

## HOW BILLY WENT UP IN THE WORLD.

BY ANNETTE L. SOBLE.

## SHARED AND SCREGGILING.—Continued.

The winter went swiftly by, then the Easter holidays came and passed. Billy had made excellent progress in his studies; had become a great favorite with scholars, and teachers, and even with Doctor Higbee. He had found time, over and above his daily tasks, to attend a few lectures on popular science and literature, and he had begun a systematic course of reading.

During the spring holidays Billy was at work on the farm, and so saw nothing of Ned; but when he came back to school, he guessed by the sullen, uncommunicative manner of his room-mate, that his vacation had been worse than unprofitable. He knew nothing for certain, however, until he one day encountered Uncle Zeph in a deserted classroom. The old man drew him into a corner, and whispered:

"I did something the other night that I can't do again—no, never! I did it partly out of liking for you, and partly because the other fellow is as civil and as nice a one, in the main, as ever I saw in the 'Academy.'"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean Fenton," returned Uncle Zeph, solemnly shaking his head. "I'll tell you how 'twas. The boys all know that the last thing at night I see to the fires. Well, the last day of school I run 'em sort of low, but the fire in the biggest heater didn't go out until next day; so I let it be, locked up, and went way until night; then I came around to see if everything was right, and no danger nor nothing. It was after eleven before I started for home; and just as I got to the front hall, ready to leave the building, there came the awful banging on the door, and then something tumbled against it. I was kind of scart, but I opened and peeked out. As I did it a feller took to his heels down the gravel walk, leaving another one in a heap on the top door step. If you'll believe it, there was Ned Fenton, drunk! Such a thing never happened in these here halls of learning ne-er! I couldn't seem to believe my own eyes. He could stagger up stairs leaning on me, and he did, tho' we took a pretty considerable time, and I preached temperance lectures on every landing, all out o' breath as I naturally was, and he only sense enough to take me to a prayer-meeting, and a saying: 'Amen, for a very blessed sentence. I got him onto his bed, and I dar'n't leave him for the night, to go to fooling, maybe, later, with matches or a kerosene lamp; so I rolled myself into your place and dozed. He slept like a log; but when morning come you never saw a fellow madder at himself or meeker to hear reason. He begged me never to tell a human being unless it was you. He didn't excuse himself or tell whose legs them was that I saw clipping down the front walk, but I knew them for Stan Ellery's all the same."

"Now, ain't this here awful? It never must happen again! What'd the trustees say to me for helping drunken fellers to bed! The reputation of the 'institution' can't suffer in that sort of a way."

Billy was not so anxious about the "institution," as he was shocked at Ned's behavior. Uncle Zeph, perceiving this in a moment, added: "Yes, you may well groan; and that wasn't the worst of it, either. Ned wanted to stay in his room until noon, he said. His head ached and he had some things to do; so I left him and came back to look up. It was climbing the stairs when I heard light steps behind me and the softest voiced, mildest faced lady, with a worried little tremble in her way of speaking. She says to me: 'Is my son in his room? I mean Ned Fenton?'"

"I says: 'He was, but now perhaps he's gone.'"

"He stayed here all night last night, didn't he?"

"Yes marm, but I heard him say he was going home to-day."

"Certainly he is—the foolish fellow, to stay here poring over his books. I presume," says she, "that he was so interested in some study he never remembered it was vacation. His father was just about as absorbed when he was over his sermons."

"Well, when we got up, sure enough, Ned was there, washed and tidied up ready to go. They left the door wide open and I could hear her kind of lovingly scolding him for studying too hard, and telling how late she sat up for him the night before. She went looking all about his room, laughing at the

contrivances, and showing just how proud she was of him. She said she was glad to hear from one of the teachers what a steady feller you was, for she didn't want her boy daily exposed to evil companionship. Ned spoke up, and says he: 'Billy Knox is worth a dozen chaps like me.' She only laughed at that, like a young girl."

"It is a wretched business," said Billy, sadly, "and what to do I cannot tell. He must stop or be stopped, but how?"

"There was a loud call in the hall for Uncle Zeph, who departed, first exclaiming: "You may well ask 'how!'"

That night Billy had one more long talk with Ned, who promised to do anything and everything in the way of thorough reform. He was humble and sorry, ashamed and melancholy; but Billy rightly judged that, pliable as he was in his hands, just so easily turned would be in Stan Ellery's. Anew he resolved to watch over him for good; but what sort of a manhood would that be which must be kept from evil by an outside human power, because before evil it would surely fall?

The spring went by, and there remained only three more weeks of the last term. Ned had applied himself to study for a number of months, and worked until late into each night. He made up so many of his neglected back tasks, that it seemed possible for him to enter college in the class he had earlier meant to join; at least it would be possible, after some work done in vacation.

## A STRUGGLE ENDED.

One Friday night Ned Fenton insisted on taking Billy home with him for a brief visit. The fine old homestead belonging to his mother's father was only five miles from the town, and Billy had accepted his invitation with satisfaction and a desire to see a place of which he had heard considerably. It was a larger house and more elegant than Billy had supposed it to be. Mrs. Fenton was very polite, in a hearty, sincere way, and old Mr. Holmes seemed so genial he soon felt at ease. The pictures of foreign buildings, the fine library, and the beautiful conservatory, were of great interest to him. Ned could not have treated a most distinguished guest with more attention, while the fact that Ned liked him was reason enough for his securing the good opinion of every person about the establishment. This visit has no particular significance as a part of our story, but one little thing pleased Billy at the time, and was never afterwards forgotten.

In the evening, by bright moonlight, they strolled out for a walk about the grounds.

"Grandfather approves of you," said Ned, lightly: "he never shows his coat-of-arms to people he does not care to please as well as to instruct; for of course it is only to you to learn our pedigrees."

"Well, a coat-of-arms is a fine thing, though I have seen the time a coat for my arms was much more to the purpose. Your grandfather is a splendid looking old gentleman."

"Yes, he has backbone literally and figuratively. If he knew the flabbiness of his grandson, he would appoint you his guardian, from this time forth. What am I going to do without you, Billy? In a few days you go one way, and I another."

"I have done you no real good. If your backbone were any stiffer for having known me, that would be something."

"You have given me a good example of pluck and principle. I have resolved to try and stand on my own feet—to 'pray devoutly and hammer away stoutly,' as Sancho Panza says."

"Really to do both?" asked Billy.

"Yes—both," returned Ned, soberly. "He had never before promised to pray; neither had he ever talked with Billy of religious matters. He always listened to any word on them from him respectfully, although he knew all that any one could say; so to-night, Billy only grasped his hand a moment, then they wandered on in the soft evening light."

The whole family urged Billy to stay over Sunday; but he declined, wishing to spend that time at the farm. He was back at the Academy promptly Monday morning; but not so was Fenton, whose non-appearance during the day caused his roommate some anxiety. In the early evening he came; his face was flushed, and his eyes very red. He smiled faintly at Billy's first unguarded look of suspicion, and sinking into a chair, said:

"I came straight from home, and I have

not eaten a mouthful to-day; but I have drunk unlimited ice water and lemonade. My head aches outrageously. I walked into town, hoping I should feel better, but I don't."

"You might as well have stayed at home until morning. Perhaps a night's sleep would have brought you out all right," said Billy, who was about going to Doctor Higbee's office. "Don't go digging into Greek," he called back, as he went down the hall. A dismal groan was Ned's only reply.

No books were on the table when Billy returned, and Ned was in bed, but not asleep. He said he had a chill after Billy left him, but now he had, evidently, much fever. Neither of them knew anything about sickness; but when Billy saw how much redder Ned's face had become, and how bright were his eyes, he proposed to him that he should return and get Doctor Higbee. To this Ned would not hear; and so, after rendering his room-mate such small services as he permitted, Billy fell asleep, and after a hard day's work, slept soundly. It was six o'clock in the morning when he awakened. The sunshine filled the room, and his first thought was that the merry warble of bird-song had startled him out of sleep; but no—Ned, erect in bed, was violently gesticulating and talking rapidly of his mother and a pyramid. It must be lifted off her head, but nobody would help him do it. Then, as Billy stared at him in dismay, he shouted with laughter, and would have leaped toward the door.

Billy, with a struggle urged him back into bed, and pounded loudly with his fists on the wall, calling to the inmates of the next room for help. For a moment or two, their neighbors supposed them engaged in some riotous sport; but at last Billy made them understand he needed them. As soon as they came in, they agreed that Billy should go at once for the doctor, while they remained with Fenton. Accordingly, he hurried over to the office, and knowing Doctor Higbee's peculiarities, would not return without him.

"Been off on a spree, I presume," grumbled the old fellow, stamping up the worn stairs.

"No, he has not. I know how he has spent every hour for weeks," returned Billy, following the doctor into the room. Ned paid no attention to the latter, save once to cry out, as with pain, when he laid his hand over his scalp. The doctor examined him carefully, and Billy who, by this time, was well able to read the old man's face, and guess at his opinions, understood that Ned's case was a serious one, even in this early stage. When the doctor spoke at last, he turned to Billy, saying:

"His pulse is a hundred and sixty."

"Can he be moved—be taken home?"

"No! You must send for his mother, and she must have a strong man nurse."

"Can't I do what a man would be needed for?" asked Billy.

"With any of us fellows to take our turn?" added the others, in a breath.

"Well to begin with, you can try; but you must keep this part of the building perfectly quiet. His hearing will be morbidly acute, and loud noises will be agony to him; slight ones almost unendurable."

"What ails him, doctor?" Billy ventured to inquire.

"An acute cerebral trouble. You must not leave him a moment; he will have all sorts of hallucinations, and you must keep him from injuring himself until the delirium becomes more subdued, as it will, with the advance of the disease."

"How long will the disease run?"

"Perhaps two weeks, or three—perhaps not half as long. Now, some of you fellows go get things into shape. Clear out these upper rooms, anybody who will make the least noise. There must be no tramping through halls, no whispering outside the doors. You might as well know that Fenton will have a hard fight for life."

Morton and Bridges, the two friends, went out softly, leaving Billy with the doctor, who turned then to him, and asked:

"Has he been drinking?"

"Not for two or three months; but he has studied very closely, by night and day, to make up for what he lost in the winter."

"Well he is in for it now; but keep his mother cool, if you can. She will naturally worry to have him moved home; but it can't be done, or thought of. Get her here at once."

It was a rare thing for the doctor to stay

with his patients, but he remained with Ned half the forenoon, and until his mother came; then, when he went, it was to return at regular and not infrequent intervals. Such strange nights and days those were that followed. By Billy only, would Ned let himself be controlled and that settled the question of a nurse. The other boys were as kind as brothers could have been. Mrs. Fenton was not a woman who had to be "kept cool," for, from the moment she entered the room, with her face colorless from fear, she was as calm and self-restrained as if she had known all Ned's danger.

At first Ned talked incessantly of Greek, of Latin, of skating, of terrible dangers he could not escape; sometimes confusing the struggle against evil, with literal fights against present enemies; often repeating the very phrases used in some past discussion, which Billy well remembered. Gradually the wildness of his delirium passed away, and he would lie for short intervals quiet, in the dim light of the silent room. He recognized his mother and smiled; to Billy, he murmured short sentences that seemed not without connection and thought. That last moonlight Saturday night seemed constantly in his mind, and always associated with some "help to the uttermost, you know you said," he would whisper to Billy.

Doctor Higbee brought all his skill to bear on the case, in a way that more than once recalled to Billy, Uncle Zeph's account of his peculiarities; but he was so quiet, he blustered so little, and joked so seldom, that his gravity was ominous.

There came a time when Ned, to his mother's intense relief, fell into profound slumbers, and, on awakening, was apparently perfectly aware of their presence—able to listen to them and reply. She assured Billy that this sleep must certainly work for his recovery; but it began to seem to the other watchers much like stupor. One midnight they heard him mutter:

"I pray—I pray!"

"For what, my son?" said his mother, bending low over the bed. He waited before he could get up slowly: "If I should die—before I wake—my soul to take."

"He is wandering a little and remembering a child's prayer," she explained to Billy; and then, at the latter's urgent request, she went away for a brief rest. In the morning she said it seemed so good to have Ned quiet, but she did not see what Doctor Higbee showed to Billy: the paralysis of the eyelids, the low, irregular pulse, in short the coming on of complete insensibility. She waited for hours, expecting him to awake; and at last the doctor had to tell her, as gently as he could, that all consciousness was gone, and almost all life from the boy who was her idol. Her grief was as the grief of all mothers with their dead; and to Billy it was infinitely touching. The little that he could do for her, he did, so tenderly, that she trusted him to carry out all her wishes.

No funeral could have been simpler or more solemn. The services were held in the great school-room, and two hundred schoolmates followed with uncovered heads the coffin, carried down the long avenue, under the budding trees. It was all as unreal as a dream to one of them. He could shut out the sight of these black badges, and hear Ned's voice in their sunny room as he sang some gay college song, or he could see him with bent head, as he sat melancholy after some confession of wrong doing. He could not think of his body, cold and motionless, his soul gone away out of all earthly temptation, out of all struggle. The poor lad had truly struggled, and Billy was glad that he could remember tears and promises and prayers; for if he pitied and loved the erring boy; was not God more pitiful? Perhaps it was in purest mercy God had sent the blow on his mother; for it may be that death, not life, could best save her son. Sooner or later her heart might have been wrung by his weakness and backslidings; now she would always keep him in her memory as in her loving ignorance she fancied him to have been.

Billy wondered if it were wrong to be sincerely glad that very few people knew of poor Ned's failings and follies, and that those few would be likely to guard their secret.

There was only one week more of the school term after Ned's death; a fact for which Billy was very grateful. He was overwrought, and needed rest, after a year of overstudy and the recent drain on his