THE RANSOM OF BILLY

By W. J. B. Moses.

NOTE—The author of this beautiful story from the January number of St. Nicholas is a brother of Charles Morse of Dayton, secretary of the Drainage convention.

Arthur was a very little boy and Billy's brother. He was also brother to the twins, both girls, who were older than Billy. Billy was a very lively boy with a most wonderful imagination, but Arthur believed every word that Billy said. Mrs. Norton who was the mother of the twins and of Billy and of Arthur, and who was a widow, lived in a tiny frame house just back of the large stone stable of Judge Corad, whose stately mansion crowned the hill. Billy's mother was often provoked by his mischief, but except when she was very very tired with the washing which formed her chief source of income, she knew that there was really no harm in him.

On the day when Billy picked up a strap from the road at the foot of Judge Corad's hitching post and was pursued to the door of his own dwelling by the irate coachman who happened to want the strap, she was tired and out of humor, and she added her own prophecies of awful things that would befall Billy if he continued to take things he was not sure did not belong to someone else.

Billy, whose imagination was set working by the reproaches of his mother and of the stableman, went into hiding in a secret cave constructed in a closet of the upstairs part of the house, where Miss Simpson, a sewing girl and Mrs. Norton's one lodger kept her scanty supply of coal. Here then Billy darkly ensconced himself as he imagined that the officers of the law, under the orders of the powerful Judge Corad, would soon come in search of him to carry him away to years of captivity. And from the depths of his retreat he conveyed instructions in sepulchral whispers through the key-hole to the woe-laden Arthur concerning the necesity of secrecy, even in the event of torture, and concerning also supples of food and water to be conveyed to him if he should be put in prison. Billy fell asleep and so played his part longer than he would otherwise have done. It was in December and the night came quickly. Just as the night began to gather and as Arthur's heart swelled to bursting with utter misery, he bethought himself and inquired from his mother whether there were not some way in which Billy's fate could be averted. The good lady utterly unaware of the horror that dwelt in the soul of the little one, and equally unconscious of the melodramatic actions of Billy and his whereabouts, felt that it would not be wise to spoil a good lesson by saying that Billy would not be troubled by the officers at all; and so she told Arthur that perhaps if some one were to go and pay Judge Corad for the strap that Billy hal taken, he would let him off. But she ended with a question as to where the money was to come from, which implied that she herself could not furnish it.

Now Arthur's ideas of the value of money were somewhat vague, but for some months he had been gradually accumulating a hoard for Chrstmas. This money consisted of a dime, a nickle and five copper cents and was the source of many very happy dreams. With it he meant to buy presents for all the family for the first time in his life. Miss Simpson from whom as payment for errands and other little services this money had been derived, had assured him that it was sufficient, and had even assisted him in deciding how it might be spent to advantage: the ten cents for a present for his mother, the nickle for a present for Billy, two of the copper cents for a present for each of the twins, and the fifth left over for himself though in his own mind Arthur had determined to buy something for Miss Simpson with it.

II.

Judge Corad, a very tall, black-bearded man, was seated in his library. He had just put aside the papers, with which he had been busy, when a servant entering announced:

"A little boy to see you, sir," He rose to his feet and looked down, blinking a little,—for the servant had turned on the electric lights,—at the little boy who stood before him.

"Well, sir, what can I do for you?" he asked in a great, gruff voice which he meant to be kind. The judge loved all little children and about this boy there was something of woe that struck him to the heart.

Arthur made several unsuccessful attempts at speech, and then suddenly unclasping his tiny hand, thrust into the smooth palm of the judge certain small coins.

"Why, what's this for?" asked the man.

"It's to pay for Billy, what he stole," stammered the boy.

"Who is Billy, and what did he steal?"

"Billy's my bruvver. He stole a strap, 'longside your hitching post; I don't believe he knew it belonged to you. We live in the house back of your stable."

"Oh-h," said the judge, beginning to understand; "and did Billy give you the money to give to me?"

"No; it's my money to buy Chris'mus presents wif. Is there enough money?"

"Yes," said the judge slowly, more than enough. So you were going to buy Christmas presents, were you? And whom were you going to buy them for?"

"One for muvver wif the ten cents; one for Billy wif the five cents; one for the twins wif the two cents apiece; and one for Miss Simpson with the other one cent."

Much to Arthur's surprise but not consternation,—for the touch of the great man had kindness in it,—the judge stooped down and gathering him up in his arms sat down in the big chair with him. Then he rang a bell and when a servant came in answer, said:

"Ask Miss Corad to come here."

When the servant had gone the man turned his attention again to the boy in his lap.

"But if you pay all this money for Billy maybe you will not have any more to buy gifts with."

The little fellow shook his head and his lips trembled. All the bright dreams of the past went out in darkness.

"Which one of them would you rather give a present to if you had some money left?"

"My muvver, because she works so hard and never has anything nice."

"And what would you give her?"

"A nice pink han'kchuf what loks like silk but you can buy for ten cents, 'cause she hasn't got anything pretty at all."

Just then Arthur was conscious that a beautiful young woman was standing beside them. Judge Corad explained something to her in very long words, and she smiled down at the little boy.

"Well", said the judge, taking ten cents and handing it back to Arthur. "The other money will be enough to pay for the strap Billy took. When you go home you can tell them it is all settled. But there are five days yet before Christmas, and I shouldn't wonder if you might be able to earn a little more money in that time. I have been looking for a little boy about your size to sort over some magazines and pile them up for me. Now if you would like to work for about an hour every day, I shouldn't wonder if you could earn as much money as you had before, or maybe a little more. Will you do it?"

"Yes," said Arthur. His heart was very light now. What a beautiful room that library was! He wondered why it had seemed so dark and gloomy when he first came in. What a pleasant man the judge was! He wondered why he had ever ben afraid of him. Miss Corad too, was certainly the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

"Well, then," said the judge, "it's a bargain. Suppose you come up tomorrow about 10 o'clock. I won't be home myself, but my little girl here will."—Arthur wondered why he called her his little girl—"and she will show you what to do. And I say," he added as the little fellow was about to go, "let's make a secret of it, will you? Don't tell your folks that you are earning money, and then my little girl and I will go and help you buy the presents, and we'll surprise them all. What do you say? Will you do it?"

"Yes," said Arthur. A surprise had been part of his plan with Miss Simpson, too.

III.

The great department-stores were certainly very wonderful. Arthur had seen much of their wonder before through the windows, but he had never been inside, and he had never expected to buy his Christmas presents in them. Miss Simpson had planned to buy from much smaller and, as far as Arthur's experience went, beter-known stores of the neighborhood. The holiday goods which these little stores displayed were perhaps tawdry and mean, but they had seemed quite wonderful in his eyes. Now, hustled and jostled by a surging crowd of men, women, and other children, clinging in desperation, nowto Miss Corad's hand and now to her skirt, his little mind was bewildered, and his sensations were rather those of one who is making a martyr of himself for the god of those whom he loves, than of a child sightseeing in a fairy-land of toys. There were so many beautiful, beautiful things; so many things that he would have gone into ecstasies over, could he have considered them one at a time; so many things that he knew would rejoice the heart of Billy and of his mother and of the twins, that he lost all appreciation of them and could not feel that they were real.

Miss Corad was buying a great deal, and from time to time she asked Arthur questions concerning this or that wondering if Billy would like a certain muffler, or if his mother would like a dress from a certain piece of cloth; but the little boy's answers had begun to grow so vague that she at last contented herself with her own judgment. Arthur knew that she was buying his gifts for him, and he had a dull sense of being wronged; for he could not tell in the number of other things which she bought just what had been purchased with the money he had earned at Judge Corad's, nor could he tell for whom the things were intended.

He was very tired and very bewildered when they were through at last, and glad to get out into the dusk of the Christmas eve. It was pleasantly cold out of doors, and the stars were beginning to shine up in the sky and to light up the snow in a Christmasy way. Besides the numerous bundles that were carried out and put in the carirage had an air of delightful mystery about them; and once Miss Corad and he were out of the great bustle of the store, he could feel a certain sense of proprietorship in some of them. What they contained he was not very sure, but he knew that there were one or two things that had been strangely left out. The pink handkerchief for his mother was one of these. Miss Corad had told him that pink would not be becoming to so old a woman; and although Arthur had felt his heart swell with pain, he had found no words in which to plead his case, and Miss Corad, mistaking his silence for consent, had purchased something else instead.

There was thing, by the way, which Arthur had coveted for more than a month, and that was a sled. He had not dared to hope for one for himself, but he had hoped that in some way or other, one might be given to Billy. Timid little boy as he was, he had ventured to suggest such a thing to Miss Corad; but she had been strangely deaf to his hints, indeed had hardly heard what he said, and had not at all understood the longing that was in his heart. If she had known about the glorious coasting on a certain hill; if she had known how many hours Arthur had stood and watched the flying sleds, with the wild hope that some generous boy might at some time offer to give him just one ride! But as it was she did not understand at all.

IV.

It was quite dark and all the family were at home and ready for supper except Arthur, and Mrs. Norton was almost beginning to feel anxious about him. Billy suggested that he had been kidnapped and held for a reward of five million dollars, but this suggestion did not frighten Mrs. Norton. much. She was more inclined to believe with the twins that he was over on the hill watching the boys slide. When at last the simple supper was all prepared and she was just on the point of sending Billy out in search of the missing one, a great tramping was heard in the hall, and before any one had time to wonder what it was, the door was flung open and Arthur appeared in the doorway, with Judge Corad, Miss Corad and a couple of servants, all loaded with bundles and baskets.

Mrs. Norton, Billy and the twins started in open-mouthed astonishment, while Judge Corad, who had shouted "A merry Christmas!" when he opened the door now advanced into the room, piled his packages on the table, and began to explain that they were presents from Arthur, who had been working for him to earn money for a week past. Mrs. Norton scarcely understood what he was saying, for she stood dumb and did not answer a word. The judge fell silent too, feeling somehow that it was all rather awkward and lacking in the enthusiasm and joy he had expected.

Mrs. Norton now understood dimly that at last her own home was receiving the bounty of the Christmas spirit which sometimes prompts the rich to give lavishly to the poor and she felt a struggle between her pride, which would have refused them and her mother love, which told her that for the sake of her children she had no right to do so. She began at last in a rather lame fashion to thank the judge and Miss Corad, and at their suggestion and with their asistance to unpack the baskets and other packages. There were many things there which Arthur and Miss Corad had not purchased personally, for there were hams and two turkeys, coffee and tea and sugar, a sack of flour, apples and oranges, candy and nuts and raisins, and all sorts of groceries and provisions; then there were dresses and shawls for Mrs. Norton and the twins, besides other useful articles. But there was nothing purely ornamental for Mrs. Norton, nor was there a doll in the whole great heap of presents for either of the twins. Billy and Arthur were provided for in much the same fashion, with warm clothes, overcoats shoes, mufflers, neckties, mittens, and even books; but of course as Arthur knew, there was no sled.

Probably the twins were the most grateful and the least dazed of all the family, and they alone were able to make the little exclamations concerning the usefulnes of the gifts and the goodness of the giver. Mirs. Norton tried to say something, too, but without very much success; and Billy and Arthur confined their remarks mainly to each other.

The confusion of unwrapping bundles, which lasted perhaps fifteen minutes, came to an end; and Miss Corad and her father were on the point of taking their departure, when the door opened again and Miss Simpson, thin-featured and looking a little bit grim, appeared. In her arms she held five packages, the largest of which was very incidently a cheap boy's sled.

"Here are just a few little things for your Christmas," she said. "This for Arthur," and she stripped the brown paper from the sled and put it on the floor.

"O-oh!"

With a cry of delight the litle boy sprang forward and clasped the sled in both arms.

"And this is for Billy."

It was only a cheap jack-knife, but the glow on Billy's cheeks attested that in his case, too the sewing girl had known his heart's desire.

For the twins there were two wonderful dolls, dressed by Miss Simpson herself from scraps of very fine goods indeed; and for Mrs. Norton there was a brilliant pink handkerchief and a little gold-washed brooch which delighted the eyese of Arthur and Billy.

The judge and his daughter stood in wondering admiration at the reception accorded to Miss Simpson's simple and inexpensive gifts but they had the good sense not to be envious.

"How well you know what to give!" said Miss Corad, slipping one arm about the girl's waist. "Your gifts are better than all of ours."

Then, all at once, Miss Simpson began to cry, and she was followed by Mrs. Norton, and she by Miss Corad; and then they all began to laugh and cry together; and the twins and the boys and Judge Corad laughed, too, though none knew why. And as they laughed, and as their eyes were wet with tears, the icy barrier that had stood throughout the evening between the rich givers of gifts and the poor receivers of them was melted, and Christmas joy flooded all their hearts.

Old Resident Dead.

James O'Connor, aged 65 years, a resident of St. Thomas, died at Winnipeg yesterday. The remains will be brought to St. Thomas for interment tomorrow. He was a pioneer in this part of the state and was well and favorably known.

ACQUITTED OF MURDER

Story of the Trial of the Polk County Man Who Killed His Father-in-Law —Old Man Was Killed by Son in Self Defense.

Late yesterday afternoon the jury at Crookston brought in a verdict of not guilty in the Wilde murder case. Fred Wilde was accused of killing his father-in-law with a pitchfork. The story of the trial is thus told by the Crookston Journal:

For five years Fred Wilde has lived on his little farm in the town of Parnell, on which is laid the scene of the occurrence. He came to this county from Murray county in the southern part of the state where he was also a farmer. He was an immigrant from Germany. When they moved to the northern part of the state it was over to Germany and bring to this country to live with them on their Polk county farm, her father, John Kisman. Fred Wilde furnished the money for this trip and the expenses of the old man.

From the very first the presence of the old man in the family brought on family dissensions and quarrels between Mr. and Mrs. Wilde and an increasing difference between Mr. Wilde and the old man.

The first witness that the defense called to the chair in their behalf was Miss Lizzie Wilde, the adopted daughter of the Wilde family and who was on the ground at the scene of the act, at the time it happened. Miss Wilde was assisting with the threshing by watching the grain as it filled the wagons. She stated that she was on the same side of the wagon as the defendant. The engine was run by gasoline motive and that day they were were attempting to move it. As they were attempting to move it one of the horses, a balky one, fell down on the ground as was its habit. At this time old John Kisman shouted to her to go out and get the other team but Fred Wilde who was unhitching the tugs told her to stay as the horse in the barn was not harnessed. Wilde struck the horse twice, breaking the fork he carried. As he hitched up the tugs again he stuck the fork in the ground at his side.

The old man started towards her and Fred Wilde to whose side she had gone. By the use of chairs and the court room table the young 15-year old girl demonstrated the relative positions of the team engine and stack. Her grandfather was mad she further stated and had a four-tined fork in his hand as he came rapidly toward her father. The tines were directed against the defendant. Wilde hit at him and struck him with the fork he had.

Attorney Rowe called Fred Wilde, the defendant, to the stand. Briefly he stated that he arrived in Illinois fourteen years ago from Germany, where he had married Miss Kisman his present wife. After farming there he moved to Murray county in the southern part of the state. Five years ago he moved to Parnell town in Polk county. He stated that old John Kisman had attacked him two times, once with an axe and once with a club, with which he had been knocked down and badly injured above the eye. Further concerning the affair on the Parnell farm his testimony is identical with that of the adopted daughter.

Mrs. Fred Wilde was next called to the stand and in every detail set forth the previous attacks that had been made upon her husband by old John Kisman and corroborated without exception the statements of the defendant when he was on the stand. She in fact made clear the nature of the man whom her husband had brought from Germany that he might spend his last days with them.

It appears that the old man was pettish and that one of the causes of the quarrel was that the prevalence of wet weather during last summer prevented the cutting of the grain by mato cut it as they do in Germany with chines and that Kisman wished Wilde a scythe. Wilde had 300 acres under cultivation.

At the time of the affair on the Wilde farm she was sitting near the kitchen window with Mrs. Ratke. They heard cries and loud swearing from Kisman. When Kisman came to the house, not knowing that he had been hurt so badly she took him upstairs and devoted the simple care of a housewife to the wound. She was with him during the night before he died.

Gasoline Eplosion.

Last Wednesday evening at about 10:30 o'clock the populace was startled by a dull explosion, which shook most of the residences in town, and the fire bell rang fircely, Ed Welch officiating. A big crowd was soon congregated around the Great Northern wind-mill which pumps water into the big tank near by. A gasoline engine had been in service for this purpose and was housed, Chris Watterud being on watch. It seems that he had noticed something was wrong with the engine, and was going down to disconnect it and use the pump. His body was half way in the well, and just as he lowered the lantern the explosion occured, throwing him entirely out of the well and through the door of the little hut.

He ran down the track with his clothes ablaze, struggling to tear them from him, till he reached the section house, and was assisted by the foreman, Henry Krabseth. His coat, cap vest were burned up, and not a hair was left on his head. His hands suffered the worst, and were very severely burned. Dr. O. T. Peterson was immediately called to attend the suffering man, and he will recover in the course of a few weeks. It was a wonder he was not killed outright, and the escape is little short of miraculous. The first explosion set the frame of the windmill on fire, and drove the gas, which is believed to have leaked into the well from an 8-gallon gasoline tank, through a small pipe tunnel, leading under the water tank, where a tremendous explosion occured, tearing up eight or ten thicknesses of board, and breaking great planks in two. The fire was soon put out of business by the Northwood Fire Department, which responded promptly and did good service.

A 40-gallon gasoline tank stood near by.—Northwood Gleaner.

THE STATE OF MISSOURI AGAINST STANDARD OIL

New York, Jan. 13.—The hearing of the Standard Oil case of the state of Missouri adjourned until 2 o'clock this afternoon. The attorney of the Standard Oil last night agreed to go with the hearing before the supreme court today and that displaced the hearing before the commissioner.

Furniture Specials

HAVING been in the furniture and piano business for twenty years in this city, we can offer the very best in our several lines and at prices that can not be duplicated. Our connection with one of the leading furniture concerns of Grand Rapids, the center of furniture manufacturing business of the country, enables us to give prices lower than any other house in the Northwest and to make a specialty of furnishing hotels, homes and public institutions, and to offer such terms as to make it an inducement to buy from us.

WITH the beginning of the new year we wish to announce that we are prepared to offer special bargains in

FURNITURE
PIANOS
ORGANS

Sewing Machines, Musical Instruments, Draperies, Carpets, Talking Machines and Records

PIANOS

IN the piano line we carry all the standard makes, and because we are both wholesale and retail dealers are able to sell at prices not available to others who handle these goods. We sell no cheap grade instruments at high prices, but the very best in tone, workmanship and finish at reasonable rates. Having been in business twenty years we are justified in referring to customers who have dealt with us during all these years and are our best patrons today.

Wholesale and Retail

¶We are both wholesalers and retailers and with our Grand Rapids connections are able to supply out-of-the-city customers with better goods at lower prices than it is possible to get from small dealers.

Wholesale and Retail Furniture and Piano Dealer **O. YOUNG** 125-127-129 So. 3rd St. Grand Forks, North Dakota