

The Aimwell Stories.

WHISTLER;

OR,

THE MANLY BOY.

BY
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PREFACE.

THE object of this book is to portray the character of the MANLY BOY—a character that never fails to inspire love and esteem, if only it be natural and genuine. That a youth may still be a real boy in his tastes, his pursuits, and his feelings,—as every young lad certainly ought to be,—and yet exhibit something of true manliness in his spirit and deportment, will, it is hoped, be made manifest to the youngest mind, in the story of WHISTLER.

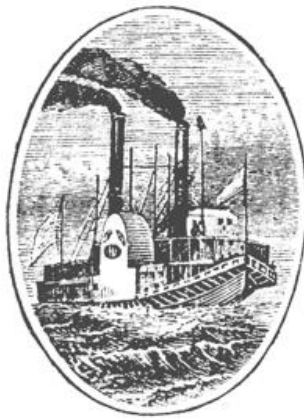
WHISTLER.

CHAPTER I. A VACATION JOURNEY.

THE steamer's bell is pealing forth its last call. The huge, hot engine, as if impatient of delay, seems hissing at every joint, while the dark clouds that roll up from its smoke-pipes tell of the activity of the sweltering firemen below. The hawser is cast off. A tardy passenger or two are hurried over the gangway, and their baggage sent after them with more celerity than care. A carriage, driven at a furious rate, is coming down the wharf, and a man's head and arm are thrust out of the window,—the arm "sawing the air" in a most vehement manner. But his gesticulations are in vain. The gangway is drawn in on deck; the wheels slowly move; the steamer gently swings away from her moorings; and by the time the carriage is abreast of her, six yards of foam-covered water separate the would-be passenger from the crowded deck. A general half-suppressed laugh from the crowd on the wharf and the steamer reminds the unhappy straggler that there is something ridiculous, as well as provoking, in being a little too late; and, seeking refuge in the carriage, he is leisurely driven off, to be again laughed at, perchance, when he reaches the home he had lately left in such hot haste.

The steamer has now got clear of the vessels moored around her, and begins to move with greater speed. So easy is the motion, it would not be difficult for those on board to imagine

that the wharf itself had hoisted sail, and parted company with the steamer, to take a turn about the harbor on its own account. Little groups on shore and on board the boat are exchanging farewells by the waving of hats and handkerchiefs. But soon the distance becomes too great for recognition; wharves and warehouses mingle together; the city assumes a crowded and compact look, and finally resolves itself into that beautiful panorama which Boston presents when viewed from the sea. Even this view soon fades, and is lost; for the steamer is now far down the harbor, gallantly ploughing her way through the dark-blue waters.



Among the passengers who were enjoying the scene from the upper, or hurricane deck, might have been seen a gentleman and three children, who appeared to be intent upon missing no object of interest. The largest of the children was a bright and pleasant looking boy of fourteen. His name was William Davenport; but he was frequently called Willie, and still oftener Whistler, by his young associates. This latter name he acquired

when several years younger, being indebted for it to his whistling talents, which were really quite clever. He rather liked the nickname; and, indeed, had become so accustomed to it, that even "Willie" did not sound quite natural, and "Bill" was altogether out of the question. You must not suppose, however, that he was one of those whistling bores who give our ears no rest from their shrill pipings, either in house or in street. On the contrary, he was rather chary of his music,—perhaps more so than he would have been but for his nickname, which put him on his guard against spending too much of his breath in this manner. But, then, he *could* whistle beautifully when he chose to; and, as he had a quick ear for music, he caught all the new and popular airs of the day, which made his performances still more pleasant to the listener. Whistler we shall call him, therefore, in imitation of his comrades. He belonged in Boston, and was now on his way to a distant town in Maine, where he was to spend his summer vacation with the family of his uncle.

The gentleman who was with Whistler was Mr. Preston. He was a stout, sun-burnt, and plainly-dressed man, and was on his way home from a visit to Boston, with his eldest daughter, Emily, a girl of thirteen. The other girl, who was a few months younger, was Ella Preston, a cousin of Emily, who lived in Boston, and was now on her way to her uncle's home in Brookdale. It was in this same town that Whistler's uncle lived; and being well acquainted with Ella, he had arranged to make the journey in company with her little party.

It was a mild August evening, and the sea was calm. Mr. Preston and the children remained upon the deck until the supper-bell sounded, when they went down into the cabin, and

found a long table spread, around which the hungry passengers were crowding and pushing, without much regard to manners, or even decency. It was with some difficulty that Mr. Preston procured seats for the children; and even then the difficulty was but half overcome, for it required a good deal of effort, not to say rudeness, to obtain enough to eat, so ravenous and selfish were the company, and so limited was the supply upon the table. The meal was swallowed, and the cabin vacated, in about ten minutes. Shortly after, as Whistler was walking about, he overheard a few remarks between two gentlemen, that set him to thinking. From their appearance, and their peculiar accent, he concluded they were foreign gentlemen, travelling for pleasure.

"You did not witness the feeding of the animals?" said one of the gentlemen, who had just come up from the cabin.

"No," said the other, "I have no taste for such exhibitions. I took the precaution to drink my tea before I came on board."

"Well, sir," added the first speaker, "I've breakfasted with the Turks, I've dined with the Arabs, I've supped with the Chinese, and I've eaten with nearly all the nations of Europe; but, sir, I must say that I never met with such a greedy, scrabbling set of gormandizers as I have found in this country. Why, sir, they seize and devour their food like wild beasts. They shovel it down whole, sir, just as a dog bolts his meat. I only wonder that these Yankees do not dispense with knives and forks altogether. Yes, sir, those implements of a civilized table seem altogether out of place in their hands."

This was all that Whistler heard. The unpleasant American habit which so disgusted this gentleman, and which is often glaringly conspicuous in our hotels and steamboats, has been justly censured with great severity by foreigners who have visited us. Whistler had himself observed the rude and greedy conduct at the table; but he supposed such scenes were always enacted when large numbers of people got together to eat. Now, however, he had learned that it was a peculiarly American characteristic; and, perceiving how it was viewed by intelligent and well-bred foreigners, his pride and patriotism were both touched, and he made up his mind that he would never be guilty of such rudeness, either at a public or a private table.

The air was now becoming damp and chilly, and little could be seen beyond the steamer's decks, save the occasional flash of some distant lighthouse. The passengers began to disappear, some seeking out sheltered nooks in the stern, and others retiring to the saloons and berths. Mr. Preston gave Emily and Ellen in charge to the stewardess, who conducted them to their berths in the ladies' saloon; while himself and Whistler soon after turned in to their own quarters in the gentlemen's cabin. The saloons were lined on each side with berths arranged in three tiers. Each berth was furnished with bedding, and screened in front by a drapery curtain. The two selected by Mr. Preston, though not favorite ones in their location, were the best that were not engaged when he bought his tickets. One of them was an upper berth; and, as Whistler was the lightest and nimblest of the two, it was assigned to him, while Mr. Preston took the other, directly beneath him.

Following the example of others, Whistler put off his shoes, jacket and shirt-collar, and climbed into his lofty and narrow sleeping-place. Here, partially concealed by his curtain, he amused himself by watching the movements of his fellow-passengers, and listening to their remarks. When Mr. Preston, who had been reading a newspaper, got ready to retire, he picked up Whistler's shoes from the floor, and told him to put them on a shelf over the berth, if he did not want "Boots" to get them. This personage, he afterwards explained, was a colored man, who gathered up all the boots and shoes he could find in the night, and cleaned them, charging each of the respective owners a ninepence (the ninepence is twelve and a half cents in New England) for his services. As Whistler's shoes did not need to undergo this process, his friend was probably justified in thus interfering with the legitimate business of the aforesaid "Boots."

The novelty of his position, the glare of the saloon lamps, and the noise of the machinery, made it rather difficult for Whistler to get to sleep. The ocean was so smooth, however, that he felt no symptoms of seasickness; and he was very well contented to lie awake in his berth, so long as he was not troubled with this distressing malady, from which he had once suffered quite severely while sailing in the harbor. But, in spite of all disturbing influences, he was favored with several good naps towards morning, from one of which he awoke, and discerned the gray light of morning through a small window over his berth. He lowered himself down from his elevated bed, and went on deck, when he found that the steamer had already entered the river, the banks of which were scarcely visible through the heavy mist with which the atmosphere was loaded.

Ella and Emily soon made their appearance, and declared that their first night on the ocean was anything but disagreeable. The fog rapidly disappeared before the sun; and, as they advanced up the river, the scenery became more interesting, so that their attention was constantly occupied, until Mr. Preston informed them that they had reached their landing-place.

Our travellers were still forty miles from Brookdale; but the rest of the journey was to be by land. On landing, they went directly to the village tavern, where they found a good breakfast awaiting them, to which, however, they could devote but a very few minutes, for the stage coach was waiting. Having made as large a draft on the driver's patience as they deemed prudent, they took their seats in the vehicle, and resumed their journey. For a while, the children found much to interest them in the country through which they passed; but it soon became an old story; and before they had climbed half of the hills that separated them from Brookdale, the inquiries were frequently heard,—

“How far have we got to go, *now*, Mr. Preston? Haven't we come more than half way? Shan't we get there before noon?”

As the stage coach did not pass through Brookdale, passengers for that village were obliged to leave it at a place called the Cross Roads, about five miles distant, and find their way over as best they could. It was noon when our party reached this stopping-place. As they alighted, a boy about fourteen years old stepped up to Mr. Preston, who introduced him to Ella and Whistler as Clinton Davenport. The two boys were cousins; but they had never seen each other before. It seemed that Clinton, knowing they were expected, had gone over to the Cross Roads

after them, with a wagon. A drive of five miles through a pleasant road brought them to their journey's end. They were in Brookdale.

CHAPTER II. LOOKING ABOUT.

DINNER was on the table when Whistler arrived at Mr. Davenport's, and he found his uncle and aunt, and his little cousin Annie, ready to welcome him to their hospitalities. These, with Clinton, constituted the whole family. The young stranger soon felt quite at home in their society. He was much pleased with his cousins at first sight, for he had never seen either of them before. Annie, who was about seven years old, was a beautiful child, with golden curls and fair blue eyes, and a face full of gentleness and affection. She seemed to be the pet of the household. Clinton, though but a month or two older than Whistler, was a stouter and taller boy, and his browned skin and hardened hands told that he was not unacquainted with labor and out-door exposure. He had, moreover, an intelligent, cheerful, and frank expression of countenance, that could not help prepossessing a stranger in his favor. The parents of these children Whistler had previously seen at his own house, and he had always numbered them among his favorite relatives.

Whistler's first movement, after dinner, was to make an inspection of the premises. He found that his uncle's farm lay at the base of a range of hills, and embraced a wide extent of land, a good part of which seemed to be under skilful cultivation. The house itself was set back a few rods from the street, and

was pleasantly situated, with its front towards the south. It was a snug, plain-looking building, a story and a half high, with a kitchen and wood-shed attached in the rear. A noble oak tree, in front, afforded a grateful shade; and climbing roses and honeysuckles were trained around the front door, giving a neat and tasteful aspect to the cottage. In the rear, upon an elevated pole, was a perfect fac-simile of the house, in miniature, erected for the accommodation of the birds; and there never was a spring-time when this snug tenement failed to secure a respectable family as tenants for the season. On the next page is a view of the premises.

The barn, which the picture is not large enough to take in, was a short distance from the house, on the left. It was much larger than the cottage, and attached to it were buildings for the hens and pigs.



Clinton, who had been busy, now joined his cousin, and offered to accompany him around the premises.

"This is what we call the shop," he said, opening the door into a small room adjoining the pantry.

"Why, what a snug little place! and what a lot of tools you have got!" said Whistler.

"Father used to be a carpenter before he went to farming," added Clinton, "and he has always kept a set of tools. They are handy in such a place as this, where carpenters are not to be had."

"I suppose you work here some, don't you? If I had such a place, I should spend half my time in it," said Whistler.

"Yes," replied Clinton; "I use the tools a little. There's a windmill I'm making now; but I don't know when it will be finished. I haven't much time to work in the shop in summer."

"Clinty made this cart for me," said Annie, who had followed the boys; and she pointed to a neat little wagon.

"Did he? Why, he is a real nice workman," said Whistler.

"And he made the vane on the barn, and the bird-house, too," added Annie.

"Can't you think of something else that I made, Sissy?" said Clinton, laughing at the pride Annie evidently took in his ingenuity.

"Yes," she promptly replied; "he made the arbor over the front door."

"Why, Clinton, you *are* a carpenter, sure enough!" said Whistler. "I should think you might almost build a house; I mean a real house, not a bird-house."

Clinton smiled at this rather extravagant estimate of his mechanical skill, and led the way towards the barn, through which he conducted his cousin, from the cellar almost to the

ridge-pole. The hayloft was very large, and was nearly filled with new-mown hay, the fragrance of which was delightful. Swallows were darting in and out of the great door, and gayly twittering among the lofty rafters, where they had made their nests. A large quantity of unthreshed grain, bound up in sheaves, was stacked away on the main floor, in one end of the barn.

"There's a good lot of straw," said Whistler, as they passed by the grain.

"And something besides straw, too; that is rye," replied Clinton.

"Is it rye?" said Whistler. "Well, I'm just green enough not to know straw from grain, or one kind of grain from another. Father told me I should make myself so verdant that the cows would chase me, and I don't know but that he was right."

"They laugh about country people being green, when they go to the city," said Clinton; "but I guess they don't appear much worse than city folks sometimes do in the country. I don't mean you, though," he added; "for you haven't done anything very bad yet."

Whistler broke off a head of rye, and found concealed beneath the bearded points several hard, plump kernels, that had a sweet and pleasant taste. Following his cousin, he then visited the pig-pen, which was behind the barn, and connected with a portion of the barn cellar. Half a dozen fat porkers were lazily stretched about, in shady places, presenting one of those familiar groups that, if they do not appeal to the artist's sense of the beautiful, *do* appeal most forcibly to the plain farmer's

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