

HOW BILLY WENT UP IN THE WORLD.

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CHAPTER VII.
BILLY PUTS AN ENEMY TO ROUT.

About a week after Billy had so unceivily refused Nan's offer of help, he went over to the cabin to see his friends. Prissy was sewing in a chair just outside the door; and Billy, having upset her work-box, first picked up the scattered spoons, and then exclaimed: "Think, Miss Prissy, of something you want me to do for you; because I want you to do something for me."

"That is right, boy! Don't you go asking favors if you don't expect to render favors. What is it you want?"

"I want to learn to read without blundering so awfully as now. I want to figure on the slate, and to—well, you know—I want to learn the things I would have learned if I had gone to school. Mr. Ellery says I may go to school this winter, but I'll hate to go in without knowing anything."

"Exactly so, Billy! In these days-poverty doesn't hinder anybody from getting some learning. Why, even Mrs. O'Gorman, the washerwoman, says her Patrick shall have a regular 'epidemic education,' and I'm sure he'll take it that way if he ever gets it at all, judging from what I've seen of him. Yes, Billy, you come over here!"

"Evenings?" suggested Billy.

"No, not evenings, for I'm likely to be interrupted," replied Prissy, hurriedly. "I'll go to you any other time. I'll ask St. Bernard to see that you get time; then I'll find my old school-books and put you through. I taught school once in Newton, and boarded around. I wonder I ain't as galant as a verde antonio Venus, with the saleratus bread stuff I was kept on. Will you study faithfully?"

"Yes, I will; no fooling, Prissy."

"And you'll do something for me?"

"Sure as you live."

"Then it is a bargain. You know I always went out dressmaking before I came to live with granny, but now I take my work all home here, to make and finish. I like this way; we are so cozy as kittens in a rag barrel; but there is one disadvantage I don't like to go away on an errand and leave granny all alone. I can, but I worry. She might tumble down, or set herself on fire, or get hurt in some way. I don't often care to go away, for I get plenty of exercise around the house and yard; and for company I have all the people who come and go for their work. Still, when I do want to leave granny for an hour or so, if you could stay around where you would have an eye on her, it would be a great accommodation."

Billy agreed to do this, at once. He had a variety of work, and some time to himself; besides, the cabin was so near he could bring a few of the tasks set for him by Mrs. Ellery, and do them here. Thus the matter of "knowing," something, was fairly matters taken. Prissy was a strict teacher, and Billy was very much in earnest. Nobody had ever called him stupid. Prissy soon privately considered him remarkably precocious. He had early trained himself to habits of observation. His first look at a word was a keen one, and ever after he could spell or pronounce that word. He liked arithmetic, and detested grammar; declaring to Prissy, that anybody talked just as well without knowing what a noun was, as after he had learned; but Prissy kept him at it all the same.

One day, after reciting his lessons, Billy told her Nan had offered to teach him. He also told how he had received her offer; not because he was at all proud of his rudeness, now, but really because he would like to know in what light it appeared to another. Prissy had no hesitation about telling him that he ought to be ashamed of himself.

Billy seemed not particularly surprised at this verdict, but he added, coolly:

"Nan said I was the most ill-mannered boy she ever saw, and she didn't know what her father took me for, anyway."

"Why do you suppose he did take you?" asked Prissy.

"Why—to work for him."

"You don't earn your bread yet, for your work is here and there in bits," returned Prissy, very kindly, but going on plainly.

"No, Billy, he didn't take you for any help or good you could be to him at present; he just took you for your own sake, to help

you make something of yourself. If Nan offered to teach you, why, you can be pretty sure it was not for any pleasure she was going to get out of it."

"Then I'm mighty glad she isn't doing it," said Billy, stoutly, as he picked up his cap and started homeward.

It was a pleasant mid-summer afternoon; and as Billy was going up the lane towards the farm-house, he saw Mr. Ellery and his wife just starting for a drive to Sefton, the nearest town. While he was thinking what he would busy himself about, Mrs. Ellery called out:

"You can finish that work in the garden, Billy; and don't go far away from the house, for Nan is alone. The men are away in the north field, out of call, if she needed them, and there is a company of gypsy tramps down by the bend, I hear."

No sooner had Billy learned of the gypsies, than he resolved to make them a visit at his earliest leisure; but he promised Mrs. Ellery to "stay around," and went to working in the garden. As he worked off-hand sort of a fashion—not, of course, as if he really cared the least bit in the world to do it—render some service to Nan.

Before their little unpleasant talk, she had sent him on errands, once or twice, and in a mildly patronizing way, approved of him when he did them well. Now she put turnip or potato on his plate at dinner, with the same indifferent and superior air with which she fed the cat and dog after dinner. It irritated Billy, but he had sense enough to see he could only "get even" with her by making her, in some faint way, under obligation to him. He racked his brains for an idea, until he was forced to give up that line of thought. Was it not a proof that Billy was a boy to the core of his heart, that, failing to think what he could do to conciliate Nan, he fell back on the suggestion that, at least, he might "scare her half out of her wits;" for was she not left alone to his tender mercies? How to accomplish this last feat, in a very simple way, by means almost always at hand, occurred to him, and when his wedding was nearly done, he resolved to go into the house very quietly.

Nan was crocheting a red shawl, sitting in the big cool kitchen alone. He could hear her sing, and could see her through the open window. He had just risen from his stooping posture when he discovered a rascally-looking fellow slouching along in the rear tramp gait. He was making for the open door of the room where Nan was sitting. Billy darted away in the opposite direction, made a complete detour of the yard, and stopped, unperceived, at the pantry window. It was open, and not far from the ground. Dropping his shoes, Billy got in as softly as a cat, and immediately placing his eye to the crack of the door letting into the kitchen he watched proceedings there.

The moment the tramp framed himself in the outside doorway, Nan sprang up, letting her work drop to the floor, for his face was as sneaking and as ugly as a human face well could be. He asked for "the folks," and Nan hesitated so long before she stammered out that they were "all busy," that he probably suspected she was alone, and stepped boldly in, demanding "something to eat."

Billy saw Nan glance at the pantry, then evidently fear to do anything. She turned very white, and her voice shook as she said:

"The dinner is all cleared away, and there is nothing I can give you, now."

Her silver thimble had rolled on the floor, the rascal coolly swooped it up, and casting an evil eye around on the table, the dresser, and the mantel-piece, growled:

"I'm out of work and very poor. I must have something—a little money, miss."

Billy took in the situation. The great fraternity of lazy, cowardly wretches, who scare women and servants into giving them food in summers, and herd in the city-land institutions all winter, was well known to him of old. He instantly resolved, inasmuch as poor little Nan had been already scared out of her wits, to turn his ammunition on the new comer. He dived toward a certain shelf in the pantry, seized a well-made paper bag, such as grocer's use, and pulled out his "jack-knife." He was back to the look-out in time to see the tramp start for a silver spoon dish that had been left on the dresser. As the man approached her, Nan gave one terrified shriek for "Father's father!"

Now Billy's voice had begun to change,

and on occasions, sounded like each and every instrument of a brass band, so muffling his mouth a trifle, he effected at this crisis, a terrific bass, and roared:

"Two seconds to git, before I fire!"

Without pausing to know if it were man or beast that bellowed, the tramp turned. There was a sharp click of steel as Billy's old knife snapped into its case—then, with a deafening noise, off went his pistol—or, his exploded paper-bag!

Nan began on a succession of ear-splitting screeches. The tramp had pushed her half over a chair, in the bound he gave toward freedom and the back lane. Billy, prone on the pantry floor, was rolling and writhing in laughter at the success of his exploit. He had overturned a churn, and no end of tin pails, before Nan, white and breathless, came, half believing she would find her father, shot by his own deadly weapon, though, at the very time, she was thinking with amazement, "Father is nites away, and the old shot-gun burst last year."

Billy, with a scarlet face, could only sit up, and point to the fragments of the paper bag, and then go off again in new peals of fun, as Nan, seeing the joke, added her merry voice to his. They had to talk it all over in detail, when they were a little calmed; how the man was most likely one of the vagabonds from the gypsy encampment; how he had Nan's pretty thimble, a birthday gift; but chiefest of all, how queer it was that a mere blown up paper bag could make such an awful noise! In her girlish excitement, Nan declared it sounded "exactly like a cannon."

They picked up the pans and churn, then Nan, who had berries to look over for supper, graciously allowed Billy to help her, and evidently regarded him as a hero in a humble sort of a way. He, on his part, repeatedly assured himself, that he had put a tag to a far better use than that first suggested to him by the spirit of mischief. When the berries were nearly picked over, he managed to get out, rather awkwardly, the statement that he was learning "something" now. He "thought he wouldn't bother" her to teach him. Prissy Tarbox could do it as well as not. Nan colored, then bravely exclaimed:

"It was mean in me to say I didn't see what father took you for. He says you are a real handy boy, and quick to understand work."

Billy was wonderfully pleased; but he began instantly to talk about St. Bernard and the black coil, for fear he should betray his basal gratification. At this point Mr. and Mrs. Ellery drove up to the door, and before their mother had untied her bonnet strings, Nan was releasing the thrilling episode of the afternoon. Nan's danger, or what Mrs. Ellery fancied might have been her danger, prevented her from entering as fully into the fun of Billy's performance as did Mr. Ellery and Silas somewhat later; but on the whole it was a fortunate occurrence for the young people. Billy modified gradually his aversion to girls in general, because, after that day, Nan was very kind to him. She took an interest in his progress with Prissy; she lent him Pilgrim's Progress, the Rollo books and Robinson Crusoe. She had the true feminine tact of letting her opinions be known on certain matters about which she did not talk openly or in any pointed manner. It was little by little borne into Billy that he must keep his face, hands and nails cleaner; that "if you please," and "thank you," were agreeable words to say and to hear. In many such ways the home influence began to tell on him. He went to church and to Sabbath-school; he came to have some well-defined ideas of his relations to God and to man. As he proved himself capable and trustworthy, Mr. Ellery increased his work and made it more methodical than at first. The result was soon apparent in Billy's increased thoughtfulness regarding his future. He had a great many practical talks with Silas, and profited by advice like this: "What you want to do, Billy, for the next two years, is to learn—as fast and as thorough as ever you can; first, about work, and next about books. I missed it in getting no education. When my work was over I learned to fiddle, instead of to spell. I was a goose."

"What will I do after two years?" Billy would inquire, very seriously.

"Well, that depends. If you have beat every scholar in the old school-house, and want to go on to know more and be something else besides a farmer, then'll be your time to try to get yourself through the Sefton

Academy, may be to college. Who knows! But you needn't think a farmer like Mr. Ellery isn't worth forty 'leven gumps who go to college and come out too fine to work, too humane to kill, but havin' to eat as much and wear as costly clothes as other folks."

"I expect I shall be a farmer," returned Billy. "Mr. Ellery says I can get on if I am plucky and do my best. First, of course, it will be work by the day, at all sorts of farm work in the season; then in time I may get to work land on shares; small fields, he says, of various crops, such as corn, potatoes, beans, or I might, in time, become a market gardener."

"That's the talk! Why Ned Wait, on the Holcomb farm, raised barley last year and cleared a good round sum. Not long ago Mr. Bruce had a choice field, just right for growing hops, and he wanted a thorough-going active young man to work that on shares. He could sell the hops right off to the distilleries, and make it pay quite well. Oh, there's ways enough to work and get on in the world, Billy, if you do your best."

"You had better believe I'll try it," was the boy's hopeful reply.

(To be Continued.)

PRESENT ENJOYMENTS.

"When we get a new house, I am going to have a nice flower-garden," said Mrs. H. "No one loves flowers better than I do, but there is no use trying to cultivate them where we are now; for the grass and weeds overrun them before the seeds are fairly out of the ground." How many, many people there are, who throw away half the real joys of life, in just the same way. The future is a great store-house of bright possibilities, but the present is a bare of pleasures as the barren desert is of vegetation. To a true lover of flowers, what an ever present enjoyment, is a plot of gay-colored annuals. And the little fairies are not so particular about their surroundings. A grand house with handsome furnishings for a background or side view, does not add a particle to their delicious fragrance or bright coloring. Given appropriate soil, moisture, light and warmth, they grow just as lovely by the cabin door as in the elegantly laid out grounds of a Stewart, Vanderbilt or Gould. The labor of caring for them is much the same. But little that is truly desirable comes without labor; and flowers that have become domesticated, must have the ground properly prepared for their reception, and then, to thrive well, like human children, they must be kept out of bad company. And for want of a certain spirit of ambition, Mrs. H. goes hungering for the beautiful, a greater part of her life, for no new house is likely to make its appearance for long years to come, if ever, on her domain, except in imagination.

Mr. and Mrs. Jones lived in the old pioneer cabin that looked for many years as though it would tumble down around them. The nice large farm was paid for; they had large flocks of sheep, and fine herds of cattle, and the stables were occupied with valuable horses. They were out of debt, and well-to-do farmers in every respect. Then, why did they live in the little old cabin, with its many lowly additions? Because, Mrs. Jones must have a lovely mansion, or none at all; and so they plodded on to acquire more means. And when the bank account was satisfactory, she must look across the way, and covet a portion of her neighbor's orchard, for a site on which to build. But for years the neighbor did not choose to sell, and still the platonic residence was delayed. At last he was prevailed upon to relinquish his claim for a liberal compensation. The new house was built, and the first family gathering beneath its roof, was occasioned by the death of Mr. Jones, now "well-stricken in years." Did Mrs. Jones enjoy her grand house and its elegant furnishing in her old age as she would in her more youthful days one of simple design and of less dimension? We think not. She was in a constant fret about something or somebody, and her face was a perfect index of her character; selfish, exacting, with charity for none.

It is well to look out for the future that we may not come to want. At the same time, we may have many enjoyments as we step along through the journey of life, if we choose to take them as they go, and really be none the poorer in purse but richer in mind, because we have gathered sweets, as the bee does honey, from the wayside flowers.

—Rural New Yorker.