

CHAPTER III.

I GO TO THE BIRD'S NEST TO LIVE, AND THE GIANT PERSISTS
IN HIS PLANS FOR A SEA-VOYAGE.

My father worked for Mrs. Sanderson during the week, but he came home every night with a graver face, and, on the closing evening of the week, it all came out. It was impossible for him to cover from my mother and his family for any length of time anything which gave him either satisfaction or sorrow.

I remember how he walked the room that night, and swung his arms, and in an excitement that was full of indignation and self-pity declared that he could not work for Mrs. Sanderson another week. "I should become an absolute idiot if I were to work for her a month," I heard him say.

And then my mother told him that she never expected anything good from Mrs. Sanderson—that it had turned out very much as she anticipated—though for the life of her she could not imagine what difference it made to my father whether he did his work in one way or another, so long as it pleased Mrs. Sanderson, and he got his money for his labor. I did not at all realize what an effect this talk would have upon my father then, but now I wonder that with his sensitive spirit he did not upbraid my mother, or die. In her mind it was only another instance of my father's incompetency for business, to which incompetency she attributed mainly the rigors of her lot.

Mrs. Sanderson was no better pleased with my father than he was with her. If he had not left her at the end of his first week, she would have managed to dismiss him as soon as she had secured her will concerning myself. On Monday morning I was dispatched to The Mansion with a note from my father

Arthur Bonnicastle.

51

which informed Mrs. Sanderson that she was at liberty to suit herself with other service.

Mrs. Sanderson read the note, put her lips very tightly together, and then called Jenks.

"Jenks," said she, "put the horse before the chaise, change your clothes, and drive to the door."

Jenks disappeared to execute her commands, and, in the meantime, Mrs. Sanderson busied herself with preparations. First she brought out sundry pots of jam and jelly, and then two or three remnants of stuffs that could be made into clothing for children, and a basket of apples. When the chaise arrived at the door, she told Jenks to tie his horse and bestow the articles she had provided in the box. When this task was completed she mounted the vehicle, and bade me get in at her side. Then Jenks took his seat, and at Mrs. Sanderson's command drove directly to my father's house.

When we arrived, my father had gone out; and after expressing her regret that she could not see him, she sat down by my mother, and demonstrated her knowledge of human nature by winning her confidence entirely. She even commiserated her on the impracticable character of her husband, and then she left with her the wages of his labor and the gifts she had brought. My mother declared after the little lady went away that she had never been so pleasantly disappointed as she had been in Mrs. Sanderson! She was just, she was generous, she was everything that was sweet and kind and good. All this my father heard when he arrived, and to it all he made no reply. He was too kind to carry anger, and too poor to spurn a freely offered gift, that brought comfort to those whom he loved.

Mrs. Sanderson was a woman of business, and at night she came again. I knew my father dreaded meeting her, as he always dreaded meeting with a strong and unreasonable will. He had a way of avoiding such a will whenever it was possible, and of sacrificing everything unimportant to save a collision with it. There was an insult to his manhood in the mere existence and exercise of such a will, while actual subjection to it

was the extreme of torture. But sometimes the exercise of such a will drove him into a corner; and when it did, the shrinking, peaceable man became a lion. He had seen how easily my mother had been conquered, and, although Mrs. Sanderson's gifts were in his house, he determined that whatever might be her business, she should be dealt with frankly and firmly.

I was watching at the window when the little lady alighted at the gate. As she walked up the passage from the street, Jenks exchanged some signals with me. He pointed to the east and then toward the sea, with gestures, which meant that long before the dawning of the morrow's sun Mrs. Sanderson's aged servant would cease to be a resident of Bradford, and would be tossing "on the billow." I did not have much opportunity to carry on this kind of commerce with Jenks, for Mrs. Sanderson's conversation had special reference to myself.

I think my father was a good deal surprised to find the lady agreeable and gracious. She alluded to his note as something which had disappointed her, but, as she presumed to know her own business and to do it in her own way, she supposed that other people knew their own business also, and she was quite willing to accord to them such privileges as she claimed for herself. She was glad there was work enough to be done in Bradford, and she did not doubt that my father would get employment. Indeed, as he was a stranger, she would take the liberty of commending him to her friends as a good workman. It did not follow, she said, that because he could not get along with her he could not get along with others. My father was very silent and permitted her to do the talking. He knew that she had come with some object to accomplish, and he waited for its revelation.

She looked at me, at last, and called me to her side. She put her arm around me, and said, addressing my father: "I suppose Arthur told you what a pleasant day we had together."

"Yes, and I hope he thanked you for your kindness to him," my father answered.

"Oh, yes, he was very polite and wonderfully quiet for a boy," she responded.

My mother volunteered to express the hope that I had not given the lady any trouble.

"I never permit boys to trouble me," was the curt response.

There was something in this that angered my father—something in the tone adopted toward my mother, and something that seemed so cruel in the utterance itself. My father believed in the rights of boys, and when she said this, he remarked with more than his usual incisiveness that he had noticed that those boys who had not been permitted to trouble anybody when they were young, were quite in the habit, when they ceased to be boys, of giving a great deal of trouble. He did not know that he had touched Mrs. Sanderson at a very tender point, but she winced painfully, and then went directly to business.

"Mr. Bonnicastle," said she, "I am living alone, as you know. It is not necessary to tell you much about myself, but I am alone, and with none to care for but myself. Although I am somewhat in years, I come of a long-lived race, and am quite well. I believe it is rational to expect to live for a considerable time yet, and though I have much to occupy my mind it would be pleasant to me to help somebody along. You have a large family, whose fortunes you would be glad to advance, and, although you and I do not agree very well, I hope you will permit me to assist you in accomplishing your wish."

She paused to see how the proposition was received, and was apparently satisfied that fortune had favored her, though my father said nothing.

"I want this boy," she resumed, drawing me more closely to her. "I want to see him growing up and becoming a man under my provisions for his support and education. It is not possible for you to do for him what I can do. It will interest me to watch him from year to year, it will bring a little young blood into my lonely old house occasionally, and in one way and another it will do us all good."

My father looked very serious. He loved me as he loved his life. His great ambition was to give me the education which circumstances had denied to him. Here was the opportunity, brought to his door, yet he hesitated to accept it. After thinking for a moment, he said gravely: "Mrs. Sanderson, God has placed this boy in my hands to train for Himself, and I cannot surrender the control of his life to anybody. Temporarily I can give him into the hands of teachers, conditionally I can place him in your hands, but I cannot place him in any hands beyond my immediate recall. I can never surrender my right to his love and his obedience, or count him an alien from my heart and home. If, understanding my feeling in this matter, you find it in your heart to do for him what I cannot, why, you have the means, and I am sure God will bless you for employing them to this end."

"I may win all the love and all the society from him I can?" said Mrs. Sanderson, interrogatively.

"I do not think it would be a happy or a healthy thing for the child to spend much time in your house, deprived of young society," my father replied. "If you should do for him what you suggest, I trust that the boy and that all of us would make such expressions of our gratitude as would be most agreeable to yourself; but I must choose his teachers, and my home, however humble, must never cease to be regarded by him as his home. I must say this at the risk of appearing ungrateful, Mrs. Sanderson."

The little lady had the great good sense to know when she had met with an answer, and the adroitness to appear satisfied with it. She was one of those rare persons who, seeing a rock in the way, recognize it at once, and, without relinquishing their purpose for an instant, either seek to go around it or to arrive at their purpose from some other direction. She had concluded, for reasons of her own, to make me so far as possible her possession. She had had already a sufficient trial of her power to show her something of what she could do with me, and she

calculated with considerable certainty that she could manage my father in some way.

"Very well: he shall not come to me now, and shall never come unless I can make my home pleasant to him," she said. "In the meantime, you will satisfy yourself in regard to a desirable school for him, and we will leave all other questions for time to determine."

Neither my father nor my mother had anything to oppose to this, and my patroness saw at once that her first point was gained. Somehow all had been settled without trouble. Every obstacle had been taken out of the way, and the lady seemed more than satisfied.

"When you are ready to talk decisively about the boy, you will come to my house, and we will conclude matters," she said, as she rose to take her leave.

I noticed that she did not recognize the existence of my little brothers and older sisters, and something subtler than reason told me that she was courteous to my father and mother only so far as was necessary for the accomplishment of her purposes. I was half afraid of her, yet I could not help admiring her. She kissed me at parting, but she made no demonstration of responsive courtesy to my parents, who advanced in a cordial way to show their sense of her kindness.

In the evening, my father called upon Mr. Bradford and made a full exposure of the difficulty he had had with Mrs. Sanderson, and the propositions she had made respecting myself; and as he reported his conversation and conclusions on his return to my mother, I was made acquainted with them. Mr. Bradford had advised that the lady's offer concerning me should be accepted. He had reasons for this which he told my father he did not feel at liberty to give, but there were enough that lay upon the surface to decide the matter. There was nothing humiliating in it, for it was no deed of charity. A great good could be secured for me by granting to the lady what she regarded in her own heart as a favor. She never had been greatly given to deeds of benevolence, and this was the first notable

act in her history that looked like one. He advised, however, that my father hold my destiny in his own hands, and keep me as much as possible away from Bradford, never permitting me to be long at a time under Mrs. Sanderson's roof and immediate personal influence. "When the youngster gets older," Mr. Bradford said, "he will manage all this matter for himself, better than we can manage it for him."

Then Mr. Bradford told him about a famous family school in a country village some thirty miles away, which, from the name of the teacher, Mr. Bird, had been named by the pupils "The Bird's Nest." Everybody in the region knew about The Bird's Nest; and multitudinous were the stories told about Mr. and Mrs. Bird; and very dear to all the boys, many of whom had grown to be men, were the house and the pair who presided over it. Mr. Bradford drew a picture of this school which quite fascinated my father, and did much—everything indeed—to reconcile him to the separation which my removal thither would make necessary. I was naturally very deeply interested in all that related to the school, and, graceless as the fact may seem, I should have been ready on the instant to part with all that made my home, in order to taste the new, strange life it would bring me. I had many questions to ask, but quickly arrived at the end of my father's knowledge; and then my imagination ran wildly on until the images of The Bird's Nest and of Mr. and Mrs. Bird and Hillsborough, the village that made a tree for the nest, were as distinctly in my mind as if I had known them all my life.

The interview which Mrs. Sanderson had asked of my father was granted at an early day, and the lady acceded without a word to the proposition to send me to The Bird's Nest. She had heard only good reports of the school, she said, and was apparently delighted with my father's decision. Indeed, I suspect she was quite as anxious to get me away from my father and my home associations as he was to keep me out of The Mansion and away from her. She was left to make her own arrangements for my outfit, and also for my admission to the

school, though my father stipulated for the privilege of accompanying me to the new home.

One pleasant morning, some weeks afterward, she sent for me to visit her at The Mansion. She was very sweet and motherly; and when I returned to my home I went clad in a suit of garments that made me the subject of curiosity and envy among my brothers and mates, and with the news that in one week I must be ready to go to Hillsborough. During all that week my father was very tender toward me, as toward some great treasure set apart to absence. He not only did not seek for work, but declined or deferred that which came. It was impossible for me to know then the heart-hunger which he anticipated, but I know it now. I do not doubt that, in his usual way, he wove around me many a romance, and reached forward into all the possibilities of my lot. He was always as visionary as a child, though I do not know that he was more childlike in this respect than in others.

My mother was full of the gloomiest forebodings. She felt as if Hillsborough would prove to be an unhealthy place; she did not doubt that there was something wrong about Mr. and Mrs. Bird, if only we could know what it was; and for her part there was something in the name which the boys had given the school that was fearfully suggestive of hunger. She should always think of me, she said, as a bird with its mouth open, crying for something to eat. More than all, she presumed that Mr. Bird permitted his boys to swim without care, and she would not be surprised to learn that the oldest of them carried guns and pistols and took the little boys with them.

Poor, dear mother! Most fearful and unhappy while living, and most tenderly mourned and revered in memory! why did you persist in seeing darkness where others saw light, and in making every cup bitter with the apprehension of evil? Why were you forever on the watch that no freak of untoward fortune should catch you unaware? Why did you treat the Providence you devoutly tried to trust as if you supposed he meant to trick you, if he found you for a moment off your guard? Oh,

the twin charms of hopefulness and trustfulness! What power have they to strengthen weary feet, to sweeten sleep, to make the earth green and the heavens blue, to cheat misfortune of its bitterness and to quench even the poison of death itself!

It was arranged that my father should take me to Hillsborough in Mrs. Sanderson's chaise—the same vehicle in which I had first seen the lady herself. My little trunk was to be attached by straps to the axletree, and so ride beneath us. Taking leave of my home was a serious business, notwithstanding my anticipations of pleasure. My mother said that it was not at all likely we should ever meet again; and I parted with her at last in a passion of tears. The children were weeping too, from sympathy rather than from any special or well-comprehended sorrow, and I heartily wished myself away, and out of sight.

Jenks brought the horse to us, and, after he had assisted my father in fastening the trunk, took me apart from the group that had gathered around the chaise, and said in a confidential way that he made an attempt on the previous night to leave. He had got as far as the window from which he intended to let himself down, but finding it dark and rather cloudy he had concluded to defer his departure until a lighter and clearer night. "A storm, a dark storm, is awful on the ocean, you know," said Jenks, "but I shall go. You will not see me here when you come again. Don't say anything about it, but the old woman is going to be surprised, once in her life. She will call Jenks, and Jenks won't come. He will be far, far away on the billow."

"Good-by," I said; "I hope I'll see you again somewhere, but I don't think you ought to leave Mrs. Sanderson."

"Oh, I shall leave," said Jenks. "The world is large and Mrs. Sanderson is—is—quite small. Let her call Jenks once, and see what it is to have him far, far away. Her time will come." And he shook his head, and pressed his lips together, and ground the gravel under his feet, as if nothing less than an earthquake could shake his determination. The case seemed

quite hopeless to me, and I remember that the unpleasant possibility suggested itself that I might be summoned to The Mansion to take Jenks's place.

At the close of our little interview, he drew a long paper box from his pocket, and gave it to me with the injunction not to open it until I had gone half way to Hillsborough. I accordingly placed it in the boot of the chaise, to wait its appointed time.

Jenks rode with us as far as The Mansion, spending the time in instructing my father just where, under the shoulder of the old black horse, he could make a whip the most effective without betraying the marks to Mrs. Sanderson, and, when we drove up to the door, disappeared at once around the corner of the house. I went in to take leave of the lady, and found her in the little library, awaiting me. Before her, on the table, were a Barlow pocket-knife, a boy's playing-ball, a copy of the New Testament, and a Spanish twenty-five cent piece.

"There," she said, "young man, put all those in your pockets, and see that you don't lose them. I want you to write me a letter once a month, and, when you write, begin your letters with 'Dear Aunt.'"

The sudden accession to my boyish wealth almost drove me wild. I had received my first knife and my first silver. I impulsively threw my arms around the neck of my benefactress, and told her I should never, never forget her, and should never do anything that would give her trouble.

"See that you don't!" was the sharp response.

As I bade her good-by, I was gratified by the look of pride which she bestowed on me, but she did not accompany me to the door, or speak a word to my father. So, at last, we were gone, and fairly on the way. I revealed to my father the treasures I had received, and only at a later day was I able to interpret the look of pain that accompanied his congratulations. I was indebted to a stranger, who was trying to win my heart, for possessions which his poverty forbade him to bestow upon me.

Of the delights of that drive over the open country I can

give no idea. We climbed long hills; we rode by the side of cool, dashing streams; we paused under the shadow of way side trees; we caught sight of a thousand forms of frolic life on the fences, in the forests, and in the depths of crystal pools; we saw men at work in the fields, and I wondered if they did not envy us; we met strange people on the road, who looked at us with curious interest; a black fox dashed across our way, and, giving us a scared look, scampered into the cover and was gone; bobolinks sprang up in the long grass on wings tangled with music, and sailed away and caught on fences to steady themselves; squirrels took long races before us on the road-side rails; and far up through the trees and above the hills white-winged clouds with breasts of downy brown floated against a sky of deepest blue. Never again this side of heaven do I expect to experience such perfect pleasure as I enjoyed that day—a delight in all forms and phases of nature, sharpened by the expectations of new companionships and of a strange new life that would open before I should sleep again.

The half-way stage of our journey was reached before noon, and I was quite as anxious to see the gift which Jenks had placed in my hands at parting as to taste the luncheon which my mother had provided. Accordingly, when my repast was taken from the basket and spread before me, I first opened the paper box. I cannot say that I was not disappointed; but the souvenir was one of which only I could understand the significance, and that fact gave it a rare charm. It consisted of a piece of a wooden shingle labeled in pencil "Atlantick Oshun," in the middle of which was a little ship, standing at an angle of forty-five degrees to the plane of the shingle, with a mast and a sail of wood, and a figure at the bow, also of wood, intended doubtless to represent Jenks himself, looking off upon the boundless waste. The utmost point of explanation to which my father could urge me was the statement that some time something would happen at The Mansion which would explain all. So I carefully put the "Atlantick Oshun" into its box, in which I preserved it for

many months, answering all inquiries concerning it with the tantalizing statement that it was "a secret."

Toward the close of the afternoon, we came in sight of Hillsborough, with its two churches, and its cluster of embowered white houses. It was perched, like many New England villages, upon the top of the highest hill in the region, and we entered at last upon the long acclivity that led to it. Half way up the hill, we saw before us a light, open wagon drawn by two gray horses, and bearing a gentleman and lady who were quietly chatting and laughing together. As we drew near to them, they suddenly stopped, and the gentleman, handing the reins to his companion, rose upon his feet, drew a rifle to his eye and discharged it at some object in the fields. In an instant, a little dog bounced out of the wagon, and, striking rather heavily upon the ground, rolled over and over three or four times, and then, gaining his feet, went for the game. Our own horse had stopped, and, as wild as the little dog, I leaped from the chaise, and started to follow. When I came up with the dog, he was making the most extravagant plunges at a wounded woodchuck, who squatted, chattering and showing his teeth. I seized the nearest weapon in the shape of a cudgel that I could find, dispatched the poor creature, and bore him in triumph to the gentleman, the little dog barking and snapping at the game all the way.

"Well done, my lad! I have seen boys who were afraid of woodchucks. Toss him into the ravine: he is good for nothing," said the man of the rifle.

Then he looked around, and, bowing to my father, told him that as he was fond of shooting he had undertaken to rid the farms around him of the animals that gave their owners so much trouble. "It is hard upon the woodchucks," he added, "but kind to the farmers." This was apparently said to defend himself from the suspicion of being engaged in cruel and wanton sport.

At the sound of his voice, the tired and reeking horse which my father drove whinnied, then started on, and, coming to the

back of the other carriage, placed his nose close to the gentleman's shoulder. The lady looked around and smiled, while the man placed his hand caressingly upon the animal's head. "Animals are all very fond of me," said he. "I don't understand it: I suppose they do."

There was something exceedingly winning and hearty in the gentleman's voice, and I did not wonder that all the animals liked him.

"Can you tell me," inquired my father, "where The Bird's Nest is?"

"Oh, yes, I'm going there. Indeed, I'm the old Bird himself."

"Tut! who takes care of the nest?" said the lady with a smile.

"And this is the Mother Bird—Mrs. Bird," said the gentleman.

Mrs. Bird bowed to us both, and, beckoning to me, pointed to her side. It was an invitation to leave my father, and take a seat with her. The little dog, who had been helped into his master's wagon, saw me coming, and mounted into his lap, determined that he would shut that place from the intruder. I accepted the invitation, and, with the lady's arm around me, we started on.

"Now I am going to guess," said Mr. Bird. "I guess your name is Arthur Bonnicastle, that the man behind us is your father, that you are coming to The Bird's Nest to live, that you are intending to be a good boy, and that you are going to be very happy."

"You've guessed right the first time," I responded laughing.

"And I can always guess when a boy has done right and when he has done wrong," said Mr. Bird. "There's a little spot in his eye—ah, yes! you have it!—that tells the whole story," and he looked down pleasantly into my face.

At this moment one of his horses discovered a young calf by the roadside, and, throwing back his ears, gave it chase. I had never seen so funny a performance. The horse, in genuine frolic, dragged his less playful mate and the wagon through the

gutter and over rocks for many rods, entirely unrestrained by his driver until the scared object of the chase slipped between two bars at the roadside, and ran wildly off into the field. At this the horse shook his head in a comical way and went quietly back into the road.

"That horse is laughing all over," said Mr. Bird. "He thinks it was an excellent joke. I presume he will think of it, and laugh again when he gets at his oats."

"Do you really think that horses laugh, Mr. Bird?" I inquired.

"Laugh? Bless you, yes," he replied. "All animals laugh when they are pleased. Gyp"—and he turned his eyes upon the little dog in his lap—"are you happy?"

Gyp looked up into his master's face, and wagged his tail.

"Don't you see 'yes' in his eye, and a smile in the wag of his tail?" said Mr. Bird. "If I had asked you the same question you would have answered with your tongue, and smiled with your mouth. That's all the difference. These creatures understand us a great deal better than we understand them. Why, I never drive these horses when I am finely dressed for fear they will be ashamed of their old harness."

Then turning to the little dog again, he said: "Gyp, get down." Gyp immediately jumped down, and curled up at his feet. "Gyp, come up here," said he, and Gyp mounted quickly to his old seat. "Don't you see that this dog understands the English language?" said Mr. Bird; "and don't you see that we are not so bright as a dog, if we cannot learn his? Why, I know the note of every bird, and every insect, and every animal on all these hills, and I know their ways and habits. What is more, they know I understand them, and you will hear how they call me and sing to me at The Bird's Nest."

So I had received my first lesson from my new teacher, and little did he appreciate the impression it had made upon me. It gave me a sympathy with animal life and an interest in its habits which have lasted until this hour. It gave me, too, an

insight into him. He had a strong sympathy in the life of a boy, for his own sake. Every new boy was a new study that he entered upon, not from any sense of duty, or from any scheme of policy, but with a hearty interest excited by the boy himself. He was as much interested in the animal play of a boy as he had been in the play of the horse. He watched a group of boys with the same hearty amusement that held him while witnessing the frolic of kittens and lambs. Indeed, he often played with them; and in this sympathy, freely manifested, he held the springs of his wonderful power over them.

We soon arrived at The Bird's Nest, and all the horses were passed into other hands. My little trunk was loosed, and carried to a room I had not seen, and in a straggling way we entered the house.

Before we alighted, I took a hurried outside view of my future home. On the whole, "The Bird's Nest" would have been a good name for it if a man by any other name had presided over it. It had its individual and characteristic beauty, because it had been shaped to a special purpose; but it seemed to have been brought together at different times, and from wide distances. There was a central old house, and a hexagonal addition, and a tower, and a long piazza that tied everything together. It certainly looked grand among the humble houses of the village; though I presume that a professional architect would not have taken the highest pleasure in it. As Mr. Bird stepped out of his wagon upon the piazza, and took off his hat, I had an opportunity to see him and to fix my impressions of his appearance. He was a tall, handsome, strongly-built man, a little past middle life, with a certain fullness of habit that comes of good health and a happy temperament. His eye was blue, his forehead high, and his whole face bright and beaming with good-nature. His companion was a woman above the medium size, with eyes the same color of his own, into whose plainly-parted hair the frost had crept, and upon whose honest face and goodly figure hung that ineffable grace which we try to characterize by the word "motherly."

I heard the shouts of boys at play upon the green, for it was after school hours, and met half-a-dozen little fellows on the piazza, who looked at me with pleasant interest as "the new boy;" and then we entered a parlor with curious angles, and furniture that betrayed thorough occupation and usage. There were thrifty plants and beautiful flowers in the bay-window, for plants and flowers came as readily within the circle of Mr. Bird's sympathies as birds and boys. There was evidently an uncovered stairway near one of the doors, for we heard two or three boys running down the steps with a little more noise than was quite agreeable. Immediately Gyp ran to the door where the noise was manifested, and barked with all his might.

"Gyp is one of my assistants in the school," said Mr. Bird, in explanation, "especially in the matter of preserving order. A boy never runs down-stairs noisily without receiving a scolding from him. He is getting a little old now and sensitive, and I am afraid has not quite consideration enough for the youngsters."

I laughed at the idea of having a dog for a teacher, but with my new notions of Gyp's capacity I was quite ready to believe what Mr. Bird told me about him.

My father found himself very much at home with Mr. and Mrs. Bird, and was evidently delighted with them, and with my prospects under their roof and care. We had supper in the great dining-room with forty hungry but orderly boys, a pleasant evening with music afterward, and an early bed. I was permitted to sleep with my father that night, and he was permitted to take me upon his arm, and pillow my slumbers there, while he prayed for me and secretly poured out his love upon me.

Before we went to sleep my father said a few words to me, but those words were new and made a deep impression.

"My little boy," he said, "you have my life in your hands. If you grow up into a true, good man, I shall be happy, although I may continue poor. I have always worked hard, and I am willing to work even harder than ever, if it is all right

with you; but if you disappoint me and turn out badly, you will kill me. I am living now, and expect always to live, in and for my children. I have no ambitious projects for myself. Providence has opened a way for you which I did not anticipate. Do all you can to please the woman who has undertaken to do so much for you, but do not forget your father and mother, and remember always that it is not possible for any body to love you and care for you as we do. If you have any troubles, come to me with them, and if you are tempted to do wrong pray for help to do right. You will have many struggles and trials—everybody has them—but you can do what you will, and become what you wish to become.”

The resolutions that night formed—a thousand times shaken and a thousand times renewed—became the determining and fruitful forces of my life.

The next morning, when the old black horse and chaise were brought to the door, and my father, full of tender pain, took leave of me, and disappeared at last at the foot of the hill, and I felt that I was wholly separated from my home, I cried as if I had been sure that I had left that home forever. The passion wasted itself in Mrs. Bird's motherly arms, and then, with words of cheer and diversions that occupied my mind, she cut me adrift, to find my own soundings in the new social life of the school.

Of the first few days of school-life there is not much to be said. They passed pleasantly enough. The aim of my teachers at first was not to push me into study, but to make me happy, to teach me the ways of my new life, and to give me an opportunity to imbibe the spirit of the school. My apprehensions were out in every direction. I learned by watching others my own deficiencies; and my appetite for study grew by a natural process. I could not be content, at last, until I had become one with the rest in work and in acquirements.

There lies before me now a package of my letters, made sacred by my father's interest in and perusal and preservation of them; and, although I have no intention to burden these

pages with their crudenesses and puerilities, I cannot resist the temptation to reproduce the first which I wrote at *The Bird's Nest*, and sent home. I shall spare to the reader its wretched orthography, and reproduce it entire, in the hope that he will at least enjoy its unconscious humor.

“THE BIRD'S NEST.

“DEAR PRECIOUS FATHER:—

“I have lost my ball. I don't know where in the world it can be. It seemed to get away from me in a curious style. Mr. Bird is very kind, and I like him very much. I am sorry to say I have lost my Barlow knife too. Mr. Bird says a Barlow knife is a very good thing. I don't quite think I have lost the twenty-five cent piece. I have not seen it since yesterday morning, and I think I shall find it. Henry Hulm, who is my chum, and a very smart boy, I can tell you, thinks the money will be found. Mr. Bird says there must be a hole in the top of my pocket. I don't know what to do. I am afraid Aunt Sanderson will be cross about it. Mr. Bird thinks I ought to give my knife to the boy that will find the money, and the money to the boy that will find the knife, but I don't see as I should make much in that way, do you? I love Mrs. Bird very much. Miss Butler is the dearest young lady I ever knew. Mrs. Bird kisses us all when we go to bed, and it seems real good. I have put the testament in the bottom of my trunk, under all the things. I shall keep that if possible. If Mrs. Sanderson finds out that I have lost the things, I wish you would explain it and tell her the testament is safe. Miss Butler has dark eyebrows and wears a belt. Mr. Bird has killed another woodchuck. I wonder if you left the key of my trunk. It seems to be gone. We have real good times, playing ball and taking walks. I have walked out with Miss Butler. I wish mother could see her hair, and I am your son with ever so much love to you and mother and all,

“ARTHUR BONNICASTLE.”