

## HOW BILLY WENT UP IN THE WORLD.

BY ANNETTE L. NOBLE.  
(National Publication House, N. Y.)  
CHAPTER VIII.  
A NEW SIGHT OF OLD THINGS.

Mrs. Ellery and Nan were very fond of Stanton. He never behaved disagreeably around the house, or said anything very unpleasant. The men about the farm were always too busy to render any sort of little services that the feminine part of the family could well do without; yet when Stan was ready to step in and proffer them, he seemed doubly agreeable. He often drove into town and left messages at the dressmaker's; he matched cloth for them. He cracked nuts and popped corn when Nan expected young girls to visit. He even stayed home and helped them eat the nuts; and this, as he was entirely out of "round-about," and, as he modestly let them know that he had eaten philopenas with young ladies recklessly and habitually, impressed the girls as being kindly courtesy. To his uncle he was always respectful, and, so far as was apparent, obedient. Mrs. Ellery was far from approving of Stan, yet he could not bring anything worse against him than a lack of earnestness in his studies and the tendency to extravagance. Billy's opinion of Stan came to be a kind of compound sentiment. He vastly admired his easy air of assurance, which was just deferential enough not to make him appear conceited. He wondered at Stan's ability to give "eats" answers, which sheered clear of actual falsehood yet never implicated him, no matter how much he seemed at fault in any matter. Perhaps the chief attraction, after all, was his good nature. St. Barnard would scowl and mutter to himself about hypocrites, and then confess to Prissy that the fellow had a mighty taking way with him."

Billy for several months was flattered by the interest Stan seemed to take in hearing of his past life and adventures. He never presumed on his apparent friendliness and grew too familiar, but he contented himself with watching the young man—for so Stan wished to be considered. At first it was rather pleasing to Stan's conceit to have Billy take admiring recognition of everything he did or said, of where he went and when he returned. Not that Billy knew or saw half as much as he probably supposed was passing under his observation, but he was proving himself observant, shrewd, and able to read character. Gradually it was borne into Stan that Billy was a positive chap, who must be for or against him."

When Stan stayed out nights until one or two o'clock, it was convenient to have Billy slip down the back stairs, and let him in. Stan was sure Billy would do this for an indefinite length of time; but he was not sure, that, if some day he were questioned, he would lie judiciously to screen him. Billy had, as Stan thought, an unconsciously horrid way of reckless truth-telling. Once, after Stan had ridden the farmer's best horse fast and furiously, forgetting to take proper care of it later, but meaning to keep the whole affair quiet, Billy had helped him very clumsily—telling no tales, but shirking the straightforward falsehood which Stan expected from him, as a good ally. Therefore, as the summer went by, Stan came to have his private opinion of the desirability of Billy's presence in his uncle's family, unless Billy could be made perfectly pliable in his hands.

He became, however, a great deal more gracious, and began to give the boy "something to read." Naturally, Billy's taste was rather poor in literary matters, and so in the cheap books Stan brought him, he soon delighted. "Off to the Moon with a Madman" and "Sue Sykes" or the "Slaughter House Demon"—time novels with terrific pictures, were delightful in Billy's eyes, though some instinct made him read them on the sly. A pretty long course of such reading had its effect; only once Stan missed the mark. A far worse book than any of those trashy yarns, was thrust smilingly into Billy's hands one day, when the boys were for a moment alone together. An hour later, Stan, sitting by the old well whittling, looked up as Billy dropped something at his feet, saying:

"You didn't say what you gave it to me for, but I thought this was what he needed. St. would think so, I reckon, if I'd showed it to him."

Stan stooped over, and recognized his

book covered—yes, stammered with soft-soap. Billy never explained why he applied it, and Stan never again alluded to the matter; but he muttered to himself:

"He's inclined to be a goody chap, and everybody here will help him on. If he was smart he'd see I could teach him a trick or two worth knowing; as it is, I'm about sick of him."

This being the case, one would have supposed that Stan would have ignored him after that, but he still continually lent him books of boys' adventures; of wild life on the frontiers, of unnatural, yet to ignorant Billy, wonderfully fascinating exploits. In these books boys never submitted to do "chore" for their bread and butter; never lived with farmers for the mere sake of a home, O no! From driving mules, they attained by rapid, brilliant strokes of vaguely described genius, to the ownership of countless acres, where wild horses roamed; where savages existed only to fall before them, after vain strifes.

From the glaring frontispiece, to the advertisements on the back cover, Billy accepted all as literally true. Stan used to discuss the heroes and situations with him, as gravely as if the question was of some well-known scene in history. He did more than this; he labored to show Billy that the youths who led these exciting lives were not naturally any "smarter" than Billy himself. It was only that they had the pluck to put themselves in circumstances favorable to the development of their daring dispositions. For a long time Stan affected this apparently disinterested appreciation of Billy, and, after a while, he was agreeably surprised to find his pupil had learned his lesson only too well.

One chilly evening in the early autumn, when, for a wonder, Stan Ellery was at home and in bed, Billy tapped on his chamber door, and whispered:

"I want to speak to you a minute."  
"Come in, then—step softly; the sitting room is just below," returned Stan, who always suspected some motive for secrecy—a bad trait in anybody.

The room was dark, but Billy felt with his hand along the wall until he reached the bed, and sat down by Stan's feet.

"What's up?" said Stan.

"I am."  
"So I see; but it isn't late. I should be lively myself if I'd had had more sleep last night. Heard anybody speak of the serenade a few fellows gave the girls down by the Bend, at Miss Crowfoot's boarding-school? I believe the old maid poured hot water out of the window, at last, she got so enraged."

"Si was telling about it. Somebody told Prissy. Were you?"

"I heard of it, sonny! That's enough. Well, what are you up for?"

"I am going to light out, Stan!"

"Where are you going to young man?"

"You see there is not the same reason now for my staying that I thought there was in the first place. Granny is well cared for, and—"

"Exactly so, Billy; but what are you going to do?"

"I'm going first to New York. I've got the tin for that trip. When I get there, I'm going to hunt up four boys I know. Pete Hurdson, the cutest chap ever you saw; he'd make his living off the sharp end of the North Pole. Ned Wilkes—he's little, but he isn't green—Sam Poole, and the Snipe, as we always called a fellow you could count on very tight."

"When you've found them, what then?" asked Stan, out of the darkness, a laugh in his voice that Billy only took for sympathetic enjoyment, of his enterprise in its first stage.

"Then we will start for Texas—or some such place. To be sure, I tried it once, but I didn't know how the thing was managed; now I could do it. I know, as nice as a pin, as so could the others. We'll call ourselves a band, and have a name, you know."

"Of course," assented Stan; and if the room had been light, Billy would have seen the bed clothes shake. "Of course, go in and win! You're a chap!" What did Stan care what became of the "little fool," so he got him away from the farm!

"Everybody has been mighty good to me. I'd like to tell St. to tell—"

"As sure as you drop a word, St. will tie you to a post in the barn, or spank you, and that'll be as far on your way to Texas as you'll get," was Stan's quick reply.

Billy felt its force; he did not, however,

confess that he had left a printed epistle in the barn, pinned to a waggon cushion, which, if it was ever deciphered, would throw some light on the path by which he had departed. He only added:

"I shall get over to the station in time for the early morning train. Good-by."

"Success to you, old chap! you deserve it. Take my blessing, and my consent."

"He don't care a snap," was the rather sorrowful thought in Billy's mind, as he went out and shut the door. He certainly wished to get away silently, it was so put down in all the books; but it would have been pleasant to think some body was a little sorry; for under his firm determination to "go and seek his fortune," Billy himself was very sorry to leave the farm. He steadfastly put all that out of his calculations at this time, and going back to his own little den, picked up his stick and bundle—he would not have taken a bag if he had owned one—opened wide the door, that, from the feeble light of a lamp below, he might take a last look, and started.

He went down the lane up which he had followed Peter's cow that other night that seemed so long ago, and stopped at the cottage. Not at the door; he went, instead, around to a little bed-room window, softly unfastened a rude shutter, and peered in. Everything was as he expected it would be. Prissy had left the little tin kerosene night-lamp burning, and by its light he could discern the old lady asleep, her hands peacefully clasped over her breast.

"She don't want many things; but Prissy can get something for her with it. Anyway, I never before could spar her a real present," muttered the boy, taking out of his pocket a silver half dollar rolled in blue tissue paper. He lifted the window softly, and aiming well shot the coin not far from granny's wrinkled hands; then more soberly than he had left Stan, he turned away from his first home. He reflected as he went that a boy who had a mother certainly would never run away, if only to leave somebody else's feeble old grandmother, made him so uncomfortable.

There was no need that he should hurry, so he turned back a little way, and creeping into an old tool-house belonging to the farm, he allowed himself a few winks of sleep; being sure his cramped position would prevent his losing too much time. The moon was up later, and about midnight Billy came out again, and tramped away toward the station, where would stop the earliest eastern train. When he reached it, the first streak of daylight had not yet appeared, and no one was moving but a surly baggage-man, who eyed him distrustfully. When he bought his ticket of the yawning agent within, the latter stared before he remarked, jocosely:

"Great pres of business on hand, young man, that you are required to start for town so early!"

"Yes, stocks going up so fast I must be back in Wall Street," was the prompt reply. Already Billy felt more like a saucy gamin than for months. When the great headlight came near and nearer, and the train moved in, stopping only for a moment or two, Billy made a rush, and plunged into a smoky, foul smelling car full of sleepy passengers. None roused out of their uncomfortable naps to look at the boy who dived into the one vacant seat by the water tank. He soon fell asleep, and did not awake until broad daylight, when they steamed into a covered depot, where a man was loudly proclaiming to the ringing of a big bell, that "Cars stop twenty minutes for breakfast."

Billy, mindful of the future, gave not a quarter of that time to his morning repast; and if he was once or twice also mindful of the past, in that the bountiful farm breakfast recurred to his thoughts, he assured himself that he had "roughed it once," and he must "learn to do it again."

It was just noon when the train ran into the city, and Billy heard again the old familiar cries, and saw the old land marks, as he worked his way down town. The life and bustle of the streets excited him; he wondered then, while the sun shone and a particularly good strolling band played "Yankee Doodle"—he wondered that he could ever have left New York. It almost seemed as if he never had been away—as if Ellery farm and the little cabin, where Ben once lived, had all been something he dreamed of. He amused himself with whatever passed under his eyes for a while; then he remembered that about five o'clock a waggon

load of evening papers arrived at a certain point on the Sixth Avenue, and that several of his old cronies used to supply themselves then and there with papers for sale. If they had retired from that branch of the trade, some of the rest of the fraternity might put him on their track. Sure enough, when Billy was within half a block of the place, the news cart came tearing past, and soon the papers were flying all around, and scores of boys were grabbing, running, yelling in all directions.

"By the cut of his job I should vow that was Pete Hurdson!" said Billy, "if he want so all-killing long-legged; but then, bless me, Pete's legs ought to have grown since I saw them last."

He broke into a run and chased the fast fleeing legs aforementioned, until Pete—for it proved to be he—stopped to make change for an old gentleman buying a paper. He would have escaped Billy then had the latter been less nimble. As it was, he started blankly a second at a well-dressed boy, who caught him by the arm, exclaiming: "Hello, Pete! don't you know me, old fellow?"

"Hello—why, is it you, Billy?"

"Guessed it the first go—stood back here, the papers 'll keep." And as Billy spoke he drew Pete out of the crowd into a quiet corner of Jefferson Market. Pete yielded, but as he glanced over Billy's decent attire, he remarked, with a slight sneer,

"Cash, are ye?"

"No s're. I haven't been in the city for a good deal more than a year."

"Honest Injun?"

"True as you live. I've had all sorts of luck—been on a farm lately."

"I'd like that. What did you quit for—lick you mebbe?"

"Never. I'll tell you by an'-by. Where is Tommy Boole, and the Snipe, and Ned Wilkes?"

"Ned's gone back to Snipes; he's got a chair and all the fixings down by Bleeker near Broadway. Tom's at papers by Grand Street Ferry, and—why, didn't ye hear about the Snipe?"

"Of course not. I don't take a daily paper," returned Billy, ironically.

"Wall, now, he did get into the papers, a hull line to himself: 'Boy busted—pieces picked up and toted off to the Island.' I reckon it said that, anyway. The Snipe was run over by a steam fire-engine. They popped him into a nambulance and rushed him off with a big bell a ringin'. My! wouldn't he be liked the racket if he hadn't been like dead, so they said he was, with a blood tricklin' out of his mouth! Tommy and I got a permit to go and see him one day, and there he was dying in style. Nice white bed-clothes as ye ever see in a shop window, and a 'spital nurse in a ruffled muslin bonnet, feeding him jilly. He was mighty glad to see us, but he seemed that tired he couldn't move. It was just as well he didn't want to, 'cause his legs was both arcuated."

"What?"

"Cut off, I do believe that woman meant by what she said, for the bed-clothes was all flat—mashed like, no room for his legs below his knees there. But I didn't ask—I couldn't sort o', you know."

"Of course—poor Snipe!" echoed Billy, his sharp eyes dimmer.

Pete's pinched face was very grave. He watched a car horse stuntable and regain its footing; then he added: "Folks do get around on stumps, but he'll never be that sort of a begger. A fellow in the 'spital hall they called a norderly, he said he'd die, because his inside works was all some way crushed. He sent his love to all the boys. His face was white as paper, and clean; his hair was combed, and looked curly, like a baby's and he had a posy and greens pinned right on his shirt—(that was white)."

Pete stopped for a keen glance at Billy. Evidently this report was not being given unfeelingly, but if his hearer was not with him, he was done. Billy's sympathy was expressed in a franker, clearer face than Pete had ever seen in him before, so he went on. "He was kind o' like a baby, anyway; for when we come away he reached out his paw, and pulled us over, and kissed us both."

No—Billy did not laugh, he only winked hard while Pete looked off a minute over the elevated road to the long stretch of blue sky, adding, under his breath, "I suppose he went up for sure, after that, some day."