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## BROTHER BILLY

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"THAT'S MY AUNT FLORENCE'S LOCKET"

[\(See page 31\)](#)

**Cosy Corner Series**

# **BROTHER BILLY**

**By  
Frances Margaret Fox**

Author of "Farmer Brown and the Birds," "Little Lady Marjorie," "Betty of Old Mackinaw," etc.

*Illustrated by  
Etheldred B. Barry*



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**TO  
MY DEAREST ONE**



CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	<a href="#">ENTERTAINING AUNT FLORENCE</a>	1
II.	<a href="#">INDIANS</a>	8
III.	<a href="#">BILLY GOES SWIMMING</a>	24
IV.	<a href="#">THE STEAM-TUG BILLY</a>	35
V.	<a href="#">ANTOINE LeBRINN</a>	53
VI.	<a href="#">ORANGES</a>	67
VII.	<a href="#">MINNAVAVANA'S BRAVES</a>	72
VIII.	<a href="#">ANTOINE'S BEAR STORIES</a>	82
IX.	<a href="#">UNCLE JOHN'S "OLD TIMER"</a>	97
X.	<a href="#">FISHING THROUGH THE ICE</a>	105
XI.	<a href="#">CHRISTMAS EVE</a>	119



	PAGE
" <a href="#">THAT'S MY AUNT FLORENCE'S LOCKET</a> ," ( <i>See page 31</i> )	<i>Frontispiece</i>
" <a href="#">ISN'T IT QUEER ABOUT INDIAN TRAILS?</a> "	10
" <a href="#">EVERYTHING HE WORE WAS NEW</a> "	34
" <a href="#">HE HELD BILLY ON HIS KNEE</a> "	54
" <a href="#">WATCHING FROM BEHIND THE NORTH WALL OF THE EVERGREEN FORT</a> "	76
" <a href="#">THERE WAS MERRIMENT WITHIN THE EVERGREEN FORT</a> "	77
" <a href="#">SAMONE</a> "	82
" <a href="#">BETTY ... WROTE HER PLEDGE</a> "	109
" <a href="#">LIFTING HER IN HIS ARMS</a> "	127

[Pg 1]

# BROTHER BILLY

## CHAPTER I. ENTERTAINING AUNT FLORENCE

Billy was cross. The twins from Grand Rapids who were living in the green cottage wanted him to play Indians on the beach. The boy from Detroit, whose mother didn't know where he was half the time, had been teasing him to go swimming. 'Phonse LeBrinn, child of Mackinaw, was throwing stones at the boat-house, a signal Billy well understood. When 'Phonse had a plan that promised more fun than usual, he always threw stones at the boat-house. Other boys came to the door and rang the bell or knocked when they wanted Billy. 'Phonse knew better. Billy longed to find out what was on his mind, but it wouldn't do to let any one know that the ragged little playmate had a particular reason for throwing stones.

[Pg 2]

Suddenly a light dawned on Billy's face. "Mamma," said he, "let me go down on the beach and tell Frenchy he must quit that, he'll spoil the paint. I won't be gone but a minute."

"Now, see here," remonstrated Billy's mother, "never mind what 'Phonse is doing, and keep away from the window, Billy, so he won't see you. Come, child, Aunt Florence will soon be ready."

"Oh, shoot the luck! I don't want to go with Aunt Florence. I want to play with the boys. What made Betty go and tell her all about old fort relics, I'd like to know."

"Hush, hush, Billy! Aunt Florence may hear you."

"Well, but, mamma, I don't want to go to the old fort and dig beads all the afternoon. It's too warm. I'm roasting."

Billy's mother laughed. One look at the child's face was enough to make anybody laugh. He was so cross. "Maybe auntie won't care to stay long, Billy. Strangers who are not accustomed to our woods often feel pretty lonesome at the old fort."

[Pg 3]

"She'll stay, mamma; I know all about bead-diggers; they stay and stay. Besides that, she won't be afraid, because there are about a million thousand resorter folks up there every day digging relics. I wish that Betty had kept something to herself. She just reads that old Pontiac's history all the time, and then tells all she knows to anybody that wants to find out. She makes me tired. I don't like to go to the old fort, anyway."

"Why not, Billy?"

"'Cause everybody up there that don't know you asks questions. They say, 'There's a little boy, ask him;' then 'cause you don't want to talk, they say, 'Lost your tongue,' and silly things like that. Aunt Florence is a question asker, too, mamma. Oh, shoot the luck!"

"I'll tell you a good plan, Billy dear," suggested his mother. "You help Aunt Florence dig beads, like a good boy, and very likely she'll be willing to come home sooner. Then you can play with the boys the rest of the afternoon."

"May I play with Frenchy?"

[Pg 4]

"Ye-es, yes, you may this time."

Billy's face brightened suddenly. "Oh, goody, goody, there comes Betty," he cried. "Now I won't have to go. Where's my hat? Oh, Bet, you came just in time," continued the boy. "Aunt Florence wants you to go to the old fort with her to dig beads, because the missionary meeting's going to be here, and mamma says to entertain Aunt Florence. You've got to go, that's all."

"Of course she must go," echoed Aunt Florence, who came down-stairs in time to hear Billy's last words. "Didn't you find your little girl at home, Betty?"

"No, auntie, she had gone to the island, but I only came home for a minute to ask—"

"Well," interrupted Aunt Florence, "then of course you can go with Billy and me to the old fort."

"Guess—guess I won't go, Aunt Florence; there's a boy down there wants me," and Billy waved his hand to 'Phonse.

"Yes, Billy'll go with you," Betty hastened to say, "because—because, Aunt Florence, I can't. I'd love to, but I must go to see another girl. I'd love to walk up there with you, but—but I—"

[Pg 5]

"You needn't go if you don't want to, children," Aunt Florence looked the least bit grieved.

"Certainly they want to go," declared Billy's mother, in a tone that Betty and Billy understood. "Go find your little shovels, children, and bring Aunt Florence the fire shovel from the woodshed."

Billy was about to venture a protest, but, catching a look from Betty that meant a great deal to him, he followed her out of the room.

"What is it, Bet?" he whispered.

"Well, Billy, don't you see it won't do a bit of good to make a fuss. We'll have to go to the old fort; mamma'll make us. But I know one way to fix it so we won't have to stay long. The Robinsons are making pineapple sherbet, and they've invited me to it, so I can't waste time up to the old fort this afternoon. I told Lucille I'd come right straight back soon's I asked mamma."

"And I want to play with Frenchy," put in the little brother.

"But don't you see, Billy, we've got to be decent to company first, so we'll take her to the old fort all right enough, but we'll scare her to death when we get her there, so she'll want to come right straight home. Don't you see? I'll tell her true wild Indian stories, and she won't want to stay."

[Pg 6]

"And I know another thing we can do," agreed Billy.

"What is it?"

"We'll take your old fort beads and then, Betty, we'll break the string and scatter the beads in the dirt, and then we'll call her to come and find them. She'll be satisfied to come home after that."

"Why, of course, Billy, and your plan is so much better than mine, we'll try it first. We won't scare her unless we have to, though a good scare never hurts anybody. You get the beads while I get the shovels. Hurry now, we'll have some fun."

Mrs. Grannis was much relieved when the children returned with pleasant faces. Aunt Florence, too, was pleased.

"I truly wouldn't want you to go a step unless you were perfectly willing," she said, as they were leaving the house.

"Well, auntie, we're always willing to go anywhere, Billy and I, if we think we can have some fun, and we're going to have a jolly time this afternoon, aren't we, Billy?" [Pg 7]

The little brother's round face beamed as he felt of the beads in his trousers' pocket.

## CHAPTER II. INDIANS

[Pg 8]

"You are the dearest children," exclaimed Aunt Florence. "I wish I could take you back to New York with me. You can't remember your grandfather and grandmother at all, can you, Billy?"

"No, wouldn't know 'em if I'd meet 'em."

"It's a shame. Never mind, I'll tell them all about you two and Gerald, and some day I'm coming north on purpose to take you all home with me, and we'll have the best kind of a time."

"Guess you wouldn't think of coming after us if we lived where we do now, and it was a hundred years ago," suggested Betty.

"Why not?"

"Oh, because you would have had to come from Detroit in a canoe, and this was all woods then, deep, deep woods full of Indians." [Pg 9]

"Dear me, Betty, don't speak of it! It seems to me there are woods enough here now. My! What a dreary place! the undergrowth is so thick you can't see the water, and yet you can hear every wave. Betty Grannis, do you mean to tell me that you ever come out here to the old fort alone?"

"Oh, not very often; it is rather dreary, isn't it, auntie? You see, this is an old, old Indian trail, and that is why the pines meet overhead. Let's walk faster. I don't believe you'll want to stay long, auntie, after you get to the fort."

"I agree with you, Betty, this is a lonesome walk. I almost wish we'd stayed at home."

"Let's turn around and go back," suggested Billy.

"Oh, I must find some beads," Aunt Florence insisted. "Do you ever see Indians around here nowadays?"

"Oh, just tame ones," Billy was honest enough to say.

"You must be brave children," the young lady remarked, as she followed Betty through the gloomy forest. [Pg 10]



"We're used to it," Betty sung over her shoulder, and Billy knew she was laughing. "Besides that, we can run like the wind if we have to. Then you know, auntie, the awful things that happened here happened over a hundred years ago, and there isn't any real danger now, of course. It just makes you feel shivery, that's all. Isn't it queer about Indian trails, how they wind in and out so often? This trail is exactly as it used to be. Did you ever read 'The Conspiracy of Pontiac,' auntie?" [Pg 11]

"No, Betty, I never read it all; I simply know about the massacre here. Have you read it?"

"She knows it by heart," said Billy. "She can say bushels of Indian speeches. Tell her one, Betty. Tell her that one where the Indian said to Alexander Henry, 'The rattlesnake is our grandfather.'"

"Yes, do, Betty, only tell me first who Alexander Henry was."

"Why, auntie, don't you know? He was the English fur-trader whose life was saved by the Indian chief Wawatam. I like him best of any fur-trader I ever knew."

"Do tell me his story, Betty."

"Oh, I can't tell it, it is too long. Do you want to know what happened to him in the spring of 1761, two years before the massacre?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, of course, you know all about the French and Indian War, auntie?"

"Yes, I know something about it."

"Then, auntie, you know that the French liked the Indians, and the Indians liked them, but the English despised the Indians, and treated them so badly the Indians hated all Englishmen. That was why the Indians helped the French in their war. They wanted to drive the English out of the country. Well, when the war was over, the Indians didn't know that the English came out ahead, and that the French soldiers would have to march out of every fort and that the English soldiers would march in. Even my Pontiac didn't know it."

[Pg 12]

"He'd have known all about his own war and where he died if he'd had you for a sister," mocked Billy.

"Don't talk quite so loud, Billy dear," cautioned Aunt Florence.

"'Fraid?" questioned Billy.

"Oh, not exactly; go on, Betty, we're listening. How much longer is this Indian trail, anyway?"

"Only half a mile, auntie. Billy, you'll punch a hole through your pocket if you aren't careful."

"Go on with your story, Bet, and don't turn around so much."

"Well," continued Betty, giving Billy a look that meant "Don't you dare lose those beads," "well, auntie, in the spring of that year, 1761, the French soldiers had left this fort, and only Canadian families were living in it. The English soldiers hadn't come yet, but they were on the way. The fort was over a hundred years old then. Only think of it!

[Pg 13]

"Alexander Henry, my Englishman, wasn't afraid of anything, that's why I like him. He came up here with canoes full of beads and things to trade with the Indians for furs. On the way he was warned again and again to go back if he didn't want to be killed. He probably would have been killed long before he got here if he hadn't put on the clothes of a Canadian voyageur."

"They're the ones," interrupted Billy, "that used to paddle the canoes and sing 'Row, brothers, row,' and—"

"She knows that," sniffed Betty; "even our baby knows that much. Well, auntie, when Alexander Henry got here, the Canadians were bad to him and tried to scare him. They wanted him to go away before anything happened. He hadn't been here but a short time when Minnavavana, a Chippewa Indian chief, came with sixty warriors to call on him. They marched to his house single file, auntie. Their faces were painted with grease and charcoal, and they had feathers through their noses and feathers in their hair. Their bodies were painted with white clay. That isn't the worst of it. Every warrior carried a tomahawk in one hand and a scalping-knife in the other. I suppose they came along this very trail.

[Pg 14]

"Alexander Henry says they walked into the house without a sound. The chief made a sign and they all sat on the floor. Minnavavana asked one of the interpreters how long it was since Mr. Henry left Montreal, and then he said it seemed that the English were brave men and not afraid to die, or they wouldn't come as he had, alone, among their enemies. Then all the Indians smoked their pipes, and let Alexander Henry think about things while it was nice and quiet. Just think of it, auntie!

"When the Indians were through smoking, Minnavavana made a speech. I don't know it by heart, but it was something like this:

"'Englishman, it is to you that I speak. Englishman, you know that the French king promised to be our father. We promised to be his children. We have kept this promise. Englishman, it is you that have made war with our father. You are his enemy. How could you have the boldness to venture among us, his children? You know his enemies are ours.

[Pg 14]

"'Englishman, our father, the King of France, is old and infirm. Being tired of war, he has fallen asleep. But his nap is almost at an end. I think I hear him stirring and asking for his children, the Indians, and, when he does awake, what must become of you? He will destroy you utterly.'"

Betty, becoming much in earnest, was walking backward.

"'Englishman, we have no father, no friend among the white men but the King of France,'" the child went on. "'But for you, we have taken into consideration that you have ventured your life among us in the expectation that we should not molest you. You do not come to make war; you come in peace to trade with us. We shall regard you, therefore, as a brother, and you may sleep tranquilly, without fear of the Chippewas. As a token of friendship, we present you this pipe to smoke.'"

[Pg 15]

Whereupon, Betty, making a serious bow, offered her little shovel to Aunt Florence. For the moment, she actually believed herself Minnavavana, the Indian chief, though Billy's face quickly brought her back to the present.

"I am thankful to say," resumed Betty, joining in the laugh following the presentation of the shovel, "that after three hundred warriors of another tribe came and were going to make trouble, the English soldiers arrived, and the red flag of England soon floated above the fort. Then, for two years, nothing much happened, but I'm glad I wasn't here then. I wouldn't have slept a wink, I know."

"Neither should I, Betty," Aunt Florence agreed.

"Frenchy'd have been all right, though," remarked Billy. "There's the fort, Aunt Florence, straight ahead; the trail ends here. Now we will find an old cellar-hole and hunt for beads. Let me go first, Betty."

"The fort," repeated Aunt Florence, "where is it?" She saw nothing but a wilderness of wild-rose

blooms.

"Oh," laughed Betty, "there's nothing left of the fort but part of the old palisades. Most of the buildings were burned the day of the massacre." [Pg 17]

"It's unspeakably dreary, in spite of the sunshine and the roses," commented Aunt Florence, "but I do want some beads."

"Come on, come on," cried Billy. "Oh, hurry up, Aunt Florence, I'm finding beads by the bushel."

"Where is the child? can you see him, Betty?"

"Way over there, auntie, in that cellar-hole near the old apple-tree. We think that is where one of the storehouses used to be, because all around it is where most of the beads have been found."

For awhile Aunt Florence forgot the surrounding woods, in her eager search for beads. Had she known Betty and Billy as their mother knew them, she might have understood that there was more of mischief than pure joy in their smiles.

"Never found so many beads in one place in my life," declared Billy.

"Nor anybody else in the last hundred years," added Betty. "Fun, isn't it?" [Pg 18]

"Fun!" echoed Aunt Florence, "why, children, I won't want to go home until dark."

Betty stared, and Billy made faces. This was an unexpected blow. At last the beads that Betty had collected, after working hours and hours through many a day, were all found.

"Now we'll look for another place," announced Aunt Florence.

"I guess we are alone out here," suggested Betty, glancing about, as though she felt uneasy.

"Oh, no," was the cheerful reply, "down there nearer the lake I saw two sunbonnets not three minutes ago. We're all right, children; I'm not the least bit timid."

Patiently Aunt Florence continued her search for beads, encouraged by the hope of finding another place equal to the first.

"It seems strange that there should have been so many beads in one spot of earth, and so few everywhere else," she said, "but I'm not going to give up now, after such luck in the beginning."

"You'll just have to scare her to death, I guess," grumbled Billy. "Lost your beads for nothing, too." [Pg 19]

"Trouble is," confessed Betty, moving nearer Billy and farther from her aunt, "this isn't a good place to tell Indian stories."

"Why not?"

"Because, Billy, I get scared myself. Honest and truth, I don't even like to think of such horrible things right here where they happened."

"Don't make any difference, you've got to," protested Billy. "Don't you know she said she'd stay here till dark?"

"I know it, Billy; let me see, how'll I begin. Oh, I know, Alexander Henry was in his room in the fort writing letters home. Perhaps, Billy, we are standing on the very place where his house was. He was so busy with his letters he didn't want to take the time to go down to the beach to see the canoes that had just arrived from Detroit. First thing he knew, he heard the war-whoops. Mercy, Billy! Don't scream like that again!"

"Billy Grannis," called Aunt Florence, "what's the matter?"

"Why, that was just an Indian war-whoop, auntie. Frenchy and I have been practising whoops lately." [Pg 20]

"Well, please don't practise any more now; you made me jump so I lost three beads. I don't believe an Indian could give a worse yell."

"Oh, yes, he could," exclaimed Betty, "my, that's nothing!" and, seeing her opportunity, she began telling stories. Even Billy grew solemn in his very mind as he listened, and it wasn't long before Betty succeeded in scaring herself, however Aunt Florence may have felt.

Suddenly the air was filled with shrieks. Aunt Florence became white as the daisies, as she stared at Betty, while terror seized Billy.

"It's the sunbonnet girls," gasped Betty; "what do you s'pose is the matter? What is the matter?" she demanded of the flying maidens.

"Indians, Indians, run quick, run, run! I tell you they're after us!"

One glance toward the lake was enough for Betty. She saw canoes being drawn up on the beach, and Indians coming straight toward them. The child was never more frightened in her life. Forgetting Billy, she and Aunt Florence fairly flew over the rough ground. Billy, poor fellow! never could run because he was too plump. He hadn't gone ten breathless steps before he fell into a cellar-hole, and, before he could scramble out, a big Indian overtook him. [Pg 21]

"Match," grunted the Indian, "want match."

"N-n-no, I don't want any matches," answered Billy, trying to steady his trembling knees.

"Humph! Indian want match. Give Indian match. Indian build fire," was the explanation.

Billy shook his head, and the Indian turned away disappointed.

"That Betty'd leave you to be eaten up by Indians," grumbled Billy, and, because he was so angry and because he had been so badly frightened over nothing, he began to cry.

"Billy, Billy, don't cry, I came back after you, you poor child." It was the voice of Aunt Florence, though Billy couldn't see her.

"Here I am, behind this clump of goose-berry bushes, Billy. I didn't dare come straight back, so I kept behind trees and bushes. Come quick; now let's run." [Pg 22]

"There isn't anything to run for, Aunt Florence," sobbed Billy. "Don't you see, they're just tame Indians, and wouldn't hurt anybody? Don't you see the little Indian children and the squaws, too? I s'pose they've come with baskets to sell. Yes, there comes a squaw, going to town now with a load of baskets."

"Then I guess I'll sit down and rest a minute," said Aunt Florence, "for I'm tired out. It's dreadful to be so frightened. I'm trembling yet."

"Me, too," confessed Billy. "Where's that Betty?"

"Home by this time, I presume," was the laughing reply, "unless she couldn't stop running when she got there, in which case she's probably in the lake. Well, Billy, let's walk on now, or the whole missionary society will be coming to our rescue."

"Oh, Billy, I've been crying my eyes out, fear something had happened to you," was Betty's greeting when she saw her little brother.

Billy made a face, as he replied in scornful tones: "'Fore I'd run away from tame Indians!" For many a day thereafter, if Billy wanted anything that belonged to Betty, it was his if he but threatened to say "Tame Indians." [Pg 23]

### CHAPTER III. BILLY GOES SWIMMING

[Pg 24]

Early the following afternoon, Billy saw 'Phonse LeBrinn throwing stones at the boat-house, and, as he liked to play with 'Phonse much better than with his nearest neighbours, the twins in the green cottage, he flew down the bank fast as he could go.

"Oh, Frenchy," he panted, "I wish I could run like a deer, way you do. I can't run worth a cent."

"Shouldn't think you could," grinned 'Phonse.

"Let's go the other side of the boat-house," suggested Billy, "I'm 'fraid, if my mother sees me down here, she'll think of something she wants me to do."

'Phonse was sure of it, so he and Billy straightway sought a hiding-place.

"What have you got that tog on for?" asked 'Phonse. [Pg 25]

"Going to be a thimble party at our house," explained Billy, "and Bet made such a fuss I had to be dressed up fear somebody might see me."

"Where's Gerald?"

"He's camping this week at the Snow Islands with some folks. Wish he was home. What'll we do this afternoon, 'Phonse?"

"Catch minnows; don't you want to?"

"I'd rather hunt for Aunt Florence's locket than anything else. See, 'Phonse, that girl up there on the bank looking through my father's spy-glass, she's my Aunt Florence, and she's a brick."

"Ain't she pretty!" exclaimed 'Phonse. "She's the prettiest lady I ever saw. She wouldn't like me, though; nobody does."

"I do; all the trouble is, 'Phonse, nobody's acquainted with you. Now, if you could find Aunt Florence's locket that she lost yesterday, she'd like you for ever and ever. I know she would."

"Where'd she lose it, Billy?"

"She thinks she lost it at the old fort yesterday. It's a gold locket that her father gave her when she graduated last summer, and Aunt Florence and I hunted for it all the forenoon. We had to give up. 'Phonse, you stay here, and I'll run up to the house and tell my mother I'm going to hunt for the locket. You be walking up the beach, and I'll meet you around the point." [Pg 26]

When Billy rejoined his ragged playmate, the two began a diligent search for the locket.

"If anybody can find it, you can, 'Phonse."

"Aw, somebody's picked it up 'fore this, Billy. Nobody could help seeing it on this black ground. Gold shines, you know."

"Maybe," suggested Billy, "maybe she didn't lose it; perhaps she lost it where we were digging for beads. Surely, this morning we hunted over every inch of this trail, and you know Betty."

'Phonse nodded his black head. "She'd find it if it was here. Don't you want to go swimmun,



Billy?"

"Too cold, 'Phonse; we'd freeze."

"We can make a bonfire on the beach, see?" 'Phonse showed Billy a handful of matches. "Swiped 'em," he commented. "We'll go down on the sand under the bank and start a fire beside of the tramp's raft. Nobody'll see us there, you know, and we can go swimmun and get dressed where it's warm."

[Pg 27]

"All right, sir," assented Billy, "only don't run, 'Phonse, whatever you do."

Beyond the fort was an old raft of planks, upon which years before tramps crossed the straits in a storm. It was a favourite resort among the boys. Billy instantly began gathering driftwood for a bonfire.

"Guess the Indians had a fire in this same place yesterday, 'Phonse," he said, "because just see the new-looking ashes. Wonder if they started it with flint or by rubbing two sticks together. Do you know?"

"No, I don't. Hustle up, Billy, and don't stop to talk."

When the pile of driftwood was high enough to suit 'Phonse, he started the fire. Thanks to the west wind, it burned, and the boys were soon ready for the water. Billy walked into the lake, screaming at every step. 'Phonse climbed upon a rock and plunged in.

"Silly," he shouted, "course you'll be cold acting that way; get down in the water, Billy, then you'll be warm."

[Pg 28]

"It's too—too—too early to go swimming," gasped Billy, shivering in the wind and the icy water. "I—I'm—I'm glad we started the fire."

"Come out where it's deeper; here, give me your hand," said 'Phonse, "I'll show you how to go swimmun."

Soon Billy declared that the water was warm, and he and 'Phonse played in the lake for an hour. They splashed, laughed, and shouted, with only the gulls to hear, until 'Phonse said it was time to get dressed. The fire was out. 'Phonse threw some bark upon the coals, and looked for his clothes. There was not a thread of them left.

"Oh, Billy," he wailed "we left our clothes too near the fire, and they're all burned up; what can we do?"

"Oh, what shall we do?" cried Billy. "Oh, b-b-but m-my c-c-clothes are all r-right," he added in the next breath. "I'll divide with you, 'Phonse."

"Your clothes ain't either all right," insisted 'Phonse. "They're burning yet. Look at them."

[Pg 29]

"Here's one all right s-stocking, just the same, 'Phonse."

"Let me take it, then, Billy, and I'll put out the fire with it that's burning the rest of the things."

"You may wear the stocking," offered Billy. "The other one's gone, and the shoes are spoiled. Why, 'Phonse, there isn't anything left of my clothes but my shirt and my blouse and my trousers, —and look at my trousers, will you, all full of holes!"

"What if you didn't have anything left," grumbled 'Phonse. "I've got some shoes and stockings at home, Billy, but that's all. I don't know what dad will do, but I'll catch it, sure."

"Oh, 'Phonse, my mother'll give you some clothes to wear, if we can ever get to my house, but, oh, dear, it is so cold! Which do you want to wear, 'Phonse, my shirt or my white blouse; there's one sleeve burned out of both of 'em, and my waist is all gone."

"I'll take the shirt," 'Phonse decided. "Don't cry, Billy, I'm the one that ought to cry."

[Pg 30]

"B-but, but I'm s-s-so c-cold, and, oh, dear, I'm going to put on the s-s-stocking if you—you don't want it."

"I do, though," insisted 'Phonse; "give her here. You've got more on than I have, anyway. Come on, Billy, we'll be warmer if we run."

"Only I can't run, and—and—and the s-s-stones h-hurt m-my fee-feet," protested Billy, his teeth chattering.

"Don't be a baby," 'Phonse advised. "Oh, Billy, what if there is a lot of folks at the old fort? We better keep back from the lake. It's too cold here, anyway. Let's sneak around where the bushes grow."

"All right, go ahead, 'Phonse."

Cautiously the boys made their way around the clearing. They were nearly past the old fort grounds when they heard voices.

"Duck, Billy, duck; it's some boys from out of town," whispered 'Phonse, "and if they see us, I don't know what'll happen! Let's crawl!"

"Listen," Billy replied; "they've found a wonderful relic, I guess; hear them quarrel. Oh, 'Phonse, it's my Aunt Florence's locket, that's what it is, and they've got to give it up!"

[Pg 31]

Without stopping to think further, Billy darted from the thicket, followed closely by 'Phonse.

"That's my Aunt Florence's locket, so please give it to me," demanded the child, springing toward the largest boy in the group.

"Listen to him, will you," replied a taunting voice. "Here's the Wild Man of Borneo wants his Aunt Florence's locket. Well, I guess not. Have you two escaped from a circus, or do you want to join one, which?"

"Give me that locket," cried Billy. "I say that belongs to my Aunt Florence."

Great fun the big boys had then, teasing poor Billy, who begged, threatened, and jumped for the locket held just beyond his reach.

"Tell you what," suggested the roughest-looking boy, "let's tie these youngsters together, and leave them here until we can get out of town. Them's diamonds in that locket, boys."

At that moment 'Phonse sprang like a wild-cat upon the boy with the locket, and, snatching the treasure, ran with it to the woods. Billy was never more astonished, and at first the boys were too surprised to chase the strange little figure flying across the clearing. When they ran after 'Phonse, Billy hid. He wasn't afraid any one could catch 'Phonse, the swift-footed French boy, but he did fear being caught himself. Like an old-time Indian, Billy managed to keep out of the enemy's sight all the way home. 'Phonse was waiting for him in the edge of the woods.

[Pg 32]

"Here," said 'Phonse, offering Billy the locket, "take it to her."

Billy shook his head. "'Phonse, you come in the wood-shed, and sit in the corner where nobody'll see you, while I ask my mother for some clothes for us. Then you can give auntie the locket yourself."

"Won't you catch it?" asked 'Phonse; "you don't look very nice, Billy."

"You do what I tell you," remarked Billy. "My mother's the kind you can explain things to. I don't want the company to see me, though, so I guess I'll whistle for Betty."

Betty quickly appeared in answer to the whistle.

[Pg 33]

"Why, Billy Grannis!" she began, and then how she laughed.

"Keep still, Bet, there is a boy in the wood-shed that's cold. He hasn't on very much clothes, and he wants something to wear home."

That was all 'Phonse heard, as Billy was led into the house. The little fellow returned in a moment, dragging a cape. "Here, 'Phonse, Betty sent you this to wrap up in, and Betty says come in by the kitchen fire."

"I won't do it," was the reply.

"All right, then, I'll have to bring your 'freshments out here. It's a shivering kind, though,—ice-cream and cake; want some?"

"Don't I? You bet!" was the answer.

"Come, 'Phonse, come in the kitchen," urged Betty, again appearing at the door. "Please come. Billy has told auntie and me about the locket, and Aunt Florence just loves you. Quick as the company goes, mamma'll find you something to wear."

Trailing the cape behind him, 'Phonse walked into the kitchen, where Betty introduced him to Aunt Florence.

[Pg 34]



That night, when 'Phonse LeBrinn went home, his own folks didn't know him. In his arms he carried a bundle of Billy's old clothes; but everything he wore was new, from the red cap to the patent-leather shoes.

[Pg 35]

## CHAPTER IV. THE STEAM-TUG BILLY

Aunt Florence didn't forget 'Phonse, and it was evident to the marine reporter's family that 'Phonse didn't forget her. He scarcely said thank you when she gave him his new suit, but every morning while Aunt Florence was in Mackinaw a bunch of wild flowers was found tied to the

front door-knob. Once only a bit of pasteboard was attached, upon which was written in letters hard to read, "For billies ant."

At first the family wondered why 'Phonse kept away, but when they learned that Antoine LeBrinn had sold his little son's new clothes for drink, they understood.

"Poor little fellow," Aunt Florence said one morning, when a cluster of bluebells was brought her, wound so closely not a blossom could move its dainty head. "How I wish he would come again." [Pg 36]

"He won't, though, 'cept when nobody knows," observed Billy, "and if any one says a word against his father, he'll fight."

"I'm curious to see his father, too," replied Aunt Florence. "Betty has told me so much about the family that I'd like to talk to that man; I'd say some things he'd remember."

"Antoine used to come often," said Betty. "We always tease him to tell stories. Everybody likes him; you'll see him sometime, auntie, and then you'll like him, too."

"I shall tell him what I think of him," declared Aunt Florence; but a week later, when Antoine came, she didn't say a word.

It was a rainy afternoon, and when Billy announced that the game must be circus as usual, and that the parade should be first on the programme, Betty objected.

"Billy Grannis," she exclaimed, "you're a nuisance. Gerald and I have played circus with you until we are sick and tired of it. You may be a lion-tamer if you want to, but you and your old lion will have to have a show of your own. I won't stand it any longer, and you can't have my cat for a polar bear, either." [Pg 37]

"Why, Bet," was the remonstrance, "what makes you be so cross? I thought you liked to play circus. Do you want to be the lion-tamer this time, Bet? I'll let you take my big dog; do you want to, Betty?"

"No, Billy, I don't want to be anything that's in a circus, so there! I'll play Grace Darling, though; you and Gerald and Hero may be the shipwrecked sailors, and I'll be Grace Darling."

"I don't want to play shipwreck," declared Gerald. "I had enough of shipwrecks when the *California* went down."

"Me, too," echoed Billy. "I'd rather play Noah and the flood. Oh, Betty, let's play that, and then my dog Hero can be the lion,—no, Betty no, I didn't mean it; he can be the elephant, I mean, and your cat can be a—a—what other animal is white 'sides a polar bear? And, oh, Gerald, your bluest pigeon can be the dove."

"But why don't you want to play Grace Darling?" interrupted Betty. "I'll let you take my dolls for the shipwrecked children, and I'll live in the lighthouse." [Pg 38]

"If you want to know what's fun," put in Gerald, "just listen to me. Let's play—"

"But I want to play get the animals out of the ark," insisted Billy.

"And I say," Betty argued, "that you don't know whether you like to play Grace Darling or not until you try it. Who's going to be captain of the shipwrecked boat, you, Billy, or Gerald? Now, this rug is the Northumberland coast."

"No, sir," shouted Billy, "it's Mt. Ararat."

"Why, children, what's going on?" asked Aunt Florence, who was passing the doorway.

"We all want to play different things," explained Betty.

"Why don't you make signal-flags, like the ones on the chart?" suggested Aunt Florence. "You know what I mean, Betty, the chart I saw you looking at yesterday in your father's office, the one with the pictures of signal-flags on it. I'll find sheets of red and blue and yellow and white paper, and I believe you can have a nice time making tiny paper flags. I'll get some paste ready for you, too."

"But what are the flags for?" asked Billy, "and why do they put letters beside of them on the chart?" [Pg 39]

"It tells all about the signal-flags in papa's marine directory, and I'm going after it," announced Betty.

"She can tell you about the signals, Billy," said Aunt Florence, "and let's see who can make the most perfect little flags. Gerald will help you, Billy, won't you, Gerald?"

"Don't need any help," Billy hastened to say, "'less he wants to whittle out flag-sticks."

"That's so, auntie," agreed Gerald. "I'll go after something to use for flagstaffs."

"And I'm going after some shears and things, and then," said Billy, "I'm going to cut out the 'B' flag. It's all red, auntie, and cut the way Betty's hair-ribbons are on the ends. I guess I will make the 'Q' flag, 'cause it's just a square made out of yellow; and the 'S' is easy, too, just white with a blue square in the centre. Oh, auntie's gone. Don't you feel queer, Hero, when you talk to somebody that isn't there?"

Gerald and Betty returned quickly with coloured paper and a book.

"Now, Billy," remarked the little girl, in her most severe tone, "put down the shears and listen a minute. I'm going to read out of the Marine Directory." [Pg 40]

"Don't read it; tell it," besought Billy.

"She wants to read it just because she can read big words without stopping to spell them," declared Gerald, after a glance at the open book.

Betty could read much better than Gerald ever expected to.

"It isn't that," was the reply, "but, if you will listen, you will know that the book tells it all better than I can. Now listen: 'The necessity for a uniform and comprehensive system of signalling at sea'—Billy Grannis, stop making faces. I've got to begin it all over again. 'The necessity for a uniform and comprehensive system of signalling at sea and to shore stations on the coast of the United States and other countries has long been felt and discussed by those interested in maritime pursuits, and by the leading maritime powers of the world.' Now, Gerald, stop acting like a goose. You and Billy both know what 'maritime' means just as well as I do. Now listen, and I'll go on. 'In view of this necessity, the adoption of a common code of signals to be observed by all nations, discarding all other codes and systems, appears to be in a high degree desirable and important. The international code of signals has been recommended and adopted by nearly all the principal nations of the world, and it is now the only code recognized or of practical use. It is the only one which, from its completeness, is likely to fully meet the existing need.'

[Pg 41]

"Billy, what ails you? Do stop laughing. What's the matter with you, Gerald,—tooth-ache?"

"No, Betty, worse'n that. When I think how your jaws must feel, I—"

"Now, Gerald, I don't believe you know a word I've read."

"Well, Betty, I should say not. Who could?"

"What I want to know is, what are all these flags for?" demanded Billy. "So please shut that old book and tell us."

"You horrid boys," exclaimed Betty, "I don't see how you ever expect to 'mount to anything."

"Wouldn't if we were girls," was Gerald's retort, which Betty didn't seem to hear. She often had deaf spells.

[Pg 42]

"Now, Billy dear," she went on, "you see there are eighteen of the signal-flags. They are marked B, C, D, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N, P, Q, R, S, T, V, and W. Besides these are two little pointed flags that mean 'Yes' and 'No.' The 'Yes' flag is white with a round red spot, and the flag that means 'No' is blue with a round white spot on it."

"Oh, now I know," exclaimed Billy. "If your boat wants to tell another boat 'No,' then it puts up the pointed blue flag."

"Yes, Billy, that's it."

"How do they use the other flags?" inquired Gerald. "You can't spell things without *a's* and *o's*."

"Don't you see, Gerald, each flag means something. Look on the back of the chart and you will see how they use the flags. The first signal is 'H—B.' When those two flags are displayed, —'display' is the right word to use, mister, so don't make eyes. When the 'H' flag and the 'B' flag are displayed together, with the 'H' above the 'B,' that's a signal that means 'Want immediate assistance.'

[Pg 43]

"Oh, boys, now I'll tell you what let's play. Every ship, you know, should carry a set of these signal-flags, so let's play we're all boats. I'll be a yacht, I guess, because yachts are beautiful."

"I'm a steam-tug—choo—choo—choo!—and my name's the tug *Billy*. Choo—choo choo—"

"Good, Bill!" exclaimed Gerald. "You're built just right for a tug. I guess I'll be the schooner *Gerald* of the White Star Line. Lumber's my cargo."

"Dear me, I can't be just a yacht, sailing around for the fun of it," remarked Betty. "I must be part of the merchant marine myself."

"Part of the dictionary, you mean," grumbled Gerald.

Betty was deaf for a moment. "I guess I would rather not be what you boys are, after all, so I'll be a passenger boat, the *City of Elizabeth*. I'm an ocean liner."

"Oh, that's just like a girl," and Gerald laughed. "An ocean liner on the Great Lakes. Oh, oh!"

[Pg 44]

"Did you ever get left, smarty Gerald? I tell you, I'm an ocean liner. These signals aren't used on the Great Lakes, only on the ocean. Besides that, if I'm a boat, I want the ocean to sail on. I couldn't think of puddling around in a little bit of water. I'm the finest steamship afloat, and I make regular trips between—oh, I guess London and New York. That will give you some work to do, Billy, because I'll need a steam-tug to pilot me into the harbour every time. You'll make a dear little pilot-boat, you are so chubby."

"Choo—choo—choo! toot—toot—toot!" responded the steam-tug *Billy*.

"What's the use of making a full set of flags?" remonstrated Gerald. "If we're going to play boat, let's play boat, and pretend we have them all. I've made the 'N—M' flags, that mean 'I'm on fire.'"

"That's what I say," agreed Billy. "I found out that 'P—N' means 'Want a steam-tug,' so I've made two sets of 'P—N' flags, one for you and one for Betty to use. For my own self, the 'Yes' and 'No' flags are all I want. You two better pin your 'Want a steam-tug' flags on; they won't stay stuck. Choo—choo—choo! toot—toot! Here I come puffing around—toot—toot—toot—see my black smoke! Oh, Bet, let's play there came up an awful fog, so we'll have to toot our horns all the

[Pg 45]

time."

"And keep our bells sounding all the while we are at anchor," added Gerald.

When the three boats began making trips, there were collisions and noise. Hero tried in vain to keep out of the way.

"He's a reef; there ought to be a lighthouse on him," suggested Betty.

"Look out for the St. Bernard Shoals," assented Gerald. "Hold on, there's a tug ashore,—a wreck on the St. Bernard Shoals."

"Toot—toot—toot! puff—puff! choo—choo—choo!" This from the steam-tug *Billy*.

"Tug is off the shoals, no lives lost," commented Gerald. "Oh, fire! fire! fire! My deck is all in flames. Up goes my signal 'I'm on fire,' and now where's my 'Want a steam-tug' signal. Oh, right here. I shall be saved if the tug *Billy* doesn't burst his boilers before he gets here!"

[Pg 46]

It so happened that the tug fell sprawling over the St. Bernard Shoals, and but for the timely assistance of the steamship *City of Elizabeth*, the schooner *Gerald* of the White Star Line must have been lost with all on board. To be sure, Gerald emptied his pockets upon the floor, insisting that everything that fell, from his jack-knife to marbles, were frantic sailors, who either perished in the sea or were devoured by sharks.

In the meantime, the St. Bernard Shoals made trouble for the steam-tug *Billy*. "Can't even blow my whistle," puffed Billy. "Hero, let me get up. Don't keep tumbling me over and over. Don't you know I'm a boat? Go 'way, Hero. Open the door, Gerald, so he'll go out. Call him, Betty."

Outside the window, Hero tried his best to persuade the children to come out and play in the rain.

"Oh, dear, let's rest a minute," suggested Betty.

"And say over the verses we learned that day of the worst blizzard last winter," added Billy. "You know what I mean, Betty, the rules for steamers passing, and then, Betty, we'll play it is a dark night when we go on some more trips."

[Pg 47]

"Oh, I'll tell you," put in Gerald, "we'll cut lanterns out of paper, red and green and white ones, and pin them on."

"Begin the verses first, Betty; let's say them all together," suggested Billy, "and say them loud so Hero can hear."

"Let me see," Betty hesitated, "the first one is this:

"Meeting steamers do not dread  
When you see three lights ahead.  
Port your helm and show your red."

"Here's a red lantern for you, Bill," interrupted Gerald, "and this is yours, Betty. Go on, why don't you? The next verse is about two steamers passing."

"Oh, I remember; say it with me, boys:

"For steamers passing you should try  
To keep this maxim in your eye.  
Green to green or red to red,  
Perfect safety—go ahead."

"Then, boys, the third verse is about steamships crossing:

[Pg 48]

"If to starboard red appear,  
'Tis your duty to keep clear;  
Act as judgment says is proper,  
Port or starboard—back—or stop her.

"But when on your port is seen  
A steamer with a light of green,  
There's not much for you to do,  
The green light must keep clear of you."

By this time three voices were singing merrily:

"Both in safety and in doubt,  
Always keep a good lookout.  
Should there not be room to turn,  
Stop your ship and go astern."

Billy gave a shout. "Oh, look, Betty! look, Gerald! There's Antoine at the gate, and he's afraid of Hero. He doesn't dare pass him."

"He's calling you, Billy; go get your dog." Gerald laughed as he spoke.

"Both in safety and in doubt, always keep a good lookout," mocked Billy. "He's scared to death. Look at him back up when Hero walks toward him. 'Should there not be room to turn, stop your ship and go astern.' If Antoine was a boat, he could play Hero was an iceberg. Hey, Bet?"

[Pg 49]

At last Antoine saw the children.

"If we don't stop laughing," warned Betty, "he'll go away. He may think we're making fun of him."

"Oh, how I wish Hero would give one of his loud barks," added Gerald. "Oh, I believe he will, sure as anything. He doesn't know what to think of Antoine. I guess he never saw any one act so queer. Now just see him stand there in front of the gate and make crazy motions."

Suddenly Hero gave three loud barks that startled the little Frenchman almost out of his senses.

"Look at him jump," continued Gerald. "He went up in the air like a rubber ball."

"It's too bad," protested Betty. "I'm going to the door to tell Antoine that Hero won't hurt him. Billy, you go and get your dog."

"Oh, I say, Bill," suggested Gerald, "instead of getting Hero, why don't you tow Antoine into port?"

"Oh, goody! Choo—choo—choo!—where's my tow-line?"

[Pg 50]

"Here, you rascal!" exclaimed Betty, "how dare you take my hair-ribbons. Why, Billy, you'll spoil them tying them together in a hard knot like that."

"One's too short—choo—ch—choo!—toot—toot—toot—French boat in distress, don't you see? Gerald, you go and pin your 'Want a steam-tug' flag on him."

Away flew Gerald, while Betty and Billy stood laughing in the window. Antoine not only allowed Gerald to pin the flag upon him, but instantly began making an active display of his signals, calling aloud for the steam-tug *Billy*.

"Toot—toot—toot!—choo—choo—choo!" was the immediate response, and the steam-tug went puffing to the rescue regardless of the falling rain.

"Make fast the hawser," commanded Billy, passing Antoine the tow-line. "It's kind of short," he added, under his breath.

Antoine obeyed.

"Choo—choo—choo!—ding—ding—ding—make fast. Ding—ding—ding—let go." Slowly did the steam-tug venture into deep water; too slowly to suit Antoine, whose fear of the dog was genuine. Gerald had explained that Hero never harmed any one Billy befriended, merely hinting at dark possibilities that might befall the unwary. He also laughingly told Antoine that Hero was not a dog, but a dangerous reef. In a short time the little Frenchman had reason to believe that the reef was volcanic in its nature.

[Pg 51]

"Choo—choo—choo"—on came the steam-tug, the French boat close behind. "Choo—choo—choo—choo"—slower and slower the two approached the reef, the steam-tug venturing nearer and nearer, to the dismay of the boat in tow.

Four sharp whistles sounded from the tug. It was the danger-signal! The steam-tug *Billy* was on the reef, and but for the parting of the hawser the French boat must have followed.

"Don't you try to run, Antoine," called Gerald; "you can't tell what Hero might do. You better stand right still till Billy gets on his feet again." Then he and Betty laughed. Terror was pictured on Antoine's face as the dog barked and pranced around, thoroughly enjoying the game.

[Pg 52]

Billy struggled to his feet. "Toot—toot—make fast," he commanded, and Betty's hair-ribbons were once more tied together, how loosely only Billy knew.

"Toot—go ahead," he sung out, but again the hawser parted, and Antoine, watching Hero, dared not stir. "Toot—toot—toot," there was the sound of laughter in the whistle, and the captain's voice was scarcely steady as he called out, "Slow up," then "Toot—stop—toot—toot—back up—make fast—toot—go ahead."

Safely into port came the French boat, in the midst of cheering from the decks of the *City of Elizabeth* and the schooner *Gerald* of the White Star Line.

[Pg 53]

## CHAPTER V. ANTOINE LEBRINN

"Tell you a bear story, Beely? No, I'm too scare to tell you a bear story," Aunt Florence heard Antoine remark. "I tole you dog story, hey? How you scare you old friend Antoine with you big dog. That was a bad trick, Beely. You do wrong to scare ole Antoine."

So earnestly did the Frenchman say this, as he held Billy on his knee, the small boy felt uncomfortable, though Aunt Florence laughed, and wondered how and when to begin her lecture.

"But, Antoine," Billy explained, "that was a game."

"A game, Beely, you call that game, do you, when you scare ole Antoine out his wit? Game, hey?"

[Pg 54]



"I knew Hero wouldn't hurt you, Antoine; he's a nice, kind dog, and he wouldn't bite a mosquito." Antoine shook his head and made a downward motion with his hands. [Pg 55]

"That's all right for you, Beely, but how did Antoine know the dog she wouldn't bite one moskeet? When I see his mouth, I say to myself, Antoine, he swallow you sure, and then I call my friend Beely."

"But I was a steamboat then," protested Billy, "and, anyway, I came after you, didn't I?"

"Yes, Beely, I find you out in the wood some day, big black bear after you. Beely call ole Antoine, and ole Antoine he play steamboat, hey, Beely? How you like that?"

"Tell us a bear story, please do," persisted the child.

"No, Beely, maybe I tole you bear story, maybe so, but that big dog he scare me. Now, I'm scare out of bear story."

"Poor old Hero, he wants to come in," said Billy. "Shall I let him come in and get acquainted with you, Antoine?"

"No, Beely, I'm too much acquaint with him now. You call your dog, I go."

"But he likes you, Antoine; I could tell by the way he sniffs at you that he likes you."

"Yes, maybe he likes me too much, I'm think. I'll bring my gun next time," warned Antoine; "then let him sniff at me, hey, Beely?" [Pg 56]

"You wouldn't shoot him."

"I wouldn't stand still and let him eat me, I tell you that, Beely. When you see Antoine coming, you better call your dog and hide him."

"Give it to him, Antoine," said Gerald, with a brotherly grin.

Billy said nothing, but, with his back turned toward Aunt Florence, he made a face at Gerald.

"Well, Beely," protested the Frenchman, "that's a pretty crooked face you make there. Let me look on that face. She's round like the pumpkin, and your eye she's like two little blue bead. Well, I can't see nothing wrong with it now. A minute ago I'm 'fraid. You must not make such face like that on your brother, because, Beely, I'm afraid she freeze like that."

"But where have you been all this time?" questioned Betty, while Gerald motioned Aunt Florence to watch the grimaces and motions Antoine made as he talked. [Pg 57]

"Oh, I'm work back here on the cedar swamp, getting out some pole to load big vesseal when he come. Where's your papa? I want to see if he's hear anything of the *George Sturgis*. I'm think he's come last week, and I'm look for it ever since. He was going to come last week to Cecil Bay to get my pole to take to Chicago. I'm 'fraid we's going to get bad weather, and I want to get out my load of pole quick as I could."

"You'll have to wait, Antoine," declared Gerald, "because papa went to the station with some messages, and he's going to wait for the mail, and the train's late."

"Don't you want to see our baby?" asked Betty. "Oh, he is the dearest little fellow, just three months old. Mamma says he looks exactly as Billy did when he was a baby."

"Beely ain't baby no more," commented the Frenchman. "I s'pose he ain't like the new baby pretty good?"

"Oh, yes," Betty assured Antoine, "Billy loves the baby."

"And I'm seven, going on eight," the small boy declared. "It seems a hundred years since you were here last," he continued; "have you been working in the cedar swamp all that time?" [Pg 58]

"Well," was the reply, "I'm think if you be there when the black fly and the moskeet eat you up,

you would say it was one hundred year sure. You say your papa she go to the post-office, hey?"

"Yes, and the train is late. If I was an engine, I'd get here on time, and not keep folks waiting for their mail."

Antoine LeBrinn made a remarkably bad grimace, looked at Billy for several seconds, and then replied: "Little boy ain't got no patience these day. Now, when I'm a little boy and live on Cadotte's Point, we only got our mail two time in one week."

"But that was before the railroads came," said Betty, "and I don't see how you got any mail at all. Did it come in canoes?"

Antoine shrugged his shoulders. "No, Betty, the dog she bring our mail in those day."

"Dogs!" exclaimed Billy. He was sure there was a story coming.

"What do you mean?" inquired Gerald, seating himself in Billy's rocker, while Betty drew her footstool close beside him. "Antoine, what do you mean?" [Pg 59]

"Just what I'm say. Dog, she bring our mail in the old day. Did you never hear of a traineau?"

"Yes," admitted Betty. "I have read of traineaus, but I never expected to see any one who ever saw one. Do tell me all about them."

"Well," began the Frenchman, making all sorts of motions with his head and his hands as he went on, "well, when I'm little boy and this was call Old Mackinaw Point, there was no train and no steamboat, and in the winter-time all our mail was brought by these dog I am tell you about. These dog she was train with the harness and haul a long sleigh call a traineau. I know a little chap," and Billy had to give a hard kick at somebody who pinched his toes, "I know one little chap that hitch up one dog to her sled and take a ride on all kinds of weather. Well, well, what's the matter with Beely? She jump around like something bite him."

"Go on, Antoine, go on, tell us about the dogs," teased Billy. "Gerald's always acting horrid." [Pg 60]

"Well," resumed the Frenchman, "a traineau was pulled by six dog; all had harness on, and hitch one in front the other on one long string. The traineau she's all pile full of mailbag, and one man go along to drive the dog. This driver she go three, four hundred mile on one trip, and she would carry enough along to eat to last him and his dog four or five day."

At this point Billy became much excited, and broke in with a remark that amused Gerald so highly he stood on his head and waved his feet in the air until Betty reminded him of his manners.

"Why, why, Antoine," Billy demanded, "how could the driver carry stones enough to last even one hundred miles, I'd like to know?"

The Frenchman was puzzled. "Stone," he remarked, running his fingers through his short, black hair, "now what, Beely, would the driver do with stone?"

Betty clapped her hands. "When Billy goes driving on the ice with Major," she explained, "he has to carry a pocket full of stones, or Major wouldn't go a step. He throws a stone and Major goes after it; then he throws another, and that's the way he keeps the dog flying." [Pg 61]

"Well, that's pretty good," said the smiling Antoine, "but you see, Beely, these dog she was train to pull the sleigh when she was a little bit of a pup. He was train so he was used to it. When the driver said 'Go,' she went; and at first, no matter how much mail they have, the dog she would jump and run as if they like it. After they draw a bit load two or three day, she's begin get tired, and then they would lay right down on the road, so the driver would stop and let the dog rest."

"Here, on Mackinaw Point, the driver she stop at the little store and left the mail for all the folks; for the fishermen along the shore and on Cadotte's Point where I'm live."

"But where did the traineaus start and where did they go?" inquired Betty.

"They come from Alpena and go way up to the Soo, and then go back again."

"Why didn't they use big sleighs and horses?" Gerald put in.

"No road," was the reply, "only narrow trail through the wood." [Pg 62]

"And was all the mail from the big world brought to Mackinaw that way when you were a little boy?" persisted Betty; "and did you ever get a letter?"

"No, I can't say I ever got one letter myself. Little children ain't much account those day, but my aunt what live on Canada send me one pair mitten for a New Year present. I'm just about big like Beely then, but I'm walk in all alone from Cadotte's Point."

"And you must have seen a bear," observed Billy.

"Oh, now, you Beely, you think I'm going to tell you a bear story. Well I ain't feel just right for tole you a bear story this time. I'm tell that some other time. I'm tell you a bear story every time I'm see you, Beely, and I'm getting them pretty near all wear out."

At this the children laughed so uproariously, the baby awoke and began to cry.

"Mamma'll bring him out in a minute," remarked Betty, and when the baby, still screaming, was brought into the room, Antoine insisted upon taking him, to the delight of the children, who stood by, softly clapping their hands and laughing. Their mother laughed, too, when Antoine, who knew something about babies from long experience, began walking the floor with the little fellow and talking to him. [Pg 63]



"Well, is this the new baby? Bring it here and let me look at it. Well, a pretty nice looking baby, I'm think, if she ain't cry so much. Her face is all crooked and all wrinkle up. Come now, you ain't going to cry all the time. I'm going to look and see them little eye you got there. Well, she make quite a bit of noise for her size, but I'm going to sing him a little song and see if she won't go to sleep again:

"The Frenchman he hate to die in the fall,  
When the marsh is full of game:  
For the muskrat he is good and fat,  
And the bullfrog just the same.

"High le,  
High low,  
Now baby don't you cry,  
For ole Antoine is right close by."

"Now you see, Beely, she's quit crying already. You ain't know Antoine can sing, eh?"

[Pg 64]

It was even as Antoine said; the baby had stopped crying, and Billy, astonished by the music of the Frenchman's voice, begged for another song, insisting that anything would please him.

"Oh, no, Beely," objected his friend. "I ain't going to sing no more to the baby, she's quiet now. I'm goin to tole you a story."

"Is it a bear story?"

"No, it's a cow story. My cow she's run away once, and I'm find it on Wheeler's farm." Thus began Antoine, accompanying his words with gestures far more laughable than the tale he told, and causing the children great amusement. Billy's round face became one broad grin as he listened.

"When I'm take my cow home," went on the little Frenchman, still walking the floor with the baby in his arms, "I'm take short cut on the wood; I'm go by old log road. There was a lot of raspberry there, so now I'm to pick up some raspberry for myself. So I'm tie my cow on black stick of wood, and let it eat grass on the road and drag the wood along, and she can't get away from me."

[Pg 65]

At this point Betty's mother rescued the baby from the arms of the prancing Frenchman, to the evident relief of Betty, who thought the baby too precious a bundle to be flourished so vigorously, as Antoine stooped to pick raspberries and to tie his cow.

"Pretty soon," continued the narrator, "pretty soon she give a jerk with his head, and the piece of wood jump toward it and scare my cow. Well, she start to run down the road, and I'm run after it and holler, 'Whoa, Bess, whoa!' but she's so scare she ain't stop.

"By and by my cow stop, all play out." Antoine placed himself before Betty, who was sitting on a footstool near Aunt Florence, while Gerald and Billy were standing near their mother's chair, the refuge they sought when Antoine was running after his cow. "Well, as I'm say, my cow stop all play out. She stand right there on front that stick of wood." Antoine certainly mistook Betty for the stick of wood. "She's stand there and look straight at it, and she's go, 'Woof! woof! woof!' and his tail she's go round and round," and Antoine's arms made wide circles in the air, "but she's all right; she ain't hurt at all, so I'm catch my cow and take it home, and I'm pretty glad she ain't hurt at all. Now I ain't tie my cow to no more black stick of wood. I told you that right now."

[Pg 66]

In the midst of the laugh that followed, and while Billy was pulling at the Frenchman's sleeve, beseeching him to tell another story, the marine reporter came home. Immediately Antoine told his errand, and made his escape from the presence of the clamouring children, laughing, shrugging his shoulders, and declaring that he would sometime tell them all the stories they would listen to. Thus Aunt Florence lost an opportunity to deliver her first temperance lecture.

Scarcely had the door closed behind Antoine when it was opened by Billy, who followed his friend into the yard.

"Here, Antoine," he called, "take this orange to 'Phonse. Mamma gave me one, and Betty one, and Gerald one."

"It's a good little Beely," was the remark that filled the small boy's heart with pride, as Antoine slipped the treasure in his pocket.

[Pg 67]

## CHAPTER VI. ORANGES

After supper Billy thought longingly of his orange. He wondered if it was thick-skinned and if it was juicy. He felt pretty sure it was sweet, and the more he thought of it the sweeter it seemed to his imagination. Billy was just saying to himself that, if he had not given away his orange, he would eat it without asking his mother for sugar, when he stumbled upon Gerald leaning over the wood-box in the kitchen.

"What are you doing out here all alone?" demanded Billy.

"What business is it of yours, I'd like to know? Why don't you go back in the other room?" Gerald

grumbled, making rather lively motions around three sides of the wood-box, as he tried to keep his back toward Billy.

"Aw, pig!" sniffed Billy, "eating your orange out here where nobody'd see you, so you wouldn't have to divide. Orange juice running all down your arm, and I'm glad of it, pig!" [Pg 68]

"Got an orange of your own," was Gerald's retort.

"Haven't either," declared Billy.

"Then you've eaten it up, and now who's a pig, I'd like to know? I offered to divide my orange with Selma, but she was in a hustle to get her dishes washed and get down-town, and it isn't my fault if she couldn't wait for me to get it peeled. You're the pig, Billy, because you didn't even offer to divide with anybody."

"No, I gave my whole orange to Antoine before I even stopped to smell of it," wailed Billy, "and I guess if I had a little brother that hadn't had a smell of orange, I'd give him a piece."

Gerald whistled. "Who ever'd think you'd do such a thing, Billy? Here, little boy, is your reward of merit," and Gerald, thrusting half his orange into Billy's outstretched hand, walked away, whistling.

Half an orange made Billy wish for more. It was a sweet one and juicy. He wondered if Betty's orange was anywhere near as good. Later in the evening Gerald went out on the beach with his father to see if there were any boats in sight to be reported. While he was gone, Betty prepared to eat her orange. [Pg 69]

"Come on, Billy," she suggested, "get your rocker, and we'll eat our oranges while mamma undresses the baby. I'm glad it is a chilly night, so we had to have a fire in the grate."

A wistful expression crept into Billy's face. "I gave my orange to Antoine to take to 'Phonse," was his reply in sorrowful tones.

"Why, you dear, good Billy, you shall have half of mine. Bring your rocker here beside of me, and we'll eat my orange together. See my saucer of sugar. I'll divide that with you, too."

Billy, more than willing, was thoroughly enjoying himself when Gerald returned. The minute the door was opened, the boy stuffed the last piece of his half of Betty's orange into his mouth so quickly Betty couldn't imagine what ailed him.

Gerald's remark upon beholding this performance was an explosion. "Pig!" he shouted. Explanations followed, and Billy was sent into the kitchen to do some quiet thinking. The cat followed him, whether from curiosity or because she liked Billy, it is impossible to say. [Pg 70]

When Billy climbed into a hard, uncomfortable chair, so high his feet couldn't touch the floor, the cat jumped upon another chair and settled down to watch him. At first Billy looked ashamed of himself and miserable. For a minute he seemed to think of pulling his loose tooth; but, after touching it ever so gently, he shook his head. Then, observing a strange expression on the cat's face, Billy half-smiled; that is, the smile stopped just below his eyes, whose solemn stare remained unchanged.

That was enough for the cat. With a remark that sounded exactly like what she used to say to her kittens when she brought them a mouse, she bounded into Billy's chair, and began rubbing against him, purring cheerfully. By the time she had flourished her tail in his face, licked his hands, and clawed at his red sweater for a few seconds, Billy laughed merrily. [Pg 71]

Perhaps if the cat had minded her own business, Billy would not have forgotten his disgrace so quickly. However that may be, the small boy slipped down from his chair and had a good time. He played tiger in the jungle with the cat until she objected; then he played he was the northwest wind, sending everything helter-skelter before his icy breath.

Suddenly Billy bethought him of a new game, and a few minutes later the whole family rushed into the kitchen half-fearing that the stove must have fallen upon the child, so unusual was the racket they heard. There was no cause for alarm. At the moment Billy was Antoine's cow. A big tin pail attached to his waist by Betty's jumping-rope was the black stick of wood.

When the family appeared at the door, the cow was standing in front of the black stick of wood, stamping its feet and snorting, "Woof! woof! woof!" The cat was nowhere in sight.

## CHAPTER VII. MINNAVAVANA'S BRAVES

The north wind is no respecter of persons. He wasn't invited to Betty's lawn party, but he came at dawn and stayed until dark the day she chose to entertain her dearest friends. Billy was glad of it. He said that girls' parties were silly, anyway, and he hoped the whole flock would have to stay in the house. He declared that Betty needn't expect to see him at the party: he would rather hide in the cellar all day than be the only boy among so many girls. Aunt Florence smiled, and said she guessed they could get along without him if he felt that way.

"Sometime before I go home, though," she promised Billy, "we'll have a boys' party, and then we won't care how hard the wind blows. But the girls, dear me, Billy, they'll be so disappointed if [Pg 72]

they have to stay in the house."

"Who cares?" suggested Billy.

"Why, I care," suggested Aunt Florence. "Young man, I am helping Betty with this party, and the wind is more than I know what to do with."

"Oh, if it's your party, Aunt Florence, that's different, and I know what to do. Build a tramps' shelter and keep the wind out."

"What's a tramps' shelter, Billy?"

"Why, Aunt Florence, out in the woods the tramps make regular little rooms of trees and branches. We can coax papa and his man to get a wagon-load of Christmas-trees from the woods and make a room, not where we'd spoil the lawn, but the other side of the house, you know, down close to the lake."

"Who would report boats, Billy, if your father and the man both go to the woods?"

"Mamma would," was the reply; "she does lots of times. I'll get some boys to help make the room if you want to do it. I wish Gerald was here, but every time Mr. Robinson invites him to go on the fishing-tug, he goes. I wish I was him."

[Pg 74]

When Betty heard of Billy's plan, she said she didn't know he could think of anything so nice, and before noon the room was made.

"It's a fort!" declared Billy.

"Why, so it is," added Betty. "And to-morrow, Billy, let's play fort, and I'll ask Lucille and that little girl that plays with her, that little Marion Struble from Marquette, and Cora and Gay to come and bring their dolls and play ladies from the settlement seeking safety in the fort during an Indian war. You may be an Indian chief, you know, and I don't care how many boys you have for braves. Oh, it will be loads of fun."

"Let's do it to-day," suggested Jimmie Brown, the Detroit boy.

"And scare the girls to death," added one of the green cottage twins.

"Oh, mercy, boys, that wouldn't do at all! You see, this is to be a real stylish party to-day, and besides that, I don't s'pose half the girls that are coming ever played Indian. Why, one time, auntie, Gerald and Billy and I had an Indian show, and we hadn't any more than begun when the girls were scared and ran home crying."

[Pg 75]

"I wish you boys would please go now and pick about ten bushels of wild flowers, so we can make the inside of this evergreen fort perfectly beautiful. See, Aunt Florence, papa made the north wall extra thick and high, so the wind can't get in. Isn't this the sweetest place for a party you ever heard of? Of course, we'll be crowded, and of course we can't stay in it all the time, but that won't hurt anything. Mamma says we may bring out all the cushions and put them on the board seats. We'll have the music-box here in the corner."

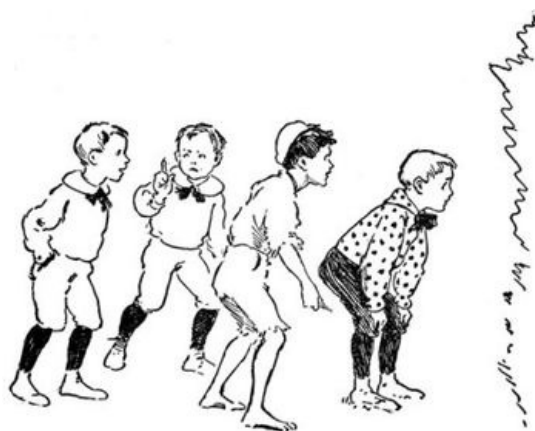
Soon the boys returned with arms full of wild flowers. "Powder and shot for the fort," announced Billy, and the mischief shining in his eyes alarmed his sister.

"Now, Billy Grannis," she warned, "don't you dare try any tricks."

"Of course not," replied Billy, though Jimmie and the green cottage twins tossed their caps into the air and grinned.

"They're planning something, auntie," Betty declared, but when the guests began to arrive she forgot her suspicions.

[Pg 76]



Alice Swayze came first, dressed in her best white gown. She was from Kalamazoo. Betty seated her beside the music-box. Two little girls from Chicago came next, wearing wide blue sashes just alike. Little Belle Lamond from California straightened her pink sash, felt of the bow on her pretty dark curls, and acted so vain and silly, four small boys, who were watching from behind the north wall of the evergreen fort, almost laughed aloud.

"Won't she jump, though?" whispered Billy.

[Pg 77]

"You bet," replied Jimmie Brown, "and there comes Nellie Thomas. She's from Detroit, and is in my sister's room at school. She'll jump sky-high."



There was merriment within the evergreen fort, as little girls continued to enter and the tiny space became crowded. When Betty started the music-box, whispering behind the north wall was no longer necessary.

"It's getting so noisy in there, I'm 'fraid they won't even hear wild Indians," ventured Jimmie Brown at the top of his voice. [Pg 78]

"Hush," cautioned Billy, "don't talk too loud. Music-boxes and wind and waves and talking girls sometimes keep still at the same time."

"Oh, look," exclaimed the twins, "what's coming?"

"Frenchy and Bud and Buzz and Tony and their little 'dopted sister Samone," Billy declared, as he began motioning for the new-comers to creep quietly to the fort.

'Phonse took the hint, and soon he and his wondering followers were peering through the evergreen walls.

"What's going to happen?" demanded 'Phonse, with a grin.

"Well," explained Billy, "it's a game, only the girls don't know they're in it. That's a fort, and we're Indians. I'm Minnavavana, the chief, and the rest of you are my braves. You want to play, of course. Samone don't count, though, she's only a papoose."

"But where are your tomahawks, and what's going to happen, I say?" persisted 'Phonse, as he and his brothers crowded around Billy. [Pg 79]

"Look," said Jimmie Brown, showing the LeBrinn children a firecracker. "These Indians have guns. Can't you give him a gun, Billy? My pocket's full of matches."

"Sure," replied Billy; "you give out the matches. Now listen, you that don't know the game. We're all Indians, but I'm the chief. You're just braves. When I nod my head like this, every brave must give an awful war-whoop. Just screech, boys, yell for all you're worth, and I will, too, and that same minute fire off your firecrackers and run. You mustn't even stop to see what the girls do, because then we'll be caught."

"You all cut for the woods," 'Phonse warned his brood.

"Now get in a straight line," commanded Billy, "and look in. I guess they're all here now, and we mustn't wait long if we expect to have any fun, because soon's they're all here Betty's going to have them all go and have games on the porch, and they're coming back here for 'freshments. Watch out there, Bud, don't lean too hard. What if the stockade should tumble in?" [Pg 80]

Unconscious of bright eyes watching, and of the row of grins behind the fort's north wall, the little girls laughed and gaily chatted.

Suddenly, without the least warning, blood-curdling sounds filled the air, accompanied by what seemed to be cannon shots. At the same instant, the evergreens forming the north wall trembled, shook, fell in; while screaming girls, frightened almost out of their senses, struggled to get away.

Billy tried to run but couldn't. "Wait, boys, wait for me!" he shouted, but the boys didn't wait, not even for the little Samone, who cried frantically for help. Billy never heard such an uproar, quickly followed by screams of terror unlike anything he ever dreamed of. Turning, he saw what Betty and her little friends that instant noticed; saw what made the grown folks, rushing across the lawn, white with fear. Little Samone, trying in vain to free herself from the evergreens, was on fire. Billy saw the flames reaching for the ragged sleeve of her calico slip, and knew that he must try to save her. Betty saw what he meant to do, and tried to stop him. [Pg 81]

"Wait, Billy, wait!" she screamed. "You're too little! Papa is coming! Wait, oh, Billy, Billy!"

But the north wind wasn't waiting, and Samone was tiny. Quicker than a flash, Billy, usually so slow, leaped upon the evergreens, snatched Samone, and rolled her down the bank into the water.

When certain braves returned, seeking a lost papoose, they found her playing with Betty's guests; but the great chief, Minnavavana, whose hands were a trifle burned, was still sobbing in his mother's arms.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ANTOINE'S BEAR STORIES

Straight into all hearts walked the little Samone. Every one in the village loved her, and strangers, learning the child's story, had tried to take her away from Antoine LeBrinn, for Samone was a waif. When Betty, Billy, and Aunt Florence called at the Frenchman's home, Antoine received them with scant courtesy. He supposed that Aunt Florence was one more summer visitor who wanted the child; one more who had come to tell him that she must not be allowed to grow up in a shanty on the beach; and, taking Billy one side, Antoine talked angrily, as he spread his nets to dry.



"Why," remonstrated Billy, "of course, I wouldn't bring any one down here to get Samone away from you. Auntie is glad you have Samone. She says she's glad of it—only—only—" How could Billy explain the errand upon which Aunt Florence had come? He did wish Betty would keep things to herself. Talking to Antoine about drinking didn't do a bit of good, anyway. Billy was sure of it, and he did wish Mrs. LeBrinn and the children were home. They were away huckleberrying. Betty and Aunt Florence were sitting on a log in front of the shanty, waiting for Antoine to finish spreading his nets.

[Pg 83]  
[Pg 84]

"What for your face she get so red, little Beely?" asked Antoine.

"I was wondering if you would tell us a bear story," replied the little fellow.

"Beely, I tole you one bear story, you tell ole Antoine why your aunt come down to see him."

Billy hesitated only a minute, and then told Antoine that Aunt Florence liked his children so well she wanted him to promise not to drink any more. "I wouldn't have said a word if you hadn't asked me," concluded Billy, "and now you'll tell us a bear story, won't you?"

Antoine laughed long and loud before saying: "Beely, you think your aunt like one bear story?"

"Why, yes, but what are you laughing at, Antoine?"

"Oh, I'm think I'm tell one, two, three, four bear story until your aunt go home, and ole Antoine she laugh."

[Pg 85]

"How are you going to begin, Aunt Florence?" asked Betty, as Antoine and Billy came toward them hand in hand. "They say he won't promise not to drink; he just will spend every cent he can get when he wants to. Now what are you going to say?"

"Oh, Betty, I don't know how to begin a bit better than you do, but for the sake of those five children somebody ought to try to do something besides laugh at such a man, and I shall try."

"But, auntie, how will you begin?"

"You must wait, Betty, and see."

"Excuse me," Antoine began, "but I'm think I'm tell my friend Beely one bear story. I guess I'm tell you about the white bear. When I'm a little fellow, not so old as you, Beely, my brother have a pet bear. It was so high and so big and his colour was brown."

"Brown," repeated Billy, "I thought you said it was white."

"Maybe so, maybe so, Beely. Well, we all like the little brown bear but my ma, and she don't like that bear so much as I like the switch she always keep on the corner behind the flour barrel. My brother would have the bear on the house, and my ma scold and scold, because that bear get into all kind of troubles. He steal lump of sugar and he eat the codfish, and he help hisself to anything she want.

[Pg 86]

"Well, Beely, one day my ma hear big noise on what you call the pantry, and that noise, Beely, was near the flour barrel, and when she go over to see what was the matter out jump a little white bear. He was the same little brown bear, Beely, all cover over with flour. My ma was so mad at that bear she ain't know what to do after he spoil all that flour. So she grab the broom, and she chase the bear all over the kitchen. She hit him whack-e-ty whack, Beely, until the poor little bear was pretty near scare to dead, and the air was all full of flour, and everything was all tip over and tumble down and upset, and my ma she look like a crazy woman. By and by she open

the door, the little bear scoot out and climb a tree, and then he sit and look on my mother while she stand there and scold him.

"And do you know, Beely, that little pet bear don't want to come on the house no more. You can't coax him on. [Pg 87]

"And one time, Beely, I have one little coon; he was my own pet. We catch him when he was a little fellow, and I have to feed him with a spoon, and when he was big he was chuck full of trick, too. One day, when my ma she was milking the cow, she turn her head, and my coon she jump right in the milk. Then my ma gave him a taste of a stick, like this, Beely, whack, whack, whack. Then my ma say to my pa she won't have so much wild animal around, and next day I find my little coon asleep, and he never wake up."

"He died while he was asleep, did he, Antoine?"

"Look that way, look that way, Beely. Now I'm tole you about one time me and my brother start out to find what you call ging-seng; around here we call it shang."

"I never heard of it, Antoine, what is it?"

"It's a root, Beely, the Chinamen want. It used to grow on China, but now she's all gone. It grows wild on the wood here, and you can get four and five dollar a pound for it if you know where to send it. You have to know the wood pretty well, or you ain't know where to find it. Well, Beely, me and my brother know where there was a good patch of shang, so one time when we have a week to spare, we start out one afternoon. [Pg 87]

"Before we have go a half-mile from home, my brother think he forget something. He go back to get it, and I walk on alone. We intend to stay all night in old log shanty. It is pretty near dark when I get there. I wait for my brother. He don't come. I'm pretty hungry, so I eat my supper, and look around the house where I'm to stay all night. Well, Beely, there was no door on the house, but that don't scare me. I am used to the wood, and I don't think nothing going to hurt me. But before I lay down and before it get dark, I put everything we bring to eat up on some high place, so the mouse and the squirrel can't get it. Then I go to sleep."

"Oh, my, weren't you afraid, Antoine?"

"What I be afraid of, Beely? I have my gun close beside me. I ain't know what time it is when I wake up. It is dark, and I think I hear a noise outside the shanty. Then I hear something walk in. Oh, Beely, my hair stand on one end, I'm so scare when I hear something go 'sniff—sniff.' I'm so scare I don't dare get my gun, and my teeth go like this, Beely." Antoine tried to make Betty, Billy, and Aunt Florence realize how his teeth chattered, accompanying the performance by gestures that were funny enough. [Pg 88]

"Well, Beely, in a moment more I hear something walk, and I know a big bear has come to see me."

"Why, Antoine, why didn't you shoot him?"

"Because, Beely, I'm too scare. I don't dare stir, and, Beely, I'm think good-bye, Antoine, for the big bear came and pokes me two time with his nose."

"Oh, sakes alive, Antoine."

"Well, Beely, it is the truth I tole you. After he give me two poke, the old bear walk around until he find my can of salmon. Then I hear him eating and tip over all my things. Then he walk around and around, and by and by he come and see me again."

"Oh, Antoine!"

"But, Beely, you just wait; I tole you one joke on the big bear. He knock my gun down; he go off biff-bang! At first I'm so scare I'm think I'm going to die. Then I laugh until I pretty near choke to dead, for I hear the big bear run off through the wood. And in the morning, Beely, I find his track, —great, big, black bear track." [Pg 89]

"Tell me another, Antoine, please."

Antoine, giving Billy a wink, began again before Aunt Florence or Betty could say a word. "Now, Beely, you know the wood is full of some bear, and ole Antoine he like to go bear-hunting."

"Yes, go on, you went hunting, and what happened?"

"Hold on, Beely, I don't go hunting, I go fishing; that is, Beely, I start to go fishing, but before I go far I come across a bear track. I think I never see such a big bear track. It is big like this, Beely, so I say I will follow the track of the big bear, but first I will go and get my gun. Then I leave my fish-pole at home, and start out with my gun, and I am think I am kill the biggest bear you ever hear of. I'm follow that bear track for one, two, three, four mile. It's a fresh track, and I'm pretty sure I'm find the bear and shoot him. By and by I stand still and think what I'm going to do. The big bear she's gone into one thicket, and, if I went after it, I shall have to crawl in. I ain't like to do that. I'm a little scare." [Pg 90]

"Well, I should think so. Go on, Antoine; of course, you did crawl in."

"Yes, Beely, I crawl in and I keep crawling. You see, I think after awhile I'm going to come out at a clearing. I don't much like to follow track of one big bear on a place where I can't stand, and by and by I hear a twig snap, and pretty soon I'm hear another. Then I'm so scare I keep still a minute. I think maybe I'm going straight to the big bear's house, and the big bear and his folks will eat me up. When I'm think that, I'm think I better get back to the road, I think I don't want to

shoot that bear, after all. I'm change my mind and go back to the road just so quick as I can."

"And when you got there, what happened, Antoine?"

"Why, Beely, I go home."

"And you didn't even see the bear?"

"No, Beely, and when I'm in that thicket, I'm think I don't want to see him."

[Pg 92]

"Well, Antoine, maybe that's a track story, but I don't call it a bear story. Now, please tell me a good one 'bout narrow 'scapes. That's the kind I like."

"Well, Beely, one time when I'm a little boy, my ma send me after the cows. We have two cows then. Well, I'm just ready to start home with the cows, when she stand still a minute and look scare to dead. I stand up on a log, and I think what is the matter, and then I see a big bear stand up on his hind feet. I don't know how I do anything so quick, but in a second I jump up on one of those cow, and then they both give a snort and start down the road lickety-split."

"And did the bear chase you, Antoine?"

"I think so, Beely, I don't know. I ain't look back to see. I have all I can do to hang on my cow. It ain't easy riding, I tole you that."

"Oh, Antoine," remonstrated Billy, "I don't call that a bear story. I call it a cow story. Now, please, Antoine, tell me a good one. Please don't laugh; tell me a good, wild bear story, one of your narrow 'scapes. Tell me about the time you caught the little bear last summer. I like that story."

[Pg 93]

"Well, Beely, I ain't like to tell you that story pretty good, for every time I'm think on it I'm scare out of my wit yet."

"But, Antoine, the bears can't hurt you now; they are all dead."

"I know that, but I'm think they are going to hurt me that time. Well, it's just like this: I'm going on the swamp to look at some cedar I'm going to get out that winter. When I'm come to a little birch ridge on the swamp, well, I'm going to go across that ridge when I see two big bear and one little one lay down on front of me about twenty-five feet away. Well, I'm scare the bear, and the bear scare me. I'm come up there so quiet they ain't think I'm going to come at all; and I ain't think I'm going to see any bear there. I'm too scare to run away and I'm too scare to shoot. You know I'm got my gun with me. You know, Beely, I'm always got my gun and one little axe when I'm go through the wood."

"Well, I'm stand there behind one stump; I look on the bear and the bear look on me. The biggest one get up on his hind leg and she show his teeth and growl. I'm pretty scare, I'm tole you that, Beely, when I'm see her big teeth. But I'm make up my mind I'm got to shoot that bear right there, or Antoine don't see Beely no more. Well, I'm take a rest with my gun on the stump, and take a good aim and shoot. I'm hit that bear right on the head. She's fall right down on his back, and growl and kick little bit and die."

[Pg 94]

"Well, that scare the little bear, so she's climb up the tree. They got one more big bear there yet, and I ain't got no more bullet on my gun, and I ain't got time for load, so I'm climb one little tree pretty quick, just like one little red squirrel. But I'm take my gun along with me, so I can load it up there, you know."

"Well, the bear she's come for me, but I'm load my gun pretty quick. When the bear she get ready for climb the tree, I'm shoot it, but I ain't hit it pretty good, and I ain't kill it that time, because just the same time I'm shoot, the limb what I'm stand on break, and I'm fall on the ground. I fall right close by the bear. I ain't hurt me very much, because I ain't fall pretty far, but I'm jump up like a rabbit and I'm grab my little axe, what I'm got on my belt, just the same time the bear she jump for me."

[Pg 95]

"I'm hurt the bear pretty much when I'm shoot the first time, so she can't jump quick like me. When the bear she's jump on me, I'm jump behind one stump and hit him on the head with my axe. But I ain't kill it first time."

"I'm run around the stump, and ever time I'm get a chance I'm hit that bear with my axe, and by and by I'm hit it on the nose and kill the bear that time. You know, Beely, it's pretty easy to kill a bear when you hit him right on the nose."

"Well, Beely, I'm pretty glad I'm kill that bear, but I'm so scare I sit on that stump and shake and shake and shake just like as if I have the ague. By and by I'm feel a little better, and I think I'm going to catch that little bear what's up on the tree, so I'm cut down the tree and catch the bear; and I'm take off my belt and tie it around his neck and fetch it home. Then I go back there and skin the two bear, because the bear she's nice and fat and pretty good to eat that time."

"I have that little bear yet, and he do lots of trick. Pretty smart little fellow, pretty ugly, I tole you that. I'm call him Beely after my little friend."

[Pg 96]

"Oh, let's show him to Aunt Florence," suggested Billy, but Aunt Florence, for some reason, insisted upon going home.

"No use for me to try to say anything to him," she remarked to Betty, as they walked along the bay shore. "I'll give up. I should think that man would be ashamed when he remembers that little suit I gave 'Phonse."

"But that's the queer thing about him, auntie," Betty explained; "he never remembers anything he wants to forget. I like him, though."

"So do I, far as that goes," agreed Aunt Florence, "but I more than like that poor little Samone."

[Pg 97]

## CHAPTER IX. UNCLE JOHN'S "OLD TIMER"

Betty cried at the station when Aunt Florence went home. Billy felt like crying, but he wouldn't. Aunt Florence was sorry to leave the children, and even Gerald felt sad enough as her train disappeared among the pines, and the whistle sounded at the crossing down the bay shore.

"Well, she's gone," was his cheerful remark.

"But she said she'd come again next summer," Betty sobbed, "and just as soon as she gets to the city she's going to send me a beautiful doll to dress for Samone."

"Perhaps Samone won't be here then," said Gerald.

"Won't be here! Why not?" asked Betty, wiping her eyes and staring at the boys.

"Well, you know Antoine's been drinking again, and I heard some men saying if he keeps on they are going to take Samone away from him. They're going to send her to the House of Correction,—no, I don't believe that's the name of the place, either, but it is some home for children that don't belong to anybody."

[Pg 98]

"Oh, what will Antoine do?" exclaimed Betty.

"He'll fight," suggested Billy, "and so I will, too."

"I'll tell you, boys, what we can do," advised Betty. "You know, it won't be long now before Uncle John comes to go hunting. Of course, Aunt Florence will tell him all about Antoine and Samone, and how she couldn't make him stop drinking, because she didn't know how to begin talking to him about it. Now, everybody says that if Antoine would make up his mind to be a different kind of a man, he could, and everybody likes him, even now, so I'm just going to ask Uncle John to go down to his house and make him stop. That's a fine plan. Folks always listen to Uncle John because he's so good-looking."

When Uncle John came, he laughed at Betty. "Why, child, I'm not a temperance lecturer," he protested. "I came up here to hunt deer, not Frenchmen. Besides that, what's the use of my trying to do what you and Aunt Florence couldn't?"

[Pg 99]

"Aunt Florence didn't half try," answered Betty, "and, of course, I've never tried at all. I wouldn't dare."

Again Uncle John laughed. "If you don't dare venture, Betty, let's give up. What do you say, Billy?"

"I say, let me go hunting with you," replied the boy.

"Hunting the Frenchman?"

"No, hunting deer and bears. Will you take me sometime?"

Betty turned away much troubled. There was no use of talking to Uncle John, she could see that plainly. Betty liked Antoine so well she couldn't understand why every one laughed when anything was said about trying to make him do right. She knew, too, how dearly the Frenchman and his family loved the little Samone, and how kind they were to the child. She also knew what Antoine was beginning to suspect: a number of men in the village who were interested in Samone, and whose decisions were always carried out, were talking of sending the little one to the State School at Coldwater.

[Pg 100]

Betty said no more about Antoine to Uncle John, but, while the frost fairies painted the maple leaves crimson and brightened the borders of the evergreen woods with many a dash of colour, she listened as eagerly as Billy and Gerald to all he had to say of forest wonders. At the same time, down in her heart, Betty was hoping that Uncle John wouldn't get a deer that season. "If he don't kill a deer," she told herself, "then the Coldwater school don't get Samone. That's my new superstition, though I'll never tell even Billy. Some things you must keep to yourself."

Those were the days when Billy hated bedtime with all his might. It always came in the middle of some tale of adventure, often at the point where Uncle John almost shot a bear.

Evening after evening, Mr. Larzalere, a neighbour, called to see Uncle John, and many a tale of the woods he told that made Gerald stare. Billy often wondered why such great hunters as Mr. Larzalere and his Uncle John could go forth each day, knowing exactly where to find deer, and yet return without one.

[Pg 101]

"Should think you'd begin to get discouraged," he said at last.

Uncle John and Mr. Larzalere only smiled at the idea, and advised Billy to wait. In the meantime, they talked with great enthusiasm of salt-licks, runways, bucks, does, and fawns, and a certain "Old Timer" that interested Billy more than anything else that lived in the woods. The little boy dreamed of the "Old Timer," and one never to be forgotten morning he saw him.

Mr. Larzalere had promised to meet Uncle John at the "Big Stone," and Billy had begged to be taken along. He hadn't the least idea where the "Big Stone" was, but, from listening to the daily



talk of the hunters, he believed that all the animals in the woods trooped by that enchanted spot ever day; possibly they formed a procession and marched past. Mr. Larzalere and Uncle John seemed always to reach the place either too late or too early to see all that happened. Uncle John told Billy that, when he was bigger, he would gladly take him hunting, but little boys seven years old were too small to think of shooting "Old Timers."

[Pg 102]

"But, Uncle John, of course, I don't want to shoot the 'Old Timer,'" persisted Billy. "I just want to see his big horns, and if you'll let me go, I'll climb up on the 'Big Stone' and sit right still until you come after me. You and Mr. Larzalere can leave me there while you hunt."

"Couldn't think of it, Billy," replied Uncle John. "When Mr. Larzalere and I drag in the Old Timer, then you'll see him."

"That isn't the way I want to see him," said Billy to his mother. "I want to see him while he is alive. I've seen hundreds of dead deer down to the depot. What I want to see is the 'Old Timer' holding his own horns high,—high and running fast,—fast as if he was happy and wasn't afraid of hunters."

Early the next morning Billy was up and gazing wistfully out-of-doors. In spite of the rain pelting against the window, Billy wanted to go hunting, and wondered how his Uncle John could lie in bed and sleep after daylight. Suddenly the small boy rubbed his eyes and stared. Across the common, in front of Mr. Larzalere's house, he saw the "Old Timer." A moment later the deer lifted his wide, spreading horns, stood quietly gazing toward the house, then came bounding across the common, pausing a moment at Billy's gate before making a dash for the woods.

[Pg 103]

"Oh, I saw him! I saw him!" cried Billy, rushing from window to window, hoping for another glimpse of the deer.

In a little while Mr. Larzalere came, calling loudly upon Uncle John to get his gun and follow the deer. He was wet to the skin, and a more excited man Billy never saw.

"Where—where's your gun?" asked Billy. "Uncle John isn't dressed yet; he says he'll hurry."

"My gun's at home," explained Mr. Larzalere. "You see that deer was grazing by the big pine in front of my house, and when I raised the shade I must have startled him. I told my wife to get my gun quick, but I didn't dare wait for it, because I didn't want to lose sight of my deer. Tell your Uncle John to come quick's he can! I'm going back for my gun!"

[Pg 104]

As Mr. Larzalere ran for his gun, Billy flew through the house shouting: "Gerald! Betty! Selma! Everybody! Get up and see where there was a deer! Come on quick and I'll show you his tracks out in the sand! You'll have to hurry if you want to see the tracks, 'cause it's raining pitchforks!"

After chasing through the storm for an hour or more, Mr. Larzalere went home to breakfast, though broiled venison wasn't on the bill of fare.

Whether dogs drove him out of the woods, or whether the deer overheard Mr. Larzalere and Uncle John planning his downfall at one of the meetings by the "Big Stone," and walked into the village to show how little fear he had of hunters, Billy never knew, and the "Old Timer" was never again seen in that region. Whereat rejoiced Betty, the superstitious.

Soon after, Uncle John went home; but he always declared that he should have killed the deer had he stayed long enough.

[Pg 105]

## CHAPTER X. FISHING THROUGH THE ICE

It was Billy who gathered the last bunch of bluebells. He found them one November morning, their brave, delicate beauty all that remained of unforgotten blooms. The next day it was winter.

The boy welcomed the whirling snow, but when the ice began forming all along the beach, his delight was unbounded. He couldn't pity the poor sailors as Betty advised; Billy envied them. The last trip of the season, like the first perilous voyage in the spring, seemed brimming with possibilities of adventure.

Morning after morning, Billy ran to the window before he was dressed to see the waves tossing the broken ice in ridges farther and farther from the shore. How he longed to try the stretches of clear ice between the ridges! How he longed to go where the waves were dashing against the crystal wall! He wondered how much higher than his head the spray leaped toward the sun before it fell in sparkling showers all along the southern shore as far as the child could see.

[Pg 106]

In the meantime the last light-ship had gone into winter quarters, the last buoy had been taken away, and even Billy understood that navigating the straits was a perilous undertaking. Whenever a boat whistled to be reported, the whole family ran to the window to see it pass, while the fog-horn sounded a farewell, and Billy's father dipped the stars and stripes in parting salute, to which the boat made answer.

One steam-barge, the *Wallula*, was long unaccounted for. She was the last of the season, as Billy knew. He and Betty watched almost as anxiously as their father for the belated boat. One afternoon there came a blinding snow-storm, and for the first time Billy agreed with Betty in pitying the poor sailors, especially those on the *Wallula*.

"Just think of being out in such a storm, with the light-ships all gone and the buoys all taken away!" said the little girl. "I don't see how a boat could help going on the shoals. Don't you ever be a sailor, Billy, will you?" [Pg 107]

"No," replied Billy, "of course not; I'll be the captain."

A wonderful sight greeted Billy the following day. As usual he was up early, and through the east window in the sitting-room he saw the *Wallula* frozen fast in the ice not far from shore.

"Oh, mamma! mamma!" he called. "Here's the big red sun coming right out of the red, red clouds, and it's shining on the *Wallula*. And the icicles! Oh, mamma! Betty! Come and see the icicles shining on all the ropes. Oh, I must get out there quick."

As Billy dressed, the sun was swallowed by a cloud so big, so black, its shadow dimmed the joy shining in his face.

"Why, mamma!" he shouted, "what a 'normous cloud, and it's spreading over all the sky. I never saw anything happen so quick before. Did you ever see such a cloud! It was so heavy it had to go and fall down over all the sunshine."

"No wonder!" exclaimed Betty, "I should think it would! Look there!" [Pg 108]

"Where? What?"

"Why, Billy, don't you see? There is Antoine LeBrinn down on the beach with Samone in his arms, and I know the poor little thing hasn't on half enough clothes to keep her warm. I don't care how soon they take her away from him, so there!"

"Why, Betty!"

"I don't care, Billy. I'm beginning to feel just the way the rest of the folks do about that old Antoine. Papa says he don't stick to any kind of work, and his family are too poor for anything!"

"I'm going to tell him," Billy threatened; "you see if I don't."

Late in the morning half the village gathered to watch the tug from Cheboygan release the *Wallula* and tow her into safe water. Then Billy saw more than one man frown, as he noticed the thinly clad child shivering in the Frenchman's arms. From that time he determined to compel Betty to tell Antoine he must stop drinking. At first Betty refused, but finally a new idea came into her mind.

"Tell you what we might do, Billy," she said, "we might get up a pledge for him to sign his name to." [Pg 109]

"What's a pledge?"



"Oh, it's something you sign," and Betty, offering no further explanation, wrote her pledge. Having never seen a temperance pledge, this was not an easy thing to do. Betty tried many times, and destroyed nearly all her best tablet before she decided upon the correct form. All this scribbling she did in the presence of the impatient Billy.

"Now read it," he begged, when Betty folded several sheets of paper instead of destroying them. [Pg 110]

"I am afraid you won't understand it, Billy," she said, doubtfully, "but it means, 'I won't drink any more whiskey and things.' Now listen, Billy; I'd like to hear how it sounds myself: 'When in the course of human events it becomes necessary to touch not, taste not, handle not, look not upon the wine when it is red, give me liberty or give me death before I ever touch another drop.'"

"Oh, Betty, that's good; course I understand it. Why, it sounds just like the Fourth of July last year!"

"There now, Billy, I shall have to read it all over again if I find out how it sounds, because that's only the short beginning."

"Why, Betty, but that's enough! If he signs that and promises that he won't drink another drop, why, why, that's the place to stop, Betty."

"I don't know but you're right, Billy, but lawyers put in lots of words they don't need when they write things, and they never stop when they get through. You see, I haven't read you the 'whereas' and 'now therefore' part. I wanted this pledge to sound as if a lawyer made it. You see, Billy, I know, because I read everything." [Pg 111]

"I don't care," Billy maintained, "you might get him mixed."

"That's so," admitted Betty.

"And then, too, Bet, why don't you say 'before I drink another drop—of whiskey,' in big capital letters."

"Oh, never, Billy, that would hurt Antoine's feelings. We mustn't even hint about getting drunk and such things, but I will do as you say about having a short pledge, and we'll trim it with pictures."

"Make pictures of bottles and things, Betty."

"Oh, stop, Billy, I should say not! Birds and flowers will be better, and won't hurt Antoine's feelings. Don't you understand? Then we'll tie a red ribbon on it."

It so happened that Billy's mother, not sharing the children's secret, wouldn't allow them to visit the Frenchman's home, and it was not until the ice stretched from shore to shore, and Antoine began his winter fishing, that their opportunity came. After school one night, they visited his fish shanty on the frozen straits. [Pg 112]

"Come in," said Antoine, in response to Betty's knock, "come in."

"Oh, my, what a tiny place!" exclaimed Betty, "and how warm it is! too warm! Oh, my!"

"Smells fishy and tarry," added Billy, holding his nose.

"Hush!" warned Betty, fearing Antoine might be offended.

"Warm!" repeated the man, laughing heartily; "the preacher she was here, and I ain't want it to stay, so I make it warm, and she ain't stay long."

"Why did the minister come to see you?" asked Betty.

"Did he come out here to have you tell him fish stories?" Billy inquired.

Again Antoine laughed. "No, Beely, the preacher she come out here and bring one temperance pledge. She say to me, 'Antoine, I'm fisherman, too. I'm ask you to sign your name on this one paper.' I'm tell that preacher she make a mistake, and I'm put one, two, three stick of wood on the stove, and it get too warm pretty quick. The preacher she go home, and ole Antoine she sign no pledge so long she live, I tole you that right now." [Pg 113]

Betty looked discouraged, but Billy grinned as he knelt to peer through the hole in the ice. Both children knew better than to speak of their pledge.

With utmost patience Antoine explained to his visitors all he knew about fishing through the ice.

"What you think is on the end of that line, Beely, that go into the water there?"

"Minnows?"

"Oh, no, Beely, no minnow on the winter. On the end that line is one decoy fish. She's heavy and weighted with lead. We let it down on the deep water. Then, when we see a fish come after it, we wind the line with one windlass."

"Can't you pull in the line?" asked Betty.

"No, Betty, no, you pull the line, you jerk the decoy fish, and that won't do. Beely, you turn the crank there and wind the line over the reel. Now, Betty, kneel on the edge of the opening on the floor and look down on the water. Can you see one decoy fish?"

"Yes, just as plain as anything." [Pg 114]

"Now you, Beely, turn the crank."

"Oh, oh!" cried Betty. "Up comes the little fish, straight, straight up, just as natural as if it was alive."

"Now let me see," besought the small boy. "You come, Betty, and turn the crank."

"Here, Beely," said Antoine, "you and Betty can both look on the same time if you squeeze beside her. Fish shanty ain't big like the town hall?"

"Well, I should say not," admitted Billy. "Why, isn't it nice, Antoine? You can sit right still on your box and reach all the walls, can't you? Oh, that's the way you do it? When you see a fish coming, you just keep watching him, and then you reach over and turn the crank and wind up the line, and then the pretend fish comes up higher and higher. But then, I don't see how you spear the real fish."

"Well, Betty and Beely, I will show you. You see the decoy fish she come quiet through the water when we bring it up with a windlass. If we brought it up with one jerk, our trout would be scare away. Fish no fool, I tole you that. When my fish come to the top of the water, so I'm sure of my aim, I send my spear after him." [Pg 115]

"But I should think you would lose the spear," said Billy. "My, it's heavy!"

Antoine pointed to the rope which tied the spear to a ring fastened in the roof.

"Wish a fish would come along now," said Billy, still gazing into the depths beneath.

"We make too much noise, Beely. Betty, you be little squaw and Beely be Indian, and we'll keep still like the Indian and then I'll show you one fish. I'm fix the spear so she's all ready, and now watch. Don't whisper."

Silently the three peered through the hole in the ice. Betty wished that her heart wouldn't beat so

loud; she feared the fish must hear its thumping. Several times Billy was compelled to stifle deep sighs, warned by a look from Antoine. Poor Billy! His knees ached and his back ached, and it is no wonder the active child kept thinking that he couldn't endure such a cramped position another moment. It seemed ages to Betty also before she raised her face with a pleased smile to the fisherman and exchanged a glance with the radiant Billy.

[Pg 116]

There was a big fish coming straight toward the decoy. The children had a fine chance to see exactly how a fish swims. Billy held his breath, as the line was slowly wound over the reel and the decoy came nearer and nearer the surface. They could see the bright eyes and the glistening fins of the fish that came after it.

Just as Antoine reached for his spear, Betty sneezed. Quick as a flash the fish darted to the bottom of the straits; but it moved no quicker than Antoine, who motioned for silence. Betty longed to explain that she couldn't help sneezing, while Billy could scarcely be restrained from venting his wrath. Under the circumstances, he gave Betty an angry glance, and ventured to wiggle the least bit before settling himself for another time of breathless waiting. As for Betty, she could just manage to keep the tears back, and, when the fish slowly rose from the bottom of the lake, she didn't see him so clearly as Billy and the fisherman did.

That time Antoine speared the fish. Billy not only saw him do it, but helped pull a big trout through the hole in the ice, and soon he and Betty were taking turns carrying the treasure home.

[Pg 117]

"Dear me," said Betty at last, "I'll never dare say 'pledge' to him again."

"I should say not," echoed Billy.

Upon reaching home, Betty was much distressed when she discovered that her pledge was lost. "Somebody'll find it, Billy, and tell everybody in town, and then won't we catch it? Everybody'll be making fun of us."

Billy tried to be consoling. "They won't know who wrote it, Betty."

"Oh, that's the worst of it, Billy. I put my name and your name and the date and everything on that paper, and I said it was for Mrs. LeBrinn's Christmas present! Oh, dear!"

At that very moment, Antoine, alone in his shanty, was reading Betty's pledge. A curious smile came and went as he read the slip of paper. When the last gleam of sunlight faded in the west, he locked his shanty and walked to the village with his load of fish.

The following morning little 'Phonse LeBrinn came late to school. His pinched face looked sad and care-worn.

[Pg 118]

"Old Antoine was drunk again last night," some one whispered across the aisle. "He sold his fish before he went home, and spent every cent at the saloons."

Billy heard the whisper, and, passing 'Phonse on his way to class, he left a piece of candy on his desk. It was all he had to offer.

[Pg 119]

## **CHAPTER XI. CHRISTMAS EVE**

Two things puzzled Billy. One was the letter from Aunt Florence, in which she hinted at the possibility of visiting Santa Claus on Christmas Day. Neither Billy's father nor Billy's mother knew what to think. Mid-winter was not the time to expect company in their part of the world.

"It's some kind of a joke, I guess," was Billy's suggestion.

The second thing that puzzled Billy was the great change that suddenly came over the LeBrinn family. He wondered if he had anything to do with it. One day, having overheard a conversation not intended for his ears, he told 'Phonse that Samone was surely going to be sent to the home at Coldwater, and advised him to tell his father to "watch out." The next time Billy met Antoine LeBrinn, Samone was with him.

[Pg 120]

"Come here, little Beely," called the Frenchman, "ole Antoine want to shake hand with you. It's a pretty good little Beely. Samone like Beely pretty good, I tole you that."

Antoine then explained to the boy that no one should take Samone away from him, because he intended keeping her with him all the time, and from that hour until the day soon after, when Billy saw the little Samone no more, she was always close beside her father. The particular thing that puzzled Billy, though, kept half the village guessing. 'Phonse, Buzz, Bud, and Tony came to school just before the holidays dressed in fine new suits and beaming with smiles. That same afternoon Billy was in the dry-goods store when Antoine bought a red dress for his wife and wide red ribbons to trim it with.

"I tole you the ole lady she look pretty good when he get this on, Beely," said Antoine, rattling a pocketful of money for Samone's benefit. The jingle pleased Antoine more than it did the little girl.

Billy wondered where Antoine got his money, and when he learned that the Frenchman's own family didn't know, he wondered more than ever.

[Pg 121]

For many weeks Antoine had been stage-driver on the evergreen road,—the winding way across

the ice, marked on either side by forest trees.

The day before Christmas there was a blizzard. From Billy's home on the point nothing could be seen but whirling snow. The nearest trees on the evergreen road were hidden from sight, while the north shore across the frozen straits seemed for ever lost.

"Antoine won't go to-day," said Billy; but scarcely were the words spoken when the sound of sleigh-bells was heard, and Antoine stopped his horses at the cottage door. He asked for an extra shawl or blanket for the children, and laughed at the idea of being afraid to make the trip. When Billy's mother knew that Phonse and Samone were in the sleigh, she begged Antoine to leave them with her.

"Samone stay with ole Antoine long as he live in Mackinaw," declared the Frenchman, "and Beely she know that. I ain't leave Samone no more." Antoine went on to explain that he could cross the evergreen road with his eyes shut, and that there wasn't a bit of danger. He had positively promised to meet two passengers who were coming from Duluth, and he was determined to be on time for the train. The children were comfortable as two kittens, Antoine further insisted, at the same time declaring that he would be back at noon to help the "old lady" get ready for Christmas.

[Pg 122]

Fumbling in his pocket at the last moment, Antoine drew forth an envelope, in which he declared was his wife's Christmas present.

"Tell Beely to take care of it until ole Antoine come back, and, if she ain't come home no more, give her to the old lady."

Every hour the storm grew worse, and at noon the marine reporter's three children listened in vain for the sound of sleigh-bells.

"Antoine must have decided to stay in St. Ignace, and drive home to-morrow," said their mother, and the family were of the same opinion.

All the afternoon the children had the gayest kind of a time. No thought of the storm outside disturbed their fun. Gerald, Betty, and Billy were too accustomed to blizzards to mind their fury. After the lamps were lighted, they gathered around the piano to sing the familiar carol they loved so well. That Christmas Eve they sang but one verse:

[Pg 123]

"Oh, little town of Bethlehem!  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by;  
Yet in thy dark street shineth  
The everlasting light,  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee to-night!"

The door-bell rang, and Antoine LeBrinn's wife, weeping and wringing her hands, was ushered into the bright sitting-room. She had waited all the afternoon for the return of her husband and children, and at last, leaving Bud and Buzz and Tony with neighbours, had walked to the village, expecting and dreading to find Antoine at the saloons. No one having seen him since morning, she was sure that, unless he had reached the marine reporter's cottage, he was lost on the Straits of Mackinaw, and every one knew what that meant. That night the evergreen road was drifted full, the trees along the way were blown down, and the ice was a trackless wilderness. Even Billy thought of the air-holes and shuddered.

[Pg 124]

It was the little brother who spoke first, after the sobbing Frenchwoman had told her story.

"Papa," he asked, "why don't you go down and telegraph to St. Ignace?"

"I'll do it, Billy," he answered, and straightway left the cottage. There was a look on his father's face when he returned that Billy had never seen before.

"Antoine left St. Ignace two hours ago," he said to Billy's mother. "Men have already gone to find him, but it is useless."

Billy's father went away, and in that dreadful time of waiting the three children listened to the Frenchwoman's despairing talk. Just that morning her husband had told where his money came from. The old aunt in Canada was dead, and had left her farm and all she owned to Antoine. They had made such happy plans. The little Samone should be a lady, and the boys would no longer be ragged and half-starved. Christmas Day the children were to be told the good news, and before the New Year they would be living in a home of their own in Canada.

[Pg 125]

The mention of Christmas reminded Billy of the worn envelope left in his care.

"Here," said he, giving it to Mrs. LeBrinn, "he said give you that."

The woman tore open the envelope and stared at the slip of paper it contained. She couldn't understand; but the instant Betty saw it she knew the truth. It was the pledge, with Antoine LeBrinn's name signed at the bottom.

For the first time since she entered the cottage, the Frenchwoman raised her head and looked hopeful. She said Antoine always kept his word, and, since she knew he had not been drinking that day, unless he perished in the blizzard, he would find his way home.

A shout from Billy startled every one in the room. "Why, my dog!" he fairly screamed. "He is a St. Bernard, and, oh, Mrs. LeBrinn, you know what St. Bernards are for. He'll find the lost folks!"

"Billy is right," echoed his mother, as the child ran for the dog. "Hero will find them, I know."

[Pg 126]

Like a flash, the dog darted into the night when he knew what was expected of him, and there were no more tears shed in the sitting-room. The curtains in the bay-window were raised, while the three children, their mother, and Mrs. LeBrinn watched the beacon-fire blazing high at the beginning of the evergreen road.

It was growing colder every minute, though the minutes were long. Men who gave up the search piled timbers on the fire and waited. It was all they could do. At last Hero bounded toward them, and the faint sound of sleigh-bells came on the wind.

Safe was the little Samone,—safe, warm, and sound asleep with 'Phonse. Neither of the children awoke as they were carried into the cottage and placed upon the couch; but they opened wondering eyes when Betty and Gerald and little Billy welcomed their Aunt Florence and their Uncle John, the passengers for whom Antoine had made that trip to St. Ignace.

For a few minutes every one, including Hero, talked at the same time, and nobody listened to what anybody else said until Billy's mother suggested dinner.

[Pg 127]



"We'll have our Christmas dinner now," she declared.

"And another one to-morrow, mamma," added Billy, in a whisper, "unless Uncle John would rather have venison than turkey. I know one thing, Antoine's so happy, he won't know what he is eating to-night, and I feel the same way myself. Aunt Florence looks as if she's pretty glad to get here, too. I guess we'll have a good time to-night that even Samone will remember long time after she goes to Canada. We are all happy, mamma; I 'tole you that."

[Pg 128]

When Antoine saw the candle-light from the Christmas tree shining upon his little Samone, he did a queer thing,—lifting her in his arms to take her in to dinner, he touched her soft curls and said: "It's a good little Beely."

THE END.

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[Pg 129]

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[Pg 130]

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[Pg 131]

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[Pg 132]

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