

till father should be better. I didn't like to leave you alone for the night while he was so helpless."

"He's ever so much better to-day," replied Prue, "and bread we must have. Could you go to-morrow? I can borrow a small bag of flour from the Ransons—they took a large grist last week."

"I suppose I must," groaned Bob, "I may as well give up, about that corn, first at last. Could you give me a cup of coffee, and put me up a big basket of sandwiches and things by five o'clock to-morrow morning? I'm sorry to hoist you so early, but the sun's hot in the middle of the day, and it's a long pull to the mill."

"Of course I can," said Prue, brightly, "and be glad to do it—it will give me such a good long day. I will put you up enough to give something to that poor little woman at the mill-house; she looks as if she never tasted anything but 'hog and hominy.'"

"If father were only well," said Bob, a little regretfully, "you could come with me and we'd take the little tent, as we did the last time, and make a jolly sort of picnic of it."

"We can't have all things here to please us, Robert; I'm surprised that it takes you so long to find that out. Come, I'm going to set that 'last bread,' and then I'm going to arrange father for the night—I would have said 'fix' him; were I in an uncultured condition—and then were all going straight to bed; those who must needs rise with the lark should be sensible enough to retire with the hen."

"I'm glad you can feel so cheerful over it," said Bob, a little grimly.

"So am I, dear," she answered, saucily; "now go to bed with an easy mind. I'll call you. Bless aunt's dear heart for that alarm clock; nobody else would have thought of it."

Bob went obediently to bed, but not to sleep. Every time he fell into an uneasy dose he started awake with the delusion that the quilt had turned into a cornfield and was smothering him. He heard Prue's light step, and soft humming of various selections, until after the clock struck eleven. Then all grew quiet, and just as he had made up his mind to get up and read, he fell asleep at last, and, as it seemed to him, five minutes afterward Prue was gently pulling his ear and telling him it was half past four. By a little after five he had started with his bags of wheat and rye, and a well-filled basket of provisions, from which a bottle of cold tea stuck up its head in what Prue declared to be a most disreputable manner.

To be Continued.

#### A BIRD IN THE HAND.

BY FLORENCE B. HALLOWELL.

Mark Avery and Frank Lardelle were born within a week of each other in a small New England village, and were constantly together until they left school. Mr. Avery kept a shoe-store, and Mr. Lardelle was a druggist. Both were industrious, sober men of plain manners and simple habits. They were devoted to their wives and their homes, and were exceedingly proud of their sons. Mark and Frank, though the best of friends, were very different in character. While Mark was slow, quiet and reserved, Frank from earlier childhood had been given to romance and adventure, and was always longing for excitement. He early voted the life of a druggist "dull" and "slow," and, as he was an only son, he had little difficulty in persuading his father to relinquish his idea of putting him behind the counter to sell drugs and put up prescriptions. Mr. Lardelle, who was proud of the business he had built up, and of his well-stocked store, did not give up the idea of making his son his successor without many regrets and deep disappointment; for he had dwelt so much upon the pleasure and comfort it would be to him to have his son associated with him, that he could not think without bitterness of the time when a stranger would fill his place. But he said little of this to his son after he saw how opposed Frank was to studying pharmacy.

"I won't push Frank into anything he don't like, Clara," he said to his wife as they talked the matter over together. "A man must take an interest in his business or he will never succeed in it. Frank says the life of a druggist would be distasteful to him, and if that is true, he should never be

forced into it. We must let him find something in his mind if we want to have reason to be proud of him."

Both Frank and Mark left school at eighteen. Mr. Avery, having a large family to support, was not able to give his eldest son a college course, and Frank declined one, though urged by his father to continue his studies for a couple of years longer at least.

"I know as much as Mark does," said Frank, "and it is time I was working my own way. If I keep pegging on at my studies, Mark will get the start of me, and I'll never catch up."

And Mr. Lardelle, only half convinced of the wisdom of his son's argument, yielded.

"What are you going to do with yourself now, Mark?" asked Frank, as he met his friend on the street the morning after their graduation from the High School.

"I am going to work," answered Mark.

"Not to-day?"

"Yes, to-day. What would be gained by waiting?"

"You ought to have a little fun before setting down to drudgery. All work and no play is bad for anyone, and I'm sure we worked hard enough over that last examination."

"Yes," said Mark, "but in taking a play-day I might lose my chance of work, and be forced to keep on playing much longer than would be profitable or agreeable."

"But you are going into your father's store, are you not?"

"No," said Mark. "He does not need me there. He can manage that well enough alone, he says, and I would be wasting my time. I'm going to work in the mill. Mr. Harlan has offered me a place in the machine room at three dollars a week."

"What's three dollars?" cried Frank, contemptuously.

"It is just three dollars better than nothing," said Mark. "And you can have a place in the mill, too, if you want it. Mr. Harlan said he needed another boy. Come with me and see about it."

"Not I," said Frank, with a laugh. "You don't get me into any woolen mill. Three dollars a week! I hope I'm worth more than that!"

"You wouldn't be worth more to Mr. Harlan at present, because you are not familiar with the business," said Mark.

"One has to work. I don't propose to work for three dollars a week all my life."

"I shall look for something better," said Frank.

"So shall I," said Mark, "but I might as well be working while I look."

"You never did have half my ambition, Mark," said Frank. "You were always one of the slow kind. I'll leave you far behind me when once I get started. And I mean to start in the right way; not fritter away my time in woolen mills or shops at small wages. A bold stroke will win me a good place soon, I know."

"Perhaps so," said Mark, "but I believe in the old saying that 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.' I mean to hold on to my three dollars a week, while I'm planning for something better."

The friends separated, and Mark turned down the street which led to the mill, where he was put to work immediately in the engine-room.

He paid strict attention to his duties, performed them faithfully, and was so anxious to please and so obedient to all rules that he soon attracted the attention of Mr. Harlan, who was pleased to reward his industry by raising his wages to five dollars.

Frank, meanwhile, was idle, and was no nearer finding a place to suit him than on the day he left school. Again did Mark urge him to accept a temporary place in the mill, but to no purpose.

"If I had no ambition, Mark, I suppose I could be content to let all other chances slip for the sake of steady work and five dollars a week; but I was born for something better than that. There's no need to worry about me; I'll be on the top round of the ladder yet, and be able to see you only with a telescope."

But a year passed by, and Frank had not mounted to the first round of the ladder. He was dreaming away still of the great things he meant to do in the world, and the vast fortune he expected to accumulate; while Mark had been made book-keeper at the mill, at a salary of six hundred dollars a year.

"He'll never get any higher," said Frank when his father cited Mark's success to him. "He'll be a book-keeper on six-hundred a year for the rest of his life. I wasn't born for such drudgery."

A few months later Mark heard that Frank had gone to the city.

"He found this place too small for him," said old Mr. Lardelle, when Mark stepped into the drug-store on his way home one night to inquire for his friend. "Frank is determined to make a fortune."

Later, Mark heard that Frank had gone into the business of a broker. But what he did not hear was that Mr. Lardelle had expended two thousand dollars the savings of many years, to establish his son.

Years passed, and Frank did not return to his old home. His friends in the little town heard vague rumors of the daring speculations in which he embarked, and believed him to be too busy making his fortune to spare time for a visit. But the truth was that Frank had failed as yet to realize the golden dreams of his youth, and found that his expenses far exceeded his income. Even his mother did not know how frequent were the calls he made on his father for money, or how wild were the speculations in which he indulged in his mad pursuit after wealth.

Mr. Lardelle found it extremely difficult to meet his son's demands for money. He was forced to sacrifice his property bit by bit, until at last he mortgaged the house in which he lived. Yet he still believed in his son, and put faith in his assurances that each speculation into which he entered was certain of success. But he grew bent and gray. His face looked sad and worn, and people began to say that old Mr. Lardelle was failing fast.

After an absence of ten years Frank came home for a two days' visit, and of course dropped in at the mill to see his old friend. He was dressed with great elegance; sported eye-glasses and a cane, and wore a tall silk hat, patent leather boots, and diamond shirt studs. On the little finger of his left hand was a large seal ring and he frequently drew from his pocket a handsome gold watch attached to a heavy chain.

"Still pegging away in the old mill, Avery," he said, as Mark came into the office in response to a call through the speaking tube.

"Yes, I've grown used to it," said Mark. "I believe I understand the business as well as Mr. Harlan, now."

"You're not book-keeping now, I see," said Frank, glancing toward the desk, where an elderly man was at work over a big ledger.

"No! I gave that up a year ago," said Mark, "when Mr. Harlan offered to make me superintendent."

"Big wages, I suppose," said Frank with a twinkle of his gray eyes.

"I get fifteen hundred a year," said Mark, "and if the business continues to prosper, I shall receive two thousand at the end of three years. You see, the town is growing, and I'm sure to make my way."

"Too slowly to suit me," said Frank.

"I couldn't content myself with such a snail's pace."

"Then you have been very successful?" queried Mark.

"Not as much so as I would like," said Frank. "But I see my way now to do something big, which will insure me a handsome income for the rest of my life. Then I shall give up work and enjoy my money," and with a gay laugh, and a promise to "look" in again before leaving town, the young speculator left the mill.

"Poor Frank!" said Mark, as he watched his friend out of sight. "I'm afraid he is still after that bird in the bush."

Five years more slipped by, and then Frank, with his fortune still unmade, was called to his home to attend the funeral of his father.

Mr. Lardelle's affairs were found to be in a lamentable condition. The drafts made upon him by his idolized son, whom he had foolishly indulged in his own ruin, had stripped him of everything. After the funeral expenses were paid nothing remained but a meagre stock of drugs, which, when sold, would not realize one hundred dollars.

Frank was aghast at this state of affairs, and knew not where to turn. Not only was he without means to support himself, but he had his mother to care for. To return to the city was out of the question. He

had no money with which to give the fickle wheel of fortune another turn.

In his distress he sought Mark and asked his advice.

"If you could only take the store," said Mark. "The town is growing so fast that you could easily build up a good business. Your father's health was such for the past few years that he neglected the store, and it has run down. How unfortunate that you know nothing of drugs."

"It is too late now to think of that," said Frank, sadly. "I see now what a mistake I made in not going into the store seventeen years ago. But regrets won't help me. I've wasted my life so far, perhaps; but I don't want to waste the rest of it. I must go to work at once at something which will bring me in enough to support my mother and myself in comfort at least."

"Suppose you come here," said Mark. "I can make a place for you as superintendent of the sorting-room at a salary of ten dollars a week. Small, I know, but you can work up. I'm junior partner in the mill now, and will do all I can for you."

"I'm deeply obliged," said Frank. "I know I don't deserve this kindness, Mark. But I will show you that I can work. And so you are a partner here?"

"Yes; I saved my money from the first, and a year ago found that, principal and interest, I had enough to buy a share in the mill. Mr. Harlan was glad to let me have it, for he is getting old, and has talked a good deal lately of retiring entirely."

"You've been tremendously lucky," said Frank.

"I don't call it luck. I've simply stuck to one thing," said Mark, "and in nine cases out of ten, when a man does that, the thing pays in the long run—provided it is legitimate business. I kept my hand on the bird I caught the day I left school, and never chased after the one in the bush."

And Frank felt that had he followed his friend's advice years before he would not have allowed that bird in the bush to ruin him.—Standard.

#### KATIE'S TRUST.

A TRUE STORY.

"Katie, it is time for you to start for school."

Nine-year old Katie slowly laid down her story book, put on her hat, and took her books, and lunch-basket from the table. Then she lifted her face for her mother's good by kiss. Mrs. Gray gave the kiss, but she was very busy and did not notice that Katie's eyes were full of tears.

"Hurry, dear, or you will be late," she said.

The little girl went reluctantly through the yard, and out into the quiet street. For a little way there were houses, but soon Katie turned a corner. The street she now entered had lately been made. There were no houses upon it, and a great many cows fed on the grass at the roadside. Katie had not always lived in the country, and she was terribly afraid of these great horned animals. Yet it was a whole mile to the schoolhouse, and she knew she must go quickly. Looking straight down at the ground, she began to run as fast as her feet would carry her. Before long she heard a sound, and looking up saw a large cow not three feet away.

Katie gave a little cry. The cow lifted its head and looked at her with its big, soft eyes. The poor little girl was frightened almost out of her wits. She thought the cow would throw her up into the air with those dreadful horns. What should she do? She stood quite still. It seemed as if she could not go on. Just then she thought of something that her Sunday-school teacher had said. "Wherever you are whatever you are doing, God is close beside you. He is just as really beside you as if you could see him. If you are afraid you can whisper a little prayer, and he will take care of you."

A sweet smile crept into Katie's face. She closed her fingers as if she were holding tight to her mother's hand. She felt as if some one were beside her. "O Jesus, take care of me. Don't let the cow hurt me," she whispered. Was Katie afraid now? No, she felt as safe as if the cows were the other side of a high fence.

Katie was foolish to be afraid of the gentle cows, but they taught her the great lesson of trust in God. May she keep it through all her life!—Child's Paper.