## WHAT CAME OF IT.

Stuart Willard was a kind hearted boy, frank, generous, honest, and truthful, but so lazy that his mother despaired of ever seeing him amount to anything. She was a widow, with no one to help her train her son, and neither advice, expostulation, nor argument had any effect upon him. He studied no more than was absolutely necessary to enable him to keep up with his classes, had no ambition to be at the head of any of them, and worked as little as possible about the house, though love and consideration for his mother prevented him from ever shirking his regular duties, such as milking the cow, cutting wood, and bringing water. But he stared at her aghast when she proposed that he should take entire charge of the garden, devoting to it his time before and after school-hours thus saving the expense of hiring help.

"O, mother, I never could," he said; "the weeds would be higher than my head in a month's time. I'm no hand at a rake or a hoe."

"You or no hand at anything as far as I can see," said his mother. "There will have to be a radical change in you Stuart, if you expect ever to win money or position."

"I don't know that I care for either," answered Stuart. "I'm not one of the pushing kind. A quiet life suits me best."

"And you'll be content to see your friends get ahead of you, I suppose."

"Now, mother, don't worry"—and Stuart looked really distressed—"I'll come out all right, never fear.'

"There'll have to be a miracle worked, then," said Mrs. Willard, sighing.

"Laziness is the one fault of your character, Stuart, and it will keep you down in your life."

Though averse to exertion of any kind, Stuart was a fun-loving boy, always ready for a frolic, and not apt to think until remembrance was too late to be of any avail, of the right or wrong of the good time. And he had three particular friends, to use his own parlance, "never stuck at anything" when there was fun ahead.

They all considered old Simon Pieffer, the richest man in Westville, fair game, for it was well known that he hated anything in the shape of a boy, and never spoke to or allowed to one, little or big, without growlingjlike the rough old bear he was believed to be.

He was an old bachelor and lived with a housekeeper and half a dozen servants in a handsome house in the suburbs of the town, and he might have thoroughly enjoyed his fine grounds, fine orchards, and well-bred live-stock but for the boys of the town, who mischievously drove the cows, stole his fruit, fished in his trout pond, broke down his fences, left his gates open, and made themselves generally obnoxious.

The culprits always managed in some way to escape detection. Well did they know the terrible example that would be made of the first boy old Simon caught. He openly declared that he would show no mercy, and would know how to deal with the offender.

We never know how one most trifling impulse, if acted upon, may affect the lives of others. When Ben Hopper stopped one May evening at the gate of the little cottage where Stuart lived and asked if he didn't want to go out to the old mill on the Creek road to hunt squirrels no intuition told him that he was doing something which was to lead to an event that would influence all the rest of Stuart's life.

Stuart accepted the invitation, of course, and on their way out of town the boys were joined by Tom Halpine and Luke Wright, who were quite as fond of squirrel hunting as were Stuart and Ben.

For at least half a mile after leaving the town the Creek road was bounded on one side by a pasture belonging to Mr. Pieffer, and so generously did it abound in wild cherry, persimmon, and crab-apple trees that the boys of the town were familiar with every nook of it.

But it was not the season now for chestnuts, persimmons or crab apples and the hunters had nothing gained would have gone whistling and shouting by had not a handsome brown horse, quietly grazing the short grass, raised his head at sight of them and whinnied softly.

"I know something we can do a sight better'n hunting squirrels," said Luke Wright, stopping short. "What do you say to a ride?"

"I'm in for it," answered Tom Halpine. "I don't believe we'll find many squirrels, anyhow. They're gettin' so shy they don't come round the mill like they used to."

The brown horse had probably been feeling lonely and was glad of company, for he had no objection whatever when Stuart climbed down on the fence, and, going up to him, took hold of his forelock and led him into the road.

But he shook his head impatiently at having four boys on his back at one time, and kicked and careered around until he succeeded in ridding himself of all four of them.

"We'll have to take turns riding," said Ben Hopper. "Each fellow can go as far as the bridge and then turn back."

They had made a bridle out of a rope they had in his pocket and a piece of wood they picked up by the road, and the horse allowed himself to be guided very easily. He seemed spirited but very gentle and had evidently been trained to trot.

The boys acted on Ben's suggestion and took turns at trying the animal's paces, enjoying themselves so much that they were loath to end the sport when it began to grow dark.

"I must get one more ride, and then I will be even with the rest of you and we can go home," said Stuart, as Luke came trotting up and swung himself from the horse's back.

"Wouldn't old Simon be in a rage if he should happen along, now," said Tom, as he, too, mounted Stuart's mount.

"This is about the best' un he ever furnished us," laughed Stuart as he rode away, "and he'll never be any the wiser either."

He went clattering up the road at a good pace and the bridge—a rough log structure—was reached much sooner than I guess I'll go a little further," he thought. "There's no telling when I'll get another ride and I'd better make the most of this."

But he went even a shorter distance further than he intended, for half way across the bridge the horse suddenly stopped, gave a wild snort of terror, and began to back. Stuart saw that the animal's eyes were fixed on a dead tree which, blasted by lightning and deprived of its bark, stood at the other end of the bridge like a ghostly sentinel, looking almost snow-white in the uncertain light; but, unaccustomed to horses, he did not know what to do, and in his alarm and excitement pulled too hard on one rein. The horse reared, gave a wild whirl, and the next instant went plunging over the side of the bridge into the gulch, nearly thirty feet below.

Strange to say, Stuart escaped serious injury, being only stunned and bruised by the fall, and at the expiration of a few minutes was able to get up from the bed of mud into which he had fallen. But the handsome brown horse did not move; he lay among the weeds and stones with a broken neck.

Stuart could not believe at first that the animal was dead; it seemed too horrible to be true. But all his efforts to arouse the poor creature proving futile, he sat down, sick and white, upon the nearest stone and shouted to his companions for help.

His shouts were met by a faint that it was a long time before they were answered. Then the boys came running up, frightened at his long absence, but utterly unprepared for the dreadful news Stuart had to tell them. They were terribly shocked, and gathered about the dead horse, uttering many expressions of dismay and sorrow.

"I don't know how I shall ever tell old Simon!" groaned Stuart. "Boys, he'll just about kill me."

"Tell him!" exclaimed Tom Halpine. "You're surely not going to be such a fool. What's the use of telling him? We'll take away the bridle, and the old fellow will never know but that the horse jumped the fence and fell over by himself."

"It wouldn't be right to let him think that," returned Stuart. "No, I've got to tell."

"And bring all the rest of us into the muss, too, I suppose," said Ben Hopper.

"No, I'll promise not to mention any of you. There's no need of it that I can see."

"And I can't see there is anything to be gained by telling Pieffer," said Luke. "It won't bring the horse to life again. What's the use of being such a saint, Stuart?"

"I don't pretend to be a saint," answered Stuart, "but I'm not a coward. I shall tell Pieffer if he kills me the next minute. It's all I can do."

"O, you'll think better of it," said Luke, as he removed the rope bridle from the head of the brown horse. "A night's sleep will cool you off."

But the night brought no sleep to Stuart, so tormented was he by thoughts of the beautiful horse lying dead among the weeds and stones below the bridge, and when morning came it found him more unwilling than ever. He was, as he had said, no coward, and he intended to confess what he had done irrespective of the consequences.

Then Mr. Pieffer would find out very severe, he did not doubt for a moment. Perhaps the old man would give him a terrible flogging, or put him in jail. He was sure to mete out a punishment equal to the offense, and Stuart knew the offense was very great.

He looked so white and haggard when he came down-stairs at 6 o'clock that his mother uttered an exclamation of alarm.

"You're sick, Stuart," she said; "you can go straight back to bed. I'll attend to the cow."

But Stuart shook his head and went out to the stable to attend to the cow himself. He had not told his mother about his misfortune, for he did not want to worry her. It would be time enough to tell her when he had seen Mr. Pieffer.

That she might not suspect that something had occurred to trouble him he tried to eat his usual allowance of porridge and bread, but every mouthful seemed to choke him, and he had to give up the attempt in despair.

As soon as he rose from the table he put on his hat and went out, despite his mother's prophecy that the sun would make him sick, and, once out, he did his steps at once in the direction of Mr. Pieffer's beautiful suburban residence.

He had prepared a little speech with which he intended to begin his confession, but every word of it fled from his mind when he came face to face with Pieffer's grounds and saw the old gentleman standing only half a dozen yards away, an angry look on his face, and his gold-rimmed spectacles astride his stood before him, looking sullen and defiant.

"You needn't deny it, sir," were the first words Stuart heard. "I wouldn't believe you on oath. You're the dull est fellow I ever had about my stables, but I'll be sure you had sense enough to put the bars up when you took the valuable horse like that out to pasture! You're discharged; and you can come back for a recommendation, for I won't give it."

With a heart that seemed like a lump of lead in his breast, and hesitating footsteps, Stuart approached the angry pair.

"Mr. Pieffer," he said, in a low, shaken voice, "I want to speak to you, sir."

"Well, speak, and be quick about it," was the gruff rejoinder. "You want work, I suppose, you young waga. You may as well leave, I havn't any work for you."

"No, sir; I don't want work," stammered poor Stuart. "I want to tell you that I took your horse out of the pasture and—and got frightened and fell over the bridge."

For a moment, it seemed much longer to Stuart in his agony of suspense, that the old man stood with a thunderous frown on his face, his eyes fairly purple with rage.

"You—you young reprobate!" he exclaimed at last. "You ought to be shot!"

"Yes, sir, I know it," answered Stuart, "and I'm sorry as can be, but the thing in all my life as I am for this. But we only wanted to have a little fun and never thought of hurting the horse."

"You were not alone then?" said Mr. Pieffer.

"No, sir."

"Who were the others?"

"There's no use in telling that, sir," answered Stuart, true to the promise of secrecy he made. "I was the one who was on the horse when he fell over the bridge, and it was all my fault. I ought only to be the one to suffer for it."

"Humph!" said the old man, and he looked at Stuart with a keen, searching look that made the boy shrink and flush, but he stood his ground manfully, and did not flinch until Pieffer, with a contemptuous gesture, turned away.

"I don't know how I shall ever tell you how I feel about it," said Stuart, as he followed his mother about the house that evening, "but I