Polly Evans Story Page
For Boys and Girls

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The Succession of Billy

SURPRISED TO SEE SKINNY'S CLOTHES

IT HAD to come sooner or later. Skinny was a fine leader and all that—he could scheme like sixty and carry out his plans, too—but for impetuous daring and skill in battle he didn't hold a candle to Billy Mumford.

The only reason Billy hadn't captured the leadership in the beginning was because he had come to Homeville comparatively recently, when the "Bloody Robbers" were already well established.

Besides, Skinny had lost his gun. With it went a great deal of his influence. True, Skinny was quick to realize Billy's ability, and had made him his first lieutenant, but the job was becoming too small for him and he was looming up big as a future captain.

Naturally, Skinny did not like to step out of the position he had occupied so long and so ably. Bearing this in mind, one may well be surprised to learn that Skinny resigned of his own accord and opened the way for Billy to become captain. And "thereby hangs a tale."

"Let's take a whack at the Swimmin' Hole," urged Skinny, on this day of momentous happenings, as he and Billy were sitting, with legs dangling, on top of cracker boxes before Fowler's grocery store.

Billy, who was indulging in the gentle pastime of coaxing the grocery cat to him and then kicking it away, was not at first inclined to stir. But as Skinny insisted, he finally assented and dropped lazily to the ground.

Once at the Hole, the two took a dip and then seated themselves on the broad flat rock.

"Think I'll take a look in the tunnel," remarked Skinny.

Billy shook his head. "Don't you do it," said he; "water's high after yesterday's rain and the place must be about flooded out."

"Oh, it'll be all right after I get inside," returned Skinny. "I think I'll move along."

"Well, all right; I'm going up to the bend to see if I can't land a sunny," announced Billy, taking his lines and hooks from his pocket, and proceeding to look for a tree which would furnish him a fishing pole.

So they separated, going in opposite directions.

It is necessary to describe the tunnel rather carefully, since it had everything to do with the adventure that happened shortly afterward.

At the place where the tunnel was located the creek made a deep bend. Upon the river side of the bend there opened in the bank a cavern with a good-sized mouth. At the other end of the cavern was another mouth. As the cave ran in the same direction as the creek part of the creek flowed right through the cavern, going in at one mouth and out the other, to join the main body of the creek beyond.

The roof of the cavern was about eight feet high, and along the wall farthest away from the main part of the creek there was a sort of shelf. It was upon this shelf that the boys liked to sit watching the water flowing over the bed of the cave. In the roof of the cave there was a little hole, opening all the way upward. Whenever one boy wished to know if another chap was in the cavern he always shouted down this hole.

Now, as Billy had said, the water of the creek had risen until it was really above the mouth of the tunnel.

But Skinny knew he could dive through the opening under water. Once inside, he could climb on the shelf out of reach of the water, and the hole in the roof would give him enough air.

Skinny got through the opening all right, and was soon perched upon the shelf.

"This'll be a stunt to talk about," said he, for no "Bloody Robber" had as yet dared enter when the water rose above the entrance and the exit.

Skinny found it so comfortable that before he knew it he had fallen asleep.

Meanwhile another rain came. It was a frightful downpour. Billy ran from his place on the bank of the Bend to the old springhouse nearby, and remained sheltered there until the storm had passed.

Then he went in search of Skinny. Arriving at the cavern, he was surprised to see Skinny's clothes, thoroughly soaked, on the bank alongside.

"That's mighty funny," said he to himself; "wonder if Skinny's there and doesn't know it's been raining?"

"Hello, Skinny!" he shouted down the hole in the roof of the cavern.

"That's funny, too!" muttered Billy, beginning to grow uneasy.

"I'm goin' to see what's the matter," said he, with decision.

Hastily stripping, he dived through the entrance of the cave, high above which the water now splashed. Once within, he rose to the surface, to find that the shelf was barely an inch above the water.

And there on the shelf lay Skinny, unconscious, a jagged cut in his head, from which blood was steadily flowing.

Billy was horrified. He was quickly at the side of his comrade. Raising his head Billy shouted, "Skinny! Skinny! Wake up!"

The eyes half opened. Skinny looked around in a dazed, bewildered way, and then they closed and the head dropped weakly back again.

"Got to get out of here some way!" Billy muttered, between clinched teeth. "So here goes for it!"

Grasping the insensible lad in his arms he dived madly back through the cavern's entrance. He was swept back by the swift water, but he fought desperately on, until, with the water ringing in his ears and his head whirling, he at last rose to the surface outside. He struggled to the bank, where, exhausted, he flung himself on the ground.

"Come, this won't do," he gasped, rousing himself and donning his clothes. Glancing at Skinny, Billy found that although the blood had ceased flowing, he was cold and white and showed no signs of "coming to."

Half dragging, half carrying him, Billy at last got over the quarter of a mile that lay between the creek and the pike. Not a step further could he go. Sobbing, he threw himself down beside Skinny.

"I've done my best, Skinny, but I've just got to rest," he moaned; "soon's I can I'll go for some one—some one to take you home! Do you hear me, Skinny?"

Fortunately at this moment old Farmer Jones, the "Robbers'" deadliest enemy, drove along the pike.

"Hello! What's this?" he exclaimed.

"Why—why—" began Billy. Then he fainted.

Farmer Jones tenderly lifted the two into his spring wagon and drove with all speed to the office of Dr. Byers, thereby winning the eternal gratitude and friendship of the entire band of "Bloody Robbers" when they heard of it afterward.

Billy was on his feet in a day, but it was a week before Skinny recovered from his wound and exposure.

No sooner was he able to be out than he called a meeting of the "Bloody Robbers" at "Robbers' Cave."

There Skinny told of how he had tried

HALF DRAGGING, HALF CARRYING HIM

to dive out through the cavern, but had struck his head severely against the rocks. Almost stunned, he was just able to pull himself back on the shelf when he fainted. Then he knew no more. From Farmer Jones Skinny had been able to gather the remaining information, and he proceeded to tell what a hero Billy had proved himself.

"Fellers," he said, in conclusion, "I don't want to be your captain any more. But I do want it to go to the fellow who earned it, and who saved my life," and he seized Billy's hand.

Billy then and there declared he wouldn't be captain, and wanted to know why "every one should make such a darn fuss over such a little thing, anyhow," but the "Robbers" insisted, and cast a unanimous vote for him.

And so Billy came into his own.

A Short Story of Jenny Lind

DO ANY of you young people know of this famous singer?

I do, and what a lovely, charming person she was! We read often of the beautiful songs and melodies she sang—not in concerts, but so often to cheer a sick-bed.

On one occasion a young man was very ill, and while he was lying suffering he heard, as he thought, a bird singing a beautiful song in the house.

He begged his mother to get the bird, for he knew it would help him to get well.

In making inquiries, she was told there was no such bird in the house. She came back and tried to console him.

THE MAN'S SURPRISE WAS GREAT

Again, later on, the same beautiful song! She hurried to where the sound came from, and, knocking at the door, begged the lady to lend her the bird, as her boy was so ill.

Her astonishment was great when the lady said she had been practicing for a concert, adding, "If I can do him any good, I will come and sing the songs to him."

The young man's surprise was great when he found the beautiful songstress was Jenny Lind.

Such a gift as hers had never been known before, and in a concert one could hear a pin drop when those delicious, bird-like trills were sung, even sweeter than birds themselves!

E. K. O.

He Ate All Five

THE wandering minstrel paused outside the house of the great nobleman, for the savory smell of roasted fowls was borne to him on the air and he was hungry—very hungry, indeed.

To rest himself he calmly sat upon the steps of the nobleman's house, where the nobleman himself came across him a few moments later.

"What do you here, caitiff!" roughly demanded the great man.

"But resting, my lord, and dreaming of the fowls I smell in yonder kitchen," boldly replied the ragged minstrel, whose harp had already been sold to buy him bread.

The nobleman reflected. "Knave," said he, at last, "thou shalt have thy dream realized; thou shalt eat fowl, but unless thou makest way with the whole five of them I shall roast thee and have thee served for my dinner."

The five pullets were brought in and placed before the minstrel.

"May I give each a name, sir?" asked he.

"Thou mayest if thou dost so fancy," assented the nobleman.

"Then I christen the first Jonah's Stomach; the second, Jonah; the third, Whale's Stomach; the fourth, the Whale, and the fifth, the Sea." Whereupon the minstrel seized the fifth pullet, devoured it with the keenest relish, and calmly proceeded to walk away.

"Hold! thou hast not eaten the five pullets!" cried the nobleman.

The minstrel smiled. "Have I not swallowed the Sea," said he, "and the whale who hath swallowed Jonah and Jonah's Stomach hath in turn been swallowed, together with its stomach, by the Sea; therefore, in swallowing the Sea do I not swallow them all?"

The nobleman admitted that he had been outwitted, and presented the departing minstrel with a well-filled purse.

Confessing a Fault

IN THE first place, Beatrice was forbidden to look into that particular bureau drawer. So that when she drew forth the pretty inkstand, perhaps it was the guilty thought that made her hand shake so that the inkstand dropped to the floor and was shattered to pieces.

Beatrice was naturally very truthful, so she really was surprised at herself when she told her mother that Fluffy, the cat, had done the damage.

Mother merely shook her head, as though to say that cats didn't open bureau drawers, but she uttered never a word.

After thinking it all over, however, Beatrice just had to confess.

"Now that you've owned to your fault, I won't punish you further," said mother; "but you must wear the dress you have on when you go out to play."

Beatrice looked down at her dress, and there she saw for the first time a big ink spot. You can't imagine how bad she felt when each friend she met asked her about the spot. It reminded her always of her untruthfulness.

Deer-Hunting

MR. JONES never tells about the time he went out to hunt deer and was hunted himself.

He had an idea that if he wore a pair of antlers on his head, the deer would be unsuspecting, and he could readily stalk his game.

He really got along finely for a time. Having approached quite near the deer, he was just about to take a shot, when bang! rang out a shot not far from him, and a portion of his antlers were shot away.

A party of hunters, who had also come out to hunt, had seen the antlers and mistaken him for a deer. Mr. Jones had the narrowest escape of his life.

He still insists that antlers are the best thing to wear when hunting deer, but his friends all notice that he has never worn them again.

Just the Tail Moved.

Elizabeth was asked to go into the next room to see if the clock there was going. Shortly she returned with this information:

"Clock is standin' still, but the tail is waggin'!"

"Song of the Sea Shell"

WHENEVER I am lonely,
I sit beneath a tree,
My sea shell hugged close to my ear,
A-singing songs to me.

And oh, the wondrous stories,
That pretty shell has told!
Of fearful great sea monsters,
And mermen weird and old;

Of splendid coral palaces,
Where little mermaids play;
The sunfish and the moonfish,
That make it light as day;

How clouds of bright sea butterflies
Go flitting to and fro,
And troops of lovely jellyfish,
With sunshades of rainbow.

It's told me of the sunken ships,
Filled full of shining gold,
The pirate ships that sailed the sea
When men were wild and bold.

It's told me of the horses
That gallop through the sea,
With merry nymphs astride their back
All shouting, full of glee.

It's told me of the gardens
Where dainty seafans grow,
And plants of splendid colors
Wave gently to and fro.

Just think of all the pleasure
My shell has brought to me—
A little country maiden,
Who never saw the sea!

MARGARET W. LEIGHTON.

Won the Overcoat

GOVERNOR JOHN A. JOHNSON, of Minnesota, was employed as clerk in a drug store in his youth. He became so valuable that at the age of 16 he received as wages $75 a month.

As he had his mother and eight brothers and sisters to support, however, he denied himself everything except extreme necessities.

He secured his first overcoat under rather peculiar circumstances. It was in the month of December and his employer noticed that the lad had no other protection against the cold than a thin alpaca coat. So the druggist offered him a fine overcoat.

The boy thanked him and said that he did not need it, and if he did need one, he could buy it.

His employer looked at him rather curiously for a moment. "I see," said he. "Now you take this coat or I'll discharge you. I guess you won't be able to wander down the street and buy another job, eh?"

John took the coat and kept his job.

Ballooning Adventure

MR. WIMBLEDON was an enthusiastic bather. Upon this day he had taken his customary morning dip and had returned to his bathhouse to dress. These little bathhouses along the English seacoast are just about big enough for one to turn around in.

Along came a balloon, with anchor dragging. Somehow, the anchor became fastened in the roof of the bathhouse, the house was lifted up and away went the balloon with the bathhouse at the end of the anchor. A good stiff wind had set in and the balloon was swept rapidly across the channel. Then the anchor became unloosened again, and the bathhouse was deposited gently on the shores of France.

Mr. Wimbledon, in the meantime, had been searching frantically on the floor of the bathhouse for a collar button. When finally dressed, he opened the door and stepped out.

You can imagine his surprise when he found himself in an unfamiliar country, and how it increased when he learned that he had been transported from England to France in a few minutes.

Concealed Them.

Joe came to school for the first time. In one hand he carried a cap and in the other a bunch of bananas.

"You can't come in here with those bananas," warned the teacher.

Joe went out. In a few minutes he came back, walking slowly and painfully.

"Where did you put the bananas?" asked the teacher.

"Oh, I hid 'em all right," gasped Joe; "they're safe inside of me."

"Blossoms"

DROVE, THE WICKED LOKI AWAY

THIS little story is told by an old Norway nurse—a story of fairies and blossoms.

Long ago, when this earth was ruled by fairies, a good and beautiful fairy named Iduna had charge of all the trees that bore blossoms. She watered and tended them every day, for the fairies made a delicious drink of blossoms steeped in dew, and those who drank of this never grew old nor lost their power of doing good. The apple blossom, especially, was considered the best from which to make this drink.

At this time there lived a very wicked fairy named Loki. He was always watching for an opportunity to do evil. One day he saw Iduna walking in the forest alone. He caught her and bore her away to a cave in the deep, dark forest. The good fairies searched everywhere for her, but could not find her, and then the trees began to wither, the blossoms fade and fall in showers.

Soon the good fairies missed their blossom wine and began to grow old and feeble. They walked about with bowed heads and sad hearts, looking for Iduna. All the festivals held in shady bowers ended, and the queen of the fairies called a meeting, for the mortals, having no one to look after them, fell into grievous ways; everything went wrong. Mortals were even known to lose their tempers and to kill one another.

One day, when things were very bad, a little fairy, who attended the great oak trees, told how she had seen Loki sitting at the entrance of a cave in the pine forest beyond the mountains. The queen called her subjects together, and they started for the deep forest of pines. It took them a long while to find the cave. There sat Loki guarding the entrance. By their united strength they drove the wicked Loki away and liberated Iduna. She came back to her trees, which blossomed anew and bore fruit, the fairies drank their delicious blossom wine, and they held a festival and there was great rejoicing.

Then mortals ate of the fresh fruits and dropped their evil ways, and for over 100 years things went smoothly.

VANETA R. HUYETTE.

Toto, the Wicked Prince

PRINCE TOTO was probably the naughtiest little prince there ever was. He kicked and scratched and bit most every one who came near him, and became a terror to his nurse and others who waited upon him.

Of course, he was given nearly everything he wished. When he couldn't have what he desired, he became unusually vicious and disagreeable. During bad weather he was at his very worst. Then he would go up to the roof of the castle, where was always stationed a royal astronomer, and command that official to have good weather sent immediately. When the dignified gentleman would explain that that was impossible, the naughty prince would pull the astronomer's beard or throw away his cap.

Things came to such a pass, however, that complaints began to reach the king himself. The king was very much shocked at these reports of the prince's misbehavior.

He at once issued a proclamation offering a great reward to any one who would rid his son of such evil traits.

For a time no one appeared, but at last there came to the king an uncouth giant, with great long nails, tusks for teeth and long, pointed ears.

"I am a genie sent by the good fairy who watches over your kingdom," he explained, in answer to the look of wonderment upon the king's face. "Have no fear; I shall take good care of your son and return him to you completely cured."

So the king finally permitted the giant to take the prince with him. The prince wasn't the least bit willing to go, but whether he would or no, he was forced to seat himself upon the back of a great goose, the giant bestrode another, and in a second's time they were flying swiftly through the air. Toto hung on for dear life, fearful every moment that he would take a bad tumble.

"Don't feel so much like kicking and biting and scratching now, eh?" asked the genie.

After a while they landed near a great lake. Strange to say, across this lake there stretched a very narrow plank.

Toto was made to walk across the lake, the genie walking on the water beside him and pricking him with his sharp nails when he didn't move fast enough. To poor Toto that bridge seemed like a mere thread, and the distance he had to go more than 100 miles.

When this feat was accomplished, the

FLYING SWIFTLY THROUGH THE AIR

giant announced:

"Now we shall pay the old magician a visit. He'll cut off your head and put another one on."

Prince Toto pleaded and cried and promised, but all in vain.

When they reached the cave of the magician, the old man came out in response to the genie's call.

"Yes, indeed," said he, "I have lots of boys' heads left; and this little boy is so naughty that he surely needs another one. I only give the very, very bad boys new heads, you know."

Down on his knees Toto begged to be allowed to keep his own head, promising that never more would he be naughty.

At last the magician listened to his entreaties and let him go.

The genie led Toto back to his father's castle. As they approached it he whispered into the prince's ear:

"Now, remember, if ever you should become bad again I shall call for you and take you to have your head cut off."

But Toto kept all his promises, and every one wondered at the delightful change which had taken place in the prince who was once so wicked.