

eBook

Jonas on a Farm in Winter by Jacob Abbott

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Jonas on a Farm in Winter

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CHAPTER I.

MORNING

Early one winter morning, while Jonas was living upon the farm, in the employment of Oliver's father, he came groping down, just before daylight, into the great room.

The great room was, as its name indicated, quite large, occupying a considerable portion of the lower floor of the farmer's house. There was a very spacious fireplace in one side, with a settle, which was a long seat, with a very high back, near it. The room was used both for kitchen and parlor, and there was a great variety of furniture in different parts of it. There were chairs and tables, a bookcase with a desk below, a loom in one corner by a window, and a spinning-wheel near it. Then, there were a great many doors. One led out into the back yard, one up stairs, one into a back room,---which was used for coarse work, and which was generally called the kitchen,---and one into a large store closet

adjoining the great room.

Jonas groped his way down stairs; but as soon as he opened the great room door, he found the room filled with a flickering light, which came from the fireplace. There was a log there, which had been buried in the ashes the night before. It had burned slowly, through the night, and the fire had broken out at one end, which now glowed like a furnace, and illuminated the whole room with a faint red light.

Jonas went up towards the fire. The hearth was very large, and formed of great, flat stones. On one side of it was a large heap of wood, which Jonas had prepared the night before, to be ready for his fire. On the other side was a black cat asleep, with her chin upon her paws. When the cat heard Jonas coming, she rose up, stretched out her fore paws, and then began to purr, rubbing her cheeks against the bottom of the settle.

"Good morning, Darco," said Jonas. "It is time to get up."

The cat's name was Darco.

Jonas took a pair of heavy iron tongs, which stood by the side of the fire, and pulled forward the log. He found that it had burned through, and by three or four strokes with the tongs, he broke it up into large fragments of coal, of a dark-reddish color. The air being thus admitted, they soon began to brighten and crackle, until, in a few minutes, there was before him a large heap of glowing and burning coals. He put a log on behind, then placed the andirons up to the log, and a great forestick upon the andirons. He placed the forestick so far out as to leave a considerable space between it and the backlog, and then he put the coals up into this space,---having first put in a slender stick, resting upon the andirons, to keep the coals from falling through. He then placed on a great deal more wood, and he soon had a roaring fire, which crackled loud, and blazed up into the chimney.

"Now for my lantern," said Jonas.

So saying, he took down a lantern, which hung by the side of the fire. The lantern was made of tin, with holes punched through it on all sides, so as to allow the light to shine through; and yet the holes were not large enough to admit the wind, to blow out the light.

Jonas opened the lantern, and took out a short candle from the socket within. Just as he was lighting it, the door opened, and Amos came in.

"Ah, Jonas," said he, "you are before me, as usual."

"Why, the youngest hand makes the fire, of course," said Jonas.

"Then it ought to be Oliver," said Amos,---"or else Josey."

"There! I promised to wake Oliver up," said Jonas.

"O, he's awake; and he and Josey are coming down. They have found out that there is snow on the ground."

"Is there much snow?" asked Jonas.

"I don't know," said Amos; "the ground seems pretty well covered. If there is enough to make sledding, you are going after wood to-day."

"And what are you going to do?" said Jonas.

"I am going up among the pines to get out the barn frame, I believe."

Here a door opened, and Oliver came in, followed by Josey shivering with the cold, and in great haste to get to the fire.

"Didn't your father say," said Amos to Oliver, "that he was going with me to-day, to get out the timber for the barn frame?"

"Yes," said Oliver, "he is going to build a great barn next summer. But I'm going up into the woods with Jonas, to haul wood. There's plenty of snow."

"I'd go too," said Josey, "if it wasn't so cold."

"It won't be cold in the woods," said Jonas. "There's no wind in the woods."

While they had been talking thus, Jonas had got his lantern ready, and had gone to the door, and stood there a minute, ready to go out.

"Jonas," said Josey, "are you going out into the barn?"

"Yes," said Jonas.

"Wait a minute, then, for me, just till I put on my other boot."

Jonas waited a minute, according to Josey's request, and then they all went out together.

They found the snow pretty deep, all over the yard, but they waded through it to the barn. They had to go through a gate, which led them into the barn-yard. From the barn-yard they entered the barn itself, by a small door near one corner.

There were two great doors in the middle of the barn, made so large that, when they were opened, there was space enough for a large load of hay to go in. Opposite these doors there was a space floored over with plank, pretty wide, and extending through the barn to the back side. This was called the barn floor. On one side was a place divided off for stables for the horses, and on the other side was the *tie-up*, a place for the oxen and cows. There was also the bay, and the lofts for hay and grain; and at the end of the tie-up there was a door leading into a calf-pen, and thence, by a passage behind the calf-pen, to a work-shop and shed. The small door where the boys came in, led to a long and narrow passage, between the tie-up and the bay.

They walked along, Jonas going before with his lantern in his hand. The cattle which had lain down, began to get up, and the horses neighed in their stalls; for the shining of the lantern in the barn was the well-known signal which called them to breakfast.

Jonas clambered up by a long ladder to the hay-loft, to pitch down some hay, and Josey and Oliver followed him; while Amos remained below to "feed out" the hay, as he called it, as fast as they pitched it down. It was pretty dark upon the loft, although the lantern shed a feeble light upon the rafters above.

"Boys," said Jonas, "it is dangerous for you to be up here; I'd rather you'd go down."

"Well," said Oliver, and he began to descend.

"Why?" said Josey; "I don't think there's any danger."

"Yes," said Jonas, "a pitchfork wound is worse than almost any other. It is what they call a *punctured* wound."

"What kind of a wound is that?" said Josey.

"I'll tell you some other time," said Jonas. "But don't stay up here. You don't obey so well as Oliver. Go down and give the old General some hay."

The old General was the name of a large white horse, quite old and steady, but of great strength. When he was younger, he belonged to a general, who used to ride him upon the parade, and this was the origin of his name.

Josey, at this proposal, made haste down the ladder, and began to put some hay over into the old General's crib. He then went round into the General's stall, and, patting him upon the neck, he asked him if his breakfast was good.

In the mean time, Oliver opened the great barn doors, and, taking a shovel, he began to clear away the snow from before them. The sky in the east was by this time beginning to be quite bright; and a considerable degree of light from the sky, and from the new-fallen snow, came into the barn. Josey got a shovel, and went out to help Oliver. After they had shoveled away the snow from the great barn doors, they went to the house, and began to clear the steps before the doors, and to make paths in the yards. They worked in this way for half an hour, and then, just as the sun began first to show its bright, glittering rays above the horizon, they went into the house. They found that the great fire which Jonas had built, was burnt half down; the breakfast-table was set, and the breakfast itself was nearly ready.

The boys came to the fireplace, to see what they were going to have for breakfast.

"Boys," said the farmer's wife, while she was turning her cakes, "go and call Amos in to family prayers,---and Jonas."

"You go, Oliver," said Josey.

Oliver said nothing, but obeyed his mother's direction. He went into the barn-yard, and he found Amos and Jonas at work in a shed beyond, getting down a sled which had been stowed away there during the summer. It was a large and heavy sled, and had a tongue extending forward to draw it by.

"What are you getting out that sled for?" said Oliver.

"To haul wood on," said Jonas. "We're going to haul wood after breakfast, and I want to get all ready."

There was another smaller and lighter sled, which had been upon the top of the heavy one, before Amos and Jonas had taken it off. This smaller sled had two shafts to draw it by, instead of a tongue. Jonas knew by this, that it was intended to be drawn by a horse, while the one with a tongue was meant for oxen.

"Oliver," said Jonas, "I think it would be a good plan for you and Josey to take this sled and the old General, and go with me to haul wood."

"Well," said Oliver, "I should like it very much."

"We can all go up together. You and Josey can be loading the horse-sled, while I load the ox-sled, and then we can drive them down, and so get two loads down, instead of one."

"Well," said Oliver, "I mean to ask my father."

"Or perhaps," continued Jonas, "you can be teamster for the oxen, and Josey can drive the horse, and so I remain up in the woods, cutting and splitting."

"No," said Oliver, "because we can't unload alone."

"No," said Jonas; "I had forgotten that."

"But I mean to ask my father," said Oliver, "to let me have the old General, and haul a load down when you come."

So saying, the boys walked along towards the house. The sun was now shining beautifully upon the fresh snow, making it sparkle in every direction, all around. They walked in by the path which Oliver and Josey had shoveled.

"Why didn't you make your path wider?" said Amos. "This isn't wide enough for a cow-path."

"O, yes, Amos," said Jonas, "it will do very well. I can widen it a little when I come out after breakfast."

When they got to the door, Jonas stopped a moment to look around. The fields were white in every direction, and the branches of the trees near the house were loaded with the snow. The air was keen and frosty, and the breaths of the boys were visible by the vapor which was condensed by the cold. The pond was one great level field of dazzling white. All was silent---nothing was seen of life or motion, except that Darco, who came out when the door was opened, looked around astonished, took a few cautious steps along the path, and then, finding the snow too deep and cold, went back again to take her place once more by the fire.

CHAPTER II.

COMMANDING AND OBEYING

About an hour after breakfast, Jonas with the oxen, and Oliver and Josey with the horse, were slowly moving along up the road which led back from the pond towards the wood lot. The wood lot was a portion of the forest, which had been reserved, to furnish a supply of wood for the winter fires. The road followed for some distance the bank of the brook, which emptied into the pond at the place where Jonas and Oliver had cleared land, when Jonas first came to live on this farm.

It was a very pleasant road. The brook was visible here and there through the bushes and trees on one side of it. These bushes and trees were of course bare of leaves, excepting the evergreens, and they were loaded down with the snow. Some were bent over so that the tops nearly touched the ground.

The brook itself, too, was almost buried and concealed in the snow. In the still places, it had frozen over; and so the snow had been supported by the ice, and thus it concealed both ice and water. At the little cascades and waterfalls, however, which occurred here and there, the water had not frozen. Water does not freeze easily where it runs with great velocity. At these places, therefore, the boys could see the water, and hear it bubbling and gurgling as it fell, and disappeared under the ice which had formed below.

At last, they came to the wood lot. The wood which they were going to haul had been cut before, and it had been piled up in long piles, extending here and there under the trees which had been left. These piles were now, however, partly covered with the snow, which lay light and unsullied all over the surface of the ground.

The sticks of wood in these piles were of different sizes, though they were all of the same length. Some had been cut from the tops of the trees, or from the branches, and were, consequently, small in diameter; others were from the trunks, which would, of course, make large logs. These logs had, however, been split into quarters by a beetle and wedges, when the wood had been prepared, so that there were very few sticks or logs so large, but that Jonas could pretty easily get them on to the sled.

Jonas drove his team up near to one end of the pile, while Josey and Oliver went to the other, where the wood was generally small. While Jonas was loading, he heard a conversation something like this between the other boys:---

"Let's put some good large logs on our sled," said Josey.

"Well," said Oliver, "as large as we can; only we'd better put this small wood on first."

"I wish you'd go around to the other side, Oliver," said Josey again; "you're in my way."

"No," said Oliver, "I can't work on that side very well."

"Then I mean to move the old General round a little."

"No," said Oliver, "the sled stands just right now; only you get up on the top of the pile, and I'll stay here." "No," said Josey, "I'd rather stand here myself."

So the boys continued at work a few minutes longer, each being in the other's way.

At length, Josey said again,---

"O, here is a large log, and I mean to get it out, and put it upon our sled."

The log was covered with smaller wood, so that Josey could only get hold of the end of it. He clasped his hands together under this end, and began to lift it up, endeavoring to get it free from the other wood. He succeeded in raising it a little, but it soon got wedged in again, worse than before.

"Come, Oliver," said Josey, "help me get out this log. It is rock maple."

"No," said Oliver, "I'm busy."

"Jonas," said Josey, calling out aloud, "Jonas, here's a stick of wood, which I can't get out. I wish you'd come and help me."

In answer to this request, Jonas only called both the boys to come to him.

They accordingly left the old General standing in the snow, with his sled partly loaded, and came to the end of the pile, where Jonas was at work.

"I see you don't get along very well," said Jonas.

"Why, you see," said Josey, "that Oliver wouldn't help me put on a great log."

"The difficulty is," said Jonas, "that you both want to be master. Whereas, when two people are working together, one must be master, and the other servant."

"I don't want to be servant," said Josey.

"It's better to be servant on some accounts," said Jonas; "then you have no responsibility."

"Responsibility?" repeated Josey.

"Yes," said Jonas. "Power and responsibility always go together;--or at least they ought to. But come, boys, be helping me load, while we are settling this difficulty, so as not to lose our time."

So the boys began to put wood upon Jonas's sled, while the conversation continued as follows:---

"Can't two persons work together, unless one is master, and the other servant?" asked Josey.

"At least," replied Jonas, "one must take the lead, and the other follow, in order to work to advantage. There must be subordination. For you see that, in all sorts of work, there are a great many little questions coming up, which are of no great consequence, only they ought to be decided, one way or the other, quick, or else the work won't go on. You act, in your work, like Jack and Jerry, when they ran against the horse-block."

"Why, how was that?" said Josey.

"They were drawing the wagon along to harness the horse in, and the horse-block was in the way; so they both got hold of the shafts, and Jack wanted to pull it around towards the right, while Jerry said it would be better to have it go to the left. So they pulled, one one way, and the other the other, and thus they got it up chock against the horse-block, one shaft on each side. Here they stood pulling in opposition for some time, and all the while their father was waiting for them to turn the wagon, and harness the horse."

"What did he say to them," said Oliver, "when he found it out?"

"He made Jack bring it round Jerry's way, and then made Jerry draw it back again, and bring it along Jack's way."

"When men are at work," continued Jonas, "one acts as director, and the rest follows on, as he guides. Then all the unimportant questions are decided promptly."

"Well," said Josey, "let us do so, Oliver. I'll be director."

"How do they decide who shall be director?" said Oliver.

"The oldest and most experienced directs, generally; or, if one is the employer, and the others are employed by him, then the employer directs the others. If a man wants a stone bridge built, and hires three men to do it, there is always an understanding, at the beginning, who shall have the direction of the work, and all the others obey."

"So," continued Jonas, "if a carpenter were to send two of his men into the woods to cut down a tree for timber, without saying which of them should have the direction,---then the oldest or most experienced, or the one who had been the longest in the carpenter's employ, would take the direction. He would say, 'Let us go out this way,' and the other would assent; or, 'I think we had better take this tree,' and the other would say, perhaps, 'Here's one over here which looks rather straighter; won't you come and look at this?' But they would not dispute about it. One would leave it to the other to decide."

"Suppose," said Josey, "one was just as old and experienced as the other."

"Why, if there was no reason, whatever, why one should take the lead, rather than the other, then they would not either of them be tenacious of their opinion. If one proposed to do a thing, the other would comply without making any objection, unless he had a very decided objection indeed. So they would get along peaceably.

"Now," continued Jonas, "boys are very apt to have different opinions, and to be very tenacious of them, and so get into disputes and difficulties when they are working together. Therefore, when boys are set to work, it is generally best to appoint one to take charge; for they haven't, generally, good sense enough to find out, themselves, which it is most proper should be in charge.

"For instance, now," continued Jonas, "which of you, do you think, on the whole, is the proper one to take the direction of the work, when you are set to work together?"

"I," said Josey, with great promptness.

Oliver did not answer at all.

"There's one reason why you ought *not* to be the one," said Jonas.

"What is it?" said Josey.

"Why, you don't obey very well. No person is well qualified to command, until he has learned to obey."

"I obey," said Josey, "I'm sure."

"Not always," said Jonas. "This morning, when you were upon the haymow, and I told you both to go down, Oliver went down immediately; but you remained up, and made excuses instead of obeying."

Josey was silent. He perceived that Jonas's charge against him was just.

"Besides," continued Jonas, "there are some other reasons why Oliver should command, rather than you. First he understands more of farmer's work, being more accustomed to it; secondly, he is older."

"No," interrupted Josey, "he isn't older. I'm the oldest."

"Are you?" said Jonas.

"Yes," replied Josey. "I'm two months older than he is."

Oliver had so much more prudence and discretion, and being, besides, a little larger than Josey, made Jonas think that he was older.

"Well," said Jonas, "at any rate, he has more judgement and experience, and he certainly obeys better. So you may go back to your work, and let Oliver take the command, and then, after a little while, if Oliver says that you have obeyed him well, I'll try the experiment of letting you, Josey, command."

The boys accordingly went back, and finished loading up the old General. Oliver took the direction, and Josey obeyed very well. Now and then he would forget for a moment, and begin to argue; but Josey would submit pretty readily, for he was very desirous that Jonas would let him command next time; and he thought that he would not allow him to command until he had learned to obey.

They had the two sleds loaded nearly at the same time, and then went down. When they were going back after the second load, they all got on to Jonas's sled, which was forward, to ride, leaving the old General to follow with his sled. He was so well trained that he walked along very steadily. Oliver fastened the reins to one of the stakes, so that they should not get down under the horse's feet. The boys all got together upon the forward sled, in order that they might talk with one another as they were going back to the woods.

"Now, Josey," said Jonas, "we will let you have the command for the next trip, and, while we are going back, I will give you both some instructions."

"About obeying?" said Josey.

"Yes, and about commanding too," said Jonas. "It requires rather more skill to know how to command, than how to obey; to know how to direct work, than to know how to execute it. A good director, in the first place, takes care to plan wisely, and he feels a responsibility about the work, and a desire to have it go on to good advantage. If some men build a way, and, after it is finished, it tumbles down, the man who had charge of the work would feel more concerned about it than any of the others, because the chief responsibility comes upon him. So with your work,---if you have the command, and you and Oliver idle away the time, and when my sled is loaded, yours has but little wood in it, you would be more to blame than Oliver."

"What, if I didn't play any more than Oliver?"

"Yes," said Jonas, "because you are responsible. It is your duty to be industrious, and it is also your duty to see that Oliver is industrious, if you are the director,---so that you neglect two duties.

"It is a good plan, too," said Jonas, "for a director to give his directions in a mild and gentle tone. Some boys are very domineering and authoritative in their manner."

"How do you mean?" said Josey.

"Why, they would say, for example, 'Get out of the way, John, quick.' Whereas, it would be better to say, 'John, you are in the way, where we want to come along.' Some men give their directions with great noise and vociferation, and others give them quietly and gently."

"I shouldn't think they'd mind 'em," said Josey.

"Yes," said Jonas. "Directions ought to be given very distinctly, so as to be plainly understood; but they are not obeyed any better for violence and noise in giving them.

"A commander ought to have a regard for those under him," continued Jonas, "and deal justly by them. If a number of boys were going to ride a wagon, and their father put one of them in charge, he ought not to keep the best seat in the wagon for himself."

While talking thus, the oxen continued slowly advancing along the road. Their previous trip had broken out the road, but the pathway was filled with loose snow of a pure and spotless white, through which the great sled runners, following the oxen, ploughed their way. On each side of the track which they had made, the surface was smooth and unbroken, excepting under some of the trees, where masses of snow had fallen down from above. They saw, at length, as they were passing along by the brook, a little track, like a double dotting, running along, in a winding way, under the trees,---then crossing the road, and disappearing under the trees upon the other side.

"What's that?" asked Josey.

"That's a rabbit track," replied Oliver.

"Let's go and catch him," said Josey.

"No," said Jonas, "we must go on with our work."

At a little distance farther on, they saw another track. It was larger than the first, and not so regular.

"What sort of a track is that?" said Josey.

"I don't know," said Oliver; "it looks like a dog's track; but I shouldn't think there would be a dog out here in the woods."

They found that this track followed the road along for some distance. The animal which made it, seemed sometimes to have gone in the middle of the road, and sometimes out at the side; and Jonas said that he had passed there since they went down with the first load of wood.

"How do you know?" said Oliver.

"Because," said Jonas, "his track is made upon the broken snow, in the middle of the road."

They watched the track for some time, and then they lost sight of it. Presently, however, they saw it again.

"I wonder which way he went," said Oliver.

"I'll jump off, and look at the track," said Jonas.

So saying, he jumped off the sled, and examined the track.

"He went up," said Jonas, "the same way that we are going. It may be a dog which has lost his master. Perhaps we shall find him up by our wood piles."

Jonas was right, for, when the boys arrived at the wood piles, they found there, waiting for them, a large black dog. He stood near one end of a wood pile, with his fore feet upon a log, by which his head and shoulders were raised, so that he could see better who was coming. He was of handsome form, and he had an intelligent and good-natured expression of countenance. He was looking very intently at the party coming up, to see whether his master was among them.

"Whose dog is that?" said Josey.

"I don't know," said Oliver; "I never saw him before."

"I wonder what his name is," said Josey. "Here! Towzer, Towzer, Towzer," said he.

"Here! Caesar, Caesar, Caesar," said Oliver.

"Pompey, Pompey, Pompey," said Jonas.

[Illustration: "He was looking very intently at the party coming up, to see whether his master was among them."]

The dog remained motionless in his position, until, just as the boys had finished their calls, and as the foremost sled was drawn pretty near him, he suddenly wheeled around with a leap, and bounded away through the snow, for half the length of the first wood pile, and then stopped, and again looked round.

"I wish we had something for him to eat," said Jonas.

"I've got a piece of bread and butter," said Josey. "I went in and got it when you and Oliver were unloading."

So Josey took his bread and butter out of his pocket. There were two small slices put together, and folded up in a piece of paper. Jonas took a piece, and walked slowly towards the dog.

"Here! Franco, Franco," said Jonas.

"He's coming," said Josey, who remained with Oliver at the sled.

The dog was slowly and timidly approaching the bread which Jonas held out towards him.

"He's coming," said Josey. "His name is Franco. I wonder how Jonas knew."

"Franco, Franco," said Jonas again. "Come here, Franco. Good Franco!"

The dog came timidly up to Jonas, and took the bread and butter from Josey's hand, and devoured it eagerly. While he was doing it, Jonas patted him on the head.

"He's very hungry," said Jonas; "bring the rest of your bread and butter, Josey."

So Josey brought the rest of his luncheon, and the dog ate it all.

After this, he seemed to be quite at ease with his new friends. He staid about there with the boys until the sleds were loaded, and then he went down home with them. There they fed him again with a large bone. Jonas said that he was undoubtedly a dog that had lost his master, and had been wandering about to find him, until he became very hungry. So

he said they would leave him in the yard to gnaw his bone, and that then he would probably go away. Josey wanted to shut him up and keep him, but Jonas said it would be wrong.

So the boys left the dog gnawing his bone, and went up after another load; but before they had half loaded their sleds, Oliver saw Franco coming, bounding up the road, towards them. He came up to Jonas, and stood before him, looking up into his face and wagging his tail.

CHAPTER III.

FRANCO

Franco followed the boys all that forenoon, as they went back and forth for their wood. At dinner, they did not say any thing about him to the farmer, because they supposed that he would go away, when they came in and left him, and that they should see no more of him in the afternoon. But when Jonas went out, after dinner, to get the old General, to harness him for work again, he found Franco lying snugly in the General's stall, under the crib.

At night, therefore, he told the farmer about him. The farmer said that he was some dog that had strayed away from his master; and he told Jonas to go out after supper and drive him away. Josey begged his uncle to keep him, but his aunt said she would not have a dog about the house. She said it would cost as much to keep him as to keep a sheep, and that, instead of bringing them a good fleece, a dog was good for nothing, but to track your floors in wet weather, and keep you awake all night with his howling.

So the farmer told Jonas to go out after supper, and drive the dog away.

"Let us give him some supper first, father," said Oliver.

"No," said his father; "the more you give him, the more he won't go away. I expect now, you've fooled with him so much, that it will be hard to get him off, at any rate."

"Jonas has not fooled with him any," said Oliver.

"Nor I," said Josey.

After supper, Jonas went out, according to orders, to drive Franco away. It was a raw, windy night, but not very cold. Franco was in a little shed where there was a well, near the back door. He was lying down, but he got up and came to Jonas when he saw him appear at the door.

"Come, Franco," said Jonas, "come with me."

Franco wagged his tail, and followed Jonas.

Jonas walked out into the road, Franco after him. He walked along until he had got to some distance from the house, Franco keeping up with him all the way, sometimes on one side of the road, and sometimes on the other. At length, when Jonas thought that he had gone far enough, he stopped. Franco stopped too, and looked up at Jonas.

"Now, Franco, I've got to send you away. It's a hard case, Franco, but you and I must both submit to orders. So go off, Franco, as fast as you can."

So saying, Jonas pointed along the road, in the direction away from the house, and said, "St----- boy! St----- boy!"

Franco darted along the road a few steps, barked once, and then turned round, and looked eagerly at Jonas, as if he did not know what he wanted him to do.

"*Get home!*" said Jonas, in a stern and severe tone; "*get home!*" and he stamped with his foot upon the ground, and looked at Franco with a countenance of displeasure.

Franco bounded forward a few steps over the smooth and icy road, and then he turned round, and stood in the middle of the road, facing Jonas, and looking very much astonished.

"Get home, Franco!" said Jonas again; and, stooping down, he took a piece of hardened snow or ice from the road, and threw it towards him. The ice fell, before it reached Franco, and rolled along towards his feet, which made him scamper along a little farther; and then he stopped, and turned around, and looked at Jonas, as before.

Jonas began slowly to turn backwards, keeping his eye on Franco.

"It's a hard case, Franco, I acknowledge. If I had a barn of my own, I'd let you sleep in a corner of it; but I must obey orders. You must go and find your master."

So saying, Jonas turned round and walked slowly home. Just before he turned to go into the house, he looked back, to see what had become of the dog. He was standing motionless in the place where Jonas had left him.

"I wish the farmer would let me give him a bone," said he to himself; and then he turned away, and walked slowly around to the barn, to fodder the cattle.

That night, just before bed-time, he went to the front door, and looked out into the road, and all around, to see if he could see any thing of Franco. It was rather dark and windy,---though he could see the moon shining dimly through the broken clouds, which were driving across the sky. The roads looked black, as they do about the commencement of a thaw. Presently the moon shone out full through the interstices of the clouds. Jonas took advantage of the opportunity to look all up and down the road; but Franco was nowhere to be seen.

The next morning, however, when he went out into the stable to give the cattle some hay, he found Franco in his old place, under the General's crib.

"Why, Franco," said Jonas, "how came you here?"

Franco said nothing, but stood looking up into Jonas's face, and wagging his tail.

"Franco," said Jonas, "how could you get in here?"

Franco remained in the same position; the light of the lantern shining in his face, and his tail wagging a very little. He could not tell certainly whether Jonas was scolding him or not.

Franco remained about the barn until breakfast-time, and then Jonas, at the table, told the farmer that he tried to drive the dog away the night before, but that in the morning he found him in the barn.

"I don't believe you really tried," said the farmer's wife. "I can drive him away, I know,---as I'll show you after breakfast."

Accordingly, after breakfast, putting on hastily an old straw bonnet, she went out into the yard and took a small stick from the wood pile, to use for a club, and then called to Franco.

"Franco," said she, "come here."

Franco looked first at her, and then at Jonas, who was standing in the door-way, as if at a loss to know what to do.

"Go, Franco," said Jonas.

The farmer's wife walked out in front of the house into the wind, calling Franco to follow. She then attempted to drive him along the road, much as Jonas had done. She brandished her stick at him, and, when she had succeeded in getting him as far from her as she could, by stern and threatening language, in order to drive him farther, she threw the stick at him with all her force.

Franco jumped out of its way. The stick rolled along the road before him. He sprang forward to it, seized it in his mouth, and came trotting back to the farmer's wife, and laid it down at her feet; and then, standing back a few steps, he looked up into her face, with a very earnest expression of countenance, which seemed to say,---

"What do you want me to do next?"

This very act of Franco's embarrassed the woman considerably. She could not bear to take up the very stick, which Franco had himself brought to her, and throw it at him again; and, on the other hand, she could not bear to give up, and let Franco remain. She, however, picked up the stick, and brandished it again towards Franco, and, stamping with her foot at him, she said,---

"Away with you, dog; get home!"

What the result of this contest would have been, it is very difficult to say, had it not been that it was soon decided by the occurrence of a singular incident; for, as the farmer's wife nodded her head, and stamped at the dog, the jar or the motion seemed to give the wind a momentary advantage over her bonnet, which, in her haste, she had not tied on very securely. A strong gust carried it clear from her head, and blew it away over Franco, upon the snow by the side of the road beyond. Franco, who was all ready for a spring, bounded after it, and pursued it at full speed. The snow was nearly level with the top of the stone walls, and the wind carrying it diagonally from the road, it rolled over the little ridge of stones which remained above the drifts, and then swept across the field, down a long descent, like a feather before the gale.

Franco pursued it with flying leaps over the snow, which had become sufficiently consolidated to support his steps. He gained upon it rapidly, and at length overtook and seized it; and then, turning round, he trotted swiftly back, leaped over the top of the wall, and brought the bonnet, and laid it down at its owner's feet, with an air of great satisfaction.

The good woman took up her bonnet, and threw her stick away, and, turning around, walked back to the house. The farmer, who had been looking out at the window, was laughing heartily. She herself smiled as she returned to her work, saying,---

"The dog has something in him, I acknowledge; go and see if you can't find him a bone, Jonas." "Yes, Jonas," said the farmer, "you may have him for your dog till the owner comes and claims him."

And this is the way that Jonas first got his dog Franco. He told Oliver that morning, as he was patting his head under the old General's crib, that the dog had taught them one good lesson.

"What is it?" asked Oliver.

"Why, that the Christian duty of returning good for evil, is good policy as well as good morals."

[Illustration]

CHAPTER IV.

DOG LOST

About the middle of the winter, the farmer went to market with his produce. The vehicle on which he carried it was a kind of box upon runners, with a pole in front, to which two horses were fastened. He was gone three days.

When he came back, he said that he had bargained for another load of his produce, at the market town, and that he was going to send Jonas with it. Jonas was very glad when he heard this. He liked to take journeys.

"What day shall I go, sir?" said Jonas.

"Day after to-morrow," said the farmer, "as early as possible. We'll let the horses rest one day."

About the middle of the afternoon, on the day following the one on which this conversation had taken place, Jonas and the farmer began to load up the box sleigh, in order to have it ready for the morning. He had about forty miles to go, and he wanted to get to market, deliver his load, and return five or ten miles that same evening.

It was quite cold that afternoon, and it seemed to be growing colder and colder. Jonas got the box sleigh ready under a shed, first shoveling in some snow under the runners, in order that the horses might draw the sled out easily, when it was loaded. He put in the various articles of produce, which were contained in bags, and firkins, and boxes. Over these he spread blankets and buffalo-skins, and put in a bag of oats for his horses, and a box of bread and cheese for himself. He did not know whether Franco was to go with him, or not; but he arranged the bags in such a way, that he could easily make a warm nest for him in one corner, if the farmer should allow him to go.

The farmer helped him about all the arrangements, and, when they were completed, he told Jonas to go in and get his supper, and go to bed, so as to get up and set off early in the morning.

"It will be a fine starlight night," said he, "and you'd better be ten miles on your way by sunrise."

When Amos got up the next morning, and went out with his lantern, to go to the barn, as he passed by the shed on his way, he saw that the sleigh was gone. He proceeded to the barn, and, as he opened the door, he was startled at something which suddenly darted past him and rushed out.

"What's that?" said Oliver, who was behind him. "It is Franco," said he. "Where is he going?"

Franco ran off to the shed where Jonas had harnessed his horses, and began smelling around upon the ground. He followed the scent along the yard, up to a post by the side of the house, where Jonas had stopped a moment ago to go in and get his great-coat, when all was ready; and then, after pausing here a moment, he darted off towards the road.

"Here! Franco, Franco," said Amos, "come back here."

"Franco, Franco," repeated Oliver, "here---here---here---here."

Franco paid no attention to these calls, but ran off along the road at full speed.

In the mean time, Jonas had traveled rapidly onward, by the light of the stars, over the glittering and frosty road.

The keen air made his ears tingle a little, but he rubbed them, and they soon became warm. His feet were comfortably stowed away down in his box, among the bags and buffalo-skins, so that they were warm and comfortable.

The horses trotted along at good speed, and soon brought Jonas and his load to the village at the mill. The street was vacant, and the houses dark, excepting that a faint light shone behind a curtain in one chamber window. Jonas supposed that somebody was sick there. Even the mill was silent, and the gate shut down; and, instead of the ordinary roar of the water under the wheel, only a hissing sound was heard, where the imprisoned water spouted through the crevices of the flume. Vast stalactites of ice extended continuously along the whole face of the dam, like a frozen waterfall, behind which the water percolated curiously down into the foaming abyss, at the bottom of the fall. Jonas thought that all this, seen by starlight, looked very cold.

The horses trotted across the bridge with a loud sound, which reverberated far and wide in the still night. He ascended the hill beyond, and drove on. His woollen comforter, tied about his neck, became frosted over from his breath; and the breasts, and mane, and sides, of the horses were gradually sprinkled with white, in the same way. They were both black horses,---the General having been left at home. They trotted down the hills and along the level portions of the road, and wheeled around the curves, with great speed. Jonas found that he had no occasion for his whip, and so he put it away behind him, under the buffaloes.

He went on in this way, without any special adventure, for a couple of hours, and then began to see a gray light appearing in the eastern sky. About the same time, the windows of the farm-houses, which he passed on the road, began to be illuminated by the fires, which they were kindling within. Now and then, he could see a man hurrying out to a barn, to feed the cattle. Jonas thought that they ought to be up earlier. The sun rose soon after, and the fields on every side sparkled by the reflection of his rays, from the crystalline surface of the snow. Tall columns of dense white smoke ascended from the chimneys, some erect, others leaning a little, some one way, some another. In a word, it was a cold, still, winter morning.

At length, as Jonas was walking his horses up a long hill, he heard light footsteps behind him. He turned round to see what was coming, and, to his utter astonishment, he saw Franco, coming up, upon the full run, and close behind the sleigh. He came to the side of it, and looked up, with every appearance of exultation and joy.

"Why, Franco," said Jonas, "how came you here?"

He stopped his horses, and Franco leaped up before him. His ears, and the glossy black hair which curled under his neck and upon his sides, were tipped with frost. Jonas patted him upon his head, saying,---

"Why, Franco, how did you get out of the barn? and how did you find out which way I came?"

Franco wagged his tail, and curled down around Jonas's feet, but he made no reply.

Jonas was very much surprised, for, as he had no permission to take Franco, he had concluded that it was his duty not to take him; and when he found that he was inclined to come with him, at the time that he was harnessing the horses, he conducted him back into the barn, and, to make it secure, he fastened up the place where he had got in, the first night that he lodged there. He knew that the barn would be opened when Amos came out in the morning, to take care of the old General and the oxen, but said he to himself, "I shall by that time be ten miles off, and it will be too late for him to follow or find me." Jonas was therefore very much surprised, when he found that Franco had contrived to make his escape, and to track his master so many miles.

Jonas drove on very prosperously, until it was about time for him to stop and give his horses some breakfast. As for himself, he ate his breakfast from his box, when they were coming up a long hill. He accordingly stopped at a tavern, and took his horses out of their harness, and rubbed them down well, and gave them a good drink of water, and plenty of oats, which he bought of the tavern-keeper. He kept the oats in his bag to use in the town. By the time that he stopped, he was comfortably warm, for he had taken some exercise walking up the hills. Franco always got out when Jonas did, at the bottom of the hills, and then got in again at the top. He remained in the sleigh, however, at the tavern, keeping guard, while Jonas went into the house; and he would growl a little if any body came near the sleigh, and thus warn them not to touch any thing that was in it.

While the horses were eating, Jonas went into the tavern, and sat down by the kitchen fire. The fire was very large, and many persons were busy getting breakfast. Jonas wished that he was going to have a cup of the coffee that they were making; but he thought it better that he should content himself with what the farmer had provided for him. There was a young woman in the back part of the room, at a window, sewing. She asked Jonas how far he had come that morning, and he told her. Then she said that he must have set out very early; and she said that he had a pair of very handsome black horses. She had seen them as Jonas passed the window.

There was a small girl sitting near her, with a slate, ciphering. She seemed very busy for a few minutes, and then she looked up to the young woman, and said,---

"My sum does not come right, aunt Lucia."

"Doesn't it? I'm sorry, but I can't help you now, very well," replied aunt Lucia. "I am very busy with my sewing."

The little girl then got up, and came towards the fire, with her slate hanging by a string from her finger, and her Arithmetic under her arm.

"Where are you ciphering?" asked Jonas.

"In fractions," said the girl.

"If you will let me look at your sum, perhaps I can tell you how to do it," replied Jonas.

The girl handed her book to him, and showed him the sum in it. She also let him see the work upon her slate. Jonas looked it over very carefully, and then said,---

"You have done very well indeed, with such a hard sum. There is only one mistake."

And Jonas pointed out the mistake to her, and she corrected it, and then the answer was right. She then went and put away her slate and book, with an appearance of great satisfaction. As she passed by the window, aunt Lucia whispered to her, to say,---

"I think you had better thank that young man, and give him a mug of coffee."

"Well," said the little girl, "I will." So she went to a cupboard at the side of the room, and took down a tin mug. She poured out some coffee from a coffee-pot, and put in some milk and sugar, and then brought it to Jonas, and asked him if he wouldn't like a little coffee. Jonas thanked her, and took the coffee; and he liked it very much.

After this, Jonas harnessed his horses again, and went on. He traveled until nearly noon, and then he arrived at the town where he was to leave his load. He had a letter to a merchant, who had bought the produce of the farmer, and, in a very short time, his load was taken out, and the other articles put in, which he was to carry back in exchange. He had some money given him by the merchant, in part payment for his load of produce. It was in bank-notes, and he put it into his waistcoat pocket, and pinned it in.

Then he set out on his return. His load was light, the road was smooth, and his horses, though they had traveled fast, had been driven carefully, and they carried him rapidly over the ground. It was the middle of the afternoon, however, before he set out, and the days were then so short, that the sun soon began to go down. He had to ride quite into the evening, before he reached the place where he was to stop for the night.

He put up his horses, and then went into the house. He called for some supper, for his own provisions had long since been exhausted. After supper, he carried out something for Franco, whom he had left in the sleigh in the barn, lying upon a good warm buffalo, to watch the property.

"Franco," said he, "here is your supper."

Franco jumped up when he heard Jonas's voice, and leaped out of the sleigh. He took his supper, and Jonas, after once more feeding his horses, went out, and shut the door, leaving Franco to finish his bone by himself.

Jonas went back into the tavern, and took his seat by the fire. There was a table before the fire, with a lamp upon it; and there were one or two books and an old newspaper lying upon another table, in the back part of the room. Jonas looked at the books, but they were not interesting to read. One was a dictionary. He read the newspaper for some time, and then he took the lamp up, and began to look at some pictures of the prodigal son, which were hung up upon the wall over the mantel-piece.

Beyond the pictures were some advertisements. One was for a farm for sale. Jonas read the description, and he wished that he was old enough to buy a farm, and then he would go and look at that.

The next advertisement was about some machinery, which a man had invented; and the next was headed, in large letters, *Dog Lost*. This caught Jonas's attention immediately. It was in writing, and he could not read it very easily, it was so high. So he got a chair, and stood up in it, and read as follows:---

"Dog lost.

"Strayed or stolen from the subscriber, a valuable dog, of large size and black color.'

"I wonder if it isn't Franco," said Jonas, interrupting himself in his reading.

"He had on a brass collar marked with the owner's name.'

"No," said Jonas, "there was no collar. But then the man that stole him might have taken it off.

"Answers to the name of Ney.'

"Ney, Ney," said Jonas,---"I never called him Ney. I wonder if he would answer, if I should call him Ney.

"Is kind and docile, and quite intelligent.'

"Yes," said Jonas, "I verily believe it is Franco.

"Any person who will return said dog to the subscriber, at his residence at Walton Plain, shall be suitably rewarded.

"JAMES EDWARDS.'

"I verily believe it is Franco," said Jonas, as he slowly got down from the chair,---"Walton Plain."

He stood a moment, looking thoughtfully into the fire.

"Yes," he repeated, "I verily believe it is Franco. I wonder where Walton Plain is."

Jonas had learned from Mr. Holiday, that it was never wise to communicate important information relating to private business, unless necessary. So he said nothing about Franco to any of the people at the tavern, but quietly went to bed; and, after thinking some time what to do, he went to sleep, and slept finely until morning.

About daylight, he arose, and, as he had paid his bill the night before, he went to the barn, harnessed his horses, and set off. At the first village that he came to after sunrise, he stopped at a store, and inquired whether there was any such town as Walton Plain, in that neighborhood.

"Yes," said the boy, who stood with a broom in his hand, with which he was sweeping out the store,---"yes, it is about five miles from here, right on the way you are going."

Jonas thanked the boy, got into his sleigh, and rode on.

"Poor Franco," said he, "I am afraid I must lose you."

He had hoped that Walton Plain would have proved to be off of his road, so that he could have had a good reason for not doing any thing about restoring the dog, until after he had gone home, and reported the facts to the farmer. But now, as he found that it was on his way, and as he would very probably go directly by Mr. Edwards's door, he concluded that he ought, at any rate, to call and let him look at Franco, and see whether it was his dog or not.

When he reached Walton Plain, he inquired whether Mr. James Edwards lived in the village. They told him that he lived about half a mile out of the village. They said it was a handsome white house, under the trees, back from the road, with a portico over the door.

Jonas rode on, observing all the houses as he passed; and he at once recognized the one which had been described to him. He stopped before the great gate, and fastened his horses to a post. He then walked along a road-way, which led in by the end of the house, and presently came to a door, where he stopped and knocked. A girl came and opened the door.

"Is Mr. Edwards at home?"

"Yes," said the girl.

"Will you ask him to come to the door a minute?"

"You'd better walk in, and I'll speak to him."

[Illustration: Jonas stopping at the house of Mr. Edwards.]

Jonas stepped into an entry, which was carpeted, and which had a large map, hanging against the wall. The girl opened a door into a little room, which looked somewhat like Mr. Holiday's study. There was a great deal of handsome furniture in it, and book-shelves around the walls. A large table was in the middle of the room, covered with books and papers.

The girl handed Jonas a seat.

"Who shall I say has called?" said she to Jonas, as she was about to go out of the room.

"Why---I---my name is Jonas," he replied; "but I don't suppose Mr. Edwards knows me. I came to see him about his dog."

At this remark, the girl looked around towards the fire, and Jonas involuntarily turned his eyes in the same direction. He saw there a large dog, very much like Franco in form and size, lying upon the carpet. He was as handsome as Franco. Jonas was surprised to see him. The girl, too, looked surprised. She, however, said nothing, but went out, and shut the door.

In a few minutes, the door opened, and an elderly gentleman, with grayish hair, and a mild and pleasant expression of countenance, came in. He nodded to Jonas as he entered, and Jonas rose to receive him. The gentleman then took a seat by the fire, and asked Jonas to sit down again.

"I came to see you, sir, about your dog," said Jonas.

"Well, my boy," replied the man, "and what about my dog?" and, as he said this, he looked down at the dog, which was lying upon the floor.

"I don't know but that I have got him."

"You have got him?" repeated Mr. Edwards.

"Yes, sir; a dog like that one came to me in the woods one day this winter."

"O," said Mr. Edwards, "you mean the dog that I lost.---Yes,---I had forgotten that, it is so long ago. When did you find him?"

Jonas then told the whole story of the dog's coming to them, and of their attempt to drive him away; and also of his seeing the advertisement in the tavern. Mr. Edwards asked him a great many questions, such as what his name was, where he lived, and how long he had lived there, and how he happened to be journeying now. At last he said,---

"I think it very probable that it is my dog. I lost one of that description six or eight months ago, and advertised him; but I couldn't hear any thing of him, and so I got another as much like him as I could. It is probable yours is the same dog; but

I don't know that there is any particular proof of it. You haven't called him Ney, have you?"

"No, sir," said Jonas; "we call him Franco."

"If he should come at the call of Ney, that would be proof. Where is he now?"

"He is with me, sir; he is out in my sleigh."

"O, well, then," said the man, "we can tell in a moment. I'll step to the door and call him."

So Mr. Edwards put on his hat, and stepped to the door. The dog was standing up in the sleigh, and looking wildly around. When he saw Mr. Edwards, he seemed more excited still.

"Here, Ney," said Mr. Edwards.

The dog leaped down from the sled, and came bounding up the road. He leaped first about Mr. Edwards, and then about Jonas, as if at a loss which was his master.

"Why, Ney," said Mr. Edwards,---"poor Ney,---have you got back at last? Come, walk in, Ney."

Ney slipped in through the door, and turned immediately into the little room, as if he was perfectly familiar with the localities. Jonas and Mr. Edwards followed. They shut the door, and took their seats again. Ney ran around the room, and examined every thing. He looked at the strange dog lying so comfortably in his old place upon the warm carpet, and then came and gazed up eagerly into his old master's face a moment. He came to Jonas, and wagged his tail, and then he went to the door and whined, as if he wanted to go out.

"Won't you let him out?" said Mr. Edwards. "We will see what he will do."

Jonas opened the door, and the dog ran out into the entry, and then made the same signs to have the outer door opened. Jonas opened it, and let him out. Jonas stepped out himself a moment, to see what he would do, and presently returned again to the room where he had left Mr. Edwards.

"Where did he go?" said Mr. Edwards.

"He has run to the sleigh," said Jonas, "and jumped up into it, and is lying down on the buffalo."

"The dog seems to have become attached to you, Jonas," said Mr. Edwards, "and I presume that you have become somewhat attached to him."

"Yes, sir, very much indeed," replied Jonas.

Mr. Edwards was silent a few minutes, appearing lost in thought.

"I hardly know what to say about this dog," he continued, at length. "You did very right to come and let me know about him. I am afraid that some boys would have kept him, without saying any thing about it. I am glad that you were honest. I valued the dog very much, and would have given a large sum to have recovered him, when he was first lost. But I have got another now, and don't really need two. Should you be disposed to buy him?"

"Yes, sir," said Jonas, "if I could. But I haven't got but a dollar at my command, and I suppose he is worth more than that."

Jonas had a dollar of his own. Mr. Holiday had given it to him when he left his house, thinking it probable that he would want to buy something for himself. Jonas had taken this money with him when he left the farmer's, intending to expend a part of it in the market town; but he did not see any thing that he really wanted, and so the money was in his pocket now.

"Why, yes," said Mr. Edwards, "I gave a great deal more for him than that. Haven't you any more money with you?"

"Not of my own," said Jonas.

"I suppose you got some for your produce."

"Yes, sir," said Jonas; "but it belongs to the farmer that I work with."

"And don't you think that he would be willing to have you pay a part of it for the dog?"

"I don't know, sir," said Jonas. "I know he likes the dog very much, but I have no authority to buy him with his money."

If Jonas had been willing to have used his employer's money without authority, Mr. Edwards would not have taken it. He made the inquiry to see whether Jonas was trustworthy.

After a few minutes' pause, Mr. Edwards resumed the conversation, as follows:---

"Well, Jonas," said he, "I have been thinking of this a little, and have concluded to let you keep the dog for me a little while,---that is, if he is willing to go with you. But remember he is my property still, and I shall have a right to call for him, whenever I choose, and you must give him up to me."

"Yes, sir," said Jonas, "I will. And I wish that you would not agree to sell him to any body else, without letting me know."

"Well," replied Mr. Edwards, "I will not. So you may take him, and keep him till I send for him,---that is, provided he will go with you of his own accord. I can't drive him away from his old home."

Jonas thanked Mr. Edwards, and rose to go. Mr. Edwards took his hat, and followed him to the door, to see whether the dog would go willingly. When he was upon the step, he called him.

"Ney," said he, "Ney."

Ney looked up, and, in a moment afterwards, jumped out of the sleigh, and came running up to the door.

"Now," continued Mr. Edwards, "if you can call him back, while I am standing here, it is pretty good proof that you have been kind to him, and that he would like to go with you."

So Jonas walked down towards the gate, looking back, and calling,---

"Franco, Franco, Franco!"

The dog ran down towards him a little way, and then stopped, looked back, and, after a moment's pause, he returned a few steps towards his former master. He seemed a little at a loss to know which to choose.

Jonas got into his sleigh.

"Franco!" said he.

Franco looked at him, then at Mr. Edwards, then at Jonas; and finally he went back to the door, and began to lick his old master's hand.

Jonas turned his horses' heads a little towards the road, and moved them on a step.

"Come, Franco," said he; "Franco, come."

Franco, hearing these words, and seeing that Jonas was actually going, seemed to come to a final decision. He leaped off the steps, and bounded down the road, through the gate, and jumped up into Jonas's sleigh. Mr. Edwards continued to call him, but he paid no attention to it. He curled down before Jonas a moment, then he raised himself up a little, so as to look back towards the house; but he showed no disposition to get out again. Jonas put his hand upon his head, and patted it gently as he drove away; and, when he found that Franco was really going with him, he turned his head back, and said, with a look of great satisfaction,---

"Good-by, sir. I'm very much obliged to you."

"Good-by, Jonas. Take good care of Ney."

"Yes, sir," said he, "I certainly will."

"You're a good dog, Franco," he continued, patting his head, "to come with me,---very good dog, Franco, to choose the coarse hay for a bed under the old General's crib, rather than that good warm carpet, for the sake of coming with me. I'll make you a little house, Franco,---I certainly will, and I'll put a carpet on the floor. I'll make it as soon as I get home."

And Jonas did, the next evening after he got home, make Franco a house, just big enough for him; and he found an old piece of carpet to put upon the floor. He put Franco in; but the next morning he found him in his old place under the General's crib. Franco liked that place better. The truth was, it was rather warmer; and then, besides, he liked the old General's company.

[Illustration]

CHAPTER V.

SIGNS OF A STORM

One evening early in February, the farmer told Jonas that his work, the next day, would be to get out four or five bushels of corn and grain, and go to mill. Accordingly, after he had got through with his morning's work of taking care of the stock, he took a half-bushel measure, and several bags, and went into the granary. The granary was a small, square building, with narrow boards and wide cracks between them on the south side. The building itself was mounted on posts at the four corners, with flat stones upon the top of the posts, for the corners to rest upon.

The open work upon the side was to let the air in, to dry the corn; and the high posts and the flat stones were to keep the mice from getting in and eating it up.

Jonas put a short board across the top of the half-bushel, and sat upon it. Then he began taking the corn and shelling it off from the cob, by rubbing it against the edge of the board. As he sat thus at work, he occasionally looked up, and he could see out of the open door of the granary, into the farm-yards.

It was a very pleasant morning. The sun shone beautifully; and now and then a drop fell from the roof on the south side of the barn. The cattle were standing, basking in the sun, in the barn-yard, and in the sheds, where the sun could shine in upon them. The whole area of the barn-yard was trodden smooth and hard by the footsteps of the cattle; and broad and smooth paths had been worn in every direction, about the house. Behind the barn was a large sheep-yard, also well worn with the footsteps of the sheep. A great many sheep were there,---now and then eating hay from a long rack, which extended across the yard.

When Jonas had shelled out the corn, he carried the bags, and put them into the sleigh, which was generally used in going to mill. Then he locked the granary, and put the key away, and afterwards went to the barn, and opened the great doors, which led in to the barn floor. He climbed up a tall ladder to a loft under the roof of the barn, and threw down some sheaves of wheat,---as many as he thought would be necessary to produce the quantity of grain which the farmer had ordered. He then descended the ladder, and got a flail, and began to thresh them out.

Standing, now, in a new position, he had a different prospect before him. Beyond the barn-yard he could see another larger yard nearer the house, in which the snow had also been beaten down by the going and coming of teams, sleds, and all sorts of travel, for two or three weeks, during which there had been no new falls of snow. Upon one side of this yard was an enormous heap of wood, which Jonas and Oliver had been hauling nearly all the winter. On the other side was a quantity of timber, of all sizes and lengths, which the farmer and Amos had been getting out for the new barn. Some of it was hewed, and some not; and several large pieces were laid out upon the level surface of the yard, and the farmer and Amos were sitting upon them, working upon the frame. Amos was boring holes with an auger, and the farmer was cutting the holes thus made into a square form with a chisel. Josey was there, too, and Amelia. They were building a house of the blocks which had been sawed off from the ends of the timbers.

When, however, they heard the sound of Jonas's flail, they left their play, and came along to the barn to see him. Josey came into the barn; Amelia remained at the door.

"What are you doing, Jonas?" said Josey.

"Threshing some wheat," replied Jonas; "but stand back, or I shall hit you with the flail."

"Are you going to mill?" said Josey.

"Yes, I or somebody else. I am getting a grist ready."

"Here comes uncle," said Josey; "I mean to ask him to let me go."

The farmer came in, and told Jonas that he expected that they were going to have a snow-storm, and, therefore, as soon as his grist was ready, he might harness a horse into the sleigh, and drive directly to mill.

"Then," said he, "you may come directly back, and not wait to have it ground; for I want you to go up to the woods this afternoon, and bring down a load of small spruces, which I cut for rafters. I want them down before the road gets

blocked up with snow."

The farmer had reflected that, about this time in the winter, they were generally exposed to long and driving snow-storms, by which the roads were often blocked up. He usually endeavored to get all out of the woods which he had to get, early in the season, while the snow was not deep. He had now got down all his wood, and all his timber, except one or two loads of rafters; and he wished, therefore, to get those down, so that, in case of a severe storm, he would not have to break out the road again.

Jonas accordingly despatched his preparations for going to mill, as rapidly as possible, and soon was ready. In driving out, he stopped opposite the place where the farmer was at work upon his frame.

"All ready, I believe, sir," said Jonas.

"Very well," said the farmer. "The pond road is a little the nearest, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir," said Jonas.

"And Josey wants to go with you; have you any objection to take him?"

"No, sir," said Jonas; "I should like very much to have him go."

"Well, Josey, get your great-coat, and come."

"O, no, sir," said Josey; "I don't need any great-coat; it isn't cold."

"Very well, then; jump in."

Josey got in upon the top of the bags, and Jonas drove on. After riding a short distance, they turned down by a road which led to the pond, which was now covered with so thick and solid a sheet of ice, that it was safe travelling upon it, and it was accordingly intersected with roads in every direction. They rode down at a rapid trot to the ice, followed by Franco, who was always glad to go upon an expedition.

The road led them over, very nearly, the same part of the pond that Jonas had navigated in his boat, when he fitted a sail to it,---though now the appearances were so different all around, that one would hardly have supposed the scene to have been the same. There was the same level surface, but it was now a solid field, white with snow, instead of the undulating expanse of water, of the deep-blue color reflected from the sky. There were the same islands, and promontories, and beaches; but the verdure was gone, and the naked whiteness of the beach seemed to have spread over the whole landscape. It was a very pleasant ride, however. The road was level, though very winding, as it passed around capes and headlands, and now and then took a wide circuit to avoid a breathing-hole. The sun shone pleasantly, too.

"I don't see what signs there are of a snow-storm," said Josey.

"Such a calm and pleasant day in February portends a storm," said Jonas. "Besides, the wind, what there is, is north-east; and don't you see that snow-bank off south?"

Josey looked in the direction in which they were going, which was towards the south-west, and he saw a long, white bank of cloud, extending over that quarter of the heavens.

"Is that a snow-bank?" asked Josey.

"It is a bank of snow-clouds, I suppose," said Jonas. "They call it a snow-bank."

By the time that the boys reached the mill, a hazy appearance had overspread the whole sky. They took out the grist, and left it to be ground, and then immediately got into the sleigh again, and commenced their return. Before they had gone far, the sky became entirely overcast, and the distant hills to the south-east were enveloped in what appeared to be a kind of mist, but which was really falling snow.

"How windy it is!" said Josey.

"No," said Jonas, "it is not much more windy than it was when we came; but then we were riding with it, and now we are going against it. You feel cold, don't you?"

"Why, yes, a little," said Josey, "now the sun has gone, and the wind has come."

"Well, then," said Jonas, "get down in the bottom of the sleigh, and I'll cover you up with buffaloes."

So Josey crept down into the bottom of the sleigh, and Jonas covered him up; and he found his place very warm and comfortable.

"How do you like your place?" said Jonas.

"Very well," said Josey, "only I can't see where we are going."

"Trust yourself to me," said Jonas. "I'll drive you safely."

"I know it," said Josey, "and I wish you'd tell me, now and then, what you see."

"Well," replied Jonas, "I see a load of hay coming along on the pond before us."

"A large load?" said Josey.

"Yes," replied Jonas; "and now we're going pretty near the round island. There, the load of hay is turning off by another road. O, there is a sleigh behind it; it was hid before. The sleigh is coming this way."

"I don't hear any bells," said Josey.

"We are too far off yet; you'll hear them presently."

Very soon Josey did hear the bells. They came nearer and nearer, and at last jingled by close to his ears. As soon as the sound had gone by, he threw up the buffalo with his arms, and looked out, saying to Jonas,---

"I guess they wondered what you had got here, covered up with the buffalo, Jonas."

Jonas smiled, and Josey covered himself up again. Not long after this, it began to snow, and Jonas said that he could hardly see the shore in some places.

"Suppose it should snow so fast," said Josey, "that you could not see the land at all; then, if you should come to two roads, how could you tell which one to take?"

"Why, one way," replied Jonas, "would be to let Franco trot on before us; and he'd know the way."

"Is Franco coming along with us?" said Josey.

"Yes," said Jonas, "he is close behind."

"Why don't you call him Ney?" asked Josey; "that is his real name."

"I was uncertain which to call him for some time," said Jonas; "but finally I concluded to let him keep both names, and so now he is Franco Ney."

"Well," said Josey, "I think that is a good plan."

A short time after this, Jonas turned up off from the pond, and soon reached home.

[Illustration]

CHAPTER VI.

THE RESCUE

Jonas found, when he reached home, that it was about dinner-time. The farmer said that the storm was coming on sooner than he had expected, and he believed that they should have to leave the rafters where they were. But Jonas said that he thought he could get them without any difficulty, if the farmer would let him take the oxen and sled.

The farmer, finding that Jonas was very willing to go, notwithstanding the storm, said that he should be very glad to have him try. And Josey, he said, might accompany him or not, just as he pleased.

"I wouldn't go, Jonas," said Josey, "if I were you. It is going to be a great storm."

He, however, walked along with Jonas to the barn, to see him yoke the oxen. The yard was covered with a thin coating of light snow, which made the appearance of it very different from what it had been when they had left it. The cows and oxen stood out still exposed, their backs whitened a little with the fine flakes which had fallen upon them. Jonas went to the shed, and brought out the yoke.

"Jonas," said Josey, "I wouldn't go."

"No, I think it very likely that you wouldn't. You are not a very efficient boy."

"What is an *efficient* boy?" asked Josey.

"One that has energy and resolution enough to go on and accomplish his object, even if there are difficulties in the way."

"Is that what you mean by being efficient?" said Josey.

"Yes;---a boy that hasn't some efficiency, isn't good for much."

As he said this, Jonas had got one of the oxen yoked. He then went to bring up the other.

When the other ox was up in his place, Jonas raised the end of the yoke, and put it over his neck.

"You see," continued he, "your uncle wants all those rafters got down. It will be a little harder getting them, in the storm; but I care nothing for that. It will be a great satisfaction to him to have them all safe down here before it drifts. He doesn't *require* me to go; but if I go voluntarily and bring them down, don't you think that, to-morrow morning, when he finds two feet of snow on the ground, he'll be glad to think that all his rafters are safe in the yard?"

"Why, yes," said Josey. "I've a great mind to go with you."

"Do just as you please," said Jonas.

"Well, do you want me to go?"

"Yes, I should like your company very well; and, besides, perhaps you can help me."

"Well," said Josey, "I'll go."

He accordingly followed Jonas as he drove the oxen along to the sled. Jonas held up the tongue, while Josey backed the oxen, so that he could enter the end of the tongue into the ring attached to the lower side of the yoke. He then put the iron pin in, and all was ready.

Jonas drove the oxen along, till he came to the great gate in the back yard, and then he stopped to go and get some chains. The chains he fastened to the stakes, which were in the sides of the sled. Then he opened the great gate, and the oxen went through; after which he seated himself upon the sled by the side of Josey, and so they rode along up into the woods.

The storm increased, though very slowly. The road into the woods, which had become well worn, was now beginning to be covered, here and there, with little white patches, wherever new snow, driven along by the wind, found places where it could lodge. At length, however, they came to the woods; and there they were sheltered from the wind, and the snow fell more equally. Josey had found it quite cold riding in the open ground, for the wind was against them; but under the shelter of the trees he found it quite warm and comfortable.

The forest appeared very silent and solitary. It is true they could hear the moaning of the wind upon the tops of the trees, but there was no sound of life, and no motion but that of the fine flakes descending through the air in a gentle shower. The whole surface of the ground, and every thing lying upon it, was covered with the snow; for the branches, and the stumps, and the stems trimmed up for timber, and the places where the old snow had been trampled down by the oxen and by the woodcutters, were now all whitened over again and concealed.

"Who would think," said Jonas, "that there could be any thing alive here?"

"Is there any thing?" said Josey.

"Yes, thousands of animals, all covered up in the snow,---mice in the ground, and squirrels in the hollow logs, and millions of insects, frozen up in the bark of the dead trees."

"And they'll be covered up deeper before morning," said Josey.

"Yes," said Jonas, "and so would our rafters, if we didn't get them out. We could not have found half of them, if we had left them till after this storm."

The rafters were lying around upon the old snow, wherever small trees, from which they had been formed, had fallen. They could be distinguished very plainly now, although covered with an inch of snow.

Jonas and Josey immediately went to work, getting them together, and placing them upon the sled. When they had been at work in this way for some time, Jonas said,---

"We shall not get half of them, at this load."

"Then what shall you do?" said Josey.

"O, come up again, and get the rest."

"But then it will be dark before you get home."

"That will be no matter," said Jonas.

"Only you'll get lost, and buried up in the snow."

"No," said Jonas; "there might be some danger to-morrow evening, after it shall have been snowing four and twenty hours; but not to-night. The snow will not be more than a foot deep at midnight."

When they had got as many of the rafters upon the sled as Jonas thought the oxen could conveniently draw, he secured the load by the chains, and collected the rest of the sticks together a little, on the ground. Then he told Josey to climb up to the top of the load and ride. He said that he would walk along by the side of the oxen. Josey found it more comfortable going back, than it was coming up, for the wind was now behind him, and the snow did not drive into his face. Jonas walked along in the snow, which was now nearly ankle deep, and after they had got out of the woods, there were some places where it had drifted much deeper.

"Do you suppose that uncle has got his frame done?" said Josey.

"I presume he has left it, if he hasn't finished it," said Jonas.

"Why? Why couldn't he stay out in the storm to work, as well as we?"

"Because," said Jonas, "the snow would wet his tools, and fill up his mortises, and so trouble him a great deal more than it does us. You can't do carpenter's work out of doors in a snow-storm."

"Do you mean to go after the other load?" asked Josey.

"Yes," replied Jonas.

The boys found, when they reached the yard, that it was as Jonas had predicted. The farmer and Amos had left their work and gone in. They were in the shop grinding their tools. The farmer asked Jonas if he had got all the rafters.

"No, sir," said Jonas; "there is another load."

"Well, we'll let them go," said the farmer. "I'm very glad you've got one load down."

"I think, sir," said Jonas, "if you have no objection, I'd better go and get the rest. I know just where they are, and I can get them all down here before night."

"You won't have time to get down before it will be dark," said the farmer.

"Just as you think best, sir," said Jonas, "but I think I can get out of the woods before dark; and it is of no consequence about the rest of the way."

"Very well," said the farmer, "you may go. Don't you want Amos to go with you?"

"No, sir, it isn't necessary."

"No, sir," said Josey, "I can go with him."

So Jonas threw off his load, and then turned his team about, and once more set out for the woods. He and Josey sat upon the sled, talking by the way,---the storm continuing without much change. The snow gradually increased in depth, but the oxen walked along without difficulty through it. Sometimes they came to a drift where the snow was so deep as to come in a little upon the bars, where the boys were sitting; but in general the sled runners glided along through it very smoothly.

The woods appeared still more somber and solitary than they had done before. The new snow was deeper, and it was falling faster; and, besides, as it was now nearly sundown, there was only a gloomy sort of twilight, under the trees. Jonas and Josey loaded the sled as fast as they could. They put on the last of the rafters, which Jonas had collected, with great satisfaction. Josey, especially, began to be in haste to set out on his return.

"Now," said Jonas, "I'll look around a little, just to see that there are none left behind."

"O, no, I wouldn't," said Josey; "let us go. We've got them all, I know."

"I want to be sure," said Jonas, "and make thorough work of it."

So saying, he began wading about in the snow, to see if he could find any more rafters. He, however, soon satisfied himself that they were all upon the sled. He then secured his load carefully, with the chains, and they set out upon their return, as before.

It grew dark rapidly, and the wind and storm increased. When they came out of the woods, they found that the air was very thick with the falling flakes, and the drifts had begun to be quite large, so that sometimes, in plunging through them, the snow would bank up quite high, before the sled, against the ends of the rafters. Jonas said that, if they had been two hours later, they could not have got along.

"You said that the snow wouldn't be a foot deep by midnight," said Josey.

"It is coming faster than I thought it would," said Jonas. "It is almost a foot deep now."

The road by which the boys were advancing, led along the bank of the brook, until it reached nearly to the shore of the pond, and then it turned off, and went towards the house, at a little distance from the shore. When they reached this part of the road, the storm, which here swept down across the pond, beat upon them with unusual fury. The wind howled; the snow was driven through the air, and seemed to scud along the ground with great violence; and the drifts, running diagonally across the road, were once or twice so deep, that the oxen could hardly get the load through. It was now almost dark, too, and all the traces of the road were obliterated,---though Jonas knew, by the land and fences, how to go.

Just at this time, when the wind seemed to lull for an instant, Jonas thought he heard a cry. He stopped his oxen to listen.

"No," said Josey, "I don't believe it is any thing; let us go on."

In fact, Josey was afraid, and wanted to get home as soon as he could.

"Wait a minute," said Jonas. He listened again, and in a moment he heard the cry again. It seemed to be a cry of distress, but he could not distinguish any words.

"It is somebody off upon the pond," said Jonas.

"Is the pond out that way?" asked Josey.

"Yes," said Jonas, "and I verily believe somebody is out on it, and has lost his way."

"Well," said Josey, "let us go home as fast as we can, and tell uncle."

"No," said Jonas, "that won't do."

Jonas turned in the direction from which the sound appeared to come, and, putting his hands up to his mouth in the shape of a speaking-trumpet, he called out, as loud as he could call,---

"Hal---loo!"

He listened after he had thus called, but there was no answer. In a few minutes, the cry which he had heard first was repeated, in the same tone as before.

"They don't hear me," said Jonas.

"Hal---loo!" cried out Josey, as loud as he could call.

There was no answer; but, in a few seconds afterwards, the cry was repeated, as at first.

"You see," said Jonas, "that the wind blows this way, and they can't hear us. We must go out after them."

Josey tried to dissuade Jonas from this plan; but Jonas said he must go, and that, as they had oxen with them, there would be no danger. "First," said he, "we must throw off our load."

So he and Josey went to work, and threw off the rafters, as fast as they could. Jonas reserved four or five rafters, which he left upon the sled. Then he turned the oxen in the direction from which the cry had come. They continued to hear it at moderate intervals.

They descended gradually a short distance across the field, and then they came to the shore of the pond. Here Jonas took off one of his rafters, and laid it upon the shore, with one end raised up out of the snow.

"What is that for?" said Josey.

"To show us the way back to our road," said Jonas. "I place it so that it points right back,---the way we came."

"We can tell by our tracks," said Josey.

"No," said Jonas; "our tracks will all be covered up before we come back."

Jonas then drove down upon the pond, guiding his oxen in the direction of the cry. He kept Josey upon the sled, so as not to exhaust his strength. He rode himself, too, as much as he could; but he was obliged to jump off very frequently, to keep the oxen in a right direction. He stopped occasionally to put down a rafter, placing it so that its length should be in the line of his road, and taking care to sink one end into the snow, so as to leave the other out as far as possible, to prevent its being all buried up before they should return. Every now and then, too, he would answer the cry, as loud as he could call.

At last, after they had toiled along in this way for some time, Jonas thought that he succeeded in making the travellers hear; for, immediately after his call, he would hear a calling from them, following it, and speaking in a different way, though Jonas could not understand what was said. He kept pressing forward steadily, and, before long, he found that the travellers were silent, excepting immediately after he called to them,---when there was a sound as if intended for a response, though Jonas could not tell what was said.

"We shall get to them, Josey," said he.

"Who do you suppose it is?" said Josey.

"I don't know; very probably some travellers lost upon the pond."

Jonas was right in his conjecture: as they came nearer and nearer, the sounds became more distinct.

"Hal---loo!" vociferated Jonas.

"Hal---loo!" was the answer. "Can---you---come---and---help---us?"

"Ay, ay," said Jonas; "we're coming."

"Ay, ay," shouted Josey, in his loudest voice, which, being more shrill than that of Jonas, was perhaps heard farther.

Still nothing was to be seen. Besides being dark, the atmosphere was thick with snow. So it was not until they got very near to the travellers, that they could see them at all. They saw at last, however, some dark-looking object before them. On coming up to it, they found that it was a horse and sleigh. The horse was in a very deep snow-drift, and was half lying down. There was a woman in the sleigh, with a small child in her arms, and a boy, about as large as Josey, standing at the horse's head.

"O, I am so glad you have got some oxen, sir!" said the woman. "We couldn't have got out without oxen."

"I don't see how the snow happens to be so deep just here."

"Why, it's that island," said the woman; "I suppose there is an island off there. I told Isaiah it would be drifted under this island; and now the horse is all beat out; and, besides, we don't know the way."

"Well," said Jonas, "I'll hook the oxen on, and we'll soon get you to the land. Isaiah, you take your horse out of the sleigh."

So Isaiah went to work to unhook the traces and the hold-backs, in order to get the horse free from the sleigh.

"I'll get out," said the woman.

"No," said Jonas; "you sit still, and keep your child warm."

As soon as Isaiah had taken the horse out, Jonas told him to lead him around behind the sleigh, while he turned the shafts over back against the dasher, and then he brought the oxen up in front of the sleigh. He first, however, drove the oxen out of the road with the sled, so as to leave that where it would not be in the way. Then he took two chains from the sled, and attached the oxen, by means of them, to the forward part of the sleigh. When all was ready, he put Josey in with the woman, and let Isaiah lead his horse behind. He then started the oxen.

"Are you going to leave the sled here?" said Josey.

"Yes," said Jonas, "we can come and get it after the storm is over."

The oxen drew the sleigh along very easily. The snow was quite deep for a little distance, and then it became less so; but it was very dark, and it was difficult for Jonas to follow his track. The snow blew across it with great violence, and was fast filling it up.

However, Jonas soon came to his first rafter, and this encouraged him. It was a good deal covered with snow, but the end was out, and the direction of it showed him which way to go, in order to find the next one. After he had passed this guide, the path was no more to be distinguished. He went on, however, as nearly as he could in the direction indicated by the rafter; and, after going the proper distance, he began to look out before him for the second. He began to be a little anxious lest he had missed it, when he observed something dark in the snow, at a little distance on the right. He went to it, and found that it was the rafter.

Thus he was upon his track again; but his having so narrowly escaped missing it, made him afraid that he should not be able to follow the train very far. His fears proved well grounded. All his efforts to discover the third rafter were entirely unavailing.

"'Tis of no consequence," said Jonas; "we can't be far from the shore. I'll keep straight on, and we shall strike the land somewhere, not far from the house."

But it is much easier to get bewildered in a storm than Jonas had supposed. The darkness, the obscurity produced by the falling snow, the perfect and unvarying level of the surface, in every direction the same, and the agitation of mind which even the most resolute must experience in such a situation, all conspired to make it difficult, in a case like this, to find the way. Jonas drove on in the direction which he thought would have led to the shore; but, after going amply far enough to reach it, no shore was to be seen. The fact was, that he had insensibly deviated just so far from his course, as to be going along parallel with the shore, instead of in the direction towards it. Jonas began to be somewhat concerned, and Josey

was in a state of great anxiety and fear.

He rose up in the sleigh, and attempted to look around; and his fear was suddenly changed into terror, at seeing a large black animal, like a bear, coming furiously up behind them, bounding over the snow. Josey screamed aloud.

"What is the matter?" said the woman.

"Why, Franco! Franco!" said Jonas, "how could you get here?"

It was Franco, true enough. He came swiftly along, leaping and staggering through the deep snow; and he seemed delighted to have found Jonas and his party at last. Jonas patted his head. Both Jonas and Franco were overjoyed to see each other.

[Illustration: "'That can't be the way, Franco,' said Jonas."]

Jonas patted Franco's head and praised him, while the dog wagged his tail, whisked about, and shook the snow off from his back and sides.

"What dog is that?" said the woman.

"This is Franco," said Jonas. "Franco Ney is his name. Now we shall have no trouble in getting out."

Franco turned off, short, from the road in which Jonas was going. He knew by instinct which way the shore lay from them. Jonas at first hesitated about following him.

"That can't be the way, Franco," said he.

But Franco, after plunging on a few steps, looked round and whined. Then he came back towards Jonas again a few steps, looking him full in the face, and then whisked about again, and went on farther than before,---and then stopped and looked back, as if to see whether Jonas was going to follow him. Jonas stood just in advance of the oxen, hesitating.

"That must be the way," said Jonas. "Franco knows."

"No, that isn't the way," said the woman; "the dog don't know any thing about it. We must go straight forward."

"No," said Jonas, "it will be safest to follow Franco." And so saying, he began to turn his oxen in the direction indicated by Franco.

The woman remonstrated against this with great earnestness. She said that they should only get entirely lost, for he was leading them altogether out of their way. But Jonas considered that the responsibility properly belonged to him, and that he must act according to his own discretion. So he pushed forward steadily after Franco.

But his progress was now interrupted by hearing another loud call behind him, back upon the pond.

"What's that?" said Josey.

"Somebody calling," said Jonas.

"More travellers lost," said the woman.--"O dear me!"

He listened again, and heard the calls more distinctly. He thought he could distinguish his own name. He answered the call, and was himself answered in return by men's voices, which now seemed more distinct and nearer.

"I know now who it is," said Jonas. "It is your uncle and Amos, coming out after us. Franco was with them."

Jonas was right. In a few minutes, the farmer and Amos came up, and they were exceedingly surprised when they saw Jonas with his oxen, drawing a sleigh, with a woman in it, off the pond, instead of a sled load of rafters from the woods.

"Jonas," said he with astonishment, "how came you here?"

"I came to help Isaiah get off the pond," said Jonas. "But how did you find out where we were?"

"Franco guided us," said the farmer. "He followed the road along some time, and then he wanted to turn off suddenly towards the pond. We wouldn't follow him for some time; but he *would* go that way, and no other. When he came to the shore of the pond, we found your rafter laid there, and that made us think you must have gone upon the ice, but we couldn't imagine what for. At last, we found where you had left the sled, and then we began to halloo to you."

"But, uncle," said Josey, "didn't you see our heap of rafters, by the road where we turned off?"

"No," said his uncle.

"We put a load there."

"Then they must have got pretty well covered up," said he, "for we didn't observe them."

The whole party followed Franco, who led them out to the shore the shortest way. They took Isaiah and his mother to the house, and gave them some supper, and let them stay there that night. The next morning, when Jonas got up, he found that it was clearing away; and when, after breakfast, he looked out upon the pond, to see if he could see any thing of his sled, he observed, away out half a mile from shore, two short rows of stakes, sticking up in the snow, not far from on island. The body of the sled was wholly buried up and concealed from view.

CHAPTER VII.

A FIRE

The last of February drew nigh, which was the time fixed upon for Josey to go home. He had remained with his uncle much longer than his father had at first intended; but now they wanted him to return, before the roads broke up in the spring.

The evening before Josey was to go, the farmer was sitting by the fire, when Jonas came in from the barn.

"Jonas," said the farmer, "I have got to write a letter to my brother, to send by Josey to-morrow; why won't you take a sheet of paper and write for me, and I'll tell you what to say. You are rather handier with the pen than I am."

Jonas accordingly brought a sheet of paper and a pen and ink, and took his place at a table at the back side of the room, and the farmer dictated to him as follows:

"Dear Brother,

"I take this opportunity to inform you that we are all alive and well, and I hope that you may be the same. This will be handed to you by Josey, who leaves us to-morrow, according to your orders. We have been very glad to have him with us, though he hasn't had opportunity to learn much. However, I suppose he'll fetch up again in his learning, when he gets home. He has behaved pretty fair on the whole, as boys go. He will make a smart man, I've no doubt, though he don't seem to take much to farming.

"We hope to have you, and your wife and children, come and pay us a visit this coming summer,---say in raspberry time, which will be just after haying."

"There," said the farmer, "now fold it up, and write my brother's name on the back, and to-morrow morning I'll look it over, and sign my name to it."

Jonas accordingly folded the letter up, and wrote upon the back, *Joseph Jones, Esq., Bristol*. When it was done, he laid it on the table.

Amos came and took it up. "Jonas," said he, "I wish I could write as well as that."

The farmer had a daughter whose name was Isabella. She was about eighteen years old. She was at this time spinning in a corner of the room, near a window. She came forward to look at the letter.

"Yes, Jonas," said she, "you write beautifully. I wish you'd teach me to write like that."

"Very well," said Jonas, "that I can do."

"How can you do it?" said Isabella.

"Why, we can have an evening school, these long evenings," replied Jonas. "You get through your spinning in time to have half an hour for school before bed-time."

"Half an hour wouldn't be enough," said Amos.

"O, yes," replied Jonas; "half an hour every day will amount to a great deal in three months."

"Yes," said the farmer, "that's a very good plan; you shall have an evening school, and Jonas shall teach you;---an excellent plan."

"What shall we study?" said Isabella.

"Whatever you want to learn," replied Jonas. "You say you want to learn to write; that will do for one thing."

"And I want to learn more arithmetic," said Amos.

"Very well," said Jonas. "We'll have an evening school, half an hour every evening, beginning at eight o'clock. Have you got any school-books in the house, Isabella?"

Isabella said there were some on a shelf up stairs.

"Well," said Jonas, "bring them to me, and I'll look over them, and form a plan."

Isabella brought Jonas the school-books, and he looked them over, but said nothing then about his plan. He reflected upon the subject until the next day, because he did not wish to propose any thing to them, until it was well matured.

The next evening, at eight o'clock, Isabella put up her spinning, and took a seat by the fire, to hear Jonas's plan. Amos sat by a table at the back side of the room. The farmer's wife was sitting upon the settle, knitting; and the farmer himself was asleep in his arm-chair, at the opposite corner.

"Now," said Jonas, "I like the plan of having an evening school, and I am willing to be either teacher or pupil; only, if I am teacher, I must *direct*, and you must both do as I say."

"No," said Isabella, "you mustn't direct entirely; we'll talk over the plans, all together, and then do as we all agree."

"No," said Jonas, "I have no idea of having all school-time spent in talking. I'm perfectly willing that either of you should be teacher, and I'll obey. I'll set copies, or do any thing else you please, only I won't have any responsibility about the arrangements. Or, if you wish, I'm willing to be teacher; but then, in that case, I must direct every thing, just as I think is best,---and you must do just as I say."

"Well," said Isabella, "what are your orders? We'll obey."

Amos and Oliver also agreed that they would obey his directions. Jonas then consented to take the station of teacher, and he proceeded to give his directions.

"I have been looking at the books," said he, "and I find we haven't got but one of each kind."

"Then we can't have any classes in our school," said Oliver.

"Yes we can," said Jonas. "The first evening, Amos may take the arithmetic and the slate, and cipher, while Isabella writes, and Oliver studies a good long spelling lesson. Then, the second evening, Amos shall study the spelling lesson, and Isabella cipher, and Oliver write."

"But I don't want to cipher," said Isabella. "I don't like arithmetic; I never could understand it."

"You promised to obey my orders," said Jonas.

"Well," said Isabella, "I'll try; but I know I can't do the sums."

"Then, the third evening," said Jonas, "Isabella shall study the spelling lesson, Oliver the arithmetic, and Amos take the writing-book."

"What, ain't you going to have but one writing-book?"

"No," said Jonas; "one is enough; because you won't all write the same evening. So you can write one page, Oliver another, and Amos the third."

"No," said Isabella; "I don't like that. I want every scholar to have his own book."

"If you'll be the teacher," said Jonas, "you can have it so."

"But I want to have it so, and you be the teacher," said Isabella.

"No," said Jonas; "if I have the responsibility of teacher, I must have the power too."

"Well," said Isabella, "I suppose we had better submit."

"But what's the reason, Jonas," said Oliver, "that you ain't willing that we should all have writing-books of our own?"

"There are two or three reasons," said Jonas. "But it is very poor policy for a schoolmaster to spend his time in convincing his scholars that his regulations are good. He must make them obey, and let them see that the regulations turn out to be good in the end."

"But it seems to me, you've grown arbitrary all at once," said Amos, with a smile.

"Yes," said Jonas, "I'm always arbitrary when I'm in command; if you mean, by arbitrary, determined to have my own way. I won't *usurp* any power; but, if you put it upon me, I shall use it, you may depend upon it."

Jonas had two good reasons why he wanted to have only one writing-book for all his scholars. One was, that he thought it uncertain how long their school plan would last, and he did not want to trouble the farmer to look up some paper, and then make a parade of preparing so many writing-books; and then, perhaps, the whole plan might be abandoned, when they had written four or five pages in each. And, therefore, as he found one old writing-book of Oliver's, half full, he determined to make the blank leaves of that answer for all.

But he had another reason still. He thought that, if all his scholars should write, in succession, in the same book, their writing would come into such close juxtaposition and comparison, that each one would be stimulated to write with greater attention and care; as each one would wish his or her own page to look as neatly written as the rest. He knew that Isabella, when it came to her turn to write, would naturally, without any thing being said, look at Amos's work on the page before, and that she would observe its excellences and its faults, and that her page would probably be written better, in consequence of her criticism upon his.

Thus, though Jonas had good reasons, he chose not to give them. He preferred, if he was going to be teacher, that they should not be in the habit of expecting him to give reasons for all his directions. So he simply expressed his decision upon the subject, by saying,---

"You may do just as you please about making me teacher; but, if you put me into the office, you must expect to have to obey."

"That's right, Jonas," said the farmer's wife: "I am glad to see you make 'em mind."

It was settled, without any further discussion, that Jonas's plan in regard to the writing should be adopted, and that his scholars would obey his directions in other things, whatever they might be. Jonas then proceeded as follows:---

"Now, you see that, if we go on so three evenings, you will all have got three lessons, and the fourth evening we will have for recitation. I will hear you spell, and examine your writing, and see if your sums are done right."

Jonas's exposition of the plan of his school was here interrupted by the farmer's wife, who, as she sat at the end of the settle towards the fire, had her face somewhat turned towards the window, and she saw a light at a distance near the horizon.

"What light is that?" said she.

Jonas and all his school rose, and went to the window to see.

The window looked towards the pond. They looked off across a sort of bay, beyond which there was a long point of land,---the one which the boys had had to sail around when they went to mill. Just over this land, and near the extremity of it, a light was to be seen, as if from a fire, beyond and behind the land.

"That's exactly in the direction of the village," said Amos.

"It is a house on fire, I know," said Oliver,---"or a store."

"It looks like a fire, certainly," said Jonas.

"Yes," said the farmer's wife; "and you must go, boys, and help put it out."

"It is several miles off," said Amos.

"Yes, but put Kate into the light sleigh, and she'll carry you there over the pond in twenty minutes.---Here, husband, husband," she continued, calling to the farmer, who was still asleep in his chair, "here's a fire."

The farmer opened his eyes, and sat upright in his chair, and asked what was the matter.

"Here's a fire," she repeated, "over in the village; hadn't the boys better go and put it out?"

The farmer rose, walked very deliberately to the window, looked a minute at the light, and then said,---

"It's nothing but the moon."

"The moon?---no, it can't be the moon, husband," said she. "The moon don't rise there."

"Yes," said the farmer, "that's just about the place."

"Besides," said she, "it isn't time for the moon to rise. It don't rise now till midnight."

He turned away, and walked slowly across the room, to where the almanac was hanging. He seemed very sleepy. He turned over the leaves, and then said, "Moon rises---eight hours and fifty minutes; that is,---let's see,---ten minutes before nine."

"Well," said his wife, "and 'tisn't much past eight now."

"It's the moon, you may depend," said the farmer; "perhaps our time is a little out." So he returned to the chair, sat down in it, and put his feet out towards the fire.

"Well," said his wife, "we shall know pretty soon; for, if it is the moon, it will soon rise higher."

So they all stood a few minutes, and watched the light. It seemed to enlarge a little, and to grow somewhat brighter; but it did not move from its place.

"It certainly must be a fire," said the farmer's wife again; "and I wish, husband, that you'd let the boys take Kate in the sleigh, and go along the pond and see."

"I've no objection," said the farmer, "if they've a mind to take that trouble; but they'll find nothing but the moon, they may depend."

"Let's go," said Amos.

"Very well," said Jonas; "I'm ready."

"We'll go too, boys," said the farmer's wife, "Isabella and I. You can put in two seats. There are no hills, and Kate will take us all along like a bird. I never saw a fire in my life."

The boys hastened to the barn, and got Kate out of the stall. Franco, who knew that something extraordinary must have taken place, though he could not tell what, came out from his place, leaped about, and indicated, by his actions, that, wherever they were going, he meant to go too.

The sleigh was soon harnessed. They drove up to the door, and found Isabella and her mother all ready. They took their places upon the back seat, while Amos and Jonas sat upon another seat, which they had placed in, before. Oliver came running with a bucket, which he put in under the forward seat, and then he jumped on behind, standing upon the end of the runner, and clinging to the corner of the sleigh, close to Isabella's shoulder.

Kate set off at a rapid trot down the road, which led to the pond. The sleigh went very easily, for the road was smooth. There had been rain and thaws lately, and cold weather after them, so that the surface of the road had melted, and then become frozen again; and this made it icy. They found the ice of the pond in the same state. The rain and the thaws had melted the snow, upon the top of the ice, and made it a sheet of water. Then this had frozen again, so that now the surface of the pond was almost every where hard and smooth; and when they came down upon it, and turned to go across the bay, the horse being at his full speed, the sleigh swept round sideways over the ice, in a great circle, and made the farmer's wife very much afraid that she should be upset. It seemed as if the sleigh was trying to get before the horse.

However, Amos, who was driving, contrived to get the horse ahead again, and then they went on with great speed. It was a mile across to the end of the point of land; but Kate carried them over this space in a very few minutes. As they drew near to the point, they watched the light. It did not rise at all.

"It cannot be the moon," said Jonas, "for it is now full a quarter of an hour since we first saw it."

"Yes," said the farmer's wife, "I knew it couldn't be the moon."

Just at this moment, the sleigh came around the point with great speed, and brought into view a very bright but distant fire, far before them.

"It is a fire!" they all exclaimed.

"But it isn't in the direction of the village," said Jonas.

"It must be some farm-house," said the farmer's wife, "on the shore."

"No," said Jonas, "I think it is on the ice."

It very soon became evident that the fire was upon the ice. It was plainly a large fire, though the distance made it look rather small. It was very bright, and it flashed up high; and a cloud of illuminated smoke arose from it, and floated off to the northward. The party in the sleigh could soon perceive, also, a number of small, bright spots near it, which seemed to be in motion about the fire. They looked like the moons about the planet Jupiter, seen through a telescope.

"I wonder what it is," said Isabella.

"I presume," said Jonas, "that the boys are out skating, and this is a fire on the ice, which they have built."

"And are those the boys moving about?" asked Oliver.

"Yes," said Jonas. "When they are near the fire, the light shines upon their faces."

As they rode on, it became gradually more and more evident that Jonas was right. The forms of the skaters, as they stood before the fire, or came wheeling up to it, became more and more distinct, and, in fact, the ringing sound of the skates soon became audible. The horse, in the mean time, went on, with great speed, directly towards the fire. When they arrived near the fire, the skaters came around them in great numbers, wondering who could have come. Jonas asked them where they got the wood to build their fire.

"All along the shore," said a large boy, with a long stick in his hand. "Let's go and get some more, boys," he added, "and brighten up our fire."

So saying, he wheeled round and skated away, the whole crowd of skaters, small and great, following him at full speed. As they swept round by the fire, the light glared brightly upon their faces and forms, but they soon disappeared from view in the darkness beyond; only Jonas could hear the sound of their skates, ringing over the ice, as they receded.

"What a great, hot fire!" said Oliver.

"Yes," said Isabella, "I never saw such a large fire on the ice. I don't see how they got all the wood."

"I suppose," said Jonas, "that they got out the wood from the forest, along the shore, and threw it out upon the ice, before they put on their skates, and then they could easily bring it to the fire. But hark! they are coming back again."

The fire was so bright where they were, and it flashed so strongly upon the ice around, that they could not see the skaters until they came pretty near. The dark figures, however, soon began to appear. The foremost was a tall young man, who came forward with great speed, pushing before him a long and slender log, half decayed and dry. One end he held before him in his hands, and the other glided along upon the smooth ice towards the fire.

There followed close behind him another skater, with the fragment of an old stump upon his shoulder; then several others, with branches, sticks, dry bushes, and fragments of every shape and size. These they piled upon the fire as they swept up alongside of it, and then wheeled away back from the heat which radiated from it. Two large boys came on, bringing a long log between them, one at each end. It looked large, but it was really not very heavy, as it was hollow and

decayed. They hove it up, with great effort, upon the fire, and its fall upon the heap threw up a large, bright column of sparks and flame. Another boy had the top of a young spruce, which he had cut off with his knife, by dint of great labor; it made a great roaring and crackling when it was put upon the fire. And, finally, behind all the rest, there came a little boy not so big as Oliver, tugging away at a long branch, which he dragged behind him, and put it upon the fire too.

"Well," said the farmer's wife, after a little time, "we mustn't stay here much longer."

"We'll drive around the fire, in one great sweep," said Jonas.

So he started the horse on, and took a great circuit about the fire. The skaters went with him on each side of the sleigh. Then they turned their course towards home again. The light of the fire shone upon the distant point of land, and illuminated it faintly, but in a very beautiful manner, and showed Jonas which way to drive.

Isabella turned back her head repeatedly, to look at the fire, as they rode on and left it far behind them. It seemed to grow smaller and smaller, as they receded; and at length, when Jonas turned around the point of land, it disappeared entirely. In a few minutes afterward, the moon arose, and lighted them the rest of the way home.

[Illustration]

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CARDING-MILL

Jonas was often sent away to transact business for the farmer. He was a very excellent hand to do business. It requires several qualities to make a boy good at business. He must be gentlemanly in his manners, so as to speak to the persons that he is sent to, in a respectful and proper manner; he must be faithful, so as not to neglect what is intrusted to him; and he must be patient and persevering. Then he must also have considerable judgment and discretion; for when he is sent away from home on business, he must often be placed in circumstances that are unforeseen, and where he must act without instructions. In such cases, he will have to exercise his own judgment and discretion. Jonas was placed in such circumstances at one time, when he was sent to the carding-mill to get some rolls for Isabella.

The rolls which Isabella wanted were rolls of wool, as they are prepared at the mill ready for spinning. The wool is carded very fine, and then, by curious machinery, it is rolled out into rolls about three feet long, and as large round as a whip-handle at the middle. These rolls Isabella used to spin into yarn, at her spinning-wheel.

Isabella had spun nearly all her rolls, and she wanted Jonas to carry some wool to the carding-mill, and get some more. The carding-mill was not in the village upon the outlet stream; but it was upon another stream, which emptied into the pond, instead of flowing from it. It was the same stream that flowed by the land which Jonas and Oliver had cleared when he first came to live with the farmer; only the mill was at some distance from the mouth of the stream, back towards the high land. It was more than two miles, by the road, from the farmer's house.

The farmer told Jonas where to get the wool, and then gave him some more business, at a place in the woods, about two miles beyond the mill. Oliver wanted to go too, and his father gave him leave. Oliver always liked to go to the mill, as the machine for carding the wool was a great curiosity.

Jonas put up the wool in a very large bundle, which almost filled up the bottom of the sleigh. Jonas himself sat upon the seat, with his feet under the bundle; but Oliver sat upon the bundle. He said it made a very soft seat.

They rode along pleasantly towards the mill. The snow-drifts were very high in some places on each side of the road; and the fences and walls were almost buried up.

"I wish that Josey was here," said Oliver. "I think that he would like to see the carding-mill very much indeed."

"Yes," said Jonas.

"Only," replied Oliver, "perhaps it would be dangerous to take him."

"Why?" said Jonas.

"Why, because," said Oliver, "I suppose he would touch the machinery, and perhaps get his hands torn off."

"Yes," said Jonas, "boys sometimes do get very badly hurt in mills,---careless and disobedient boys especially."

"I think that he is a careless and disobedient boy," said Oliver.

[Illustration: "He said it made a very soft seat."]

"Yes, but it is his misfortune, rather than his fault," replied Jonas.

"His misfortune?" repeated Oliver.

"Yes," said Jonas; "his father's situation is such, that it is very unfortunate for him. I expect he is very unhappily situated at home, in many respects."

"How?" said Oliver.

"Why, in the first place," said Jonas, "he lives, I'm told, in a large and handsome house."

"Yes," said Oliver.

"And then," continued Jonas, "your aunt, I have heard, is a very fine woman, and has a great deal of company."

"Well," said Oliver.

"And then," continued Jonas, "they can buy Josey any thing he wants, for playthings."

"Yes," said Oliver; "he told me he had got a rocking-horse. But I don't call that being unfortunate."

"It is very fortunate for the father and mother, but such a kind of life is generally unfortunate for the child. You see, if a man has been industrious himself, when he was a boy, and has grown up to be a good business man, and to acquire a great deal of property, and builds a good house, and has plenty of books, and journeys, it is all very well for him. He can bear it, but it very often spoils his children."

"Why does it spoil his children?" asked Oliver.

"In the first place, it makes them conceited and vain,---not always, but often. The children of wealthy men are very often conceited. They wear better clothes than some other boys, and have more books and prettier playthings; and so they become vain, and think that they are very important, when, in fact, they owe every thing to their fathers.

"Then, besides," continued Jonas, "they don't form good habits of industry. Their fathers don't make them work, and so they don't acquire any habits of industry, and patience, and perseverance."

"If I was a man, and had ever so much money," said Oliver, "I would make my boys work."

"That is very doubtful," said Jonas.

"Why is it doubtful?" asked Oliver.

"Because," said Jonas, "you would be very busy, and couldn't attend to it. It would be a great deal more trouble to make your boys do any thing, than it would be to hire another man to do it; and so you would hire a man, to save your trouble."

"Yes; but then, Jonas, farmers are very busy, and yet they make their boys work."

"True," replied Jonas; "but farmers are busy about such kind of work as that their boys can help them do it,---so they can keep them at work without any special trouble. But men of property are employed in such kind of business as boys cannot do; and so they must work, if they work at all, at something else; and that makes a good deal of trouble."

"Then I'd send my boys to some farmer, and let him make them work," said Oliver.

"Yes," said Jonas, "that would do pretty well."

So saying, Jonas stopped the horse a moment, and stepped out of the sleigh. He was at the foot of a long, steep hill in the woods. He was going to walk up. Oliver remained in the sleigh, and rode. When they reached the top, Jonas got in again, and they rode on.

"But then, Jonas," said Oliver, "there is one thing to be thought of, and that is, that rich men's sons will not have to work when they grow up; and so they don't need so much to grow industrious."

"O, yes, they will," said Jonas.

"Why, Josey told me that he didn't expect to work when he should be a man."

"No, he doesn't *expect* to work, but he'll find that it is different from what he had expected, when he grows up."

"How?" said Oliver.

"Why, a great many rich men's boys find, when they get to be twenty-one, that they have to go out into the world, and earn their own living, without any money."

"Why?" said Oliver; "won't their fathers give them any money?"

"Their fathers cannot generally give them enough to support them," said Jonas, "even if they are disposed to do it; because, you see, they have their own families still to support. Besides, if they were to divide their property at once

among all their children, it would only be a small portion for each one. It wouldn't be enough for the boys to live as expensively as they have been living while at home. Therefore, as fast as they grow up young men, they have to go away into the world, and earn their own money by some kind of work, head work or hand work."

Jonas would probably have given Oliver some further explanations on this subject, were it not that about this time they arrived at the mill. Oliver tied the horse at a post, while Jonas took out the great bundle of wool, and went in. Oliver followed immediately after him.

The machinery made a heavy, rumbling sound, which grew louder and louder as the boys went up stairs. Jonas opened a door into a large room, and at this the noise increased very loudly, so that Oliver and Jonas could hardly hear each other talk. Jonas put down the bundle of wool by the door, and then he and Oliver went in among the wheels and machinery. There were a great many separate machines at different parts of the room, with girls tending them. There was a large, round beam of wood, overhead, slowly revolving. There were wheels upon it in different parts, with straps passing around these wheels, and also around other wheels connected with the machines below.

Oliver saw Jonas walk to a man who was writing at a desk in the corner of a room, and say something to him. Oliver could not hear what it was. Jonas pointed, while he was talking to the man, to the great bundle of wool. Presently the man came and took the bundle of wool, and dragged it off to one of the machines, which was not in motion. He called a girl to come and tend it.

At one end of the machine was a broad band of cloth, passing around two rollers. One roller was close to the wheels and other large rollers of the machine itself. The other was back from it a little; and the cloth, being extended from one of these to the other, formed a sort of flat table just before the machine.

The girl who came to tend the machine immediately opened the great bundle of wool, and then she took up a handful of it, and began to spread it evenly over the cloth. When she had got the cloth pretty nearly covered she pulled a handle pretty near her, and that, in some mysterious way or other, set the machinery a-going. The cloth, with all the wool upon it, began to move towards the great rollers of the machine. These rollers were covered with card teeth, and the wool, as it was drawn in between them, was carded fine, and spread evenly over all the surface; and in a few minutes Jonas and Oliver found that it began to come out at the other end, in the shape of rolls. One roll after another dropped out, in a very singular manner. Oliver thought that it was a very curious machine indeed, to take in wool in that way at one end, and drop it out in beautiful long rolls at the other.

"Now," said Jonas, after a few minutes, to Oliver, "I am going away farther, and shall come back here in about an hour. You may go with me, or you may stay here,---just which you prefer."

"Well," said Oliver, "I'll stay here."

"Good-by, then," said Jonas; "I shall be back again in about an hour."

So Jonas went down stairs, and Oliver began to walk about the room a little. There was a window in the back side of the room, which he happened to pass pretty near to, and he stopped to look out at it. He saw the dam and the waterfall below. There was a large pond above the fall, which was made by the dam. The pond was frozen over, and the ice was covered with snow. The water was open for a short distance above the edge of the fall, and it was also open below the fall, where there was a great foaming, and tumbling, and whirling of currents.

Oliver looked at it a moment, and then he concluded that it would be better for him to go with Jonas.

"I have seen," said he to himself, "pretty much all of the machinery, and I shall be very tired of waiting here an hour."

So he concluded that he would run down, quick, and see if Jonas had gone.

When he got down stairs, and out at the door, he found that the sleigh was not at the post. He ran around the corner, and saw Jonas at some distance, just at the foot of a hill. He ran after him, calling, "Jo-nas! Jo-nas!"

Just at this time, Jonas stopped to let his horse walk up the hill, and so he heard Oliver calling; for the bells did not make so much noise when the horse was walking, as they did before.

So Jonas stopped until Oliver overtook him; and they went on the rest of the way together.

[Illustration]

CHAPTER IX.

DIFFICULTY

Although it was winter when the boys were taking this ride, yet the sun was shining in a very warm and pleasant manner, and the snow was every where softening in the fields and melting in the roads, indicating that the spring was coming on.

There was a little stream of water, coming down the hill in the middle of the road, and forming a long pool at the bottom. Jonas turned his horse to one side, to avoid this pool of water, and waited until Oliver came up.

"Well, Oliver," said he,—"tired of the mill already?"

"Why, no," said Oliver, "only I thought that, on the whole, I'd rather go with you. I didn't think that you were going to be gone so long."

"It is about two miles," said Jonas.

"Where are you going?" said Oliver.

"O, to see about some logs. I thought you heard your father tell me to go and see about some logs."

"What about the logs?" said Oliver.

"Why, to make the boards of, for the barn."

"O," replied Oliver, "I didn't know that."

"Yes," continued Jonas, "when we want boards, we have to go to somebody who owns some pine timber in the woods, and get him to cut down some of them, and haul them to the mill. Then they saw them up, and make boards."

"What mill?" said Oliver.

"At that saw-mill near the carding-mill. The mill down in the village, you know, is a grist-mill."

By this time, the boys had got to the top of the hill, and they got into the sleigh, and rode along. Presently, they came to a place where Jonas was going to turn off, into a sort of by-road which led away into the woods, where the pine-trees grew. The man that owned the trees lived pretty near, in a farm-house.

"Is that the road that we are going in?" asked Oliver.

"Yes," said Jonas, "but it does not look very promising."

The road was filled up nearly full of snow. It had been hard, so that they could travel upon it pretty well; but the warm sun had softened the snow so much, that the horses' feet sunk down into it, in some places, very deep. However, Jonas went along as well as he could.

"Let us get out and walk, Jonas," said Oliver.

"No," said Jonas, "that will not do much good; for it is the weight of the horse himself, that makes him sink into the snow, not the weight of the sleigh."

So the boys both continued to ride in the sleigh. They soon came into the woods, where, the ground being sheltered by the trees above, the snow lay more evenly upon it; and, though the horse slumped a little, yet he got along very comfortably.

At length, however, they came out of the woods into an opening. The road went along under a high bank, with a deep brook on the other side. The wind, during the storms in the winter, had blown in over this bank, and filled up the road entirely.

"Now," said Jonas, "I am afraid we're in difficulty."

"Why?" said Oliver; "is that a very bad place?"

"Yes," said Jonas, "it looks like a very bad place."

Oliver saw that the snow was very deep on the upper side of the road, and that it sloped away in such a manner that it would be very difficult for them to get along, even if the road-way was hard.

"Perhaps it is hard," said Oliver.

"No," said Jonas, "I think it cannot be, for the bank slopes to the south, and the sun has been shining upon it all day. However, we must try it."

The horse hesitated a moment when he came to this place, for he knew by instinct that it would be very hard for him to get through it.

"Come, General," said Jonas. "Though, stop a moment, Oliver; perhaps we had better get out and walk, or the sleigh may upset."

So they got out. Oliver walked by the horse, keeping on the upper side of the road. Jonas went behind, taking hold of the back part of the sleigh, so as to hold it in case it should tip down too far. They went on thus for some distance tolerably well. The horse sometimes got in pretty far, and for a moment would plunge and stagger, as if he could hardly

get along; but then he would work his way out, and go on a little farther.

At length, however, the old General came to a full stop. He sank down, shoulders under, in the snow. The more he struggled to get free, the deeper he got in. Jonas stepped on before him, and patted him on the head, and tried to quiet him.

"Jonas," said Oliver, "let us stop; I don't believe we can go any farther."

"Nor I," said Jonas. "At least I don't think we can get the old General any farther."

"Nor back again either," said Oliver, "as I see."

The boys stood still, looking upon the horse a moment, utterly at a loss what to do.

"Oliver," said Jonas, "should you be willing to stay here and take care of the horse, while I go on and see about the logs?"

"Why---I---don't know," said Oliver. "I'm afraid he won't stand quiet."

"O, I shall get him out of the snow, first," said Jonas, "and take him to some level place, where he'll stand well."

"How shall you get him out?" asked Oliver.

"Why, we will unharness him first," said Jonas, "and then draw the sleigh back out of the way."

So Jonas began to unbuckle the straps of the harness, in order to liberate the horse. Oliver tried to help him, but he could not do much, the horse was so deep in the snow. And, besides, he was standing, or rather lying, in such a position, that many parts of the harness were drawn so tense, that Oliver had not strength enough to unbuckle them.

However, Jonas at length got the sleigh separated from the horse, and drew it back out of the way. He trampled the snow down around the horse, as much as he could, and then the horse, with a leap and a plunge, recovered his footing. He stood deep in the snow yet, however.

"Now," said Jonas, "where shall we put him till I come back?"

Oliver looked across the brook, and saw there, upon a bank, under some trees, a spot which was bare. The reason why it was bare was, that the snow had nearly all blown off during the storms; and then the sun, which had been shining for some days so pleasantly, had melted away what there had been left; and now the ground was bare, and almost dry. But the difficulty was to get to it; for it was upon the other side of the stream, and the bed of the stream was filled with water and ice.

"I wouldn't lead him over there," said Oliver. "I think you had better go home, and not do any thing about the timber."

"No," said Jonas.

"Why, father will not think you did wrong to give it up, when we got into such trouble," said Oliver.

"No, I don't suppose he would; but I'd rather carry him back an answer, if I can."

"Then let me go with you," said Oliver.

"Why, it is a long and very hard walk," said Jonas. "There is no work so hard as travelling in soft snow, without snow-shoes. If we had a pair of snow-shoes, we could get along very well."

"Did you ever see any snow-shoes?" said Oliver.

"No," replied Jonas, "but I have read about them. They are very large and flat, and your foot stands in the middle of them, and so presses them upon the snow; and they are so large that they will not sink in very far."

While Jonas was saying this, he was climbing down to the bank of the brook, with a pole in his hands, with which he was going to see if he could find firm footing, for the horse to go across.

"Yes," said he, punching his pole down to the bottom of the brook; "yes, it isn't deep. The old General will get down here very well, I think."

So he and Oliver trampled a sort of path down to the brook, and then they led the old General down. He seemed a little reluctant, at first, to step into the water. However, he soon went in, and walked over, and Oliver fastened him to a tree, so that he could stand upon the bare piece of ground. Jonas then pulled the sleigh out of the road, so that it should not be in the way, if any body should come along with any other team; then he bade Oliver good-by, and went on alone.

Jonas traveled along, as well as he could, through the snow, though he found it very laborious walking. In some places, he found hard footing for some distance; but then he would sink down again for several successive steps. After a short distance, he got out of the deep drift, which had prevented the horse from going on, and then he could advance faster. There was a singular-looking track in the road. It consisted of a smooth groove in the snow, as if the end of a large log had been dragged along.

It was, in fact, made by a log which had been drawn along that road towards the mill. One end of the log had been placed upon a sled, and the other left to drag along in the snow; and this was what made the smooth groove, which Jonas observed. He did not see it before, because the man who drove the sled had turned out of the main road, into a by-way across the fields, to avoid the deep drift where Jonas's horse got into difficulty.

Jonas found it pretty good walking after this. The snow was not so deep as it had been; and the path which the log had made was hard and smooth. He concluded that it must have been made by such a log, and, of course, if he followed it, that it would take him directly to the house of the man whom he wanted to see.

After walking about a mile, he came to the house. It was a small farm-house, in the woods. There were a great many large logs, lying each side of the road near it, ready to be drawn to the mill.

Jonas went up towards the door, which was in the end of the house. As he drew near to it, he saw a boy's head behind an enormous pile of wood. He went around it, and found that the boy was about as big as Jonas himself. He was rolling down a large stick of wood, and had an axe in his hand, as if he was going to chop it.

"Does Mr. Woodman live here?" said Jonas.

"Yes," said the boy; "but he isn't at home."

"Where is he?" said Jonas.

"He is out in the lot, falling trees," said the boy.

"How far is it from here?" asked Jonas.

"O, about a good half mile."

"Which way?" said Jonas.

"Out yonder," said the boy; and he pointed back of the house, where a rough sled-road led into the woods. "You can hear his axe."

Jonas listened, and he heard distinctly the sound of an axe in the woods behind; presently it ceased. Immediately after, there was a prolonged crash, which echoed back from the mountains.

"There goes a tree," said the boy.

Jonas was sorry to have to leave Oliver so long, but he wished to persevere until he should find the man, as he knew that the farmer was very desirous of having the business done that day. So he told the boy that he believed he would go and see if he could find Mr. Woodman; and then he set off in the direction which the boy had indicated.

This road was so sheltered by the woods, that the snow was not much drifted; and, besides, it had been kept open by the teams, which had been employed in hauling out pine logs. When Jonas got in to the end of the road, he heard the strokes of the axe, at a short distance on the right.

He looked that way, and found that the man was standing at the foot of a tall tree, of very large size; and he was cutting through the trunk of it, about two feet from the top of the snow. He saw that it was nearly off, and so he thought he would wait a moment, where he was, and see it fall. He observed that Mr. Woodman occasionally looked up the stem of the tree, between the strokes of his axe, as if to see whether it was beginning to fall.

After a few strokes more, he stepped back from the foot of the tree to one side. Jonas wondered why he left his work before the tree fell. He looked up to the top of it, and he perceived that it was moving. It was bending over very slowly indeed. It moved, however, faster and faster, and presently began to come tearing down between the branches of the other trees, and, at length, descended with a mighty crash to the ground. Jonas thought that it was a very fine spectacle indeed. He wished that Oliver had been there to see it.

Jonas then went to Mr. Woodman, and transacted his business successfully, according to the farmer's directions. Then he turned around, and began to walk back, as fast as he could go.

"I am afraid," said he to himself, "that Oliver is almost out of patience waiting for me."

[Illustration]

CHAPTER X.

A SURPRISE

Jonas walked on until he came out of the woods, at the house where he had seen the boy cut wood. As he approached the place, he saw that the boy was there still; but there was a man with him. The man had a goad-stick in his hand.

"He is driving a team somewhere," said Jonas to himself. "I wonder where his oxen are."

A moment afterwards, Jonas came in sight of the oxen, which were in the road, having been hid from his view before, by the wood pile.

The man and the boy looked at Jonas, as he walked towards them. The man smiled a little, as if he knew Jonas; but Jonas thought that he had never seen him before.

"Well, Jonas," said the man, "did you find Mr. Woodman?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jonas. He wondered how the man happened to know his name.

"I'm glad of it," said he; "and you'd better make haste back. Rollo is almost tired of waiting for you."

"Oliver, you mean," said Jonas.

"No," said the man,---"Rollo; he said his name was Rollo."

"Rollo?" said Jonas; "his name is Oliver. I don't see what made him tell you that his name was Rollo."

So saying, Jonas walked thoughtfully away, wondering what this could mean. He had never known Oliver to do any such thing before. Oliver, he thought, would not tell a falsehood on any account. He was not inclined to say any thing of that kind by way of jest. He was a very sober and sedate, as well as honest boy. Besides, he could not think what should have put Rollo into Oliver's head. He did not recollect that he had said any thing of Rollo for a long time. In fact, he had seldom told Oliver any thing about him; and what could have induced him to call himself Rollo, he could not conceive.

However, he had nothing to do but to go on, for the more he attempted to imagine some explanation of the mystery, the more he was puzzled. So he walked on as diligently as he could.

He came, at length, in sight of the spot where he had left the horse and Oliver. The horse was there, but Oliver was not to be seen.

"He has got tired of waiting, and has gone away," said Jonas; "or perhaps he is playing about near."

This last supposition was pretty soon, for a moment, confirmed; for Jonas saw, very soon after, a boy's head on the bank of the brook, at a little distance below.

"There he is now," said Jonas to himself. "No, it isn't he. That boy isn't dressed like Oliver. I wonder who it is."

The boy had a long pole in his hand, and was pushing cakes of ice with it. He was so intent upon this amusement, that at first he did not see Jonas; but, presently, looking up, his eye suddenly caught a view of Jonas, coming, and he instantly dropped his pole, and ran towards him, shouting,---

"Jonas!"

"Why, Rollo!" exclaimed Jonas, in his turn. "How came you to be here?"

It was Rollo, indeed. Jonas was astonished. He could scarcely believe his senses. "Is it possible that this is you?" said he.

"Yes," said Rollo, laughing with great delight, "I believe it is."

"And how came you here? I left Oliver here an hour ago, little thinking that he would turn into Rollo while I was gone."

"Oliver?" said Rollo, "who is Oliver?"

"Why, don't you know Oliver?" said Jonas. "He is the farmer's son. He came with me, and I left him here to the care of the sleigh. Haven't you seen any thing of him?"

"No," replied Rollo, "nothing; there was nobody here when I came."

"What can have become of him, then?" said Jonas. "I hope he is not lost in the woods."

So saying, Jonas began to call aloud, "Oliver! Oliver!" But no Oliver answered.

"Let us see if we can find any tracks," said he; and he and Rollo began to look about for tracks.

"What's this?" said Rollo, looking down intently upon the snow, pretty near where the horse had been tied.

"Any tracks?" said Jonas.

"No," said Rollo, "but some writing in the snow."

So Rollo began to read the writing in a slow manner, as he walked along from one word to another; for, the letters being large, the sentence extended quite a distance from where it first attracted his attention. He read as follows:---

"Jonas,---I---am---tired of writing,'---no, 'waiting. I am going---back---to---the---mill.'"

"Let me see," said Jonas.

So Jonas came to the place, and saw the writing. Rollo had read it correctly.

"Yes," said Jonas, "he has gone back to the mill, no doubt. We will go, and we shall find him there;---but when did you come from home? and how did you find where I was?"

Rollo, in answer to Jonas's question, explained to him that his father had given him permission to take the horse and sleigh and Nathan, and come and pay Jonas a visit. He had arrived at the farmer's that day, just after Jonas and Oliver had set out. The farmer told them where Jonas had gone, and he was very desirous of going after him. He said that he had no doubt that he could find him.

The farmer had hesitated a little; but finally he gave his consent, and Rollo set off, leaving Nathan at the farmer's, as he was rather tired. He had followed Jonas to the mill, and then he inquired of the people whether Jonas had been there. A man in the road told him that he had seen Jonas ride away on a certain road; and so Rollo had followed on in the road pointed out to him, as he knew that it was not far that he was to go.

When Rollo had got so far in his story, Jonas interrupted him to ask,---

"Were you on foot, Rollo?"

"No," replied Rollo, "in my sleigh."

"And where is your sleigh?" asked Jonas.

"Why, I left it out here a little way. When I found that the snow was deep, and my horse slumped in pretty bad, I left him by the side of the road, and walked on to see if I could see any thing of you. I soon found your sleigh, run out of the path, and the horse tied under a tree over the brook. So I knew that you couldn't be far off."

"And you did not go any farther."

"No," said Rollo; "I thought it would be better for me to stay by the sleigh, and wait for you."

Jonas asked Rollo a great many questions about all the people at home---his father and mother, and his cousin Lucy; and he said that he was very glad indeed, that Rollo had come to see him.

"Do you have a pretty good time upon the farm?" said Rollo.

"Yes," said Jonas, "very good indeed. You would like to be here very much."

"Are there any boys for me to play with?" said Rollo.

"Yes," said Jonas, "there is Oliver, though he don't play much. He works nearly all the time. But then there is Josey, though he has gone home now."

"I saw a boy at the mill," said Rollo, "when I came along. I verily believe it was Oliver."

"How big was he?" asked Jonas.

"O, about as big as I am," said Rollo.

"And what was he doing?" said Jonas.

"O, he was playing about on the rocks, under the falls. But he didn't seem to have much to do. He stopped and looked at me when I was coming by."

"Very likely it was he," said Jonas. "If he had only known who you were, he would have liked very much to have come along with you; and you would have been good company for each other."

"And O, Rollo," said Jonas again, very eagerly, "there's somebody you'll like very much indeed."

"Who is it?" said Rollo.

"Franco Ney," said Jonas.

"Franco Ney!" repeated Rollo; "I never heard a boy named Franco before. How old is he?"

"I don't know," said Jonas.

"Don't know? Well, where does he live?---at your house?"

"No," said Jonas. Jonas was correct in this answer, for Franco was accustomed to live in the barn.

After some other conversation, Rollo, suddenly looking up, said,---

"How far is it, Jonas, from your house to Mr. Ney's?"

Jonas laughed very heartily at this question, but gave no answer. Rollo could not imagine what he could be laughing at. Jonas, however, would not tell him, but said that he would know all about it, when he should come to see Franco Ney.

"Well," said Rollo, "I'll ask him why you wouldn't tell me where his father lives."

Very soon Rollo and Jonas arrived at the mill. They found Oliver safe there, waiting for them; and the rolls, too, were ready. As they did not like to tumble the rolls, Oliver rode with Rollo in his sleigh, and Jonas took care of the rolls.

Rollo was greatly astonished, as well as very much pleased, when he came to see Franco Ney.

[Illustration]

CHAPTER XI.

THE SNOW FORT, OR GOOD FOR EVIL

The next morning, after breakfast, Oliver proposed to Rollo, that they should go down to the pond, and build a snow fort. During the night, there had been a slight thaw, accompanied with some rain. The body of snow on the ground had become softened and adhesive by the moisture, and was, as Jonas said, "in prime condition for all sorts of snow work."

Oliver borrowed of Jonas the large wooden snow-shovel, with a blade nearly two feet square, used in cutting out the paths around the house. Rollo assisted him to strap it on the hand-sled, together with some boards, two iron shovels, and a hoe.

"The Conqueror"---for that was the name of his sled---"will have to be captive to-day," said Oliver, as he bound the load upon the sled, which he and Rollo were going to drag down to the pond.

"You had better take the garden-reel and line," said Jonas to Oliver, "if you intend to make a good fort. You will want to stretch your line so as to make the sides square, and to guide you in cutting out your blocks of snow."

"O, we don't want to be so particular as that," said Oliver.

"But I thought," said Jonas, "that your plan last evening was, to do your work in a workmanlike manner. If you want a substantial fort to last all winter, you must lay a good foundation, and cut your courses true, so that they will rest firmly one upon the other,---and especially if you are going to have a roof."

"We mean to have a roof," said Rollo, "or we cannot illuminate it in the evening."

"Well, then," said Jonas, "I advise you to take the line, and build according to rule."

Oliver had not forgotten what Jonas had often told him about doing his work like a workman.

"*What is worth doing at all, is worth doing well!*" Jonas used to say.

So Oliver went to get the reel and line.

While he was gone to the tool-house, Rollo thought of Franco Ney, and began to call aloud, "Franco! Franco!"

Franco did not come.

"Franco! Franco---o! Franco---o! Where *is* Franco?" said Rollo; "we can't go without him."

"He won't mind you," said Oliver, as he came running back.

"You call him, then," said Rollo.

Oliver whistled the dog call, and in a moment, Franco came running from the poultry yard with a bone in his mouth, which he had been gnawing for a breakfast. At that moment, Nathan came running out of the door, with a luncheon in his hand for them all. The farmer's wife had put up in a paper an apple turn-over and a nut-cake for each of the boys, as they were going on so important an expedition.

Very soon, every thing was ready, and they started for the scene of operations, eager for their work, Oliver and Rollo drawing the sled, and Nathan and Franco following on behind.

When they arrived near the pond, Oliver pointed to a little mound, not far from the edge of the water, which overlooked the principal skating-ground of the village boys in winter.

"There, Rollo," said Oliver, "there's the place for a fort. Many a pleasant time we have had there, in a clear winter night, watching the skaters all the way up to the head of the pond. The fires look splendidly."

"It is a good place for a lookout," said Rollo; "but then I wouldn't build it here. Let us go down nearer the pond."

"No," said Oliver; "if we go down near the pond, as likely as not, the first skating night, some of the boys will tear our fort all to pieces."

"What if they do?" said Rollo.

"I want it to last all winter," said Oliver.

Rollo yielded to Oliver's wishes, and they began together to unbind their load of boards and tools.

"Come, Nathan," said Oliver, "we want you to help us now."

Rollo and Nathan measured with the reel and line, while Oliver planted a stake firmly in the snow at the four corners of the square.

According to Jonas's advice, the evening before, they had agreed to make their fortification twelve feet square, and the walls about one foot thick.

Rollo and Nathan held the cord, stretched from corner to corner, just along the surface of the snow, while Oliver, with the shovel, cut the snow square down to the ground, more than a foot and a half deep.

In this way they went round the whole enclosure, outside. They then went inside, and, by a similar process, cut away the snow so as to leave an unbroken line of snow wall about ten feet square and one foot wide.

"There," said Oliver, "there are the sills, as Jonas called them. It is what *I* call a good foundation."

After this, Oliver asked Rollo to bring in the measuring-board inside of the fort.

Oliver and Rollo remembered what Jonas had told them about "commanding and obeying," and agreed to take turns in being "director."

It was Oliver's turn for the first hour, and Rollo was to obey him. Nathan was to assist them both, when he was wanted.

Oliver, therefore, took the command, and directed where and how to cut out the snow, in the manner which Jonas had described.

They proceeded with the measuring-board, to mark off, and cut out by it, solid blocks of snow about four feet long, one foot wide, and one thick.

Rollo laid down the measuring-board on the snow, and then both of them, with the shovels, cut down the snow perpendicularly along the edges, so as to have all the snow-blocks of precisely the same length, breadth, and thickness. These they laid in courses, on the top of the foundation.

It took just three blocks to form a side, excepting the side where the door was, which they left three feet wide.

After working more than two hours, and laying two courses, they shoveled out all the broken snow that remained inside, and then sat down on the sled to eat their luncheon and rest.

"How do you like the looks of it, Rollo?" said Oliver.

"*Well,*" said Rollo; "only I don't see how we can make a roof."

"Jonas will help us do that," said Oliver, "if we do the rest of the work well."

The boys, however, were now pretty tired. They had worked very hard. They pulled off their caps, and with their handkerchiefs wiped the perspiration from their foreheads.

"Don't let us work any longer now," said Nathan, rubbing his hands, and knocking one foot against the other. "I think we have done enough for one day; and my feet are *so* cold!"

"We've done enough!" said Oliver. "I think Rollo and I have had the principal *doing* to do. You and Franco have been looking on."

"What you've to do
Get done to-day,
And do not for to-morrow stay;
There's always danger in delay"---

said Rollo. "I think we had better finish it now. Come, Nathan, jump about here on the sled, and you will soon be warm."

So they went briskly at work again, Rollo taking the command. They found it very hard, after the second course, to get the snow-blocks up on the snowy wall. Often they would slip away out of their hands, just as they were lodging them safely on the top, and fall over on one side of the wall, and break to pieces.

"Let us cut them in two," said Oliver; "we can handle them better so."

Before they got through the fourth course, they were glad to cut all their materials into pieces of one foot square.

"How high are the walls now?" said Rollo, as they stopped to look at the appearance of the last course.

"Between five and six feet," said Oliver. "The foundation is at least a foot and a half high, and we have laid four courses."

Oliver, Rollo, and Nathan went to work together, then, stopping up all the chinks in the wall, inside and out, with soft snow.

When this was well done, Oliver took the hoe, and with the sharp edge shaved down all around on both sides, making the walls look even and true.

"Well," said Rollo, "that is the best snow fort I ever saw. Jonas does know how to do things, doesn't he, Oliver? But I don't see how we are to get a roof on."

"I don't care about a roof," said Oliver. "We don't want to play in it only in pleasant weather."

"I'll tell you what we might do," said Rollo. "We could make a partition through the middle, and put a roof over half of it."

"So we can," said Oliver. "We'll do that this afternoon. It's time to go to dinner now."

The boys then gathered all the tools, &c., and laid them together, as Jonas had taught them to do, when they finished work, and then started for home.

"Halloo, Franco," said Rollo, "are you here still?" They had been so busy at work, they had taken no notice of him. But Franco had watched their operations, and now went running on in the path before the boys, wagging his tail, as if he had as much pleasure as they, in contemplating the result of their morning's labor.

When Jonas came home to dinner, at noon, the boys were impatient to tell him what they had done.

But Jonas was too much engaged in some work about the new barn to listen to their story then. He told them, however, that he would go down about sunset, and look at their work, and hear the account, in the evening, of the experiment in doing work like workmen.

After dinner, Oliver was excused from many of his regular duties, on account of the visit of Rollo and Nathan; and the three boys hastened to return to their fort. They were so intent on finishing it, that they lost all interest in playing with Franco, or each other.

"What shall we call our fort?" said Oliver, as they walked along.

"We don't want any name, do we?" said Rollo.

"O, yes," said Oliver, "let us have a name. I always like to have a name. There's the old 'General,'---we have had many a good time with him; and my 'Conqueror,'---there isn't a boy in town that doesn't know my sled."

"We might call it 'Gibraltar,'" said Rollo.

"Yes, that's a good name," said Oliver. "How do you like 'Iceberg Castle'? Jonas was telling us all about the icebergs the other evening; and I read a story, about a famous 'Ice Palace' in Russia; how do you like that?"

"I don't like that," said Rollo. "Ours is a *fort*; it isn't a palace."

"If you are going to have it a palace," said Nathan, "whom will you have for a *king*?"

"You may be king, Nathan," said Rollo, "and we will soon demolish your palace, and make a prisoner of you."

"No, no," said Oliver, "the fort shall stand as long as ice will last. I mean to pour water all over it, and freeze it into solid ice; and I expect the last ice to be seen any where about next spring, will be the ruins of the old fort."

After some discussion, the boys agreed to call it "Iceberg Castle."

They then took a survey, inside and out, of their morning's work, and decided to proceed at once and build the partition which Rollo proposed before dinner. At Oliver's suggestion, Rollo was director.

For more than an hour they continued their toil, in constructing the partition. Jonas had given them no instructions about this; and they found it much more difficult than the walls, on account of the small, low door, which they had to make, to lead from one apartment into the other.

At last, as Oliver and Nathan were drawing through the outer door a small heap of loose snow, which they had gathered up from the floor of the inner room, Rollo followed them, shouting, as they emerged from the fort, "Done, boys, done!---Hurrah for Iceberg Castle!"

"I wish Jonas was here now," said Oliver; "but I suppose it will be two or three hours before he can come down."

"Can't we do something more?" said Rollo. "I wish we could put on a roof, before he comes."

"I don't believe we can do that," said Oliver.

The boys walked in and out, and all around the fort, again and again, admiring its appearance, and thinking what else they could do.

"It wouldn't be a bad plan to have a king, as Nathan said, in our castle; would it, Oliver?" said Rollo.

"Not at all," said Oliver. "Let us make a king, or a giant, to keep the premises for us, when we are away."

So saying, they all set to work rolling snow-balls to make him.

Oliver rolled up a huge mass, for his body, larger than they could at first get through the doors.

Rollo rolled one for his head, and Nathan made several small ones.

In one corner of the inner room, they laid a small platform, of several square, flat blocks of snow, for a throne, as Rollo called it; and here they placed his "Majesty."

"It seems to me," said Oliver, "that the King of the Frozen Regions ought to have a crown and a court."

No sooner said than done. A little band of snow-balls, in double rows, soon encircled his brow, surmounted, too, with icicles and stalactites, which Nathan brought from the brook.

The opposite corners of the room were soon decorated with corresponding figures, whom Rollo introduced as Lord and Lady Frost.

He had scarcely pronounced the names, when Jonas walked in, to the surprise and great delight of the boys.

"Well done, boys," said Jonas; "I think you have followed directions this time. I give you credit for doing your work in a workmanlike manner. But I can't stay to talk with you about it now. Your father, Oliver, wishes me to go out on the pond, and bring home the sled we left there, the other night, in the storm. The wind has come out in the north-west, and there is every prospect of a bitter cold night. It has begun to stiffen already, and, before morning, the sled may be locked up in solid ice."

Jonas hurried away, and the boys, not a little disappointed, gathered all their implements together to return home.

"It *will* be a cold night; won't it?" said Oliver, as he looked off to the north-west. How fast it grows cold! It freezes now. I was in hopes we should have one more mild day. But we can't get a roof on after this."

"Won't it make good skating on the pond," asked Rollo, "if the water freezes now?"

"Yes, indeed," said Oliver. "I shouldn't be surprised if there was skating there to-night. It's only a thin sheet of water over the ice and snow. Three or four hours of real cold will make ice enough for that.

"Come, Nathan, jump on the sled, and you shall have a ride. Rollo and I will be your horses. Mother will have supper ready by the time we get home."

Nathan, glad of a ride, took his seat, and they were soon at the house.

Oliver took the snow-shovels and the other tools, and returned them to their proper places, and then drew up his sled into a corner of the wagon-house.

After tea, Oliver and Rollo went out into the yard to feel the air, and judge of the impression the night would probably make upon "Iceberg Castle" and its inhabitants.

It was clear and cold. The stars twinkled brightly. The moon was not up.

"See there!" said Oliver; "I do believe they are building a fire down on the pond already. There'll be a skating party to-night, no doubt."

The boys returned to a cheerful room with a good fire, and were seated round the table, to amuse themselves for the evening. They passed the time pleasantly until Jonas returned from the pond.

"O Jonas, Jonas," they all said, as he came in, "what made you stay so long?"

Jonas gave them an account of his adventures, and of his meeting a party of skaters, who were already on the pond, expecting to be joined, in the course of the evening, by a much larger number from the village.

After Jonas had taken his supper, the boys gathered around him to talk about their fort, every now and then running to the door or window, to see the fire on the pond.

Long before it went out, Oliver, Rollo, and Nathan, were in a sound sleep.

The next morning, early, they appeared as impatient to run down to the "Castle," as if they had dreamed of it all night long; and before the fire was well burning in the great room, they all three came running back to Jonas, out of breath, and with sad faces, exclaiming,---

"O Jonas! Jonas! our fort is all torn to pieces!"

True enough, some of the boys of the skating party had completely demolished the Castle.

Oliver and Rollo were greatly excited; they were grieved, and they were angry, and could scarcely refrain from expressing wishes of vengeance which it was not in their power to execute.

Jonas sympathized with them in their severe disappointment.

"'Tis *too bad*," said Rollo.

"'Tis *too bad*," repeated Oliver. "How shall we pay them for it? Jonas, tell us how?"

"Pay them for it?" said Jonas; "that isn't the way I should do."

"Well, I think they deserve it," said Rollo.

"So do I," said Oliver.

"What do you mean by paying them for it?" said Jonas; "giving them as much injury and pain as they have given you? Don't you remember the lesson that Franco taught us, that to return good for evil was good policy as well as good morals?"

"Well, what would you do, Jonas?" they both asked together.

"I don't know now," said Jonas, "what I would do. I will think of it. But this I know,---that we ought *never to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.*"

Oliver and Rollo wondered what Jonas would do.