice comfortable pasture, plenty to eat, and nothing to do. Oh, you lucky old lady ! Give her a bran-mash, Joe ; that will put her all right.” And he was gone.

Annie’s soft brown eyes followed Kit’s figure up the lane with an appealing look. A bran-mash ? What was a bran-mash to a faithful old friend, whose only illness was a longing for the baby boy who eight years before had first been put astride her back and who every day since, until these last miserable weeks, had fondled her and ridden her and driven her ?

How should she ever make him understand ?

Was a mere machine to supplant a lifetime’s devotion ?

Her friend, indeed ! She would not have answered for that friend’s safety had it been just then within reach of two well-shod hoofs. Nothing to do for the rest of her natural life ! There was the rub. She had always been such a necessary member of the family—so willing, so proud of her usefulness ! And now, in the very hey-day of her powers, to be cast aside ! Had she failed to carry him fast enough ? She would challenge any wheel made to beat her. Had she ever rebelled at distance or time ? Never ! And yet—and yet—— No more mad rides down the river bank !

No

No more racing! No more wild charges home from the park, passing everything on the road, with Judy and Kit sitting proudly behind her! No more all-day rambles through woods and along the lake! No more of anything that was!

Annie's heart was as heavy as a horse's heart could well be; heavy, and a little indignant as well. Accordingly, when Joe, following instructions, placed the bran-mash in the measure before her, she tipped it over with a viciousness never before seen in her and resolutely refused to take it.

But that was her one and only offence. From that day she bore ills with the dignity of a dethroned monarch; and if Kit's neglect wounded her, she only betrayed it by an added gentleness to him on those now rare occasions when he remembered her.

And so the bright summer slipped away, and October with its mellow fulness was at hand.

Judy, always more or less influenced by that subtle melancholy of the autumn, was this year particularly affected by it. It was a singular trait of Kit's almost passionate affection for her, that whenever she was ill he bore himself toward her with something almost approaching harshness. It seemed to be his only method of pulling himself together against a nameless horror which any lack of her accustomed force always suggested to him. He could not look back to the time when that horror had not played a part in his thought of her. On that never-to-be-forgotten first day of his school-life, when his little feet had raced home to her and she had caught him to her heart after their first few hours' separation, his first cry had been:

"Oh, Judy, Judy! I was afraid I might not find you here!"

And that had been the unspoken fear of all his home-comings ever since. Afraid he might not find her! And this fear had grown

grown and grown, and made riot in his imagination until every tiny ill to which she became subject developed into a possible monster of evil. One day a spark from the grate had caught in her dress and burned it. When he came from his lessons she laughingly told him of it, and for days after he had been almost afraid to go into that same room to look for her, lest he should find that a second spark had accomplished more ghastly results. Again, an irritation in her throat had produced a violent fit of coughing, and he had seen a speck of blood upon her handkerchief. Thereupon the horror took a new form, and for weeks he endured the agony of a new suspense. His bedroom was just across the passage from hers, and she, dreaming one night, had called out in her sleep. Wakened by her voice, he had rushed to her, only to find her lying white and peaceful. But the sight had so suggested that other "dreamless sleep," that, awe-stricken, he had fled back to his own room, where he had locked himself in and sobbed the night away. And after this for many weeks, in spite of her entreaties, he closed his door at night and refused her the solace of calling across to him, as was her wont, until she fell asleep—for Judy disliked solitude and the dark. But his moist pillow had the same story to tell every morning.

And Judy never knew.

It was his one secret from her. He found it easier to be misunderstood, than to put the horror in words, and chose rather to appear hard and sullen to her than to yield to it in her presence.

So it happened that on a particular day of this particular October, coming into her room and finding her lying on her bed, pale and weak, his heart suddenly leaped to his throat in an agony of suffering, but he only said :

"I cannot think why you lie about such a fine day, Judy. You would be much better out of doors."

And

And Judy answering that she felt a bit tired and ill, he abruptly left her—but only to linger outside her door heart-broken, hollow-eyed, and afraid. Later, when the doctor came, he comforted Kit and smiled at his anxious questions. His mother was sure to be all right in the morning. But Kit, with the keen prescience of intense affection, realised that she was as she had never been before. When night came, he stole quietly in to her and put his cheek against hers, but he could not trust himself to speak. Then he crept back to his own room, where he threw himself upon the bed, fully dressed, to wait for the morning. Before many hours had passed, however, a cry of pain aroused him :

“Kit! Kit!” He was at her side in a bound. “The doctor, Kit! I cannot breathe.”

In looking back at it afterwards he never could remember how he found his cap or how he got out of doors. His first distinct consciousness was when he found himself on the road in front of the house mounted on his bicycle and starting on what seemed to him a race against time for Judy’s life. What words can describe the tension of his feelings? All the accumulated suffering of that awful fear was at work within him. How he flew! What time he made from the start! Old Doctor Morton lived four miles down the river—but before he could strike the river road he must go a mile in the opposite direction, and then half as far again to the right. That mile and a half seemed a mile and a half of treason to Judy. But on, on, on—even while he was deploring it, he had accomplished it. And now he had turned into the smooth highway, running along by the river bank, and following Annie’s pasture for a quarter of a mile. Little thought of Annie, however, was in his mind to-night—little thought of anything but Judy and speed. The road, the trees, the moon,

the fences, even the blades of grass, seemed all to whisper her name—Judy—Judy!

He remembered with a peculiar sense of thankfulness that he had spent an hour that very day in putting his wheel in condition. He had cleaned it, and oiled it, and pumped it, and every screw had been made tight and fast. And now, with head well forward and feet firmly working, he braced himself for his quick and noiseless flight. Almost unconsciously to himself he began to calculate the time he was making—how long it would take to reach the doctor, the delay there, the return. An hour should accomplish it all and find him back with her again. What gratitude he felt for this sure, silent steed he was riding! No loss of time in saddling and bridling! A horse was all very good when one had time, but not even Annie with all her speed could equal this quiet, swift carrier that had supplanted her. A sense of exultation mingled with his anxiety for Judy, as he realised how quickly he could bring aid to her. His hand resting easily on the bars, his body inclining farther and farther forward, his speed increased at every revolution. It seemed to him that wings could not have borne him faster. A mile! Another quarter! He knew every inch of the way. Another half! Here was Annie's pasture! How he was going it! How Annie would prick up her ears if she could see his pace! And then—snap! A sound like the report of a pistol and Kit's steed had failed him. Too tightly pumped for his mad haste, a tire had exploded. He was on his feet in a flash and studying the situation. He looked at the flattened, useless wheel—he thought of Judy's plight, and for one weak moment all his strength forsook him. Down on his face he threw himself in an abandonment of suffering, and in one long, loud sob cried out his anguish:

“Oh, Judy! Poor, poor little Judy!”

But

But hark ! His sob was not fully spent, when he lifted his head with a throb of returning hope. Could he believe his ears ? Whose friendly voice had he heard ring out on the night in answer to his cry ? With a shout he sprang to his feet, and called aloud. Again that welcome response, followed now by the sound of hurrying steps he knew so well.

“It is ! It is ! Annie, Annie, Annie !” He had not been deceived. He was over the fence like a ball, and down at the gate as fast as his feet could carry him, calling in half-sobs as he ran :

“Annie, Annie, old girl ! Hurry ! Hurry ! It’s for Judy, Annie—it’s for Judy !” And in shorter time than pen can write it, he was on her bare back and away.

What need to explain ?

Annie, nibbling the night away under the moon, in the pasture, had been startled from her pensive meditation by that heart-breaking cry of her young master. Catching its note of despair, like the loyal servant that she was, she had lifted her voice in loud, quick, sympathetic response.

A neighbour was heard to say, the following day : “That mare of Bryce’s whinnied like she wanted to wake up the whole town last night.”

As to Annie herself, she could not guess what catastrophe had brought Kit to her in such distress at this hour of the night, but she felt intuitively that the vindication of the entire equine race might depend upon her speed. With his hands gripped firmly on her neck, and his knees pressed well into her sides, Kit held his breath at the pace she set. On, on like the wind ! And the clatter of her hoofs played good part too, for, long before the house was reached, their sound had struck Doctor Morton’s keen ears like a call to duty, and brought him to the door before Kit had turned into the yard.

“She

"She is worse, doctor. You are to come—come at once!"

Then they raced back, and the old doctor mounted on his tall, raw-boned gray, came in no mean second.

When the morning broke it found Judy better. Relief had come to her at a critical moment, and an awkward crisis was safely passed.

A week later, almost herself again, she and Kit stood by the drive, while Joe led out Annie, harnessed to the little phaeton.

"She is a proud steppin' beast, Master Kit—and no mistake—and have more spirit than a two-year-old."

"Yes, Joe; you are right."

When Judy was comfortably seated, and her cushions properly placed, Kit sprang in by her side and took the reins.

"What have you done about that tire, Joe?"

"Mended it, sir."

"Well—I am rather off wheeling for the present. The thing is yours, if you like. I shan't want it again. Here! mind yourself, old girl. What are you up to?"

But Annie could not help it. With a snort of triumph she dashed down the drive and out into the road, and refused to be reined up until she had gone a mad mile or two.

Later, Kit explained:

"A wheel is right enough for sport, Judy, but you can't count on anything in trouble that doesn't know how to feel. Annie is good enough for me."