Trials and Triumphs of Poorhouse Joe

CHAPTER IV.

THE legless man had told Joe to get a good sleep that night and prepare himself for what was to come, but the lad was so nervous at the thought of running away from the poorhouse that he did not sleep for an hour all night long.

He was thinking things over and wondering what would befall him in the future. He believed that he ought to follow the advice of Mr. Phillips, and yet he was frightened of the Selectmen and of the superintendent. If he ran away and was overhauled he would certainly receive a severe punishment.

The boy tossed about on his bed of straw all night, and when morning came he was nervous and worried. This brought him misfortune.

He went into the field to work with Tompkins, as usual, and the man met him with a scowl. He was determined to find fault with the boy, and Joe realized this, and it made him more nervous. They were repairing a rail fence, and the boy had to lift one end of the rails. As a very heavy one was being lifted up he lost his hold and let his end drop. No harm was done, but Tompkins cast his end on the ground also and hopped about and shouted:

"Boy, you let that rail down on my foot on purpose, and I shan't get over hobbling for a month!"

"The rail didn't hit your foot at all," said one of the small boys who was pulling up weeds near by.

"Who asked you to speak, you young pauper?" demanded Tompkins. "I say he dropped the rail on purpose to smash my foot, and at noon I shall tell the superintendent and get him a good hiding."

"Please, sir, but I didn't mean to," said Joe.

"Don't talk back to me. You wanted revenge on me for the licking you got last night, so you dropped the rail and smashed all my toes. At noon you will get such a dressing down as you never had before. As for Jimmy, here, he will get one, too."

It was no use for either of the boys to say another word. They knew the man lied, but they also knew the superintendent would believe him. At noon

Tompkins went to the superintendent, and when he came out of the office he said to the frightened boys:

"You can get ready for a real, old-fashioned hiding. The boss will cut your hide to ribbons this time."

The superintendent waited until after dinner before calling Joe up to the whipping-room. He had the same whip, and one look into his face showed the boy that he need expect no mercy.

"I didn't do it on purpose, sir," said Joe when sternly ordered to take off his coat.

"Don't think to lie to me," said the superintendent. "Mr. Tompkins says you deliberately threw your end of the rail down in hopes to smash his foot, and you have smashed it. He may have to have it amputated."

"But he is walking around the same as before, and Jimmy will tell you that the rail never touched his foot."

"What! You dispute the word of an honest, truthful man like Mr. Tompkins! Boy, you are bad all the way through, and I have got to take you in hand in earnest. I am now going to lick the badness out of you if it takes all the afternoon."

He seized Joe by the collar and began to lay the whip over his shoulders, but he had not struck more than three or four blows when his wife came running upstairs to say that there were visitors at the office and he must go down and receive them.

"Very well," he said as he threw the whip aside. "I have got to go down, but tonight I will finish with this boy. I would have you whip him, but I want the blows laid on extra strong. Joseph, you can go back to the field."

Tompkins had done a mean thing and was satisfied with it. He sneered at Joe many times during the afternoon, and kept talking about the whipping to come in the evening, and when 6 o'clock came Joe's mind was fully made up to follow the advice of the legless man and run away that night. He had no chance to speak to the man until after supper. Then he said:

"I have made up my mind and am going."

"That's right, my boy," was the hearty response. "Here's the dollar, and don't you let anything stop you from going. The visitors are here yet and may be for two hours more. Then it will be so late that the superintendent will put off the whipping until morning. By that time you will be far away. You won't be missed tonight, and so you will have a good start. You are now going out to count the sheep and drive them into their fold for the night. When that is done away you go without coming back to the house. Here is the dollar and here is your bundle of clothes. Put the dollar in your pocket, and I will throw the bundle out of the window and you can pick it up. Keep walking all night and get as far away as you can by morning."

"I shall always remember your kindness," said Joe as they shook hands.

"I know you will, and I hope some day to know that you have succeeded. Remember what I told you last night. Be honest and truthful and industrious. Don't get into the habit of swearing. It is a bad one and disgusts your best friends. Don't get into the habit of drinking anything worse than tea or coffee. A drunkard is almost as bad as a pauper. Now, boy, off you go, and may heaven help you along the road.

Joe gave him another shake of the hand and went downstairs and outdoors, feeling that his career as a pauper was ended.

(To Be Continued.)

Nightmare of Mazeppa, the Donkey

CAREFULLY HE PUT ONE PAW DOWN, AND THEN ANOTHER.

MAZEPPA stood in the stable yard with his eyes shut, his tail motionless, one long ear out of action and the other set a little forward—a sort of advance guard to warn him of anything that might attempt to disturb his slumbers.

Three of his hoofs were set squarely on the ground, but the joint of number four—the left hind one—was slightly bent. That was Mazeppa's rear guard—a strong and ready one, and a grand protection; a forceful argument, too, when anyone wished to cross his inclination.

Mazeppa possessed all the willfulness of a long line of donkey ancestors, who had made their way forward through life by kicking backward. He had made up his mind that morning that he would sleep till noon, and when Billy Boy attempted to show him how nice it would be to be harnessed into the little cart and driven around the village with Billy Boy at the reins Mazeppa used his rear argument with such strength of purpose that the cart retired from the field with a smashed dashboard, and Billy Boy was fully persuaded that a ride that morning would not be pleasant.

Mazeppa took his position on the sunny side of the stable yard and prepared for a solid three hours' nap.

Grimes, the old Maltese cat, was feeling none too amiable that morning. He had cause enough, goodness knows! Had he not been waylaid by Mrs. Dorking, the gray hen, just as he was coming in from the hunt with a beautiful field mouse? Had not Mrs. Dorking disputed his right to the possession of the aforesaid mouse, and with beak and claws actually taken it away from him?

It was awfully humiliating to be whipped in a tussle with a fowl of any kind—but for a common hen like Mrs. Dorking to have stolen his breakfast—that was indeed a blow. Grimes' feelings were sore to a state of rawness, but what could he do?

He would have liked to scratch Mrs. Dorking's eyes out, but he couldn't strike a lady, and, besides, she had already eaten the mouse.

The only thing left was to find a nice, soft, sunny spot and sleep off his "mad" until mouse-time came round again. Where to sleep was the question. The stable-yard wall was sunny, but not soft, and the hay in the loft was soft, but not sunny.

He walked slowly along the wall, and looking down, his eye fell on Mazeppa in his peaceful slumber. Carefully he put one paw down, and then another. Mazeppa's ear twitched, but he did not waken.

Grimes stepped down with all four feet, taking care not to unsheath even the tiniest little point of a claw.

Mazeppa's back was both soft and sunny. Moreover, it was warm. Grimes curled down with a suppressed purr of contentment, and passed off into the land of dreams, whither Mazeppa had preceded him.

Slowly the sun went round till it hid behind the stable. Grimes felt a chill on top, though he was still warm underneath. It woke him up, and forgetting where he was, he gave a loud, hearty purr and stretched himself, claws and all.

The touch of those claws brought Mazeppa back to earth and the stable yard, and he realized that all was not well with him.

Up went two long ears and out went his two strong hind legs. They struck nothing. That was singular. The thing, whatever it was, was on his back, where he could neither bite, kick nor flick it off with his tail.

Mazeppa's heels came down and his front ones went up. Grimes was awake now—oh yes! But he dared not jump for fear of those wild hoofs. They seemed to be everywhere. So he clung with all the claws he had.

What could old Mazeppa do? The thing stuck to him. He tried to run from it. Round and round the stable yard he went, snorting and rolling his eyes with fright. Tighter and tighter clung Grimes.

Mazeppa darted at the gate, but it did not yield, and the thing was still with him. Which of the two was the more frightened it would have been hard to say.

Suddenly a thought struck Mazeppa. He stopped short and dropped on his side. He would roll the thing off and crush it.

Then Grimes saw his opportunity. He gave a leap, and his bulging eyes and bristly back disappeared in one stable door. Out he came at the other, down the lane he reeled, over the lawn he shot, up the grape trellis he scrambled—never did he stop till his panting body stood high and safe on the woodshed roof.

And Mazeppa? Poor Mazeppa! When he felt his rider drop from him he rolled once or twice, and then raised his poor trembling, dripping body and turned his bloodshot eyes round the stable yard.

Nobody was there but Mrs. Dorking, and she never said a word, for she had been scared out of her senses by the proceedings.

"Shades of Bucephalus," muttered Mazeppa, as he shook his steaming sides. "I've heard the groom and the coachman talk about Nightmare as if it were a mighty unpleasant animal. That must have been what I had on my back."

WELL, fellows, here I am again, and you can just bet that me and Dave had a great time. It wasn't slow, like the way I guess it was here while we were away.

That place that Dave's uncle took us fellows to was a real wild place, like the kind that you read about in books by Captain Cook and Roosevelt. It was full of bears and wildcats and things. You couldn't see them, because they are awful shy, and they only come out at night, and there ain't any street lamps at all in the woods, and so you couldn't see them at night.

I saw something that looked like a bear one day in the middle of a terrible thick woods, but it went away in such a hurry that I couldn't tell exactly. But me and Dave used to wake up nights, and we could hear them howl all around the farmhouse where we was staying.

Me and Dave borrowed the farmer's gun a whole lot of times, and we had some great hunting trips. Only it was awful heavy and you couldn't aim with it very good unless you rested it on something, and most every time we saw a rabbit, or a bird, or an eagle, or something like that, there wouldn't happen to be any place where you could rest it, and so the thing woulld get away.

Once I rested the gun on Dave's shoulder and aimed at a big animal. I think that it was a raccoon or a chipmunk, or something like that. And I would of shot it sure if Dave hadn't up and tumbled flat the minute the gun went off. He carried on and said that his head was busted in two, and he kept feeling his ear—the one that was nearest the gun—and hollered that he couldn't hear with it, and that it was broke. But it got better all right. Dave ain't as strong as me, you know.

Well, after that Dave he didn't seem to care so much any more about hunting—at least he didn't care to hunt with the gun—and so we sort of agreed to go in for trapping. Dave said that it took more cunning, anyhow, to be a trapper than a shooter.

We kind of thought of building a bear trap, but when we got to reading about it we saw that it would take an awful lot of work, because you have to chop down trees and build a pen with them so the bears can't break out.

We almost gave it up then, but just before we did we were lucky. We found a peachy log cabin in the woods. It was strong as iron. And so we got spikes and nailed logs across the windows, and then we fixed the door the way the book on trapping says.

We hung the door up with a rope and put logs on it to make it heavy as lead, so it would fall down like anything when the rope was pulled from inside. And then we fixed a place up in the cabin just where the bear would have to step when he went in, and when he stepped on that the rope would give way and down would come the door.

Then we borrowed a hunk of meat from the farmer and we fixed up the trap and we covered our trail—that's the footmarks you leave, you know—with snow and then we went back to the farmhouse and we said to ourselves that we would wait about three days before we went to it, so as to give the bear plenty of chance.

We didn't get around to it, though, because about two days after that there was a terrible lot of excitement around the place over Dave's uncle. He went in the woods and got lost, and nobody could find him, and we went off with the other men and hunted through the swamps and everywhere, and we couldn't find a bit of him.

Dave and me looked in a lot of caves for his bones, because Dave said that he probably got eaten up by a panther. But when we couldn't find anything, not even blood on the bushes, I told Dave that most likely he had been carried off by an eagle.

Well, the hunters kept looking for him the next day and the next, and me and Dave got sort of tired of it, because it didn't seem to do any good. And so we went to look at the bear trap.

When we got in sight of it, Dave caught hold of me and says that we had a bear sure enough. Say! you ought to been there and heard it. First off it would be a whole lot of roaring like, and then it would be a sort of whining, and I said right away that I knew what had happened, that we had caught a bear and a panther at the same time, and they was fighting to the death.

So we ran back like anything and we told some of the men and they got their guns and hurried there, and what do you suppose?

You'll never guess, so I'll tell you. It was Dave's uncle that was caught!

Think of a man as old as him not knowing any better than to walk into a bear trap! He up and said that he had been out walking and that he seen the cabin and went in and stepped on something and down came the door, and he tried to break out, but he couldn't. That shows what a good job we made of it.

Most men would be glad if boys that they knew could build a trap as good as that on the first try. But Dave's uncle didn't seem to have any sense about it at all. He kept on hollering and hollering, and all at once, when me and Dave went in and Dave shouted where did the meat go to, and all the men commenced to laugh, Dave's uncle just ran for us, and we had to go like anything to get away. You wouldn't suppose a fat man could run that fast.

Afterward we found that he had gobbled the meat raw while he was in there. I don't see why he should of got mad about that. As Dave said to me, it was us that had the right to get mad and not him.

So Dave's uncle he sent us home next day and here we are. But we certainly had a peachy time.

"THEY GOT THEIR GUNS AND HURRIED"

Adventures of Dearest Dorothy

DEAREST DOROTHY was a nice person—very extremely nice, indeed.

It stands to reason that she must have been, because otherwise it isn't at all likely that she would have been called Dearest Dorothy, now is it? But she certainly was not dear about some things. For example, she would forget to say "Please" and "Ma'am" and "Sir" and "Thank You," and words like that, which are very nice.

So one day at dinner, Dearest Dorothy said: "I want some more chocolate pudding." She said it just that way. And Big Father looked at her from the head of the table, and he looked stern; that is,

he looked as stern as Big Father ever could look, which was not so very. And Sweetest Mother frowned a little frown that made her look prettier than ever. But just the same, it was a truly frown. And she said to Dearest Dorothy:

"Leave the table."

"And Dearest Dorothy, who was not a bit disobedient, even if she did forget nice words, went away and climbed up to her own room that had rosy paper on the walls and a cunning rosy carpet, and she threw herself down on the little bed and sobbed and sobbed just dreadfully. And that was mostly because she had been sent away by Sweetest Mother and partly because she did so want another helping of chocolate pudding, which she loved just frightfully.

So she sobbed and sobbed until she sobbed herself tight, fast asleep, and then all at once she opened her eyes again and there stood the very, very funniest little old man that you ever, ever, ever could imagine, if you imagined with all your might for a whole year, day and night.

He had short little legs and bright blue trousers around them, and his waistcoat was yellow, and his coat was so long that it touched the floor, and it was bright pink, which added im-mea-sur-ably to his looks. And how he did smile and bow!

That was something that had to be seen. He bowed and bowed and bowed without stopping a moment, and politeness just seemed to drip from him the way honey drips from a honeycomb.

"Good evening, Dearest Dorothy," said he, bowing again till his dear little rosy nose actually touched the floor. "Good evening. Dearest Dorothy, I am Mister Please. Mister Please, this is Dearest Dorothy." Then he shook hands with himself till he nearly shook his dear old arms off and kept saying "Delighted! Delighted!" as fast as he could, bowing like mad all the time.

"Pray accompany me," said he, giving one short arm to Dearest Dorothy and trotting to the window with her. Dearest Dorothy held back and said: "I want to go down the stairs if I go at all." Mister Please paid no attention but trotted straight out of the window with her, and down they went to the ground with a most awful bump.

Dearest Dorothy began to cry, and Mister Please said: "Dearest, Dearest Dorothy, what is the matter?" And when Dorothy told him that it hurt her to jump out of the window, he said: "Why, I am terribly sorry; why didn't you tell me to go down the stairs? You know I am used to going the shortest way." And then Dearest Dorothy told him that she had asked him, and he said: "Strange! strange! I did not hear you."

He looked puzzled a moment and then he said suddenly: "Can it be that you forgot to say 'Please' to me? You must know that I can never hear any request unless the word please is in it. It's a very queer ailment. I have tried the best physicians for it, but they do not seem to be able to cure me."

Dearest Dorothy's hurt stopped by this time, and Mister Please gave her his arm again and trotted on. Soon they came to a high fence, and Mister Please ran straight at it and vaulted over without paying the littlest bit of attention to Dearest Dorothy's scream. "The gate is just to the left, and I want to go through the gate!" So Dearest Dorothy tumbled most unpleasantly over the wall, and Mister Please picked her up in great distress and said: "Dear, dear, dear me! How sorry I am! How sorry I am!"

Then they trotted on, and when they came to a ditch and Mister Please went right towards it to jump over it, Dearest Dorothy said, very very quickly indeed: "Please, please, let us go over the footbridge," and Mister Please said, "To be sure, to be sure, Dearest Dorothy; delighted, delighted," and they trotted across the footbridge as comfortably as could be.

And then they came to a river, and Mister Please was going to jump right into it, but Dearest Dorothy said "Please" again, and he immediately went to where a bridge was.

And so they trotted on and on, and at last they came to the end of the world, where there was nothing but a sharp edge left, and Dearest Dorothy was so interested that she forgot, and so, when Mister Please trotted straight to the edge without stopping, Dearest Dorothy cried, "I want to stop—I want to stop!" and Mister Please looked at her with a polite smile and said: "Did you speak?" and

Over he went!

With Dearest Dorothy!

And she went down, down, down, screaming, "Please, please, please, dear Mister Please, I will never forget to say please again!"

And then Sweetest Mother caught her and had her in her arms, and there she was, safe and sound in her own room, and Sweetest Mother said something about a nightmare; but Dearest Dorothy knew better.

And the very next morning at the breakfast table she said, "Please, will you please let me have some toast, please,

if you please?" And Big Father made believe to fall off the chair with surprise.

Southwestern English.

The Kansas City Journal gives a sample of English as they speak it in Oklahoma. The dialogue was between a Guthrie ballplayer and a bartender.

"Is you got any smokin' tobacco?" asked the ballplayer.

The bartender did not reply at once, and the question was repeated.

"I ain't said I ain't," retorted the bartender.

"I ain't ast yo' if you ain't. I ast yo' if you is. Yo' is, ain't yo'?"

Isobel's Most Dreaded Midyear Examination

THE dreaded time of midyear examinations was approaching.

Miss Damon's girls had begun to tremble and devote themselves studiously to their books. At recess they huddled in little groups and groaned over what they didn't know.

"Isn't it silly?" laughed Jean Stewart to Isobel. "The ones that make the most fuss are the ones who are surest to pass. Susie Latimer never worries. She just cheerfully flunks each time and begins again."

"Just the same, don't you wish't you knew your 'rithmetic a little better?" replied Isobel.

"I—I'm afraid I do," Jean admitted slowly. Then they both laughed.

The gray morning of the arithmetic examination came. Miss Van Wyck's girls were sent downstairs to the large assembly room, as all the examinations were to be there.

Isobel had a desk to herself. After the newcomers were seated Miss Damon gave them a very stern talking-to. They were to work quickly and quietly, and under no conditions to speak until they had finished their examination—unless it was to the teacher in charge. Any girl who was seen to whisper to another would forfeit her examination paper and be marked a failure.

There was a little rustle after this decree, and then the room settled down to hard work.

At the end of the first period Isobel thought Miss Van Wyck had given them a severe test. At the end of the second she was sure of it. When the examination was done she had strange feelings inside. Her paper was crossed and recrossed, and she was curiously certain that some of her examples were not correct.

As she was glancing over her paper for the last time before handing it in Bertha Jamison came into the room and up to the desk where Isobel was seated. Isobel realized that she occupied Bertha's place.

"Am I in your way?" she questioned with her lips.

Bertha smiled and shook her head, and took the seat behind.

"Isobel Strickland," rang out Miss Damon's high voice, "did you speak to Bertha Jamison?"

Every girl in the room looked up and around at Isobel. She rose, trembling, to her feet.

"Yes, Miss Damon. I asked her—" she faltered.

"You were in the room when I said there was to be no whispering?" interrupted Miss Damon.

"Yes," replied Isobel.

"You heard what I said as to the penalty?"

"Yes," replied Isobel.

"Then you may put your paper in the waste basket and tell Miss Van Wyck that you are to be marked failure."

Isobel walked forward unsteadily. Her face was hot and her eyes smarting with bitter tears. She dropped the result of her hours of work and worry into the basket and fled out of the room and up the stairs.

Miss Damon had rung the bell for recess, and the girls had begun to open their luncheons.

Isobel went to Miss Van Wyck's desk.

"Miss Van Wyck—I—" she began; then the scaldign tears blinded her, sobs choked her voice. She covered her face with her hands and wept.

The next moment a kind, strong arm went around her, and Miss Van Wyck led her gently out of the room and into the dressing room.

She closed the door after them, and, drawing Isobel close to her, she held her in her arms until Isobel was able to stammer out her difficulties.

"It was too bad you forgot," Miss Van Wyck said, soothingly. "I can see, of course, that you did it instinctively, and had no idea of breaking the rule."

"No-o, not the least," gasped Isobel.

"Well, suppose, dear, that you slip on your coat and hat and run home, and I'll go to Miss Damon after school and see what can be done."

"You're so go-od," sobbed Isobel, and hurried into her things and away, without waiting even to speak to Jean.

Mrs. Strickland was quite indignant, and wanted to take Isobel away from school at once. Mr. Strickland looked at the trouble a little differently.

"It was stern punishment," he said; "it was even unjust. Yet the letter of the law you did disobey."

Isobel nodded.

"Then I should think there would have to be some compromise. Miss Damon may have spoken in irritation and more severely than she meant to."

"Well, I don't think anyone ought to teach who has a bad temper," pouted Isobel.

"Well, we're all pretty human, you know," smiled Mr. Strickland.

Next morning Isobel, rested and comforted, returned to her problem. Miss Van Wyck met her, smiling.

"Miss Damon said she spoke more hastily then she meant to, and that if you wish to take another examination it may be counted to your credit."

Isobel remembered the crossed and recrossed paper.

"Oh, thank you!" she said. "I'd like to try again."

"Wasn't that an easier test, Miss Van Wyck?" asked Isobel, when she finished.

"Why, no," replied Miss Van Wyck. "I thought it was even harder."

"Well, I guess I must have been 'wuzzy' yesterday, everything seemed so hard. I suppose I ought to thank Miss Damon for making me destroy my other paper."

And Isobel's mark kept her very decidedly from being counted a failure.

The Lion in the Path.

Donald's mother read to him one day of the lion in the path, and how he frightened everybody away till a brave stranger advanced to fight him, when he turned tail and ran.

Donald thought that the stranger was very brave indeed, and he felt quite sure that he would not have dared to do it; for Donald was timid.

The boys had found it out, and they "picked on him" till they had the life nearly frightened out of him. One big bully of a boy in particular used to watch for Donald every day and chase him, and Donald never failed to run, screaming at the top of his voice for help.

The day after his mother had read the story of the lion in the path to him Donald was approaching the corner where the bully always lay in wait, and his heart was going pit-a-pat. He would gladly have taken another direction, but there was no way home except past this corner.

Donald was so frightened that he started to run before he reached the corner, and he was sobbing with fear, although the bully was not in sight.

Thus it happened that when the big boy did suddenly burst from his hiding place according to his habit, Donald's eyes were so blinded by tears that he did not see him, but ran straight at him.

The next moment the two boys met with a smash, and Donald instinctively caught hold of the bully. Then he realized what had happened, and he opened his mouth to let out a yell; but to his astonishment the bully yelled first.

"Let me alone!" shouted he. "let me alone! I was only fooling. I didn't mean to hurt you, honest!" Then he tore away and raced down the street, never stopping till he was out of sight.

"I guess I know now what a lion in the path is like," said he. And after that he fought his battles and soon overcame his timidity.

Isobel went to Miss Van Wyck's desk