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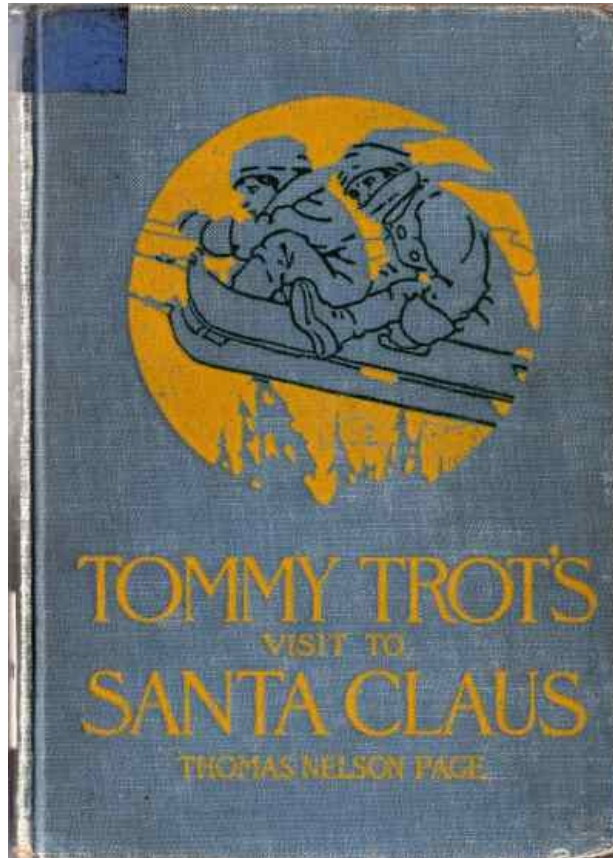
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TOMMY TROT'S VISIT TO SANTA CLAUS

BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS
BY THOMAS NELSON PAGE

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As wide awake as a boy could be who had made up his mind to keep awake until midnight.

TOMMY TROT'S VISIT TO SANTA CLAUS

BY
THOMAS NELSON PAGE

ILLUSTRATED BY
VICTOR C. ANDERSON



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1908

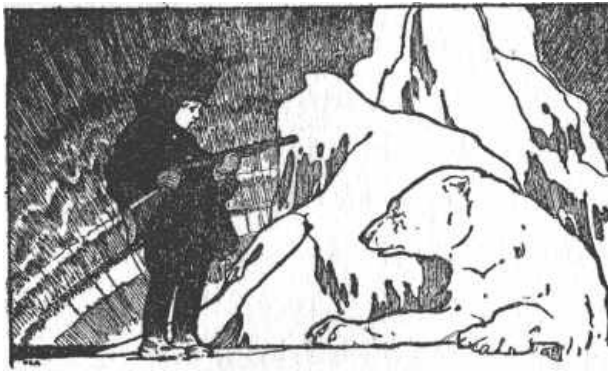
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TO
THE GREATEST LOVER OF CHILDREN
THE AUTHOR HAS EVER KNOWN
AND TO THE CHILDREN SHE LOVES
BEST IN ALL THE WORLD

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TOMMY TROT'S VISIT TO SANTA CLAUS

I

The little boy whose story is told here lived in the beautiful country of "Once upon a Time." His name, as I heard it, was Tommy Trot; but I think that, maybe, this was only a nick-name. When he was about your age, he had, on Christmas Eve, the wonderful adventure of seeing Santa Claus in his own country, where he lives and makes all the beautiful things that boys and girls get at Christmas. In fact, he not only went to see him in his own wonderful city away up toward the North Pole, where the snow never melts and the Aurora lightens up the sky; but he and his friend, Johnny Stout, went with dogs and guns to hunt the great polar bear whose skin afterwards always lay in front of the big library fireplace in Tommy's home.

This is the way it all happened.

Tommy lived in a big house on top of quite a high hill, not far from a town which could be seen clearly from the front portico and windows. Around the house was a large lawn with trees and shrubbery in it, and at the back was a big lot, in one corner of which stood the stables and barns, while on the other side sloped down a long steep hill to a little stream bordered with willows and maples and with a tract of woodland beyond. This lot was known as the "cow-pasture," and the woodland was known as the "wood-lot," while yet beyond was a field which Peake, the farmer, always spoke of as the "big field." On the other side of the cow-lot, where the stables stood, was a road which ran down the hill and across the stream and beyond the woods, and on the other side of this road near the bottom of the hill was the little house in which lived Johnny Stout and his mother. They had no fields or lots, but only a backyard in which there were chickens and pigeons and, in the Fall, just before Tommy's visit to Santa Claus, two white goats, named "Billy" and "Carry," which Johnny had broken and used to drive to a little rough wagon which he had made himself out of a box set on four wheels.

Tommy had no brothers or sisters, and the only cousins he had in town were little girls younger than himself, to whom he had to "give up" when any one was around, so he was not as fond of them as he should have been; and Sate, his dog, a terrier of temper and humours, was about his only real playmate. He used to play by himself and he was often very lonely, though he had more toys than any other boy he knew. In fact, he had so many toys that he was unable to enjoy any one of them very long, and after having them a little while he usually broke them up. He used to enjoy the stories which his father read to him out of Mother Goose and the fairy-books and the tales he told him of travellers and hunters who had shot lions and bears and Bengal tigers; but when he grew tired of this, he often wished he could go out in the street and play all the time like Johnny Stout and some of the other boys. Several times he slipped out into the road beyond the cow-lot to try to get a chance to play with Johnny who was only about a year older than he, but could do so many things which Tommy could not do that he quite envied him. It was one of the proudest days of his life when Johnny let him come over and drive his goats, and when he went home that evening, although he was quite cold, he was so full of having driven them that he could not think or talk of anything else, and when Christmas drew near, one of the first things he wrote to ask Santa Claus for, when he put the letter in the library fire, was a wagon and a pair of goats. Even his father's statement that he feared he was too small yet for Santa Claus to bring him such things, did not wholly dampen his hope.

He even began to dream of being able to go out some time and join the bigger boys in coasting down the long hill on the other side from Johnny Stout's, for though his father and mother thought he was still rather small to do this, his father had promised that he might do it sometime, and Tommy thought "sometime" would be after his next birthday. When the heavy snow fell just before Christmas he began to be sorry that he had broken up the sled Santa Claus had given him the Christmas before. In fact, Tommy had never wanted a sled so much as he did the afternoon two days before Christmas, when he persuaded his father to take him out again to the coasting hill to see the boys coasting. There were all sorts of sleds: short sleds and long sleds, bob-sleds and flexible fliers. They held one, two, three, and sometimes even half a dozen boys and girls—for there were girls, too—all shouting and laughing as they went flying down the

hill, some sitting and some lying down, but all flying and shouting, and none taking the least notice of Tommy. Sate made them take notice of him; for he would rush out after the sleds, barking just as if they had been cats, and several times he got bowled over—once, indeed, he got tangled up in the string of a sled and was dragged squealing with fright down the hill. Suddenly, however, Tommy gave a jump. Among the sleds flying by, most of them painted red, and very fine looking, was a plain, unpainted one, and lying full length upon it, on his stomach, with his heels high in the air, was Johnny Stout, with a red comforter around his neck, and a big cap pulled down over his ears. Tommy knew him at once.

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“Look, father, look!” he cried, pointing; but Johnny’s sled was far down the hill before his father could see him. A few minutes later he came trudging up the hill again and, seeing Tommy, ran across and asked him if he would like to have a ride. Tommy’s heart bounded, but sank within him again when his father said, “I am afraid he is rather little.”

“Oh! I’ll take care of him, sir,” said Johnny, whose cheeks were glowing. Tommy began to jump up and down.

“Please, father, please,” he urged. His father only smiled.

“Why, you are not so very big yourself,” he said to Johnny.

“Big enough to take care of him,” said Johnny.

“Why, father, he’s awful big,” chimed in Tommy.

9

“Do you think so?” laughed his father. He turned to Johnny. “What is your name?”

“Johnny, sir. I live down below your house.” He pointed across toward his own home.

“I know him,” said Tommy proudly. “He has got goats and he let me drive them.”

“Yes, he can drive,” said Johnny, condescendingly, with a nod, and Tommy was proud of his praise. His father looked at him.

“Is your sled strong?” he asked.

“Yes, sir. I made it myself,” said Johnny, and he gave the sled a good kick to show how strong it was.

“All right,” said Tommy’s father. They followed Johnny to the top of the slide, and Tommy got on in front and his father tucked his coat in.

“Hold on and don’t be afraid,” he said.

“Afraid!” said Tommy contemptuously. Just then Johnny, with a whoop and a push which almost upset Tommy, flung himself on behind and away they went down the hill, as Johnny said, “just ski-uting.”

10

Tommy had had sledding in his own yard; but he had never before had any real coasting like this, and he had never dreamed before of anything like the thrill of dashing down that long hill, flying like the wind, with Johnny on behind, yelling “Look out!” to every one, and guiding so that the sled tore in and out among the others, and at the foot of the hill actually turned around the curve and went far on down the road.

“You’re all right,” said Johnny, and Tommy had never felt prouder. His only regret was that the hill did not tilt up the other way so that they could coast back instead of having to trudge back on foot.



Tommy had never before had any real coasting like this.

When they got back again to the top of the hill, Tommy's father wanted to know if they had had enough, but Tommy told him he never could have enough. So they coasted down again and again, until at length his father thought they had better be going home, and Johnny said he had to go home, too, "to help his mother."

"How do you help?" asked Tommy's father, as they started off.

"Oh, just little ways," said Johnny. "I get wood—and split it up—and go to Mr. Bucket's and get her things for her—draw water and feed the cow, when we had a cow—we ain't got a cow now since our cow died—and—oh—just a few little things like that."

Tommy's father made no reply, and Tommy, himself, was divided between wonder that Johnny could call all that work "just a few little things," and shame that he should say, "ain't got," which he, himself, had been told he must never say.

His father, however, presently asked, "Who is Mr. Bucket?"

"Don't you know Mr. Bucket?" said Johnny. "He keeps that grocery on Hill Street. He gave me the box I made this old thing out of."

"Oh," said Tommy's father, and turned and looked the sled over again.

"What was the matter with your cow?" asked Tommy.

"Broke her leg—right here," and Johnny pulled up his trousers and showed just where the leg was broken below the knee. "The doctor said she must be killed, and so she was; but Mr. Bucket said he could have saved her if the 'Society would've let him. He'd 'a just swung her up until she got well."

"How?" asked Tommy, much interested.

"What Society?" asked his father.

Johnny answered the last question first. "'Pervention of Cruelty,'" he said, shortly.

"Oh," said Tommy's father.

"I know how she broke her leg," said Johnny.

"How did she break her leg?" inquired Tommy.

"A boy done it. I know him and I know he done it, and some day I'm going to catch him when he ain't looking for me."

"You have not had a cow since?" inquired Tommy's father. "Then you do not have to go and drive her up and milk her when the weather is cold?"

"Oh, I would not mind that," said Johnny cheerily. "I'd drive her up if the weather was as cold as Greenland, and milk her, too, so I had her. I used to love to feed her and I didn't mind carryin' milk around; for I used to get money for it for my mother to buy things with; but now, since that

boy broke her leg and the 'Siety killed her——"

He did not say what there was since; he just stopped talking and presently Tommy's father said: "You do not have so much money since?"

"No, sir!" said Johnny, "and my mother has to work a heap harder, you see."

"And you work too?"

"Some," said Johnny. "I sell papers and clean off the sidewalk when there is snow to clean off, and run errands for Mr. Bucket and do a few things. Well, I've got to go along," he added, "I've got some things to do now. I was just trying this old sled over on the hill to see how she would go. I've got some work to do now"; and he trotted off, whistling and dragging his sled behind him.

15

As Tommy and his father turned into their grounds, his father asked, "Where did he say he lived?"

"Wait, I'll show you," said Tommy, proud of his knowledge. "Down there [pointing]. See that little house down in the bottom, away over beyond the cow-pasture?"

"How do you know he lives there?"

"Because I've been there. He's got goats," said Tommy, "and he let me drive them. I wish I had some goats. I wish Santa Claus would bring me two goats like Johnny's."

"Which would you rather have? Goats or a cow?" asked his father.

"Goats," said Tommy, promptly.

16

"I wonder if Johnny would!" laughed his father.

"Father, where is Greenland?" said Tommy, presently.

"A country away up at the North—away up in that direction." His father pointed far across the cow-pasture, which lay shining in the evening light. "I must show it to you on the map."

"Is it very cold there?" asked Tommy.

"Very cold in winter."

"Colder than this?"

"Oh, yes, because it is so far north that the sun never gets up in winter to warm it, and away up there the winter is just one long night and the summer one long day."

"Why, that's where Santa Claus comes from," said Tommy. "Do people live up there?"

17

"People called Eskimos," said his father, "who live by fishing and hunting."

"Tell me about them," said Tommy. "What do they hunt?"

"Bears," said his father, "polar bears—and walrus—and seals—and——"

"Oh, tell me about them," said Tommy, eagerly.

So, as they walked along, his father told him of the strange little, flat-faced people, who live all winter in houses made of ice and snow and hunted on the ice-floes for polar bears and seals and walrus, and in the summer got in their little kiaks and paddled around, hunting for seals and walrus with their arrows and harpoons, on the "pans" or smooth ice, where every family of "harps" or seals have their own private door, gnawed down through the ice with their teeth.

18

"I wish I could go there," said Tommy, his eyes gazing across the long, white glistening fields with the dark border of the woodland beyond and the rich saffron of the winter sky above the tree-tops stretching across in a border below the steely white of the upper heavens.

"What would you do?" asked his father.

"Hunt polar bears," said Tommy promptly. "I'd get one most as big as the library, so mother could give you the skin; because I heard her say she would like to have one in front of the library fire, and the only way she could get one would be to give it to you for Christmas."

His father laughed. "All right, get a big one."

"You will have to give me a gun. A real gun that will shoot. A big one—so big." Tommy measured with his arms out straight. "Bigger than that. And I tell you what I would do. I would get Johnny and we would hitch his goats to the sled and drive all the way up there and hunt polar bears, and I'd hunt for sealskins, too, so you could give mother a coat. I heard her say she wanted you to give her one. Wouldn't it be fine if I could get a great big bearskin and a sealskin, too! I wish I had Johnny's goats!"

19

"You must have dogs up there to draw your sled," said his father.

"All right! After I got there I would get Santa Claus to give me some," said Tommy. "But you give me the gun."

His father laughed again. "Well, maybe—some day," said he.

"Some day' is too far away," said Tommy. "I want to go now."

"Not so far away when you are my age," said his father smiling. "Ah, there is where the North Star is," he said, pointing. "You cannot see it yet. I will show it to you later, so you can steer by it."

20

"That is the way Santa Claus comes," said Tommy, his eyes on the Northern sky. "I am going to wait for him tomorrow night."

"You know he does not bring things to boys who keep awake!"

"I know; but I won't let him see me."

As they trudged along Tommy suddenly asked, "Don't you wish, Father, Santa Claus would bring Johnny a cow for his mother?"

"Why, yes," said his father.

"Like Cowslip or Rose or even old Crumpled Horn?"

"Like our cows!" echoed his father, absently. "Why, yes."

"Because they are all fine cows, you know. Peake says so, and Peake knows a good cow," said Tommy, proud of his intimacy with the farmer. "I tell you what I am going to do when I get home," he declared. "I am going to write another letter to Santa Claus and put it in the chimney and ask him to send Johnny a whole lot of things: a cow and a gun and all sorts of things. Do you think it's too late for him to get it now?"

"I don't know. It is pretty late," said his father. "Why didn't you ask him to send these things to Johnny when you wrote your other letter?"

"I did not think of it," said Tommy, frankly. "I forgot him."

"Do you ask only for yourself?"

"No. For little Sis and Mother and Peake and one other, but I'm not going to tell you who he is."

His father smiled. "Not Johnny?"

"No," said Tommy. "I forgot him."

"I am afraid I did, too," said his father slowly. "Well, write another and try. You can never tell. Trying is better than crying."

This was two days before Christmas. And the next afternoon Tommy went again with his father to the coasting-hill to see the boys and once more take a coast with Johnny. But no Johnny was there and no other boy asked Tommy if he wanted a ride. So, they returned home much disappointed, his father telling him more about the Eskimos and the polar bears. But, just as they were turning the corner before reaching the gate which led into their grounds, they came on Johnny struggling along through the snow, under the weight of a big basket full of bundles. At sight of them he swung the basket down in the snow with a loud, "Whew, that's heavy! I tell you." Tommy ran forward to meet him.

"We have been looking for you," he said.

"I could not go to-day," explained Johnny. "I had to work. I am working for Mr. Bucket to-day to make some money to buy Christmas things."

"How much do you make?" asked Tommy's father.

"Half a dollar to-day, if I work late. I generally make ten cents, sometimes fifteen."

"That is a pretty heavy load—in the snow," said Tommy's father, as Johnny stooped and swung his basket up on his hip.

"Oh, I can manage it," said the boy, cheerfully. "A boy stole my sled last night, or I would carry it on that."

"Stole your sled!" cried Tommy.

"Yes, I left it outside the door when I was getting my load to put on, and when I came out it was gone. I wish I could catch him."

"I am going to watch for him, too," said Tommy.

"If I had a box I could make another one," said Johnny. "Maybe, Mr. Bucket will give me one after Christmas. He said maybe he would. Then I will give you another ride." He called over his shoulder to them, as he trudged off, "Well, good-by. I hope you will have a merry Christmas, and that Santa Claus will bring you lots of things," and away he trudged. They wished him a merry Christmas, too, and then turned into their grounds.

"Father," said Tommy, suddenly, "let's give Johnny a sled."

"Yes," said his father, "you might give him yours—the one you got last Christmas."

"I haven't got it now. It's gone," said Tommy.

"Did some one take it—like Johnny's?"

"No, I broke it," said Tommy, crestfallen.

"You might mend it?" suggested his father.

"I broke it all up," said Tommy, sadly.

"Ah, that is a pity," said his father.

Tommy was still thinking.

"Father, why can't I give him a box?" he said. "The basement and the wood-shed are full of big boxes."

"Why not give him the one I gave you a few days ago?"

"I broke it up, too," said Tommy shamefacedly.

"Oh," said his father. "That's a pity. Johnny could have made a sled out of it." Tommy felt very troubled, and he began to think what he might do.

"If you will give me another, I will give it to Johnny," he said presently.

"Why, I'll tell you what I will do," said his father. "I will furnish the box if you will carry it over to Johnny's home."

"All right. I will do it," said Tommy promptly. So as soon as they reached home Tommy dived down into the basement and soon came out, puffing and blowing, dragging along with him a big box as high as his head.

"I am afraid that is too big for you to carry," suggested his father.

"Oh, I will make Richard carry it."

"Richard is my servant, not yours," said his father. "Besides, you were to carry it yourself."

"It is too big for me. The snow is too deep."

"Now, if you had not broken up your sled you might carry it on that," said his father.

"Yes," said Tommy sadly. "I wish I had not broken it up. I'll be bound that I don't break up the next one I get."

"That's a good beginning," said his father. "But wishing alone will never do anything, not even if you had the magical wishing-cap I read you about. You must not only wish; you must help yourself. Now, Johnny would make a sled out of that box."

"I wish I could," said Tommy. "I would try if I had some tools. I wish I had some tools."

"What tools would you need?"

Tommy thought a minute. "Why, a hammer and some nails."

"A hammer and nails would hardly make a sled by themselves."

"Why, no. I wish I had a saw, too."

"I thought Santa Claus brought you all these tools last Christmas?" suggested his father.

"He did; but I lost them," said Tommy.

"Did you ever hunt for them?"

"Some. I have hunted for the hammer."

"Well, suppose you hunt again. Look everywhere. If you find any I might lend you the others. You might look in my lumber room." Tommy ran off and soon returned with a hammer and some nails which he had found, and a few minutes later his father brought a saw and a hatchet, and they selected a good box, which Tommy could drag out, and put it in the back hall.

"Now," said Tommy, "what shall we do next?"

"That is for you to say," said his father. "Johnny does not ask that question. He thinks for himself."

"Well, we must knock this box to pieces," said Tommy.

"I think so, too," assented his father. "Very carefully, so as not to split the boards."

"Yes, very carefully," said Tommy, and he began to hammer. The nails, however, were in very tight and there was a strip of iron along each of the edges, through which they were driven, so it was hard work; but when Tommy really tried and could not get the boards off, his father helped him, and soon the strips were off and the boards quickly followed.

"Now what shall we do?" asked his father.

"Why, we must make the sled."

"Yes—but how?"

"Why, we must have runners and then the top to sit on. That's all."

"Very well. Go ahead," said his father. So Tommy picked up two boards and looked at them. But they were square at the ends.

"We must make the runners," he said sadly.

"That's so," said his father.

"Will you saw them for me?" asked Tommy.

"Yes, if you will show me where to saw." Tommy pondered.

"Wait," he said, and he ran off, and in a moment came back with a picture of a sled in a magazine. "Now make it this way," he said, showing his father how he should saw the edges.

He was surprised to see how well his father could do this, and his admiration for him increased as he found that he could handle the tools quite as well as Peake, the farmer; and soon the sled began to look like a real sled with runners, sawed true, and with cross-pieces for the feet to rest on, and even with a strip of iron, taken from the edges of the boxes, carefully nailed on the bottom of the runners.

Suddenly Tommy cried, "Father, why not give Johnny this sled?"

"The very thing!" exclaimed his father with a smile. And Tommy felt quite proud of having suggested it.

"I wish it had a place to hitch on the goats," said Tommy, thoughtfully.

"Let's make one," said his father; and in a few minutes two holes were bored in the front of the runners.

It was now about dusk, and Tommy said he would like to take the sled down to Johnny's house and leave it at his door where he could find it when he came home from work, and, maybe, he might think Santa Claus had brought it. So he and his father went together, Tommy dragging the sled and, while his father waited at the gate, Tommy took the sled and put it in the yard at the little side-door of Johnny's home. As they were going along, he said, pointing to a small shed-like out-building at the end of the little yard, "That's the cow-house. He keeps his goats there, too. Don't you wish Santa Claus would bring his mother a cow? I don't see how he could get down that small chimney!" he said, gazing at the little flue which came out of the roof. "I wonder if he does?"

"I wonder if he does?" said his father to himself.

When Tommy slipped back again and found his father waiting for him at the gate, he thought he had never had so fine a time in all his life. He determined to make a sled for somebody every Christmas.



II

When they reached home Tommy, after warming his hands and telling his mother about the sled, set to work to write a letter to Santa Claus on behalf of Johnny, and as he wrote, a number of things came to him that he thought Johnny would like to have. He remembered that he had no gloves and that his hands were very red; that his cap was very old and too small for him; that a real flexible flier would be a fine thing for him. Then, as he had asked for a gun for himself to hunt polar bears with and a fur coat to go out with in the snow, he added these in Johnny's letter also; in fact, he asked for Johnny just the things he had asked for himself, except the goats, and, as Johnny had two goats, it was not necessary to ask for them for him. Instead of goats, however, he asked that Santa Claus might give Johnny's mother a cow, as good as one of their cows. As he was not a very rapid writer it took him some time to write this letter, especially, as he did not know how to spell a good many words, and had to ask his mother how to spell them, for his father had gone out soon after their return from taking the sled to Johnny, and immediately after showing him the picture of the polar bear and the map of the North-pole region. Then when the letter was all done, signed and sealed, Tommy carefully dropped it in the

fire in the library, and watched it as it first twisted up, then burst into a blaze, and finally disappeared in flame and smoke up the big chimney, hoping that it would blow away like the wind to Santa Claus to catch him before he started out that night on his round of visits.

By this time his supper was ready and he found that he was very hungry. He had no sooner finished it than he drew up in a big chair by the warm fire, and began to wonder whether Santa Claus would get his letter in time, and, if so, what he would bring Johnny. The fire was warm and his eyes soon began "to draw straws," but he did not wish to go to bed quite yet and, indeed, had a lingering hope that when his father returned he might coax him into letting him go out again and slide with Johnny and then, perhaps, stand a chance of seeing Santa Claus come up the long hill, with his reindeer flying like the wind over the snow and taking the roofs of the houses with a single bound. So he moved over to the sofa where he could see better, and where it would not be likely his sleepiness would be observed.

The last thing he recalled in the sitting-room was when he parted the heavy curtains at the foot of the sofa and looked out at the snow stretching away down the hill toward the woods, and shining in the light of the great round moon which had just come up over the side of the yard to the eastward. Then he curled up in the corner of the sofa as wide awake as a boy could be who had made up his mind to keep awake until midnight. The next thing he remembered was Sate jumping up and snuggling by him, and the next was his father coming in and telling him Johnny was waiting outside with his sled and the two goats hitched to it to take a long ride, and his wrapping him up carefully in his heavy overcoat. In a second he was out in the yard and made a dash for the cow-lot, and there, sure enough, was Johnny waiting for him at the gate in the cow-pasture with a curious little peaked cap on his head and his coat collar turned up around his chin and tied with a great red comforter, so that only his eyes and nose peeped over it. As Tommy had never seen Johnny with that cap on before, he asked him where he had got it, and he said he had swapped caps with a little old man he had met driving a cow in the road as he came home. He could not keep this cap on his head, so Johnny had given him his in place of it, as it fitted him very well. And there were the two goats hitched to the very sled Tommy had made. In a minute they were on the sled, Tommy in front with the reins and Johnny sitting behind. Just as they were about to start, to Tommy's horror, out came Sate, and do as they might, Sate would not go back; but jumped up on the sled and settled down at Tommy's feet, and as Johnny said he did not mind and that Sate would keep Tommy's feet warm, they let him stay, which proved in the end to be a very fortunate thing. Just after they had fixed themselves comfortably, Johnny said, "Are you ready?" "Ready!" said Tommy, and gathered up the reins, and the next moment the goats started off, at first at a walk and then at a little trot, while Tommy was telling Johnny what his father had told him about the night in Santa Claus's country being so long that sometimes the sun did not rise above the horizon for several months.

"If it's as long as that," said Johnny, "we might go and see the old fellow and get back before midnight? I wish we could go."

"So do I," said Tommy, "but I'm afraid we might not find our way." He remembered just then that all one had to do was to steer by the North Star, and at that moment he caught sight of the star right over the goats' heads.

The coast was clear and the snow was up to the top of the fences. The moon made it as light as day and never again would there be such a chance. It came to him, too, that on the map all the lines ran together at the North Pole, so that one could hardly miss his way, and if he should, there were Eskimos to guide him. So when Johnny said, "Let's go and try," he agreed, for if they once got there, Santa Claus, himself, might bring them back with him.

For a moment they went along as though they were coasting down a hill, with the little North Star shining directly in front of them as they glided along.

Just then Tommy said, "I wish the goats were reindeer. Let's pretend they are."

"So do I," said Johnny.

At this instant something happened; the goats gave a jump which sent a cloud of fine snow up into the boys' faces; the sled gave a great leap and on a sudden they began to tear along like the wind. The snow-fields flew by them, and the trees, standing up to their knees in snow, simply tore along to the rear.

"They are running away!" said Tommy, as soon as he could catch his breath.

"All right. Let them run," said Johnny. "But steer by the North Star." And so they did.

When the cloud of snow in their faces cleared away, Tommy could scarcely believe his eyes.

"Look, Johnny!" he cried. "They are real reindeer. Real live ones. Look at their antlers."

"I know," said Johnny. "That little man said he wanted to swap with me."

So they flew on, up hill and down dale, over fields of white snow where the fences and rocks were buried and the cuts were filled up level; down frozen streams, winding through great forests where the pines were mantled with white; in between great walls of black rock towering above them, with the stars shining down like fires; out again across the vast stretches of snow with the Pole Star ever twisting and turning and coming before them again, until the sky seemed lit up with wonderful colours, and great bands of light were shooting up and sinking down only to shoot up again with a crackling like packs of pop-crackers in the distance.



They flew on, over fields of white snow.

The wind sang in their ears, nipped their noses, and made Tommy drowsy, and presently he must have fallen asleep; for just as he was conscious that Johnny had taken the reins, and, with one arm on either side of him was holding him on his shoulder, there was a great jolt and a sort of crash as of breaking through. He would have fallen off the sled if Johnny had not held him tight.

When he opened his eyes they seemed to be passing through a sort of silvery haze, as though the moonlight were shining through a fine mist of silvery drops which shed the softest radiance over everything. And suddenly through this enchanting light they came to a beautiful city, with walls around it of crystal, all rimmed with gold, like the clouds at sunset. Before them was a great gate through which shone a wonderful light, and inside they saw a wide street all lit up. As they reached the gate there was a sort of peal, as of bells, and out poured a guard of little men in uniform with little swords at their sides and guns in their hands, who saluted, while their officer, who had a letter in his hand, halted them with a challenge.

"Who goes there?"

"Friends," said Tommy, standing up and saluting, as he had seen soldiers do at the fort.

"Advance, friends, and give the countersign." Tommy thought they were lost and his heart sank.

But Johnny said, "'Good-will.'"

"All right," said the captain and stepped back.

"Who gave you that sled?" he asked.

"Tommy," said Johnny. "This little boy here made it and gave it to me."

"This is the one," said the captain to a guard, looking at a letter in his hand. "Let them by."

They drove in at the gate and found themselves in a broad street filled with enchanting things more beautiful than Tommy had ever dreamed of. The trees which lined it were Christmas trees, and the lights on them made the street as bright as noonday.

Here the reindeer slackened their pace, and as they turned down the great street they could see through the windows rooms brilliantly lighted, in which were hosts of people bustling about as busy as bees, working at Christmas things of all sorts and descriptions. They suddenly came to the gate of a great palace-like place, which the reindeer appeared to know, for they turned in at the gate just as Tommy's father's horses always turned in at their gate at home, and as they drove up to the door, with a shout of, "Here they are!" out poured a number of the same little people—like those they had already seen at the gate. Some helped them out, some stood like a guard, and some took their reindeer to drive them to the stable.

"You are just in time," said the captain of this party, as he stepped forward and saluted them. "The old Gentleman has been waiting for you, sending out to the gate to watch for you all evening."

Tommy was about to ask, "How did he know we were coming?" but before he could get the words out, the little man said, "Oh, he knows all that boys do, especially about Christmas time. That's his business."

"My!" thought Tommy, "I shall have to mind what I even think up here. He answers just as if I had said it. I hope he knows what I want for Christmas."

"Wait and see," said the little man; and Tommy, though he was glad to hear it, determined not to think any more just then, but he was sorry he had not thought to wish for more things while he was wishing.

"Oh, don't worry about that," said the guard. "Santa Claus doesn't care much what you ask for for yourself. Even if he gives those things, you soon get tired of them or lose them or break them up. It is the things one asks for for others that he gives pleasure with. That's the reason he has such a good time himself, because he gives all the things to others."

Tommy tried to think what he had ever given to any one. He had given pieces of candy and cake when he had plenty, but the sled was the only thing he had ever really given. He was about to mention this when the guard mentioned it for him.

"Oh, that sled was all right," he said, with a little nod. "Come in," and the great ice-doors opened before them, and in they walked.

They passed through a great hall, all ice, as transparent as glass, though curiously it was warm and dry and filled with every kind of Christmas "things:"—everything that Tommy had ever seen, and a myriad more that he had never dreamed of. They were packed and stacked on either side, and a lot of little people, like those he had already seen, were working among them, tossing them about and shouting to each other with glee to "Look out," just as the boys did when coasting on the hill.

"I tell you," said one, "the Governor will have a busy time to-night. It beats last Christmas." And he made a run and a jump, and lit on a big pile of bundles which suddenly toppled over with him and nearly buried him as he sprawled on the slippery floor. This seemed a huge joke to all the others and they screamed with laughter at "Old Smartie," as they called him, and poured more bundles down on him, just as though they were having a pillow-fight. Then when Old Smartie had at last gotten on his feet, they had a great game of tag among the piles and over them, and the first thing Tommy knew he and Johnny were at it as hard as anybody. He was very proud because Johnny could jump over piles as high as the best of them. Tommy, himself, however, could not jump; for they led him to a pile so high that he could not see over it; and on top were the fragments of all the things he had ever had and had broken up. He could not help crying a little; but just then in dashed a number of little men and gathering them up, rushed out with them. Tommy was wondering what they were going to do with them, when his friend, the guard, said: "We mend some of them; and some we keep to remind you with. Now try again." Tommy tried and did very well, only his left foot had gone to sleep in the sled and had not quite waked up.

"That was because Sate went to sleep on it," said his friend, the guard, and Tommy wondered how he knew Sate's name.

"Why," said the guard, "we have to know dogs' names to keep them from barking at us and waking everybody up. Let me lend you these boots," and with that he kicked off his boots. "Now, jump," and Tommy gave a jump and lit in them, as he sometimes did in his father's shoes. No sooner had Tommy put them on than he found that he could jump over the highest pile in the room.

"Look, look!" cried several of the others. "The captain has lent that little boy his 'Seven Leaguers.'"

"I know where he is going," said one; "to jump over the North Pole."

"No," laughed another. "He is going to catch the cow that 'jumped over the moon,' for Johnny Stout's mother."

Just then a message came that "Old Santa," as they called him, was waiting to see the two boys who had come in the new box-sled, as he wanted to know how their mothers were and what they wished for Christmas. So there was a great scurrying to get their heads brushed before the bell rang again, and Tommy got soap in his eyes wetting the brush to make his hair lie smooth, while Johnny's left shoe came off and dropped in a hole in the floor. Smartie, however, told him that that was for the "Old Woman who lived in a shoe" to feed her cow in, and this was considered a great joke.

The next minute the door opened and they entered a great apartment, filled with the softest light from a blazing fire, and Tommy was sure it was his father's back before him at the fireplace; but when the man turned it was Santa Claus, only he did not have on his whiskers, and looked ever so much younger than in his pictures. At first he did not even look at them, he was so busy receiving mail that came fluttering down the chimney in a perfect snowstorm. As the letters came he gathered them up and handed them to a lady who was seated on the floor, saying, "Put that in," to which the lady always answered, "Just the thing," in a voice so like his mother's that Tommy felt quite at home. He was just wondering when "Sometime" would come, when Santa Claus picked up a letter, which had been thrown on the floor, and tossed it to the lady, saying, "Here's that letter from that little boy, Tommy Trot. Put some of those things in so he can break them up. He asked only for himself and much joy he will get out of them." Tommy shrank back behind Johnny. He wanted to say that he had written another letter to ask for

things for others, but he had lost his tongue. Just then, however, Santa Claus put up his hand and pulled out another letter.



“Look, Look! The captain has lent that little boy his ‘Seven Leaguers.’”

“Now,” he said, as he glanced at it, “this is more like it. He is improving. I see he has asked for a lot of things for a friend of his named Johnny. Johnny Stout—who is he? It seems to me I hardly remember him or where he lives.”

“Yes,” said Johnny, stepping up. “That’s me. He gave me a sled, too, and he made it himself.” Santa Claus turned and looked at him and his expression turned to a smile; in fact, Tommy thought he really winked at Johnny.

“Oh, I know that sled. It was a pretty good sled, too,” he said.

This gave Tommy courage, and he stepped forward and said, “He lives in a little bit of a house near our place—just that way—” He turned and pointed. “I’ll show it to you when you come.”

“Good,” said Santa Claus. “I’ll show it to you and you show it to me. We are apt to overlook those little houses. So you are Tommy Trot?” he said. “Glad to see you,” and he turned and held out his hand to Tommy. “I sent my reindeer to fetch you and I am glad you made that sled, for it is only a sled made for others that can get up here. You see, everything here, except the North Pole, is made for some one else, and that’s the reason we have such a good time up here. If you like, I’ll take you around and show you and Johnny our shops.” This was exactly what Tommy wanted, so he thanked him politely.

“I’ll be back in a little while,” said Santa Claus to the lady, “for as soon as the boys are all asleep I must set out. I have a great many stockings to fill this year. See that everything is ready. Come along, boys,” and next minute they were going through room after room and shop after shop, filled with so many things that Tommy could not keep them straight in his mind. He wondered how any one could have thought of so many things, except his mother, of course; she always thought of everything for everyone. Some of them he wished for, but every time he thought of wanting a thing for himself the lights got dim, so that he stopped thinking about himself at all, and turned to speak to Johnny, but he was gone.

Presently Santa Claus said: “These are just my stores. Now we will go and see where some of these things are made.” He gave a whistle, and the next second up dashed a sled with a team of reindeer in it, and who was there holding the reins but Johnny, with his little cap perched on the top of his head! At Tommy’s surprise Santa Claus gave a laugh that made him shake all over like a bowl full of jelly, quite as Tommy had read he did in a poem he had learned the Christmas before, called “The Night Before Christmas, when all through the house.”

“That comes of knowing how to drive goats,” said Santa Claus. “Johnny knows a lot and I am going to give him a job, because he works so hard,” and with that Tommy’s boots suddenly jumped him into the sled, and Santa Claus stepped in behind him and pulled up a big robe over

them.

"Here goes," he said, and at the word they turned the corner, and there was a gate of ice that looked like the mirrored doors in Tommy's mother's room, which opened before them, and they dashed along between great piles of things, throwing them on both sides like snow from a sled-runner, and before Tommy knew it they were gliding along a road, which Tommy felt he had seen somewhere before, though he could not remember where. The houses on the roadside did not seem to have any front-walls at all, and everywhere the people within were working like beavers; some sewing, some cutting out, some sawing and hammering, all making something, all laughing or smiling. They were mostly dressed like grown-up people, but when they turned their faces they all looked young. Tommy was wondering why this was, when Santa Claus said that was because they were "Working for others. They grow young every Christmas. This is Christmas Land and Kindness Town." They turned another corner and were whisking by a little house, inside of which was some one sewing for dear life on a jacket. Tommy knew the place by the little backyard.

"Stop, stop!" he cried, pointing. "That's Johnny's home and that's Johnny's mother sewing. She's laughing. I expect she's making that for Johnny."

"Where?" asked Santa Claus, turning. Tommy pointed back, "There, there!" but they had whisked around a corner.

"I was so busy looking at that big house that I did not see it," said Santa Claus.

"That's our house," said Tommy. "I tell you what," he said presently, "if I get anything—I'll give him some." Santa Claus smiled.

So they dashed along, making all sorts of turns and curves, through streets lined with shops full of Christmas things and thronged with people hurrying along with their arms full of bundles; out again into the open; by little houses half buried in snow, with a light shining dimly through their upper windows; on through forests of Christmas trees, hung with toys and not yet lighted, and presently in a wink were again at Santa Claus's home, in a great hall. All along the sides were cases filled with all sorts of toys, guns, uniforms, sleds, skates, snow-shoes, fur gloves, fur coats, books, toy-dogs, ponies, goats, cows, everything.



III

Tommy was just thinking how he would love to carry his mother a polar bearskin for his father, and his father a sealskin coat for his mother, when Santa Claus came up behind him and tweaked his ear.

"Ah!" he said, "so you want something—something you can't get?"

"Not for myself," said Tommy, shamefacedly.

"So," said Santa Claus, with a look much like Tommy's father when he was pleased. "I know that. They don't have them exactly about here. The teddy-bears drove them out. You have to go away off to find them." He waved his hand to show how far off it was.

"I should like to hunt them, if I only had a gun!" said Tommy;—"and one for Johnny, too," he added quickly.

Santa Claus winked again. "Well," he said slowly, just as Tommy's father always did when Tommy asked for something and he was considering—"well, I'll think about it." He walked up

and touched a spring, and the glass door flew open. "Try these guns," he said; and Tommy tipped up and took one out. It, however, seemed a little light to shoot polar bears with and he put it back and took another. That, however, was rather heavy.

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"Try this," said Santa Claus, handing him one, and it was the very thing. "Load right; aim right; and shoot right," said he, "and you'll get your prize every time. And, above all, stand your ground."

"Now, if I only had some dogs!" thought Tommy, looking around at a case full of all sorts of animals; ponies and cows; and dogs and cats; some big, some little, and some middle-sized. "I wish those were real dogs."

"Where's Sate?" asked Santa Claus.

"Sate can't pull a sled," said Tommy. "He's too little. Besides, he ain't an Eskimo dog—I mean he isn't," he corrected quickly, seeing Santa Claus look at him. "But he's awful bad after cats." Just then, to his horror, he saw Sate in the show-case with his eye on a big, white cat. He could hardly keep from crying out; but he called to him very quietly, "Come here, come here, Sate. Don't you hear me, sir? Come here."

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He was just about to go up and seize him when Santa Claus said: "He's all right. He's just getting acquainted."

"My! how much he talks like Peake," thought Tommy. "I wonder if he is his uncle."

Just then Sate began to nose among some little brownish-gray dogs, and so, Tommy called, "Here—come here—come along," and out walked not only Sate, but six other dogs, and stood in a line just as though they were hitched to a sled, the six finest Eskimo dogs Tommy had ever seen.

"Aren't they beauties!" said Santa Claus. "I never saw a finer lot; big-boned, broad-backed, husky fellows. They'll scale an ice-mountain like my reindeer. And if they ever get in sight of a bear!" He made a gesture as much as to say, "Let him look out."

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"What are their names?" said Tommy, who always wanted to know every one's name.

"Buster and Muster and Fluster, and Joe and Rob and Mac."

"Ain't one of them named Towser?" asked Tommy. "I thought one was always named Towser."

"No, that's a book-name," said Santa Claus so scornfully that Tommy was sorry he had asked him, especially as he added, "Isn't, not ain't."

"But they haint any harness," said Tommy, using the word Peake always used,—“I mean, hisn't any—no, I mean haven't any harness. I wish I had some harness for them."

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"Pooh! wishing doesn't do anything by itself," said Santa Claus.

"Oh! I tell you. I've a lot of string that came off some Christmas things my mother got for some poor people. I put it in my pocket to give it to Johnny to mend his goat-harness with, and I never thought of it when I saw him last night."

"So," said Santa Claus. "That's better. Let's see it."

Tommy felt in his pocket, and at first he could not find it. "I've lost it," he said sorrowfully.

"Try again," said Santa Claus.

Tommy felt again in a careless sort of way.

"No, I've lost it," he said. "It must have dropped out."

"You're always losing something," said Santa Claus. "Now, Johnny would have used that. You are sure you had it?"

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Tommy nodded. "Sure; I put it right in this pocket."

"Then you've got it now. Feel in your other pockets."

"I've felt there two times," said Tommy.

"Then feel again," said Santa Claus. And Tommy felt again, and sure enough, there it was. He pulled it out, and as it came it turned to harness—six sets of wonderful dog-harness, made of curious leather-thongs, and on every breast-strap was the name of the dog.

As Tommy made a dive for it and began to put the harness on the dogs, Santa Claus said, "String on bundles bought for others sometimes comes in quite handy."

Even then Tommy did not know how to put the harness on the dogs. As fast as he got it on one, Sate would begin to play with him and he would get all tangled up in it. Tommy could have cried with shame, but he remembered what his father had told him about, "Trying instead of crying"; so he kept on, and the first thing he knew they were all harnessed. Just then he heard a noise behind him and there was Johnny with another team of dogs just like his, hitched to his box-sled, on which they had come, and on it a great pile of things tied, and in his hand a list of what he had—food of all kinds in little cans; bread and butter, and even cake, like that he had given away; dried beef; pemmican; coffee and tea, all put up in little cases; cooking utensils; a frying-pan and a coffee-pot and a few other things—tin-cups and so forth; knives and everything that he had read that boys had when they went camping, matches and a flint-stone in a box with tinder, in case the matches gave out or got wet; hatchets and saws and tools to make ice-houses or to mend their sleds with, in fact, everything that Tommy's father had ever told him men used

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when they went into the woods. And on top of all, in cases, was the ammunition they would need.

"Now, if we had a tent," said Johnny. But Santa Claus said, "You don't need tents up there."

"I know," said Tommy. "You sleep in bags made of skin or in houses made of snow."

Santa Claus gave Johnny a wink. "That boy is improving," he said. "He knows some things;" and with that he took out of the case and gave both Tommy and Johnny big heavy coats of whitish fur and two bags made of skin. "And now," he said, "you will have to be off if you want to get back here before I leave, for though the night is very long, I must be getting away soon," and all of a sudden the door opened and there was the North Star straight ahead, and at a whistle from Santa Claus away went the dogs, one sled right behind the other, and Sate, galloping for life and barking with joy, alongside.

The last thing Tommy heard Santa Claus say was, "Load right, aim right, and shoot right; and stand your ground."

In a short time they were out of the light of the buildings and on a great treeless waste of snow and ice, much rougher than anything Tommy had ever seen; where it was almost dark and the ice seemed to turn up on edge. They had to work their way along slowly between jagged ice-peaks, and sometimes they came to places which it seemed they could never get over, but by dint of pushing and hauling and pulling, they always got over in the end. The first meal they took was only a bite, because they did not want to waste time, and they were soon on their sleds again, dashing along, and Tommy was glad, when, after some hours of hard work, Johnny said he thought they had better turn in, as in a few hours they ought to be where Santa Claus had told them they could find polar bears, and they ought to be fresh when they struck their tracks. They set to work, unhitched the dogs, untied the packs and got out their camp-outfit, and having dug a great hole in the snow behind an ice-peak, where the wind did not blow so hard, and having gathered some dry wood, which seemed to have been caught in the ice as if on purpose for them, they lit a fire, and getting out their frying-pan they stuck two chops on sticks and toasted them, and had the best supper Tommy had ever eaten. The bones they gave to the dogs. Johnny suggested tying up the dogs, but Tommy was so sleepy, he said: "Oh, no, they won't go away. Besides, suppose a bear should come while we are asleep." They took their guns so as to be ready in case a polar bear should come nosing around, and each one crawled into his bag and was soon fast asleep, Sate having crawled into Tommy's bag with him and snuggled up close to keep him warm.

It seemed to Tommy only a minute before he heard Johnny calling, and he crawled out to find him looking around in dismay. Every dog had disappeared except Sate.

"We are lost!" said Johnny. "We must try to get back or we shall freeze to death." He climbed up on top of an ice-peak and looked around in every direction; but not a dog was in sight. "We must hurry up," he said, "and go back after them. Why didn't we tie them last night! We must take something to eat with us." So they set to work and got out of the bag all they could carry, and with their guns and ammunition were about to start back.

"We must hide the rest of the things in a cache," said Tommy, "so that if we ever come back we may find them."

"What's a cache?" said Johnny.

Tommy was proud that he knew something Johnny did not know. He explained that a "cache" was a hiding-place.

So they put the things back in the bag and covered them up with snow, and Tommy, taking up his gun and pack, gave a whistle to Sate, who was nosing around. Suddenly the snow around began to move, and out from under the snow appeared first the head of one dog and then of another, until every one—Buster and Muster and Fluster and the rest—had come up and stood shaking himself to get the snow out of his coat. Then Tommy remembered that his father had told him that that was the way the Eskimo dogs often kept themselves warm when they slept, by boring down deep in the snow. Never were two boys more delighted. In a jiffy they had uncovered the sled, eaten breakfast, fed the dogs and hitched them up again, and were once more on their way. They had not gone far, though it seemed to Tommy a long, long way, when the ice in the distance seemed to Tommy to turn to great mountain-like icebergs. "That's where they are," said Tommy. "They are always on icebergs in the pictures." Feeling sure that they must be near them, they tied their dogs to the biggest blocks of ice they could find, and even tied Sate, and taking each his gun and a bag of extra ammunition, they started forward on foot. As Tommy's ammunition was very heavy, he was glad when Johnny offered to carry it for him. Even so, they had not gone very far, though it seemed far enough to Tommy, when he proposed turning back and getting something to eat. As they turned they lost the North Star, and when they looked for it again they could not tell which it was. Johnny thought it was one, Tommy was sure it was another. So they tried first one and then the other, and finally gave themselves up as lost. They went supperless to bed that night or rather that time, and Tommy never wished himself in bed at home so much, or said his prayers harder, or prayed for the poor more earnestly. They were soon up again and were working along through the ice-peaks, growing hungrier and hungrier, when, going over a rise of ice, they saw not far off a little black dot on the snow which they thought might be bear or seal. With gun in hand they crept along slowly and watchfully, and soon they got close enough to see that there was a little man, an Eskimo, armed with a spear and bow and arrows and with four or five dogs and a rough little sled, something like Johnny's sled, but with runners made of frozen salmon. At first he appeared

rather afraid of them, but they soon made signs to him that they were friends and were lost and very hungry. With a grin which showed his white teeth he pointed to his runners, and borrowing Tommy's knife, he clipped a piece off of them for each of them and handed it back with the knife; Tommy knew that he ought not to eat with his knife, but he was so hungry that he thought it would be overlooked. Having breakfasted on frozen runner, they were fortunate enough to make the Eskimo understand that they wanted to find a polar bear. He made signs to them to follow him and he would guide them where they would find one. "Can you shoot?" he asked, making a sign with his bow and arrow.

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"Can we shoot!" laughed both Tommy and Johnny. "Watch us. See that big green piece of ice there?" They pointed at an ice-peak near by. "Well, watch us!" And first Johnny and then Tommy blazed away at it, and the way the icicles came clattering down satisfied them. They wished all that trip that the ice-peak had been a bear. So they followed him, and a great guide he was. He showed them how to avoid the rough places in the ice-fields, and, in fact, seemed quite as much at home in that waste of ice and snow as Johnny was back in town.

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He always kept near the coast, he said, as he could find both bear and seal there. They had reached a very rough place, when, as they were going along, he stopped suddenly and pointed far off across the ice. Neither Tommy nor Johnny could see anything except ice and snow, try as they might. But they understood from his excitement that somewhere in the distance was a seal or possibly even a polar bear and, gun in hand, with beating hearts, they followed him as he stole carefully through the ice-peaks, working his way along, and every now and then cautioning them to stoop so as not to be seen.

So they crept along until they reached the foot of a high ridge of ice piled up below a long ledge of black rock which seemed to rise out of the frozen sea. Up this they worked their way, stooping low, the guide in front, clutching his bow and arrow, Johnny next, clutching his gun, and Tommy behind, clutching his, each treading in the other's tracks. Suddenly, as he neared the top, the guide dropped flat on the snow. Johnny followed his example and Tommy did the same. They knew that they must be close to the bear and they held their breath; for the guide, having examined his bow and arrows carefully, began to wriggle along on his stomach. Johnny and Tommy wriggled along behind him, clutching their guns. Just at the top of the ledge the guide quietly slipped an arrow out of his quiver and held it in his hand, as he slowly raised his head and peeped over. Johnny and Tommy, guns in hand, crept up beside him to peep also. At that instant, however, before Tommy could see anything, the guide sprang to his feet. "Whiz," by Tommy's ear went an arrow at a great white object towering above them at the entrance of what seemed a sort of cave, and two more arrows followed it, whizzing by his ear so quickly that they were all three sticking in deep before Tommy took in that the object was a great white polar bear, with his head turned from them, in the act of going in the cave. As the arrows struck him, he twisted himself and bit savagely at them, breaking off all but one, which was lodged back of his shoulder. As he reared up on his hind legs and tried to get at this arrow, he seemed to Tommy as high as the great wardrobe at home. Tommy, however, had no time to do much thinking, for in twisting around the bear caught sight of them. As he turned toward them, the guide with a yell that sounded like "Look out!" dodged behind, but both Tommy and Johnny threw up their guns and pulled the trigger. What was their horror to find that they both had forgotten to load their guns after showing the guide how they could shoot. The next second, with jaws wide open, the bear made a dash for them. Tommy's heart leapt into his throat. He glanced around to see if he could run and climb a tree, for he knew that grizzlies could not climb, and he hoped that polar bears could not climb either, while Tommy prided himself on climbing and had often climbed the apple-tree in the pasture at home; but there was not a tree or a shrub in sight, and all he saw was the little guide running for life and disappearing behind an ice-peak.

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"Run, Johnny!" cried Tommy, and, "Run, Tommy!" cried Johnny at the same moment. But they had no time to run, for the next second the bear was upon them, his eyes glaring, his great teeth gleaming, his huge jaws wide open, from which came a growl that shook the ice under their feet. As the bear sprang for them Johnny was more directly in his way, but, happily, his foot slipped from under him and he fell flat on his back just as the bear lit, or he would have been crushed instantly. Even as it was, he was stunned and lay quite still under the bear, which for the moment seemed to be dazed. Either he could not tell what had become of Johnny, or else he could not make up his mind whether to eat Johnny up at once or to leave him and catch Tommy first and then eat them both together. He seemed to decide on the latter, for, standing up, he fixed his eyes on Tommy and took a step across Johnny's prostrate body, with his mouth open wider than before, his eyes glaring more fiercely, and with a roar and a growl that made the ice-peaks shed a shower of icicles. Then it was that Tommy seemed to have become a different boy. In fact, no sooner had Johnny gone down than Tommy forgot all about himself and his own safety, and thought only of Johnny and how he could save him. And, oh, how sorry he was that he had let Johnny carry all the ammunition, even though it was heavy! For his gun was empty and Johnny had every cartridge. Tommy was never so scared in all his life. He tried to cry out, but his throat was parched, so he began to say his prayers, and remembering what Santa Claus had said about boys who asked only for themselves, he tried to pray for Johnny.

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What was their horror to find that they both had forgotten to load their guns.

At this moment happened what appeared almost a miracle. By Tommy dashed a little hairy ball and flew at the bear like a tiger; and there was Sate, a part of his rope still about his neck, clinging to the bear for life. The bear deliberately stopped and looked around as if he were too surprised to move; but Sate's teeth were in him, and then the efforts of the bear to catch him were really funny. He snapped and snarled and snarled and snapped; but Sate was artful enough to dodge him, and the bear's huge paws simply beat the air and knocked up the snow. Do what he might, he could not touch Sate. Finally the bear did what bears always do when bees settle on them when they are robbing their hives—he began to roll over and over, and the more he rolled the more he tied himself up in the rope around Sate. As he rolled away from Johnny, Tommy dashed forward and picked up Johnny's gun, coolly loaded it, loading it right, too, and, springing forward, raised the gun to his shoulder. The bear, however, rolled so rapidly that Tommy was afraid he might shoot Sate, and before he could fire, the bear, with Sate still clinging to him, rolled inside the mouth of the cave. Tommy was in despair. At this moment, however, he heard a sound, and there was Johnny just getting on his feet. He had never been so glad to see any one.

"Where is the bear?" asked Johnny, looking around, still a little dazed. Tommy pointed to the cave.

"In there, with Sate tied to him."

"We must save him," said Johnny.

Carefully dividing the ammunition now, both boys loaded their guns, and hurrying down the icy slope, carefully approached the mouth of the cave, guns in hand, in case the bear should appear.

Inside it was so dark that they could at first see nothing, but they could hear the sound of the struggle going on between Sate and the bear. Suddenly Sate changed his note and gave a little cry as of pain. At the sound of his distress Tommy forgot himself.

"Follow me!" he cried. "He is choking!" and not waiting even to look behind to see whether Johnny was with him, he dashed forward into the cave, gun in hand, thinking only to save Sate. Stumbling and slipping, he kept on, and turning a corner there right in front of him were the two eyes of the bear, glaring in the darkness like coals of fire. Pushing boldly up and aiming straight between the two eyes, Tommy pulled the trigger. With a growl which mingled with the sound of the gun, the bear made a spring for him and fell right at his feet, rolled up in a great ball. Happily for Sate, he lit just on top of the ball. Tommy whipped out his knife and cut the cord from about Sate's throat, and had him in his arms when Johnny came up.

The next thing was to skin the bear, and this the boys expected to find as hard work as ever even Johnny had done; but, fortunately, the bear had been so surprised at Tommy's courage and skill in aiming that when the bullet hit him he had almost jumped out of his skin. So, after they had worked a little while, the skin came off quite easily. What surprised Johnny was that it was

all tanned, but Tommy had always rather thought that bears wore their skin tanned on the inside and lined, too. The next thing was to have a dinner of bear-meat, for, as Tommy well remembered, all bear-hunters ate bear-steaks. They were about to go down to the shore to hunt along for driftwood, when, their eyes becoming accustomed to the darkness, they found a pile of wood in the corner of the cave, which satisfied them that at some time in the past this cave had been used by robbers or pirates, who probably had been driven away by this great bear, or possibly might even have been eaten up by him. 88

At first they had some little difficulty in making a fire, as their matches, warranted water-proof, had all got damp when Tommy fell into the water—an incident I forgot to mention; but after trying and trying, the tinder caught from the flint and they quickly had a fine fire crackling in a corner of the cave, and here they cooked bear-steak and had the finest dinner they had had since they came into the Arctic Regions. They were just thinking of going after the dogs and the sleds, when up came the dogs dragging the sleds behind them, and without a word, pitched in to make a hearty meal of bear-meat themselves. It seemed as if they had got a whiff of the fresh steak and pulled the sleds loose from the ice points to which they were fastened. They were not, however, allowed to eat in any peace until they had all recognized that Sate was the hero of this bear fight, for he gave himself as many airs as though he had not only got the bear, but had shot and skinned it. 89

It was at this moment that the Eskimo guide came back, jabbering with delight, and with his white teeth shining, just as if he had been as brave as Sate. At first, Tommy and Johnny were inclined to be very cold to him and pointed their fingers at him as a coward, but when he said he had only one arrow left and had wanted that to get a sealskin coat for Tommy's mother, and, as he had the sealskin coat, they could not contradict him, but graciously gave him, in exchange for the coat, the bear-meat which the dogs had not eaten. 90

Having packed everything on the sled carefully, with the sealskin coat on top of the pack and the bear's fur on top of that, and having bid their Eskimo friend good-by, they turned their backs on the North Pole and struck out for home.

They had hardly started, however, when the sound of sleigh-bells reached them, coming from far over the snow, and before they could tell where it was, who should appear, sailing along over the ice-peaks, but Santa Claus himself, in his own sleigh, all packed with Christmas things, his eight reindeer shining in the moonlight and his bells jingling merrily. Such a shout as he gave when he found that they had actually got the bear and had the robe to show for it! It did them good; and both Tommy and Johnny vied with each other in telling what the other had done. Santa Claus was so pleased that he made them both get in his sleigh to tell him about it. He let Sate get in too, and snuggle down right at their feet. Johnny's box-sled he hitched on behind. The dogs were turned loose. At first Tommy feared they might get lost, but Santa Claus said they would soon find their way home. 91

"In fact," he said with a wink, "you have not been so far away as you think. Now tell me all about it," he said. So Tommy began to tell him, beginning at the very beginning when Johnny took him on his sled. But he had only got as far as the sofa, when he fell asleep, and he never knew how he got back home. When he waked up he was in bed. 92

He never could recall exactly what happened. Afterward he recalled Santa Claus saying to him, "You must show me where Johnny lives, for I'm afraid I forgot him last Christmas." Then he remembered that once he heard Santa Claus calling to him in a whisper, "Tommy Trot, Tommy Trot," and though he was very sleepy he raised himself up to find Santa Claus standing up in the sled in Johnny's backyard, with Johnny fast asleep in his arms; and that Santa Claus said to him, "I want to put Johnny in bed without waking him up, and I want you to follow me, and put these things which I have piled up here on the sled you made for him, in his stocking by the fire." He remembered that at a whistle to the deer they sprang with a bound to the roof, the sled sailing behind them; but how he got down he never could recall, and he never knew how he got back home. 93



Santa Claus said to him, "I want to put Johnny in bed without waking him up."

When he waked next morning there was the polar bearskin which he and Johnny had brought back with them, not to mention the sealskin coat, and though Johnny, when he next saw him, was too much excited at first by his new sled and the fine fresh cow which his mother had found in her cow-house that morning, to talk about anything else, yet, when he and his mother came over after breakfast to see Tommy's father and thank him for something, they said that Santa Claus had paid them a visit such as he never had paid before, and they brought with them Johnny's goats, which they insisted on giving Tommy as a Christmas present. So Tommy Trot knew that Santa Claus had got his letter.

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Transcriber's Note:

The page numbers in the list of [Illustrations](#) have been changed to match their position in this ebook.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK TOMMY TROT'S VISIT TO SANTA CLAUS ***

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