

WEST SHORE BOYS AND GIRLS

WHAT THE FIR KNIXY DID.

The wind came up the great river early that morning and began to blow and blow. All the brown tumble weeds looked at each other in surprise and then scurried away up the roads and across the fields like bands of frightened sheep, and hid away in trembling heaps in the fence corners.

"It is cold," said the ranchers, and they piled more wood on the fires, and the logs snapped and hissed. The vapory ghosts of the dying pine wood went up the chimneys and came curling out at the tops to be caught and whirled away by the angry wind. They flew far off up into the rain clouds, and when the clouds were blown down across the mountains they wept to see the jagged stumps that had been their thrones when alive, and the needles of the baby pines were wet and dripping after the clouds had passed.

The fir knixy didn't care for the wind himself, for however hard it blew it could not penetrate his cosy nest, hung low on the side of an old fir tree.

You have all seen knixy nests, for they live in the great, round balls of branches which often grow on the sides of fir trees.

There was a new cabin near the fir knixy's tree, so new that the ends of the logs were still yellow and emitted a pleasant, piney odor. Harder and harder blew the wind, the rain changed to sleet that covered the trunks of the trees with a glistening armor. It drove in through the chinks of the cabin and the cold air followed after and made everybody shiver.

"Burn, burn," said the fire, cheerfully, and tossed up its long, red arms and sent the sparks flying. There were three little children in the cabin; the father lay sick on a bed in the corner, and the little mother tried to stop up the chinks as best she could and keep out the stormy weather. The fir knixy knew all about it, for he often sat on the end of a log that projected over the fireplace and heard the poor people tell of their troubles. Many a time he rocked the baby's cradle to keep him from crying; often, when the coyote came up from the canyon and stood on the hill top and barked lustily he had frightened him back that he might not molest the chickens. Surely, this was a good deal for a knixy to do, but he was not contented. His round head buzzed all day long with impossible schemes to help the poor people. And that day it was worse than ever, and when night came there was no supper in the house; the father lay as white and still as if he were dead, and the children clung to their mother's skirts.

"I can't stand this," said the fir knixy, when he saw how things were going, and he started off up the road, for just what he could not have told, for he had no settled purpose in view; but up the hill he met a horse and carriage, and he at once settled himself on the horse's neck.

"Where are you going this bad night, my friend?" he asked.

"Don't ask me," said the horse, "for I'm sure I don't know. I think my master must be crazy. I'm so tired I can hardly walk, and I'm nearly blind with trying to see the road, and this impudent wind blowing in my eyes."

"I know where there is a stable only a short distance off," said the knixy. "There is no grain there, but plenty of warm straw. How much better that would be than to be out in the storm!"

"I should think so," said the horse, as his feet slipped on the icy road.

"Just close your eyes, then, and I'll guide you, and when your master finds he has missed his way he will probably stop for the night." This the horse gladly agreed to, and they were soon at the cabin.

"Hello, what's this?" cried the man, with a start, for he had nearly gone to sleep jogging along. "I must be off the road, for I don't remember any house along here. Hello, there!" he called to the house. No one answered, so he got out and rapped loudly at the door.

"Who can that be, at this time of night!" said the little mother, as she opened the door, for they had no neighbors. As the door swung back she turned so white that the knixy thought she was going to faint, and she would surely have fallen if the stranger had not caught her in his arms.

"Why, Mary?" he cried, "you here! Why, who would have dreamed of it!" for it was his only sister and he had not known where she was for years. "And in such a place! It will never do, never!"

So the horse got his place in the stable, but in the morning he went to town flying; indeed, he told afterward that the carriage only touched the ground when they went round the fence corners, though he may have exaggerated. And he went back almost as fast with a load of good things, and in a

week or so he carried the whole family off, which was surely a frightful load for one poor horse. That was the last the knixy saw of them.

The creek knows all about them and that they are well and happy, for it runs right by their new home in the valley, but it never comes back to tell, although the canyon kelpie charges it every night to search for the knixy's lost friends.

The poor fir knixy's complexion is getting quite blue, reflecting his sad thoughts, and he gets lonesome now that the cabin is empty; he hardly ever goes out, but sits crumpled up on a limb in his nest, like an old fir cone, and thinks and thinks.

MAUDE SUTTON.

FOUND IN THE ATTIC.

Is there anything more delightful than visiting an old friend who lives in a rambling old country house, and gives you the "freedom" of her domain, to wander as you will, and explore the mysteries of the hay mow, the cellar, the attic and the old "north wing?" I have such a friend, a dear old lady whose hair has been prematurely whitened by sorrow, yet whose temperament is too sunny to yield to habitual gloom. My rare visits to her are the bright spots in my otherwise uneventful life; and somehow she always manages to pack up some of her heart sunshine among my belongings for me to carry home. She is an inexhaustible study to me, with her bright, sweet spirit and her sorrowful experience. Twenty years ago the husband of her youth was laid to rest in the little burial ground whose white stones can be seen from the gable window of the attic; and one by one, as the years went by, eight children followed him, until she had but one left—a boy, the brightest and handsomest of all her brood. Useless to try to tell how her bleeding heart strings twined themselves about that boy, nor with what fond hope and pride she watched him step across the threshold of young manhood. When I tell you that now he occupies a felon's cell in a penitentiary, and is serving out a life sentence, you will understand how deeply my old friend has drunk of the dregs of sorrow. I never fully understood it myself until, during a recent visit, an incident occurred that gave me an insight into the hidden recesses of her heart. We had gone together, she and I, to the attic to look for something of which we had been speaking, and while rumaging in a trunk full of old-time treasures I came upon a little slate, with a shrunken sponge attached by a bit of string, and wooden frame battered and whittled in true boy fashion. But what especially drew my attention to the slate was a little hand crudely outlined on it, in the palm of which a name and date were dimly scribbled. As I thoughtlessly held it to the light my friend caught sight of it, and such a change came over her poor old face I hope never to see again. She reached out for the slate, gazed for a moment at the little hand and burst into a fit of weeping that wrung my heart to witness. I tried to say something to atone for my thoughtlessness, but could find no words in the presence of such grief. I believe the thought of my distress caused her to control her feelings sooner than she could have done had she been alone, for she was by nature unselfish and considerate of others. As soon as she could speak she said:

"Never mind, dear—how could you know it was his slate? I have not seen it for years, yet it seems, O, so short a time since he came bounding in from school one day and proudly cried: 'Here, mamma, you can put away my slate, now; I've passed into the sixth grade and won't need it any more. I give it to you, mamma, and my hand with it, you see.' Dear, little, innocent hand," she continued, the tears gathering and falling fast upon the little slate, "to think that now it is stained with the blood of a fellow creature, and doing convict labor in that awful place! O, that he had gone with all the others, to lie down guiltless and peaceful over there."

She turned to the window and gazed out, far away, to where the little cemetery lay bathed in the golden glow of the setting sun.

"It makes me afraid to die," she murmured, and a shiver convulsed her slight frame. "How can I go to them and tell them where I left him?"

I could do nothing but weep with her and resolve to put her sad story where it may come under the eye of some thoughtless boy standing on the verge of his first crime, and lead him to pause a moment and think of his mother. Think, boys, of your own mother, and picture her growing bent and gray beneath the weight of your sins, too sorrowful to live and yet afraid to die and carry her burden of shame to the innocent ones gone before.

CARRIE BLAKE MORGAN.

A bright little three-year-old was sent to awaken her papa and summon him to breakfast. "Papa, papa," she called, "breakfast is weady; wake up, papa." "Yes, pet, I'm awake," said her papa, sleepily, and only half opening his eyes. "O, papa, won't you please open your eyes *loud*?" was baby's closing appeal which papa found it impossible to resist.