

Dossie was waiting on the verandah, all unharmed as yet, although the flames had leapt the drive width.

Maurice lifted her to his saddle.

"You must ride astride," he said. "I'll lead him. He will not carry a lady."

"You walk! Ah, no, Maurice! Let me!" she cried.

Maurice shook his head. He felt half stupified with the smoke. The cool of the night air was soothing to his burnt arms and face—vaguely he dreaded the pain that the heat would bring into them.

But there was Dossie to save—soon it would be impossible.

So, for the last time, the blinding, sickening smoke was faced. But progress was slow this time—very slow—and Royal was not so obedient as when his master was in the saddle. After a few minutes Maurice noticed with dismay that Dossie seemed quite stupified.

He had to hold her in the saddle and let Royal go his own way through the almost impenetrable smoke.

The flying sparks caught the flimsy muslin of Dossie's hat. Maurice threw it away. Her hair blazed. Maurice took off his coat and crushed out the flames—and his shirt-sleeves flared up and went out.

His arms ached intolerably, and Dossie was quite senseless, but somehow safety was reached at last.

As Maurice stood on the verge of the fire, a big drop of water splashed on to his up-turned face.

Another fell, and another. Soon a steady rain was falling.

The drought had broken—the country was saved.

Maurice muttered a thanksgiving as with his last remnant of strength he lifted Dossie from the saddle, and laid her on the parched grass.

He had a vague idea that he ought to find some water, but before he could move something in his brain seemed to snap, and he fell beside her.

And so they found them lying, side by side, in the drenching rain—Dossie with her white, wet face turned towards Maurice, and he with one badly-burnt arm thrown protectingly around her.

By their side stood a shivering, spiritless, scorched horse, which they found hard to recognize as the fiery-tempered Royal who had started on the mad journey only a few short hours before.

Dossie soon revived, and remembered little of that dreadful ride—Royal also was soon himself again. The new growth of hair made him forget even the horrors of that night-mare journey, but Maurice was ill for many weeks.

The rain did not come in time to save "Toi-Toi," and but for the boy's pluck several lives must inevitably have been lost.

But Maurice had not neglected the opportunity of doing something great that had come to him, and of all the heroes of that dread time few could surpass Maurice Cheriton—ex-Ted Brown—the Milk-cart Boy!

NOTE.—The incidents related in this story actually occurred.

