Pete the Peddler or A Boy's Start in Life



CHAPTER VI.

"Now you go on about your business or it will be the worse for you!" growled the big tramp after looking the constable over.

"But you tried to rob this boy and you must go with me," replied Lukens.

"Bah! It was the kid who tried to rob me. I was asleep in the bushes there when I felt a hand in my pocket and woke up to find him bending over me. When I grabbed at him he hit me with a club."

"He is telling an awful lie!" shouted Pete. "I was drinking at the creek there when he grabbed me and drew me into the bushes. If I hadn't hit him, he'd have robbed me of box and money."

With an ugly laugh the tramp advanced upon the constable and picked him up and tossed him into the bushes and then walked down the road. He did not even look at Pete. The boy ran to help the officer extricate himself, and the first question asked by Lukens was:

"Is he gone?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure of it?"

"He went down the road, but you can soon overtake him."

But the constable didn't want to overtake the tramp. He was only too glad that he had escaped. He sat around for five minutes, pretending to be greatly shaken up, and then he suddenly blustered out:

"See here, boy, that tramp says you tried to rob him, and how do I know but what you did?"

"Would a boy of my size try to rob a giant of a man like him?" asked Pete.

"You might try to do anything. If you came along and found him asleep you might think it a good time to get into his pockets. I don't like the looks of you. I don't know who you are or where you come from, and I'm going to take you to the county jail. Constable Lukens has never let a criminal slip through his fingers yet, and never will."

"But you are letting one go now. That tramp frightened the women most to death along the road and he is a hard case. If you are afraid to arrest him I'll get some farmer to do it."

"Afraid to arrest him! I, Constable Lukens, afraid to arrest any man on the face of this earth! Young man, that is sass, that is. You are sassing an officer in the discharge of his duties, and that is a penal offence. I don't want another word out of your head, but you climb into that buggy and come along with me. Things have got to a purty pass in this county when boy's like you try to rob folks, and then try to tell the constable how to run his business!"

Pete was disgusted with the man and had no more to say. They drove past the farmhouse where the tramp had threatened the women, and where the farmer had talked to Pete about it, and when he saw them coming he walked down to the gate and called:

"Well, Lukens, did you hear about the tramp?"

"Yes, and I got him, but he got away. I have got his partner here, though, and am taking him to jail. This boy is a hard case."

"Nonsense! The boy and the tramp were not together. They boy is all right and you are making a big mistake."

"He surely is, sir," replied Pete. "I knew nothing about the tramp until you told me. I was drinking at the creek back there when he came out of the bushes and was going to rob me. I hit him and ran away, and met this man."

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Lukens," said the farmer.

"I want no advice from you, Joe Harper," blustered the cowardly officer. "I say the boy is a thief. He is traveling around the county with a gang of tramps, and I shall land him in jail and then hunt up evidence against him."

With that he drove on. It was four miles to the county seat and the jail, and there was very little talk between Pete and the officer during the rest of the drive. The boy knew that nothing could be proved against him, and that it would be easy to get Mr. Mims from Johnsonville to testify in his favor, but things had come about so fast that he could hardly understand them. On arriving in town he was taken before a justice of the peace.

The constable swaggered around and said he had come along the road just as the boy was trying to rob a sleeping man. He wanted Pete held in jail until further evidence could be hunted up, and without asking the boy four questions the justice committed him. His box of notions was taken away and he shortly found himself behind the bars along with a dozen other persons.

"You have begun a career of crime pretty young," said the jailer as he took Pete's name, age, etc.

"I shall prove myself an honest boy before I get through," replied the lad.

"I hope so. You don't look to me like a bad one. I am sorry to have to turn you in here with these men, all of whom are old tramps, but I have nowhere else to put you. You probably won't be held mose than five or six days."

The tramps gave the boy a welcome. That is, all shook hands with him and asked him questions, and one of them said he had met him on the road a week before. When he told them about how the big tramp had tried to rob him and how cowardly the constable had behaved they explained:

"We know that tramp. He is big Jim, and when he has been drinking he's a desperate fellow. He'd have robbed you for certain, and maybe he wouldn't have stopped there. As for Lukens, he's a regular yellow dog. Now, boy, as you are the last one to come in, you must par your footing. They won't allow beer in here, but you must buy pipes and tobacco for all hands."

(To be continued.)



"I WANT NO ADVICE FROM YOU, JOE HARPER."

GOING A-FISHING.

Uncle John Pinchley was going a-fishing, and little Joe teased so hard to go too, that he consented.

Aunt Huldah called him up before light to get him ready, and here he was waiting on the doorstep, all wrapped in scarf and fur cap with ear lappets and thick coat and leggins and socks and almost no end of woolly things to keep him warm, till he looked as pudgy as a little bear.

There was a great hot soapstone and last of all, grandma tucked two hot pebbles into his hands to keep his fingers warm.

Then Uncle Joe poked him down under the "buffalo" in the "lumber-box" and off they bumped and jiggled and rumbled over the icy roads, fairly making Joe's head swim and his teeth rattle, and once he bit his tongue so hard when they jumped a "thank-you-ma'am" in the road that it brought tears into his eyes.

But what of that! He was going up to the lake, five miles off in the woods, where all the men in the township went to fish.

It was a cold morning. The old "lumber-box" fairly hummed over the hard logging road; and almost before Joe knew it he was there, crawling out from under the bufalo, half blinded and trying to straighten his cramped leggs.

Then what an odd sight! Away out on the lave was a little village of a dozen houses, when funnels sticking out of their roofs and all smoking like steam engines. They were built of boards, and were to shelter the fishermen from the harsh, cold winds and storms.

They were no larger than a little bedroom, but inside each was a tiny stove to keep it warm, and to warm or cook the dinners and suppers and breakfasts of the men; for some of them staid a week or two at a time.

The houses were light, and when the fisherman found that he had settled in a poor place he could move his shanty to a different one.

Sometimes the whole village was on the move over the ice at once, looking queer enough to little Joe's eyes.

On arriving Uncle John hitched the horse to his house, which stood on the shore, and away it scooted out to join its mates, Joe riding inside.



UNCLE JOHN HITCHED THE HORSE TO HIS HOUSE.

Then Uncle John cut a hole through the ice and pulled his house over it so that the hole was right beneath a hole in the floor.

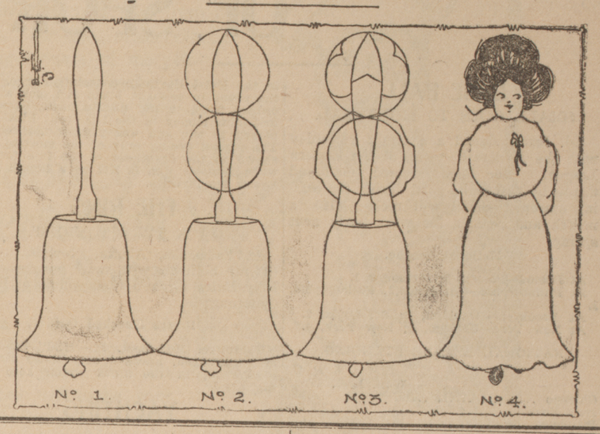
Then he went to fishing through it in good earnest. He baited a hook for Joe, too. At first Joe was afraid of the hole, with the black water gurgling beneath; but after he had caught a pickerel he did not mind it, and so one day in his excitement he fell in—only one leg, though. But didn't he yell! And Uncle John jerked him out by his wool "comforter" so quickly that it nearly strangled him.

So they fished nearly a week; and little Joe thought there never were such delightful days. But one thing troubled and frightened him sorely—the old lake groaned at night. "Just as if it had the stomach-ache," he afterward confided to Aunt Huldah.

Uncle John said it was the air running along under the ice to find a hole to get out.

Then the little house was dragged ashore. Joe was again tucked under the buffalo, with a great box of fish right under his nose, and away they bumped and rattled for home.

FOR THE YOUNG ARTIST.



PHYLLIS AND THE TREES

Phyllis sat on the grass, feeling very little under the big trees. She did not know she felt little for she was only three. But it was the first time she could realize being in the country, and the trees that grew out of the pavement, and in the park in New York weren't half so strange, she thought.

"Chees," whispered Phyllis softly to herself, directly, for this was how she said trees.

She looked up shyly, feeling exactly as she felt when somebody said "Boo!" Overhead green leaves were waving with musical murmurs. A long tree branch almost touched her head; the leaves were green, on one side, silver on the other. "Ah," said Phyllis. Then she kept very silent for a moment; and mama was under another tree, reading a book in a hammock, almost forgot her.

She thought, maybe, she would like to be in bed, safe, safe, with the sheet up to her chin. Then, she thought of his brave Papa in New York, then she thought of Mama — Mama was right here in the hammock. She looked at the hammock. Mama had two hands— and one of them, a soft dear hand hung down, doing nothing.

"No," thought Phyllis, for mama hated being "sturbed."

But—oh, oh—there it was again; a soft, soft, soft whispering, like a strange sweet voice. Mama looked up, and Phyllis caught her eye. The spell of terror found vent.

"Oh, mama," screamed the child, holding out pleading arms, her little face streaming with tears, "come, come, the chees is talking, saying fings."

For this was how Phyllis explained the gentle rustling of the leaves above her head. Trees, which were supposed to be dumb, were telling city children things they could not understand.

This was last Summer, and now the city child has grown so used to the voices of nature that she can tell you different things the leafy boughs say when the breeze blows through them. Sometimes she says quaintly:

"Now they are telling God they are happy."

THE VIOLIN LESSON.

"I can't do this horrid old lesson to-day," cried Freddie, crossly, coming out of the bay window and throwing down his bow. "Every time I get to that top note it screeches. Mamma, please can't I stop?"

Mamma looked out the bay-window. There, just as she supposed, were three of Freddie's friends, playing hop-scotch on the common.

"I heard a little boy promise his music teacher on his word of honor that he would pratice one hour edery day. Just as you please, though, Freddie. You may stop and go out to play if you want to."

Freddie ran and skipped for his hat and coat, and when he came back into the sitting room there stood mamthat he would practice one hour every drawing the bow slowly across the strings.

"Why, what are you doing, mamma?" cried Freddie, in astonishment.

"Keeping somebody's broken promise for him," replied mamma, seesawing busily.

"Oh," said Freddie. The hat and jacket came off again.

"You needn't do that, thank you, mamma," he returned, taking the violin and tucking it under his chin.

Mamma laughed.

"I am glad I need not," she said, "for between you and me, Freddie, I am afraid it screeched very badly for mamma."

"It is going to behave now," twinkled Freddie."

WHEN BROWN-EYES SAW THE WORLD.

BY SARAH NOBLE-IVES.

Illustrated by the Author.

There was a silver mist over everything and the dark had not yet quite gotten out of the world. Out in the mist Brown-Eyes could hear the sleepy piping of birds as they greeted the warm Summer dawn.

"The mothets are waking up the children," thought Brown-Eyes, "and the fathers are singing so they can't go to sleep again. But I've waked myself up and I am going out to see the world, just the way the birds see it, before God pulls up the curtains."

Brown-Eyes was bare-footed, but she had been bare-footed before, and the grass stalks are soft and fresh in June. Brown-Eyes was dressed only in her little white nightgown; there was not time for much of a toilet when one had to see before breakfast, and then, one did not need very much clothing when only the birds are abroad.

She tip-toed softly to the door, and nobody heard her; she swung it open; still, so still, and slipped out across the lawn, and started to see what there was in the world.

It all belonged to Brown-Eyes; no other little girl or boy was awake; even the cows were asleep yet. The orchard gate was open, so she went in and was lost in the mist that swam around the trees. She was not sure that she was a little girl any longer; perhaps she was a tree, too. The mist nestled in her hair and made it damp and curly; it stood like beads all over the grass and the hem of her little white gown was soon dripping.

Then something happened. A shaft of light struck the top of an apple tree; then another, and another; and in a minute all the tree-tops were sparkling with jewels, and the light kept creeping down till Brown-Eyes could see the jolly laughing Sun.

Now she was not alone. The Sun would be her playfellow. His round face beamed with good-nature.

"Ho! ho! little girl! So you've come out to see the world. Well, this is just the time. Now watch me play with the mist"

He ran his fingers through a great cob-web that was strung across from one tree to another, and all the little drops of dew that were threaded on the gossamer strands turned into little rainbow worlds. Then drip-drop they began to run together and tumble like rain on to Brown-Eyes' shoulders.

Then the Sun took a handful of mist and rolling it up like a snowball threw it into the air and it floated off, a little pink cloud. Then he danced all over the orchard and all the mist rolled up and floated away up into the blue Summer heaven.

"Ha! ha! Brown-Eyes, can you do that? Now watch again." He whirled his golden-fringed robe over the grass in the orchard and far into the meadow, and instantly every merry little blade twinkled with a diamond on the tip.

Out in the meadow a Robin was calling to Brown-Eyes: "Come away! Come away! Run! Run! Come with me, oh, come!"

Over the fence she clambered, just where the Robin had started up, and there, in the hollow of a decaying post, lay four blue eggs. Oh, the skies were not so soft and lovely a blue! Brown-Eyes touched them lovingly with the rosy tips of her fingers, but she knew they would turn into little birds if she left them safe. So she dropped down into the meadow, and there was the Sun, beckoning, and the South Wind was with him, and Brown-Eyes had two playmates now.

"Come on! Come on!" said the South Wind, and away they all ran. The clover tops nodded "Good-morning," and the big Daisies stared at the little girl in her dripping nightgown.

"Ah, Yellow-Eyes, you're not a match for her," chattered the Timothy Heads to the Daisies. "She is the Flower of Humanity."

Then all the meadow whispered and rustled, as the South Wind ran across it. The Sun beckoned, and Brown-Eyes followed. The Robin sang "Come on! Come on!" and they all ran to the edge of the meadow and there lay a broad marsh, and the forest lay beyond that, and that went clear to the end of the World.

The South Wind played in the boughs of the forest trees and they sang to their leafy harps:

"Come over. Come over. Come over the bridge."

Then Brown-Eyes remembered the long grassy road where she had crossed the marsh with Feather. There it lay right before her, a dry ribbon across the wetness. There were snakes there sometimes. One slipped across the path now and trailed silently down into the brown water where the arrowheads and lily pads were lying. But Brown-Eyes was not afraid. Why should anybody be afraid arm in arm with the Sun and the South Wind?

On over the grassy ribbon she tripped, almost to where the cool green forest lay. Then she stopped, for across her path lay what she had not forgotten—the ruined bridge. It had once stretched over the deep place in the brown water, but now it had fallen away, and only one beam remained. Brown-Eyes shivered a little as she looked down where the tadpoles were bunting their heads against one another. She would not like to fall in there.

But the Sun beckoned and the South Wind blew in her hair, and the Robin, balancing on a tall tree-top over in the Forest, called:

"Come over! Come over!"

Then a bobolink took it up as he swayed on a tall marsh grass, and a wood thrush far away in the leafy depths trilled enticingly:

"Oh, come! Oh, come! Oh, Brown-Eyes, come over! Come to the end of the world!"



THEN ALL THE MEADOW WHISPERED AND RUSTLED.

Then brave little Brown-Eyes went down on her hands and knees and crawled carefully, slowly, across the beam over the brown water, and there she stood, on the edge of the Forest, and the Forest was the end of the world. She would go a little farther, and then she would have seen it all.

Oh, how the birds sang, while the South Wind played its tunes in the boughs! Oh, how the wet leaves danced and sparkled as the Sun ran his fingers through them and shone and shone! Oh, how the flowers bent and kissed the feet of little Brown-Eyes! How they caressed the hem of her white nightgown! The end of the world was as beautiful as the beginning.

But Brown-Eyes had come a long way to find it, and now she began to feel tired. Breakfast must be ready. She would run home.

Back she started. Out from under the trees, down the bank and out onto the grassy ribbon across the marsh. The ruined bridge was there with its rotting beam lying across the brown water. But Brown-Eyes was tired. The thrill of adventure was over, and she only wanted to get home. The beam looked very slippery and terrible. How could she ever get heart to cross it again?

The tadpoles wiggled and wiggled, and a big turtle slipped off a floating log and scared the tadpoles so that they all put their heads in the mud. If only she could not see the brown water she might screw up her courage; but suppose she should fall in? A creepy chill ran up her back and a tear came, and then another, and they ran out of her brown eyes down onto the little white nightgown. She wished Mother was there—or Father. Father would carry her across, and she was hungry—oh, so hungry!

"Oh, coward, coward!" sang the Robin and the Bobolink. "Oh, fraidcat!" jeered the South Wind as he whirled through the marsh grasses. "Oh, cry-baby!" called the waving tree-boughs.

"Give it up," said the Sun, and he scowled down at her. He was climbing up the sky now, and had no more time to play with little runaway girls who were afraid.

Then out of the woods came the sweet voice of the wood thrush, soft, caressing: "Oh, rest a while; rest a while."

Brown-Eyes dropped her tired head on a bunch of violet leaves, and the tears stopped coming.

When she awoke she was lying in her father's arms, and he was holding her very close as he tramped homeward across the sunny clover meadow.

THE BASKET-FISH.

BY CORNELIA GAFFNEY.

The Basket-fish is a member of the Star-fish family, and by all she is considered very beautiful. She radiates sunlight, and brings good cheer to all those around her.

The Star-fish has five arms, and on the end of each is a red eye protected by a circle of spines. He is very graceful in his movements.

In some members can be seen these five arms subdivided by a two-fold radiator which extends into many branches, often exceeding eighty thousand.

The Star-fish family possess a strange power of restoring any part of their body that has been destroyed.

Sometimes malicious persons will break off particles of the arms and throw them back in the water. In a brief time these parts have been completely restored by the Star-fish.

The Basket-fish was different from the others, having a network of radiating cords shaped like a cluster. She would touch the surface of the water gently and glide into the channels and narrow fissures, protecting especially the little Star-fishes. She would carry home the feed and deposit it where the little ones could enjoy the dainties she brought.

One day she saw King Star-fish and his followers entering a narrow channel followed by the children.

Basket-fish knew they were unconscious of the little ones, and hurried forward to capture the runaways. Back she returned with a basketful of the Star-fish family, and left them in the nursery while she hastened to the channel.

She realized the danger of the King Star-fish and his followers if they failed to cross the inner lake.

The channel led into the peaceful valley of Landville, where the waters were fresh and cold. Not too soon did Basket-fish appear upon the scene.

They were rejoicing and did not notice the pitfall.

The king moved rapidly along when Basket-fish swept over his followers, and with one move wrapped him in her network of cords, throwing him back into the inner court.

Joy fell upon the party when they understood how narrow the escape had been, and to Basket-fish they gave much credit for her wisdom in averting such a disaster.

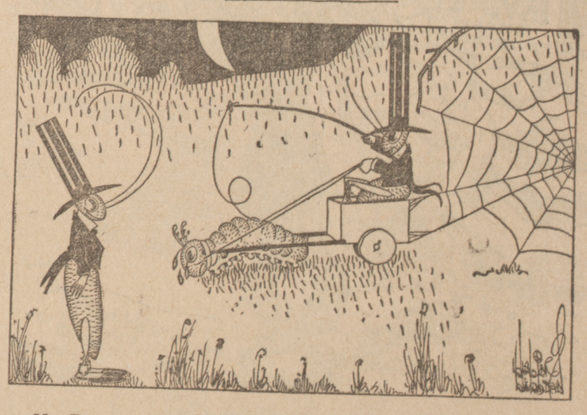
A great reception was held, and Basket-fish was the hooored guest, the Fish family never tiring in their praise of Basket-fish and her wonderful act.

HAUGHTY MRS. WREN.



"Indeed," said haughty Mrs. Wren,
"You may call on me now and then;
But you must not come here to woo,
Because I'm not the bird for you."

A SPIDER TRICK.



Once Mr. Buzz was walking
When he saw a funny sight,
Another bug—a neighbor—
Was in an awful plight.

He'd hitched his worm before his cart,
To take a drive to town;
He meant to purchase groceries,
And buy his wife a gown.

He tried to make the poor worm go;
But, try as best he could,
He couldn't budge a single inch
From where the creature stood.

Then Mr. Buzz began to laugh,
He said, "Why, can't you see?
Some foxy spider's tied your cart
To yonder maple tree!"