

two miles. What a narrow, dangerous hill! But the cottages are very pretty— Oh, Frank, stop, *stop!* There’s a child, I’m sure it’s a child—by the wall over there!”

Dr. Travers jammed on his brakes and brought the car to a stop. A little
210 stream ran down by the road in a shallow stone culvert,¹³ and half in the water lay something that looked, in the dusk, like a pile of clothes—or was it the body of a child? Mrs. Travers was out of the car in a flash, but her husband was quicker.

“Don’t touch her, Emily!” he said sharply. “She’s been hit. Can’t be more than a few minutes. Remember that truck that overtook us half a mile back, speeding like the devil? Here, quick, go into that cottage and phone for an ambulance. The girl’s in a bad way. I’ll stay here and do what I can to stop the bleeding. Don’t waste a minute.”

Doctors are expert at stopping dangerous bleeding, for they know the
220 right places to press. This Dr. Travers was able to do, but he didn’t dare do more; the girl was lying in a queerly crumpled heap, and he guessed she had a number of bones broken and that it would be highly dangerous to move her. He watched her with great concentration, wondering where the truck had got to and what other damage it had done.

Mrs. Travers was very quick. She had seen plenty of accident cases and knew the importance of speed. The first cottage she tried had a phone; in four minutes she was back, and in six an ambulance was wailing down the hill.

Its attendants lifted the child onto a stretcher as carefully as if she were
230 made of fine thistledown.¹⁴ The ambulance sped off to Plymouth—for the local cottage hospital did not take serious accident cases—and Dr. Travers went down to the police station to report what he had done.

He found that the police already knew about the speeding truck—which had suffered from loss of brakes and ended up with its radiator halfway through the post-office wall. The driver was concussed¹⁵ and shocked, but the police thought he was the only person injured—until Dr. Travers told his tale.

At half-past nine that night Aunt Rebecca Hoskins was sitting by her fire thinking aggrieved thoughts about the inconsiderateness¹⁶
240 of nieces who were asked to supper and never turned up, when she was startled by a neighbor, who burst in, exclaiming, “Have you heard about Sandy Pengelly, then, Mrs. Hoskins? Terrible thing, poor little soul, and

13. **culvert** (kŭl'vɜrt): a gutter or tunnel that runs along or under a road.

14. **thistledown** (thɪs'əl-dəʊn): the soft, fluffy part of a thistle, a plant with a prickly stem and purple flowers.

15. **concussed** (kən-kŭsd'): suffering from a concussion, an injury that results from being struck in the head.

16. **aggrieved thoughts about the inconsiderateness**: offended feelings over the thoughtlessness.