

HOW BILLY WENT UP IN THE WORLD.

BY ANNETTE L. NOBLE.

"WHAT SHALL THE HERALD BE?"
Continued.

Scarcely a word of the leader's discourse did Billy hear, or heed; and when the last hymn was sung, he forgot the message he had to give, and hastened out, asking himself: "What have I done, or failed to do, that I should be harassed by this idea of something wrong, somewhere? Do I not know I am a child of God? Yes. Do I not wish to walk in His light? Yes. If I have sinned in some undefined way?— Hestopped, standing there in the darkness. "No, let me be perfectly sincere. If it is possible that I have sinned in selling this barley, am I not sorry for the sin?" He dare not, all alone with God, say unreservedly: "Yes," for that whisper within him, was even then suggesting: "If you sorrow after a golly sort, what carelessness is wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourself."

How long he stood in the quiet lane, with the night wind rustling the unseen foliage around him, he did not realize. He was possessed by two alternating ideas: either he was overtried, mentally, and so was giving way to a morbid self-analysis; or else he was about to enter on that most wearying of all contests, a battle with a rebellious conscience, which must be conquered or a conqueror.

It was in vain that he said to himself, that there was no more barley to be sown for months to come; much less any to be sold. He could not longer avoid the moral issue. One question must be answered once for all: Not—is it wrong for men to sell barley to brewers? but, is it wrong for William Knox to sell his barley for beer-making? He could not stay there in the darkness to answer it, so he went on home, finding the little house quiet, its inmates all retired.

He went to his room, and to his bed, resolved to sleep, if it were possible; but no sleep came to him. "It is of no use for me to ask the opinion of any man not a Christian," he reflected; "for if I were not one myself, I think I should surely raise my fellow-men, quite apart from my relations toward God, would be weighty enough to keep me from it. I don't want to see men drunkardly, but I would say they became so at their own peril. It is this evil, God, 'Our Father,' that shuts our lips when otherwise we would ask: 'Am I my brother's keeper?'"

"If I could only be sure I had no responsibility as to the evil done by beer-selling, after I had sold my barley for making it! If anybody could satisfy me that I am not doing a little to help on the spreading of a thing which harms my fellow-creatures in soul, body, and estate! But no one does convince me to the contrary, ready as I am to catch at whatever favors my desires. They tell me that my barley is only a drop in the ocean; that just about as much beer would be made, and sold—just about as much evil be done, if I never sold a bushel. That is true. I only add a little; but this is not the point. In reality I am doing my utmost; and if it is wrong to sell any of my barley for this purpose, I am doing all the wrong I am able to accomplish; because the fault with me is not the amount of evil but the number of my acres." No consolation came from the train of ideas.

Billy turned and tossed, endeavoring to banish all thought in drowsiness; but soon he had started on a new track. "I am not absolutely sure this thing is wrong, so, as I cannot prove it, why not take the benefit of the doubt, and go on until the Lord makes it plain to me that I am sinning?" He can do this. Is it wrong to think that He ought to do it, when I am in such perplexity? How can I know of myself? "If any man do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." Yes, but I am going in a circle. I do not know His will, so why may I not have my will? I can have it by saying to this uneasy voice within: "Be still!" but what if the voice really is my conscience, trying to enlighten me on my duty? Why, then, forbearly silencing it in this way denials my moral sensibility.

"It is true as the eternal truth, that if a man blunts his perception of right and wrong in regard to one line of conduct, he inevitably makes himself duller in distinguishing between good and evil in all other modes of action.

"Can I afford to hurt my own soul? Will I deliberately risk it, and if I do so, what will I risk, and what will I gain? I have yet to choose between the doubtful and the positive; between what may be, and what cannot but be right.

"Now if I sell barley, deciding that it may be all right, I shall make a good sum each year, and I need every cent I can make. I am morally bound to pay my debts. I can give a little to good enterprises in the present, and my future is more secure. I want to get on in the world. I might want to marry. I don't care to be any poorer, especially as the only wife I want has never been accustomed to pinching. It may be folly to think Nan Ellery will ever marry me, but while I have any hope, I do not want to act like a fool, or a fanatic. Mr. Ellery has always raised more or less barley. He might not oppose me, but he would think me more nice than wise. I do not wish to be that. I will do right; but I cannot afford to be over-righteous. It is hard enough for a man among men to be at par in this respect."

The tendency of this new track on which Billy had entered was rather downward, and he realized it with a little self-disgust; but not until he had said to himself:

"Nan Ellery would not be pleased with such a new departure. She thinks her father one of the best men on earth, and it would look to her as if I had taken it on myself to be better than the man who taught me what right and wrong meant—as if I fancied myself moved by higher, finer principles. A little thing may turn her against me; and I may lose more than money, if I do what looks fanatical in this barley business."

Billy was by nature independent, but he was sensitive, and fond of approbation. He had worked his way up toward a place among men, in the face of obstacles; and he did not like to fall, in the least degree, in any one's opinion, or to lose a bit of his personal influence. If any one thinks this noble, let him ask himself if it would cost no effort suddenly to depart from the settled custom of all about him—surely to arouse the prejudices of friends and neighbors? Above all, if he were making the first move, not out of absolute conviction that he must be right, but out of belief that it not doing it he might be wrong? There is a difference in the moral heroism of actions prompted by these two motives. In the first case one can have the enthusiasm of a bearer of light into darkness; in the other case, he is only feeling his way steadily through darkness toward a hoped-for light. Hour after hour passed, and it was almost day before Billy slept. The battle had begun, but was not to end in one night.

(To be Continued.)

SUSIE REDMAYNE, OR THE BITTER CRY.

(By Christabel.)

The children went on wandering hand in hand. At last they came to a street that was as strange to them as if it had been a street in some other town. The neighborhood was respectable compared with the one they had left. There were tiny gardens in front of the houses, or rather little damp plots that were meant for gardens. The houses stood in regular rows, as modern houses do stand. They looked bare, even mean, but there were no signs of squalor outside.

Our two little wanderers went up and down one of these rows—Nelson Row it was called. Most of the houses were inhabited by working-men, and some of the windows betrayed signs of that desire for respectability which is so strong a characteristic of England's best working-men and working-women.

The door of one of these neater-looking houses stood open and a comely woman was trying to clean away the blackened ice from the door-steps.

She looked up at the children as they passed, and her eyes met the heavy, sorrowful blue eyes of Susie.

"Eh, hain't," she said, "but I don't you're sickly. Why has your mother let you come out such a morning as this?"

Little Susie only looked silently into the woman's face—silently and pathetically.

It was Ralph who replied: "We haven't got a mother," and his eyes filled with tears as he spoke.

"You've got a father?" said the woman, inquiringly.

"Yes," replied Ralph, brushing the tears away.

"And what's he doing?" asked the woman.

"I don't know what he'll be doing to-day," was the reply, cautiously given. Ralph had learned to dread this species of catechism from strangers.

"What does he do on other days?" asked the woman.

"He paints heraldry," said Ralph.

"Paints what?" said the woman.

"Well, coats of arms, and things on carriage doors."

"You mean then lions, standing on their hind legs, and bears climbing up poles, and vultures w' two heads?"

"Yes," said Ralph, "things of that kind."

"And does he make a living by it?"

"He can make a living, and a very good living."

"Only he don't?" said the woman, interrogatively.

Ralph kept silence. It was often difficult for him to keep God's commandment:—"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee;" but he tried to keep it as a rule.

It was only when he was worn down by suffering that he permitted a word against his father to escape him.

The woman had been watching the children narrowly, taking note of their worn-out look, their thin clothes, and their bad shoes. She was a person who had had a history of her own.

"And where hav' ye slep' all night?" she asked of the children.

"Under the river arch," said Ralph boldly and bravely.

"Eh, mercy on us!" said the woman. "Ye slep' under there w' the rats running about ye."

Little Susie shivered, and the woman thought she was shivering with cold.

"Come away to the fire and get warmed," said the good-hearted woman. "My man's good to work, and I've neither chick nor child o' my own."

There was a blazing fire in the kitchen and a tidy hearth. Ralph could remember the time when his father's home had looked just as warm and comfortable as this. Little Susie smiled when the woman told her to put her feet on the fender.

"Will you tell me what your name is?" the little thing asked, blushing as she spoke and looking prettier than ever.

The woman laid a maternal hand upon the little golden head.

"They call me Jane Sorrell, honey. And now tell me what they call thee?"

"Susie Redmayne," said the small creature; "and Ralph is Ralph Redmayne."

While Mrs. Sorrell had been talking, she had also been preparing breakfast. A jug of steaming coffee was on the table, some beautiful home-made bread with nice sweet butter and a pot of real jam, such as Ralph knew only by memory. Mrs. Sorrell was both proud and glad to see how much the children enjoyed their breakfast.

"And now tell me what ye're a-going to do to-day," she asked when the children's appetites were about satisfied. "I don't want to ask no questions, not none as I shouldn't ask," she added, with a touch of respect that included both herself and her guests. "But it isn't unbecoming on me to ask what ye're a-going to do to-day."

The question saddened Ralph in spite of the woman's kindness. What were they going to do? He tried to think for a moment what they were likely to do, then he gave it up.

"I don't know what we shall do," he said, "nor where we shall go."

"You ain't thinking o' going home again?" asked Mrs. Sorrell.

And little Susie cried out with a touch of terror in her tone: "No, please don't take me home; I'll sleep every night down beside the water rather than go home any more."

"I'd a' asked you to stay a bit longer, but my master isn't like me; he isn't fond o' children, and he's allus saying that he's glad we haven't none of our own. So I can't ask ye to stay, ye see, that is no longer than dinner time, but ye can sit a bit yet. He doesn't come home to his dinner till twelve."

While the children were sitting by Mrs. Sorrell's cosy fire, wishing that twelve o'clock might never come, or that John Sorrell would send word that he was not coming to his dinner that day, Richard Red-

mayne was walking in bitter moodiness up and down his wretched room. Things were bad with him, they had been bad a long time, and he could not have believed that the absence of the girl and boy could make matters much worse. But the sudden discovery of their escape had filled him with a strange deep feeling to which he could give no name.

If he could only have them back for a moment, so that he might tell them of his bitter repentance, so that he might promise them that he would never be unkind or cruel any more, then he would be satisfied; so he said to himself. He had scolded them, he had starved them, and he had struck them; but it seemed as if another man had done it, for he had loved them all the while.

CHAPTER IV.—CAROLINE FRERE.

Twelve o'clock did come, and the children were once more cast on the world. But Mrs. Sorrell made them promise that they would come again to see her. She stroked Susie's hair fondly as she said good-bye, and kissed her pale cheek. All a mother's heart went out to her, and she wished she was her own.

Going out from a warm fireside the wind felt piercingly cold. What to do and where to go Ralph didn't know; he couldn't think of taking Susie under the arches again. He blamed himself for taking her from the shelter that their wretched home afforded; for he saw that she could not bear this kind of life many days. Massive stone villas displaying beauty of architecture dotted the landscape where the children were wandering now, and all around lay the beautiful white snow. These mansions looked very unapproachable to such unimportant little wayfarers as these. Little Susie looked almost as white as the snow she stepped upon. It was still white and untrodden in this western suburb of Yarnborough; and the snow was still frozen on the leaves of the evergreen trees that grew in the gardens.

Little Susie would have thought them very beautiful if she could have thought of anything at all, but she was thinking of nothing now. Her last strength was going out in endurance, she held by her brother's arm, dragging her slow steps after his, but her eyes were half closed, her brain confused, and every step grew more and more of an effort.

Suddenly, quite suddenly it seemed to Ralph, she sank gently down on the snow, and lay there seemingly half dead. The boy's distress was intense. Till that moment he had not known how weak he was himself; but when he tried to lift the slight form he found himself powerless to do so. Then in his agony and bewilderment he threw open the nearest gate. It was a handsome bronzed end gilded one, but Ralph never saw that. He saw nothing. He dashed up the wide avenue and into the Gothic porch of the great house, hardly knowing that he rang the bell as if he were a personage of great importance.

The servant who came to the door was simply speechless with surprise. When she could speak she asked sharply: "What on earth do you want, you little ragamuffin?"

At the same moment a silvery voice behind said:

"Let me see the little ragamuffin, Jane, will you?"

The speaker was a young lady, Miss Caroline Frere, and her position might most easily be described as that of daughter of the house, but in truth she was only niece to old Miss Roland. Miss Frere had seen the boy come running wildly up the pathway, and she had seen that he was in no ordinary state of excitement.

"What is it, my little man?" she asked, laying her two white hands on his ragged shoulders, and looking sympathetically into his pallid face.

"It's Susie," he said gasping for breath as he spoke, and pointing down the avenue,—"it's little Susie!" He could say nothing else. He was as one stunned and helpless, he even seemed unable to move.

But Caroline Frere had now and always full use of her faculties. She tripped lightly down the avenue, not heeding that her little kid shoes were not intended for the snow. A minute later she came back again with an unconscious pallid child lying in her arms. She had quick perception and an abundance of useful knowledge, and her presence of mind was not likely to desert her in a crisis of this kind.

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