CHAPTER III.

BEECHNUT.

IT happened that on the same afternoon that Ellen Linn and Annie held the conversation in their chamber, which is described in the last chapter, and just about the time that they were making the fire there, before they commenced their work, Alphonzo Henry, or as he was more commonly called Phonny, came out to the door of his mother's house with a kite string in his hand. He was going to fly his kite.

It may seem strange, that Phonny should choose such an amusement as flying his kite, in the winter. But it was not very cold that day, although it was winter. The weather had been quite warm for several days, and there had been a great thaw. Water was running over the roads in every direction. The grounds all about the house were very wet, and broad and shallow pools of water were standing here and there, with ice and snow, instead of sand and pebbles, at the bottom of them. Phonny was glad to see this, fur he expected to have abundance of good skating when all this water should freeze ; but in the mean time, such a state of things was quite inconvenient for him, as it was so wet that he could hardly step out of doors.

The sun was shining very pleasantly and yet there was quite a breeze blowing, from the north. Phonny had a plan of climbing up upon the roof of a shed, where there was a fine shelter on. the north made by other buildings which rose higher than the shed on that side, and formed a warm corner on the roof. This corner was sheltered from the north, and being open to the south, the sun shone in upon it in a very pleasant manner.

When Phonny came out upon the step, holding, as has been said, his kite string in his hand, he saw Beechnut out by the barn, opening the great barn doors.

" Beechnut," said Phonny, " are you going away anywhere ?"

"Yes," said Beechnut, "I am going to mill."

" May I go with you ?" asked Phonny. Beechnut did not answer, but went on pushing open the great door.

" Beechnut," said Phonny again.

"What," said Beechnut.

" *May* I go with you ?"

" I am thinking," said Beechnut.

Beechnut was in fact considering the question, whether it would be best for Phonny to go, or not. He had a great many bags of grain to carry, and the roads were bad. He thought at first that his load would be quite heavy enough for the horse, without Phonny. Then besides he was going in the wagon, for the roads were bare in many places, so that the sleigh would not run well, and he was afraid that if the wagon should be loaded too heavily, it might upset. Notwithstanding these objections, however, he finally concluded that he would let

Phonny go, as he knew that Phonny would wish to go, very much. At length, therefore, he called out Yes.

" And may I take my fishing-pole, too ?" said Phonny, still calling out in a loud voice, for Beechnut was at a considerable distance.

" I expect the ice has broken up before the mill," he added, "and perhaps I can catch a pickerel while the grist is grinding."

There was a moment's pause, during which, Phonny stood upon the step of the door, with a very eager and earnest expression upon his countenance, and with his head turned a little to one side, that his ear might the better catch the expected answer.

" May I?" he repeated.

" No," said Beechnut.

" Why not ?" asked Phonny.

" I will tell you why not, as we go along on the way," said Beechnut. So saying, he went into the barn, and disappeared.

Phonny went into the house and put on his coat, and then went out through the shed into the barn. He found Beechnut at work harnessing the horse and wagon. Phonny immediately went to work booking the traces and buckling up the straps, and then he helped Beechnut heave in the heavy bags of grain. When all was ready, the two boys mounted into the wagon, and taking their seats upon the top of the bags, they rode out of the barn

As soon as they had thus started, Beechnut saw that Phonny had his fishing-line in his hand. Phonny had had it all the time He had held it under his arm while he had been harnessing the horse.

" What is that ?" said Beechnut.

"My fishing-line," said Phonny.

" But I said you must not bring your fishing- line," said Beechnut.

"No," said Phonny, "it was *my pole*. I asked you if I might bring my pole."

Beechnut laughed.

"And now tell me," said Phonny, "why you could not let me bring my pole, so as to fish while the grist is grinding."

" Because," said Beechnut, " I am not going to stay at the mill while the grist is grinding. I am going down to Ellen Linn's."

Phonny hardly knew whether he was satisfied with this explanation or not, for he could not quite decide whether he should prefer to go to Ellen Linn's with Beechnut, or to remain behind, fishing below the mill.

In the mean time, the boys rode along steadily, though very slowly, on the way to the village. At length they came to the mill. Phonny was very much pleased to see that below the dam, and between the dam and the bridge, the water was almost entirely open. There was a path leading down to the water, just below the mill, and as soon as the wagon stopped, Phonny jumped out, and said that he was going down to the water, to play there till Beechnut was ready to go on.

"Very well," said. Beechnut, "only be careful of the ice. Do not go on any ice till yon Lave first proved it to be strong."

Perhaps Beechnut would not have consented so readily that Phonny should go down to the stream, if he had not known that the water there was very shallow in every part, so that all that was to be feared was a wetting, in case Phonny should in any way chance to fall in.

Phonny went down to the shore. The water was open in the middle of the stream, not only between the dam and the bridge, but also for some distance below the bridge, as Phonny could see by looking under the bridge between the piers. There was a great deal of ice, however, along the shores, and on the margin of the stream. In one place there was a large and very thick cake of ice lodged against the shore, at a sort of point of land, which there projected a little into the stream.

" I think that cake of ice is strong enough to bear me," said Phonny, to himself. "But Beechnut said that I must prove it."

So he took up a large stone, half as large as his head, and swinging it with all his force, he threw it out upon the cake of ice. The stone came down with a sort of crash upon the soft snow, which formed the upper surface, but did not break through. It remained on the ice very near the spot where it had fallen. The ice was, in fact, nearly a foot thick.

" Yes," said Phonny, " it is strong enough to bear twenty men." So saying, he stepped over upon the ice, and walked out toward the outer edge of it.

In the mean time, Beechnut had been at work in taking out the bags of grain from the wagon, and carrying them into the mill. The miller helped him lift them. Then Beechnut helped the miller open the bags and pour the grain out into the hoppers which led to the machinery, where the grain was to be ground. After having finished this work, Beechnut. came to the door of the mill, intending to go and call Phonny, when his attention was arrested by loud outcries coming up from the water. Phonny was shouting as loud as ho could, and in a tone, expressive of the utmost distress and terror.

" Beechnut! Beechnut! Ah- h- h ! Ah-h-h! Beechnut! Ah-h-h!"

Beechnut ran down the bank. The great cake of ice with Phonny upon it was slowly sailing out into the stream.

"Ah-h! Beechnut!" cried Phonny, screaming, " I am sailing away, what shall I do ? Come quick. Oh come quick!"

" That is nothing," said Beechnut.

" What is nothing ?" said Phonny, still apparently very much terrified.

" Why, sailing away on such a cake of ice as that. Push in ashore here, and let me get on, too."

" Why I can't push it in to the shore," said Phonny. " I don't know how I shall ever get it to the shore again. What shall I do ?"

Beechnut knew very well that Phonny could not push in to the shore. His saying that was only intended to show that he was not himself alarmed about Phonny's situation. His words had the effect that he intended. Phonny was at once relieved of his extreme terror, and yet he felt a great anxiety still.

Beechnut took his seat upon a rock on the shore, and assumed an attitude of great composure. The ice in the mean time having floated very slowly out into the stream, seemed to be undecided which way to go. It was, however, very slowly moving down toward the bridge.

" Oh dear me," said Phonny, " what shall I do ?"

" There are plenty of ways of getting to the shore," said Beechnut. "All you have to do is to choose which you think is best."

" What ways ?" said Phonny.

" Why, the first way is," said Beechnut. " for you to step off into the water, and wade to the shore at once. It is not much deeper than your knees."

" Oh, Beechnut," said Phonny, "it is up to my middle."

"Well," said Beechnut, "you can wade in water that is up to your middle easily enough."

" But it is dreadfully cold," said Phonny. "What other way is there?"

" You can wait till you float down to the bridge," said Beechnut. "I presume you will go down there pretty soon, and then when you are shooting under it, you can seize hold of the timbers, and so climb up to the top of the bridge."

" Oh, no," said Phonny, "I should not dare to do that."

" Then," said Beechnut, " you can wait till you have floated down. through all the open water, till you come to the solid ice down the stream. It is not far."

As he said this, Beechnut looked under the bridge to see how far the open water extended. " No," he added, " you would not have to sail very far."

" No," said Phonny, " I should not dare to do that. I could not get off my cake of ice. I should fall in among the loose pieces, where the water is deeper than it is here."

"Then," said Beechnut, "you might sail down on the ice as far as it goes, and stay there until I can get a boat and come and take you off."

"And how long will that be?" asked Phonny.

" Oh, not more than half an hour, I should think," said Beechnut.

" Oh, no," said Phonny, " I can't stay on the ice so long as that."

By this time the ice on which Phonny was floating was beginning to have quite a decided tendency down the stream. The water ran more and more rapidly, as it approached the bridge ; and under the bridge the current was very swift indeed. The ice was now turning slowly round, and gradually advancing into tills current.

" Oh dear me!" said Phonny, " I am going."

" Have you got your fishing-line in your pocket ?" said Beechnut.

" Yes," said Phonny. So saying he felt eagerly in his pockets and took out the line.

" Here it is," said he.

"Throw it over here to the shore," said Beechnut.

Phonny threw the line to the shore. The line was wound upon a short stick, so as to form a missile that could be easily thrown through the air. Beechnut picked it up and began immediately to unwind it. He let the line as fast as he unwound it fall down upon the shore, where it lay in a sort of loose coil When it was all unwound, Beechnut broke off the end from the stick on which the line had been wound, and then picking up a small white stone from the beach, he tied it to the end of the line. Then taking the stone in his hand, and standing on one side so as to leave the line clear, he tossed the stone over into the stream beyond the cake of ice in such a

THE RESCUE.

manner, that the stone fell into the water and the line fell across the ice.

"There," said Beechnut, as soon as he had made the throw, " take up the line and hold on."

Phonny did so. Beechnut at the same time took hold of the end of the line which lay upon the shore.

" Now pull gently," said Beechnut.

So Phonny pulled gently, while Beechnut at his end of the line pulled gently too. The ice soon began to feel the influence of the new force thus made to act upon it, and was brought gradually round in a great circle to the shore, at a place some distance below where Phonny had first embarked. As soon as the edge of the ice touched the shore, Phonny jumped off safely to the land.

" Now," said Beechnut, " wind up the fishing-line, and then come up to the wagon."

When they got seated in the wagon and were riding along, Phonny said that he did not see what made the cake of ice float away.

"It rested on the shore," said Phonny, " before I got upon it, and I thought that my going on it would press it down more."

"Yes," said Beechnut, "but I suppose that when you went out upon it toward the outer edge, your weight pressed that side down and lifted the other side up a little, so as to loosen it from the shore; and that set it adrift."

"I did not suppose that there was any danger," said Phonny. " But I got punished enough."

" I don't think you were to blame at all," said Beechnut,-"or scarcely at all. You were punished too much. You were frightened, and that is the worst kind of suffering."

"Yes," said Phonny, "I think it is."

" I think you suffered more than enough for your fault that time, and I have an idea," said Beechnut, " of letting it go for your next punishment."

" Well," said Phonny, very joyously.

Just at this point they arrived at the great gate which led into Mr. Linn's yard. This gate was usually kept open in the winter, but now the snow had thawed so much that Rodolphus had shut it that morning, and so Phonny got out of the wagon and opened it to let Beechnut drive through.

Beechnut and Phonny went to the house. Ellen and Annie met them at the door and invited them in. They sat down in the kitchen and talked together a long time. Phonny gave Annie and Ellen a very animated account of his floating away on the cake of ice, and of Beechnut's saving him by a stone and a string. As he came to the end of his account, he put his hand into his pocket, and taking out the smooth, white pebble which Beechnut had used, he concluded by saying,

" And there is the very stone now. I am going to keep it."

" Oh, what a pretty white stone," said Annie. " I wish you would give it to me."

"Well," said Phonny, "I will give it to you."

Annie then told Phonny about her Aunt Randon's rules. They were in a picture-frame, she said, and there was a picture at the top. Phonny wished to see the picture, and so Annie said that she would go up-stairs and bring it down. Ellen made no objection to this. In fact, she was secretly pleased at the idea of having Beechnut see that she had taken such good care of the frame that he had made for her.

So Annie brought down the frame and showed it to Phonny. Then she brought it to Beechnut, saying,

" See, Beechnut, I am going to be Ellen's girl, and there are the rules that she is going to govern me by."

"Ah!" said Beechnut. "Let me read them."

So saying, Beechnut took the frame out of Annie's hands. He looked at it attentively, and said,

" Why, Ellen, I did not know that you had kept this so long."

"Yes," said Ellen. "Aunt Randon valued it very much, and she gave it to me before she died."

" Read the rules, Beechnut," said Annie. So Beechnut read the rules.

When you consent, consent cordially

When you refuse, refuse finally.

Commend often: never scold.

" Very good rules," said Beechnut, " only there is nothing said about punishment. There must be some punishment in a good government, and there ought to be some rule about that."

"No," said Annie, "I don't like to be punished."

"But there is no getting along without punishment," said Beechnut. " Besides," he added, " you will observe whenever you have done any thing wrong, you never feel really easy in mind about it, until you have been punished for it. I will put in a rule about punishment. There is just room for it before the last line."

" Oh no," said Annie, " it will spoil it."

" How will it spoil it ?" asked Beechnut.

"Why, that is all printed," said Annie, " and it will not look well to see writing in among the print."

" But I will print the new rule just like the rest," said Beechnut. " I printed the others."

Annie was very much astonished to hear this, but it was true. In fact the whole was Beechnut's work. He had made the picture and printed the rules under it. lie had also made the frame and cut out the glass to go over the paper. He learned to do such things in France, before he came to America.

Ellen said that she should like to have the rule about punishment in, very much.

" But why did not you put it in before ?" said she.

" I left a space for it," said Beechnut, " but I did not put it in, because I knew it would be useless for Mrs. Randon."

" Why ?" asked Annie.

" Ah ! you must guess why," said Beechnut.

Ellen knew very well that Beechnut meant that it would never be necessary for her Aunt Randon to punish *her*. But Annie could not understand what he meant.

In the mean time, Beechnut took out the little wooden pins behind the picture, and thus freed the paper from the frame. Then he took a pen which Ellen brought him, and Beating himself at a table that was near, he printed in the fourth rule, in the blank space; between the second and third. There were then four rules, and they read as follows :

When you consent, consent cordially.

When you refuse, refuse finally,

When you punish, punish good-naturedly.

Commend often : never scold.

" Now," said he, " we must decide what kind of punishment Annie's shall be. I think it will be best to put her in prison. Let us look about and find some place that will do for a prison for her."

So they all went to look about the room to find some place that would do for a prison. Annie was as much interested in this search as any of the party. Various places were proposed, one after another, but there seemed to be some good reason against them all. Annie recommended the clock-case. There was just room for her to get inside, she said, and then besides she could have the. pendulum to play with, while she was shut up in prison. The clock was out of order and did not go, but the weights and the pendulum were there, all in their places, though motionless-the weights at the sides, and the pendulum in the middle. Annie thought that this machinery might furnish her with some occupation in her imprisonment, but Beechnut and Ellen thought that the clock-case would not do.

At last they found a place under a shelf in a closet, which they thought would answer very well. Ellen found a little footstool, which she put in, in the corner, for Annie to sit upon.

" Now," said Beechnut, " the first time you disobey Ellen or your mother, you must come to this prison and stay there till you count twenty."

" I can't count twenty," said Annie.

"How many can you count?" said Beechnut.

"Ten," said Annie.

" Well, count ten twice then," said Beechnut. "That will do just as well as counting twenty. And if yon wish for a pendulum in your prison, I can make you one. I can make it with your white stone."

So Beechnut took the white stone, and tied a string round it in a very secure manner, and then attached the other end of the string to a small nail, which he drove in on the under side of the shelf, opposite to the place where Annie was to sit. Annie was then told that when she was sent to prison, she was to sit upon the footstool, and set the pendulum in motion, and then count the vibrations. When she had counted ten vibrations she was to begin again, and count ten more,-and that was to be the end of her punishment.

Beechnut then told Annie that if she would always submit to her punishment like a good girl, and go to the prison whenever Ellen directed her to go, he would fit up her prison in a much more comfortable manner, the next time he came.

" Prisons used to be miserable places, formerly," said Beechnut, " but they have made a great many

improvements in modern times, and if you are a good girl, and always submit to your punishment, I will fit up your prison with the modern improvements, the next time I come."

So Beechnut went away, and after he was gone, Ellen and Annie went to work preparing to get supper. Annie was in hopes that she should do something wrong pretty soon, as she was in haste to try her prison.

There will be a picture of this prison, as it appeared after it was fitted up with Beechnut's improvements, in the next chapter.

Return to main page