

## HOW BILLY WENT UP IN THE WORLD.

BY ANNETTE L. NOBLE.  
A NEW IMPULSE.

All went well with Billy in the very first weeks at the academy. His work at Doctor Higley's stable was not at all burdensome, and there were as yet no other tasks about the house to perform. In school he easily acquired the good will of the teachers and of his fellow-students. His room-mate was a tall, delicate fellow, with such refined, quiet ways that he made Billy feel at first shy and awkward; but Ned Fenton put on no airs of superiority. He frankly admired Billy's "muscle." He added his finer contributions to the furniture of their room without any parade; and after a little good-natured rallery at Prissy's taste in bed-quills, won Billy's favor. Ned was the only son of a clergyman's widow. He was cared for and educated by his wealthy grandmother, with whom his mother, who had been left poor, made her home. He had never been strong, so he had become rather self-indulgent. Billy could hardly think him lazy; yet when not, as he frequently was, excited by fun making, or interested in the pursuit, most congenial to his tastes, Ned seemed to dread exertion, mental or physical. He would lie in bed in the morning until an hour which Billy thought ridiculously late; then would get up with an abused, dogged air, half assumed and comical, half real and felt. The next thing in order was the making of his strong coffee of which he drank inordinately; then he was ready for study. When Billy left him, at an early hour in the evening, he had usually disposed of his lessons—for he learned rapidly—and was deep in some old book or new magazine. It seemed to his simple room-mate that Ned had read every book known in literature; and he looked up to him as to a superior intellect. In fact, young Fenton had good literary taste; he had also a quick, sensitive mind, appreciative of the best, if not powerful in all its workings.

It was a rule of the Academy that every student on the "fourth story" should attend some church on Sunday morning. It was old Uncle Zeph's duty to see that every fellow was out of his room by half-past ten. Very few attempted to cheat him, and fewer succeeded in so doing; but occasionally boys who were not in their rooms on Sunday were not to church.

From the first Billy had, according to his promise made to Mrs. Ellery, gone regularly to the church which Nan attended, and he also entered a Sunday-school class. He might not have done this last unsolicited, but as he stood in the church vestibule, after the morning service one Sunday, a gentleman asked him into a Bible class. He found a little to his surprise, Ned Fenton seated in the class, as if he had long belonged there. It was evident that the latter was at home in such places. He answered readily questions on matters of religious belief and practice, when the other members of the class seemed, like Billy, unable to bring much of an answer out of any inner experience, or promptly to compose one from thoughtful observation. This puzzled Billy somewhat, but he reflected that Ned was a minister's son, and must have heard much discussion of religious topics.

Billy's evenings were usually spent in the doctor's office, but this Sunday evening he was at liberty. After supper he said to Ned, who was idly drumming on the window-pane.

"What are you going to do to-night?"

"I don't know. Do you like hymn-singing?"

"That depends. I like some hymns and some singing—my own not much, and yours not at all."

"Humph! Ever go to a gospel meeting?"

"Why, I suppose so. I never went to any other sort."

"I'll wager you have. Well, there's one held by the Young Men's Christian Association, in a hall in Cleaver Street. We'll go."

"Why isn't it in a church?"

"Oh, it is to draw in folks that might not go into a church. They sing well; that is the reason I go sometimes." Ned spoke in a very indifferent tone; but he began to pat on his coat, so Billy arose and followed him.

The "gospel meeting" was like many others held all over the land but it had some new features to Billy. He liked the easy,

informal exercises, the frequent singing by all the people of the inspiring hymns. He had always attended church, because the Ellery family did so, and he considered it right and becoming; but he had never been consciously moved out of his peace of mind by any sermon ever heard.

This night, toward the end of the meeting, his attention wandered, and he was reviewing a certain mathematical problem, when a plain faced, quiet man began to talk, as if he were urging something deeply felt by himself on some one hearer in whom he was personally interested. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" that was his message: for like a message it came slowly and solemnly to Billy. At first he listened because the man meant what he said; then because the man's meaning held him. There was a God. He had always said he believed it; but had he ever realized the awful thought of God and himself, one in relation to the other? Never! God had a kingdom, and reigned in heaven—yes, Billy had calmly accepted that; but he reigned in some human hearts—of that he had not reasoned. As the man told of that reign—that it meant active love; fervent toward the heavenly Father, helpful toward every human creature—meant pardon of sin, help in temptation, a light on all life, an indescribable, wistful sadness took hold of Billy. He had felt it more faintly just once before. It was that spring morning when a tender sunshine rested on the earth, and he, sitting desolate in the old doorway peered in where he could see the white apple blossom around little white Ben; and there stirred in him regret, a sense of something sweet and pure that he was missing. Then he only dully knew that he could not enter that kingdom, which the neighbors whispered about as the home of the child. That, as a result of that longing, he took a long step towards better things by going to the farmer, he was not aware. But to-night, when the man dwelt on the words, "Seek ye," Billy clearly felt that a call had come to him which he must deliberately comply with, or as deliberately refuse. He had not lived these last years in a Christian family without learning, intellectually, what was meant by a Christian life; but, until now, he had never in his heart asked:

"What is my life? What do I want it to be? What ought it to be?"

He looked at Ned, and saw him yawn, as if a little weary of the speaker. The man, and his words, so affected Billy, he had supposed he must be holding everyone's attention.

"They won't sing any more to amount to anything. Let us go," whispered Ned, as the speaker sat down.

Billy felt a sudden desire to get away from the place—perhaps from its influence, and he went out without remonstrance.

"Rather dull to-night; they often are," said Ned, as they sauntered home in the clear starlight.

His companion made no response, he was lost in thought. They soon passed a little shop, half a restaurant, half confectioner's, and Ned stopped before the lighted window.

"Hold on a minute, Knox. I am awfully thirsty. I'll have a glass of beer; don't you want one?"

"No; I'll walk on," returned Billy. "Very well; I'll overtake you. I like beer; I ought to have been a Dutchman. I'll have a keg for home consumption, if it wasn't against Academy rules."

Billy hardly heard him. He had seen so many noisy rum-holes, that this quiet spot in the pretty town did not seem to him very objectionable. He walked along under the trees until Ned caught up with him again.

"Don't you ever drink beer?" he asked, a little curiously.

"No."

"You don't think it wrong, do you?"

"Your words brought up on it, were you?"

"In a parson's family? No indeed!"

"Well, I was not either, but my nursery was a sort of a beer garden, as you might say. My father drank—anything—everything but water; and beer was to him, when he couldn't get whiskey, what bread is to a fellow who can't get meat. My mother was good as gold, but all the other women in the tenement house guzzled beer incessantly. They were always slapping along the pavement in slipshod old shoes, a dirty shawl over their heads, and a broken-nosed pitcher in their hands after beer—beer. When their hungry young ones yelled they made

them sleepy with it, and when these young ones grew a little older they spent their own pennies with it. I was in the beer business myself once. There was an old hag in a collar near our street, who took me into partnership. I used to go around with a tin pail, getting slops and dregs from the bottom of the beer casks at doors when they were sending them to be refilled. She gave me a few coppers, and made much more by peddling this stuff for half the price of the better article. I think I got enough of beer in those days."

Billy's tone was not in the least vehement, or like one who lectures another. He seemed coolly accounting for a personal peculiarity. He had forgotten the whole conversation when they reached home; but he was not in a lively mood. Usually he liked to talk; so Ned, finding him preoccupied, took a book and was soon lost in its contents. About eleven o'clock, the latter, looking up, saw him still gazing at the one picture that adorned their walls, but not as if greatly interested in it.

"What are you thinking about, old fellow? I thought you had gone to bed."

"Fenton, you are a—you ought to know about all these things, if you are a minister's son. Now, about how much must a body dismount on that man's talk to-night?"

"What man's talk?" was Ned's bewildered question.

"The one who talked about 'seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness,' and did it every bit as earnestly as if he was selling western land, and expected to make something out of you and me."

"Why, he meant it, of course. He's a kind of city missionary, who comes here occasionally."

"And you believe every word he says?"

"Why, yes—all that I can remember of what he said to-night."

"Then, why are you not doing something; or why haven't you done something about it?"

"What on earth are you talking about?" asked Ned, tossing his book aside and facing Billy.

"If it is all true, why are you not a Christian?"

"Are you one yourself?"

"No."

Ned dashed a little, glanced at Billy, and remarked—

"I am—a member of the church."

"A Christian?" asked Billy, so quickly that Ned was forced to reply.

"Of course—I suppose so."

"I should think you'd know what you were."

It was impossible to take offense where none was meant; and as Billy's voice was full of curiosity, Ned said:

"If you had been brought up as I have been, perhaps you would not be able to tell what you had found out for yourself from what people had told you about everything religious. You don't want any beer, because you had so much around you when you were young. I don't listen with great enthusiasm to every sermon, for I've heard ten thousand odd in the course of my life."

"You believe in them?" persisted Billy.

"Yes, certainly."

"There was a long silence after that, but at last it was broken by Ned, who arose, and stretching himself, said lazily:

"I haven't much backbone, I can tell you in the outset. You'll not think much of me in the long run. I always do what I feel like doing."

Billy said nothing, and soon there was silence and darkness in the old Academy; but one boy was not asleep. It was characteristic of Billy to look at issues squarely, and to act, if he saw the time had come for action. He went over and over the late sermon, and at last there, in the darkness, reverently, with full purpose of heart to "seek" that kingdom learned of, he prayed in the very words given him by poor old granny: "Teach me to do thy will: for thou art my God; thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."

Ned saw no great or immediate change in him from that time, although he noticed that he was interested in his Sunday-school class; so much so, he seemed to study his lesson during the week; and as he, put it, Knox was always "on the square," Ned's own profession having little to do with his conduct, he was not inclined to criticize Billy for not defining his position more fully.

Ned Fenton was somewhat older than Billy, and the latter was not surprised to learn from him that he was an acquaintance

of Stan Ellery. In fact, before they had been long together at the Academy, Stan one day walked into their room. He had always kept on good terms with Billy; but it is not probable he would have come to see him, had Ned not been his room-mate.

These two talked of many people unknown to Billy, for both of them were in a sense "in society,"—while Billy had his own position to make hereafter in the social world. Stan, as a young man of property, education, and refined (if) manners, visited the best families of the town, and Ned might do the same whenever he chose.

"By the way, Stan," asked Ned, as young Ellery, tipping back in his chair, put his heels on top of their small stove, "I've meant to ask you before this, who that mighty pretty girl was I saw you with at a concert one Wednesday evening not long ago. I have not seen such bright eyes in an age."

"Wednesday—bright eyes? O that is Nan! Awful pity she is my cousin, and knows me like a book, for she is getting so saucy it would be downright fun to flirt with her."

"Well, I'm not her own cousin, and she don't know me; suppose you flirt by proxy. If you will introduce Miss Nan to me, she may be just as saucy as she likes. I hate insipid girls."

"All right, young man," said Stan. "Come around to-morrow night, and I'll take you to see her, and several other pretty girls. They are all young. Nan has only just put her hair up like a young lady—but they are nice. They board with a proper old maid who don't let them run wild, by any means; but being one of Uncle Zeph's family, or about the same as that, I go to see Nan any time. Of course I can take a friend, it will be a good idea, for she bothered me about to death last winter to go skating with her. I'll put you in her charge, vice versa; and when the time comes, if you are fool enough to like the ice, you can freeze in one another's society."

"Stan, you're a trump! Isn't there something or other I can do for you?"

"Yes, come back to the club."

"Oh, I can't afford it; or if I can spare the fees, I can't spend the time."

"Nonsense! Come over to-morrow night; we're going to have some fun. If you will, I'll tell Nan no end of fine things about you, before I trot you out."

"Oh, go along! You needn't 'paint the lily and gild the rose.' I'll speak for myself, if you give me the chance."

"Haven't a doubt of it. Girls are generally geese enough to like a lady, indifferent wretch like you. Your miserable liver makes you pale, and I presume she'll fancy you're killing yourself with hard study."

A boot-jack was aimed at Stan's head, but it struck the wall, already battered beyond injury, while Stan, calmly "ducking" to avoid it, went on. "Here's Billy now, all brawn and muscle; he's worth six of us for all practical purposes; but I bet you, not a girl in Nan's 'set,' as she calls it, would see anything about Billy but the size of his boots."

"They'd be taken up with a big subject, even then," laughed Billy, who sat writing not far off. He laughed, but he was not wholly amused. His boots were big, but so was he, and he had no desire to shrink. He did not wish to belong to any club. The fun Stan enjoyed would be too costly, even if it would have suited his taste in other respects. He did not expect later in the season, to have many leisure hours in which he could skate, and he had not proposed to himself ever to go skating with Nan. It did occur to him now that he might do this under some circumstances. No, perhaps not. Nan at home, he could meet on easy terms of familiarity; but Nan in town, with stylish young friends, would, perhaps, not want her father's farm-hand for an escort. Be that as it might, Billy was not glad to have Stan make Ned acquainted with Nan. It was not that he did not see a great deal that was agreeable and attractive about his room-mate, for he did see his many fine qualities. It did not once come home to Billy, that in his own acknowledgment of this last fact, was the real secret of his uneasiness.

AT THE RED COTTAGE.

"Any messages left with you while I was out?" asked the old doctor, shaking himself free from his great coat, and sitting down by the office fire.

"An old lady called—Mrs. McGeard, and left word that she needed a tonic. She