

The Story Teller.



"Truth Will Out."

SUMMER had given place to fall and vacation to school. The novelty of the first days was wearing off, and a fortnight had passed when the incident I am about to narrate occurred. One morning Frank and I came later than usual, and were mounting the stairs when we saw our own initials neatly engraved on the door in conspicuous letters. The surprise was so great that we involuntarily remained still, staring at the entrance door in speechless amazement. At last our unpleasant reverie was broken by the voice of Miss Arnold, our teacher, and we went within. How quiet every one became. I dropped my eyes in confusion; I knew what they all thought.

"I wish to speak to you," it was Miss Arnold who spoke. We went forward in awkward silence.

"I noticed on entering this morning some newly carved initials on the door, which, I suppose, you have seen. I have questioned the room, but they seem to know nothing about it, so now it remains only for you two to answer."

We both replied that we knew nothing about them; had, in fact, but just discovered them. After we had taken our seats she continued:

"I'm very sorry that it should have happened, but it is my duty to find the guilty ones. Only two persons in this room have such initials, and they deny any knowledge as to the —"

"We do," came Frank's voice, high and clear, and I could not help sending him an admiring glance.

"I sincerely hope it may prove so," she said, sadly. "From a reliable witness I have evidence as to the right party, but I shall say no more till confession is made." I could not help but feel she believed us guilty, and this also seemed to be everybody's opinion, for that day we were the targets of all eyes, causing us to be very uncomfortable.

True to her word, Miss Arnold never mentioned the trouble, and a week went by. The girls then begged us to confess, telling Frank and me that the teacher was so discouraged she wished she had never taken our school. This made us doubly sad, for having nothing to confess, we could only try hard to penetrate the mystery. We tried so earnestly and were so very anxious that on Friday, when Frank's mother came over to tea, she remarked on our tired looks.

"Now, boys, forget all about the matter and take some kind of outdoor exercise to-morrow. If you don't, I'm afraid one of you will become ill," said the good lady. At first we shook our heads, but on second thought the subject was given more consideration, and by nightfall our decision was favorable. Frank and I had long wished to go nutting, so we decided to make Saturday the date.

The night was one of those beautiful, starry evenings in late September. All was still excepting for the dismal howl of some sleepless dog, and the singing of the frogs in the marsh. We were sitting with our backs to the pillars of the veranda, our legs dangling over the railing in careless fashion, and our faces looking upwards at the exquisite beauty of the sky, watching the occasional fall of some star.

"You're going to take your boat, aren't you, Randolph?" asked Frank.

"Yes, of course I'm going to take it. We'll row up the river to the grove," I made reply.

"Hurrah! Won't we have a snap," cried Frank, jumping to the ground and throwing his hat high in the air.

At breakfast the next morning I was jubilant, and still more so when Frank gave his well-known signal—the whistle. After crossing the fields to the river we pushed the rowboat out into the water, and set out toward "the grove" as a clump of trees with nuts and plums was called.

Down the stream we went, applying vigorous strokes to the bars. The spray from the water sprinkled our clothes and faces. At last we reached our destination, and leaving the boat moored to the trunk of a tree, we ran joyously down to the grove.

It was a little past noon when our sacks were full to the brim, and we sat down to a hearty meal. Not wishing to embark for home yet, we took a stroll in the woods, coming back about the hour of 2. On going to untie our boat we found it gone. We looked blankly into each other's faces, when a cry of "help!" startled us. At no great distance we saw some one splashing in the water and a boat rising and falling on the waves. It was the missing one.

Hardly a moment passed before Frank and I were striking out for the drowning boy (as we plainly saw now). I managed to catch the boat and was successful in clambering over one side. By the time I had regained the oar, which was floating away, Frank had reached the boy. He really is the best swimmer I ever saw, and only he could have done what he did. I have never been noted for coolness, and it seems queer now, after it is over, that I had sense enough to do what little I did and row in their direction, but in some odd manner unknown to me, I reached the two and saw that the rescued boy was no other than Jack Merriweather, a boy who had always hated us for some reason or other. When he revived we heard him mumble in a tone of complete subjection and humiliation:

"I—I hope you will forgive me." Now, it's hard for a boy to feel himself obliged to any one he has always hated, and I pitied him.

"Don't you mind, old boy. Let's be friends. I never could win your good



Oh list to the tale of the Elephants three,
Of Jumbo and Mumbo and Puggery-Wee.
Far back mid the trees of a tropical wood,
The home of this Elephant family stood.
Of Jungle-folk all they enjoyed the good will
For Jumbo was ruler of all Jungleville.



When Junglefolk quarreled, to Jumbo they came
Who ended the trouble by fixing the blame;
To Mumbo they came when they wished a new hat,
Or to learn how to cook for she knew about that.
But Puggery-Wee was too small to know much,
He was just a small child and was treated as such.

opinion, even if I wished. Now, I hope, you won't turn away from us," said Frank, kindly. And as I most generally feel it my duty to back my chum, I joined in the entreaties.

"Maybe you won't care to be my friend, if you know all," he said, his lips quivering with emotion. "I have often tried to get you into trouble, but you never seemed to mind, so I carved your initials on —"

"You!" we both exclaimed. "I knew you wouldn't forgive me, but I'll tell all now."

"Jack, how could you!" I cried reproachfully. He drew back, giving me a look of hatred. It seemed as if there would be a silence, but Frank quieted that fear by saying:

"It is over, Jack, and we don't mind, if you get us out of the fuss."

"Don't you really? I thought you would. Do you know what I was going to do just now?" I was not included in the conversation, so Frank only, answered "No," said Jack continued.

"I heard from the boys that you were coming here to-day, and I came out, but I hadn't any intention of doing harm then. A half hour ago I passed your boat, and—and I began to think I ought to play you one more trick, so I took the boat out, but you came then, and I lost the oar. When I went to lean for it, I tumbled head over heels into the water, and—you know the rest."

"Tell us no more, Jack, about what you have done—we forgive you if only you will go to our teacher and tell her all about the initials."

He was silent for a moment, then he answered slowly: "I will, because you saved my life, but won't you ask Miss Arnold to keep my name from the school?"

"Yes, I'll ask her," said Frank.

We had now reached the wharf near the village, and after mooring the boat we gathered our belongings, which, by the way, had not been forgotten, and walked homeward in the quiet twilight of the waning afternoon.

"Oh, Randolph, how could he do it!" cried Frank when we were again alone. I had been thinking of this on the way home, and had an answer ready long before he made this exclamation.

"Easily enough," I replied. "Don't you remember one Sunday last January." He stared at me blankly; it was evident he had forgotten one event which I knew Jack hadn't, so I quickly jogged his memory by placing before him our entry in my diary, which I may as well quote for the benefit of my readers:

"Sunday, Jan. 18.—To-day we had a jolly laugh at the expense of one Jack Merriweather, a newcomer to our village. He is living with his uncle, old Mr. Merriweather, so I heard."

Frank is accustomed to drive Bessie to church in the sleigh, and this fact the boys sometimes tease him about. Being a boy who will not stand teasing, several fights have occurred. Jack did not know this at the time, and when he first saw Frank and Bessie, he made some really provoking remarks, but Frank kept his peace till Jack Merriweather threw a snowball. Then you should have seen him chase the other down the street, while Bessie held the lines. When he caught Jack, Frank administered such a thrashing as that boy never had before. Many saw it, and laughed, for they all like Frank, but the person who was passing gave him a good talking to after it was over. I can't, for the life of me, see how the person could have done so without remembering he was a boy once, but some people are puzzles.

That Merriweather boy must have taken his thrashing with very little pleasure, for he raged like everything afterwards."

"I remember now. He has always been cool; but to you—" I interrupted Frank. "Oh, as to his hatred for me, it has been so ever since, because I teased him about it, and because of my being your friend."

On Monday morning Frank and I were not slow in maintaining our innocence or in laying before Miss Arnold the proposition, to which she readily consented. That afternoon Jack (the reliable witness, as we soon learned) told her the story. We at first thought that our teacher prevailed on him to confess in a written apology to the school, so that there might be no embarrassing mistakes among the pupils; for when she cleared us two, it was through a letter signed in Jack's name. But afterwards, she informed us, that old Mr. Merriweather had commanded his nephew to write the statement, which cleared the mystery and lifted the shame in which the carved initials had placed Frank and me.

Jack is not living in our little town any more, for it seems he felt too humbled and disgraced to remain longer where friends and familiar scenes would remind him of some very unpleasant incidents.

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INCREASE OF RAILWAYS.

The average increase in the length railways throughout the world is at 11,000 miles per annum, equal to one 2½ per cent of the total lines existing at the beginning of this century embraced nearly 480,000 miles. Of the increase during recent years 4,100 miles per annum are added to the European system, while the addition in Asia is at the rate of 2,250 miles, in Africa 1,100 miles and in Australia 160 miles per annum.

A "BURNING MOUNTAIN."

The "burning mountain" of Montet, Aveyron, France, which is often mistaken for an active volcano, because a pillar of cloud rises from it by day and a pillar of fire by night, is in reality a coal mine which has been burning for several years.

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