

Talk on the Book-Shelf.

BY KATHARINE FYLE.

The little toy shepherdess looked up, where the books stood in a row, "I wish I could hear them talk," she said;

"For it must be fine, I know."

"Ah, yes," the wooden soldier said; "They are quiet enough all day; But I've heard when the children are all abed, They talk in a wonderful way."

And now it was twilight in the room; And on the book-case shelves, The books began to stretch their backs, And to talk among themselves.

"I wish," cried a peevish little book, "That you would not crowd me so; You're always poking me in the back, Because I am small, I know."

"It's not my fault," said a fat, thick voice, "I'm crowded so myself, I can hardly breathe. You little books Should be kept off the shelf."

"Oh, dear! my stories," another said, "Kept buzzing so inside, That I hardly got a wink of sleep Last night, though I tried and tried"

"Oh go to sleep," cried a lesson-book; "It's enough to work all day, Without your quarrelling, too, at night: So get to sleep, I say."

"Ah!" the shepherdess sighed, "they are going to sleep! How lovely their dreams must be! I wish that I were a book, to live Up there on the shelf," said she.

On Schedule Time

BY

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CHAPTER II.

MISCHIEF.

It seemed to Dick as if slumber had but just closed his eyelids when he was awakened by a knocking at the chamber door, and heard Aunt Lois cry:

"Come, boys, it is three o'clock!"

"The agreement was that we shouldn't get up until four," Dick replied; and Phil, only half awake, muttered:

"It won't be daylight until nearly six o'clock, so what's the use of turning out at this time?"

"Now don't begin the journey by being indolent, boys," Aunt Lois said from the other side of the door. "Something tells me that unless the utmost exertions are made we shall not succeed in the mission with which we are entrusted."

"Something is always telling Aunt Lois that trouble is near at hand," Phil whispered to his cousin, and then added aloud, "We'll be up in time. Don't fear for us. It isn't sound common sense to hang around an hour or two waiting for the day to break."

"It isn't common sense to lie in bed when you have got work to do," Aunt Lois said, almost sharply.

"We might as well have started last night as to get up now," Dick muttered, but nevertheless leaped out of bed, for he was thoroughly awakened, and a single hour was all too short for a second journey into the land of dreams.

When the boys descended from their chamber it appeared very much as if Aunt Lois had not retired during the night. Breakfast was already upon the table, and her travelling wraps—twice as many as any woman could possibly need," Phil whispered—were already stored snugly in the surrey.

The younger members of the party looked sleepy and almost ill humoured because of having been aroused so early; but Aunt Lois appeared thoroughly happy as she bustled about, something after the fashion of an active sparrow, prognosticating evil, while she made certain there was nothing lacking from the collection of medicine which might, by any possibility, be needed.

Shortly after breakfast, and while the horses were being groomed, Mr. Ainsworth summoned the two boys to his room, and said in reply to Phil's question:

"I am not really sick, my son, but simply in that bodily and mental condition where I am unable to do as I wish. I depend upon your going through to Benner in the time set, and again impress upon your minds the fact that it is of almost vital importance you reach him

by the close of the sixth day. I have been persuaded into giving my consent that Aunt Lois and the girls accompany you, but it is coupled with the stipulation that at the first moment they retard your progress, you will leave them encamped. No harm can come to them anywhere this side of Chesuncook Lake, therefore do not hesitate to abandon them whenever by so doing you may possibly gain a few hours. Here are written instructions to Benner. I will tell you the substance of them, that the journey may not have been in vain if you should lose the letter. He is under no circumstances to begin operations in Township Eight, Range Fourteen; and if he thinks there is yet time to prepare for the winter's work, let him proceed at once to Range Thirteen. I believe the trip, as mapped out, could be made by you on foot if the horses were disabled. Outside of the ordinary accidents of travel, it is possible some unscrupulous lumberman, learning of the difficulties which beset me because of this unlooked-for decision, may attempt to throw obstacles in your way; no one would deliberately try by force to prevent you from going through. You are old enough to look out for your companions and yourselves, and at the same time avoid those who might detain you. I trust both implicitly, and again repeat that of all my business affairs, none are so important as this one of your getting through to Benner on time. Do not remain idle when you can be pushing forward, and don't allow anything in the way of sport to distract your minds from the purpose of the journey. After that has been accomplished, you are at liberty to follow your own inclinations until the time originally set for the hunting tour to come to an end."

When the boys left Mr. Ainsworth's chamber they had begun to believe that perhaps Aunt Lois might be excused for awakening them thus early, for until this moment they had not fully realized how important it was their mission should be accomplished.

The day had not fully dawned when they drove through the yet sleeping city, as silent and care-laden a party as ever set out in search of pleasure.

As the day grew older and the sun came up from behind the hills with his friendly greeting of warmth, the spirits of the young travellers were raised decidedly, and all save Aunt Lois appeared to think this finding Benner within six days was a much lighter task than they had at first fancied.

They were riding over a good road, and the horses pressed forward as if eager for exercise.

"We are making six miles an hour at the very least," Phil said, when the forenoon was half spent and they had stopped at the brow of a long hill to give the animals a breathing spell.

"At this rate we shall be able to go farther than Milo to-day," Dick replied, in a tone of satisfaction; and Aunt Lois, who had hitherto remained comparatively quiet for one who was accustomed to fret about the merest trifles, exclaimed:

"Now, boys, don't overdo the thing! Something tells me it won't be safe to urge the horses on any farther than your father advised; and if we sleep at Milo to-night, we shall be doing all that is expected of us."

"But the road beyond is so much rougher than this, that we ought to keep on as long as possible," Gladys suggested.

"You are right; and even if something does tell Aunt Lois that trouble is ahead waiting for us, I think we had better continue on to Schoodic Lake, which is only seven miles farther. That would leave us thirteen miles for to-morrow's journey, and will cost as much labour as we shall have expended to-day, if the stories Benner told me last summer were true."

"But, Philip, it is wisest to do as was decided upon."

"If we can get ahead of schedule time, Aunt Lois, we have gained just so many hours in event of a serious detention," Phil replied decidedly, and then gave the word for the journey to be resumed.

They were only ten miles from Milo when a halt was made by the side of the road for dinner, and there was no longer a question in the minds of any of the party, save Aunt Lois, that they would camp on the shores of Schoodic Lake rather than on the outskirts of the town.

A full hour was allowed for this noon-day halt, and then the journey was continued, not to be interrupted until they were in the town of Milo, where Phil, uncertain as to the most direct road to the proposed camping-place, entered the one hotel for the purpose of making the necessary inquiries.

Although not acquainted with any of the townspeople, Phil was not a stranger to them, for on several occasions, while travelling to and from the camp with his

father, he had been a guest at the hotel.

"It looks like you was countin' on a bit of sport," the landlord said, as he gazed through the window at the baggage-wagon without turning his eyes in the direction of Phil.

"That's what we intend to have. I want to put up the tents on the shore of Schoodic Lake, and am not certain which is the best road to take. Can you tell me?"

"If I can't, I reckon there ain't a man in Milo that can. Takin' the women folks along, eh?"

"My aunt, my sister, and my cousin. In which direction shall I drive to find the best camping-place?"

"Ain't Mr. Ainsworth comin' up this way before Benner begins work, or did his losin' the lawsuit kinder knock the vim out of him?"

"I don't know what father may do. He was sick when we left Bangor."

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing serious, I hope. The doctor seemed to think it was a case of nerves rather than anything else."

"An' I allow his'n got a pretty good shakin' up when the case went agin him, though the most of us 'round here allowed he was a leetle off the straight course when he claimed that stumpage."

"But he had bought and paid for it, therefore I can't see why he shouldn't have claimed it," Phil replied hotly.

"That is as may be. There's always two sides to a story, my boy, an' I allow the peopel hereabouts feel friendly disposed toward your father, as they have a right to do; but most of 'em kinder had an idee that he hadn't bought exactly what he thought."

"If father made any wrongful claim it was through a mistake, and not from an intention to defraud other people."

"I reckon you're right there, my boy, for Ainsworth always dealt on the square, so far as I know; but this time there can't be any question about the rights of the matter, seein' how the court has decided agin him. I allow Benner won't do much work on Range Fourteen this winter."

"He certainly will not, now it has been decided father has no rights in that section."

"It would be a troublesome piece of business if he should go ahead, as he counted on doin' it. I reckon Mr. Ainsworth will send him word to change the plan of operations, eh?"

"Yes, that's what I—"

Phil ceased speaking very suddenly, as he realized that he was on the point of making public what should be kept a secret. He did not believe his father had an enemy in Milo, but at the same time he had been warned against disclosing the purpose of the journey, and added quickly:

"Will you tell me which road I had better take in order to find a good camping-place for the night?"

The other occupants of the hotel office, as well as the landlord, observed Phil's slight confusion, and two of those present exchanged significant glances, which, however, were not observed by the young messenger.

"Why don't you put up here?" the landlord suggested. "The black horse has got a decently heavy load, and I allow you have come through from Bangor to-day."

"Yes, we have, and would stop but for the fact that we started out with the tents, and want to use them. It is only seven miles farther, and there is no reason why we shouldn't make it before night."

"You are right there, lad, more especially if you are in a hurry to get through, an' I allow you are. After you pass the school-house up here about a quarter of a mile, bear to the right, and then take the first left-hand road. That'll let you in among the hemlocks, where you'll have a good chance to put up the tents decently near the water."

"Thank you, sir," and Phil left the office hurriedly, conscious now that it was too late to repair the error, that he had given the landlord and the loungers good reason to believe it was his purpose to push on in order to warn Benner.

"We have only seven miles farther to drive, and we'll do it in an hour and a quarter," he said, in what he intended should be a cheery tone, as he took his place in the surrey and urged Bessie forward.

"I hope you didn't tell all those people where we are going, Philip?" Aunt Lois said, almost before the journey was resumed, and while they could see half a dozen curious faces at the windows of the hotel.

"Of course I didn't," Phil replied, his cheeks reddening as he thought that while he might not have done so absolutely, he had certainly betrayed the secret of his mission in a most incautious manner.

"Your father warned you that we must

simply pretend to be out on a pleasure excursion, and—"

"Now, Aunt Lois, I remember that quite as well as you do, and there is no reason why we should talk about it in the street, where any one may hear us," Phil replied impatiently, for the knowledge of his own carelessness vexed him more than he cared to admit.

At four o'clock in the afternoon Phil turned Bessie from the main road into the narrow track which led to the lake, halting at a cleared space twenty yards from the water, where there was no underbrush to impede the work of erecting the tents, as he said triumphantly:

"We are more than an hour ahead of time, which I call a pretty good beginning, and the horses haven't suffered in the slightest because of the additional labour."

"That is something we cannot be positive about, Phillip," Aunt Lois replied gravely. "The animals do not appear to be suffering, but no one can say whether they will be in as good a condition for to-morrow's work as if they had remained where your father supposes we are."

"And since we sha'n't be able to learn that definitely until to-morrow morning, there's no reason why we should trouble our heads about it just now, Aunt Lois. You stay in the surrey until the tents are up, Alice and Gladys must lend a hand."

Phil's sister knew exactly how she could assist, owing to previous experiences; while Dick and Alice, eager to learn, were soon able to render material assistance.

(To be continued.)

HONEST WITH HIMSELF.

Little Frankie was forbidden to touch the sewing-machine, and as he was generally a pretty obedient boy, his mother, auntie and his auntie's friend were much surprised one afternoon to find the thread badly tangled and the needle broken. Frankie was, without doubt, the culprit, and he was called before the family tribunal of justice.

"Frankie, did you touch the sewing-machine?" asked mamma, severely.

"Yes, mamma," was the tremulous answer. He was such a mite, so frail and delicate, so utterly helpless as he stood before us all with parted lips and big, frightened eyes, our hearts went out to him in pity.

"Now, Frankie," continued his mother, "you know I said I would punish you if you disobeyed me, and I shall have to keep my promise."

"Yes, mamma," came in a trembling whisper. Surely the little fellow was punished sufficiently, and yet we realised that justice must be enforced.

"It is a very long time since you forbade him to touch the machine—perhaps he forgot," suggested his aunt.

"And if he forgot, that would make a difference, would it not?" I ventured to suggest.

"Certainly," answered his mother; "did you forget, Frankie? I know my boy will speak the truth."

There was a pause, and in that pause there was a struggle between right and wrong; then came the answer with a passionate cry, as though the struggle were almost beyond his puny strength: "Oh, mamma, mamma, I did remember I shan't make believe to myself!"

Brave boy! How often we children of a larger growth lack the courage of being honest with ourselves.—New York Observer.

FILLED THE BILL EXACTLY.

An amusing story is told of a rebuke administered to a hard bargainer, who sent the following advertisement to a paper:

"A lady in delicate health wishes to meet with a useful companion. She must be domestic, musical, an early riser, amiable, of good appearance, and have some experience in nursing. A total abstainer preferred. Comfortable home. No salary."

A few days afterward the advertiser received by express a basket, labelled: "This side up, with care, perishable." On opening it, she found a tabby cat with a letter tied to its tail. It ran thus:

"Madam, in response to your advertisement, I am happy to furnish you with a very useful companion, which you will find exactly suited to your requirements. She is domestic, a good vocalist, an early riser, possesses an amiable disposition, and is considered handsome. She has had great experience as a nurse, having brought up a large family. I need scarcely add that she is a total abstainer. As salary is no object to her, she will serve you faithfully in return for a comfortable home."