

OUR HERO.

BY B. ATHOL.

"Well, what did he do?"

I never said he did anything, but he is our hero, nevertheless.

Charlie and Bill and I were cousins, but being such inseparables we were generally called "the triplets;" for if you saw one in any place you might be sure the other two were very near at hand.

That was in our schooldays, and very happy days they were until Charlie and I left home. When we went to college I don't know which of us felt worst about leaving Will behind. But Will's mother was a widow, with very limited means, so he hid his own regrets, and commenced to look about for anything that would relieve her and help himself.

The first opening that presented itself was in the Post Office; not the most desirable situation, certainly, but it promised to improve, so Will accepted it. I remember how sorry Charlie and I were when we heard the news. We thought the cleverest of the three had been thrown away; for Will was certainly clever, with an odd taste for drawing or painting. Anything with pencil, brush or pen, was a delight to him. I never saw a fellow that could make the same use of a pen. His letters, too, were worth a dozen of newspapers to us while we were away. Charlie, it is true, had another correspondent. I always knew when there was a letter from Annie, the boy was sure to be missing for an hour, and when next we met, stray bits of home gossip would unconsciously fall from his lips, while he had the air of a person who is trying to look as if nothing had happened. Annie Somers was the only child of our old teacher—not remarkably pretty—more the sort of girl people call sweet. She and Charlie were engaged at this time. It had been a sort of Enoch Arden attachment, I fancy, for I remember when all we youngsters used to sleighride down that hill behind the school-

house, that Charlie never took anyone down but Annie. I think I see them now—a little mite of a thing in a red jacket and hood, stuck fearlessly on the front of the sleigh, and Charlie sitting at the back, holding her firmly on, while he steered behind with one leg, and down the long, steep hill they rushed, the snow flying around them like spray, but they never upset.

I think it was some time between our second and third year when Charlie's father died; he had been ill only a few days, and was dead when we reached home. This was in '57, the time of the crisis, when everything was going to ruin. Two weeks before he died, Mr. North had failed, with plenty more in the town, and, after the business was settled, it was found that Charlie had about two hundred and fifty dollars he could call his own.

As bad luck would have it, for weeks before we came home, there had been a perfect fever about California and the gold diggings.

A number of the students had entered wildly into the scheme of getting up an expedition out West, and for a time the excitement was intense. Maps and plans of the country were bought and studied with the deepest interest, meetings attended every other evening, committees appointed to make further enquiries and bring in their reports—in fact, the watchword was "California and the Pacific." Then the state of the country helped it on. Everything looked blue, and young fellows without prospects took eagerly to the scheme of an "expedition." Charlie and I had never caught the California fever, so was greatly surprised when he, upon hearing how he was situated, immediately announced his intention to join the party going West. Of course we tried to dissuade him; but as he said: "What else