people. So the cook blustered, and ordered, and cuffed the scullions, especially poor little Joe, who always came in for a large share of abuse. He was a very poor boy, a little orphan, who had been picked up in the muddy streets of London by the abbot, on an occasion when the good man went up to visit the capital. It must have been for the king's coronation or a great religious festival, I think, for in those times it was quite a fearful journey from Buckfast to London, — it was so long, long ago, before King Henry the Eighth was crowned.

Poor little Joe! He knew neither father nor mother, he was found in the kennel, — a foundling, in fact, — and he would have had a terrible life if the abbot had not taken him back to Devonshire. But even at Buckfast, Joe had a hard life, all work and no play. From the first he had scrubbed the stone floors of the cloister house, and weeded the kitchen garden; he had carried wood for the fire when he was too small to split it, and he had washed the cook's dishes, and worked, day in and day out, until his hands were toilworn and his small face was old and sober. He had never had the sunshine and play of other children, never a loving word or a sweet caress, only blows, and hard discipline, and coarse fare, and his only joys had been to listen to the singing in the abbey, when the monks sang the masses, or to lean out of the windows and listen to the "cry" of the Dart as it swept past the walls, for in Devon the murmur and splash of the river was called the "cry." And Joe liked to look up at the sky and to count the stars, which he thought were holes in the sky, where the glory shone through. Not many joys certainly, for a little lad, but he did his best, and he was not wholly unhappy; but you may be sure that the night that he talked to the trout he never closed his eyes, but lay on his hard little bed staring out of the window opposite, and thinking of the strange fish, and longing for daybreak. And at the very first peep of dawn he jumped up, and throwing on his clothing, — very poor and coarse it was, — he ran softly down the narrow stone stair which led to the kitchen, and unfastened the door. It was so early that no one was stirring except the robins, and Joe heard them whistling sweetly in the trees as he crept out into the courtyard. He half expected to find that his wonderful trout had vanished — indeed, he was not quite sure that he had not been dreaming; but no, there was the fish sitting up in

the bowl, and waving its fins, as if they were arms. The strange creature spied Joe at once, and hailed him as an old friend.

"Dear me," he said, "how slow you are; it has been light nearly a week, I think, and you are just up."

"I 'm sorry I kept your Worship waiting," stammered Joe; "but it 's really early, for the fathers are not up for mass."

"Never mind," said the trout, good naturedly, "boys will be boys. Go get a basket and put some fresh ivy leaves in it and bring it here. Be quick now, for this bowl is really a fearfully stupid place."

Quite bewildered at these strange orders, but afraid to disobey, Joe hurried off and soon returned with a basket lined with fresh ivy leaves. And to his amazement, as he approached the bowl, the trout turned a somersault through the air and dropped into his basket. Joe could not help giving a little squeal of surprise, and then the fish laughed — a gurgling, fishy laugh, but still a laugh — and Joe felt his hair rising on top of his head, but he put a brave face on the matter, and held tight on to the handle of the basket. But it was almost too much even for his courage when, the next minute, the fish

began to mutter some strange charm, and Joe felt his feet lifted from the ground, and he began to float through the air — basket, and trout, and all. To tell the truth, the boy was dreadfully frightened, but he would not confess it — and least of all to a fish; so he set his teeth and held tight on to the basket, while he floated along, very rapidly, too, over the green fields by the river, through the wooded valley, and up, up over the tors, the gray craggy hills that cropped up everywhere. He was dizzy at first, but as he never went more than three or four feet up in the air, he got over that, but he could not imagine what was going to happen next; and when he looked at the fish it was placidly fanning itself with its tail amongst the ivy leaves. Joe began to wish that he had left it in the frying-pan or the bowl, at the abbey; but it was too late for regrets, so he only tried to keep up his courage and be ready for anything that might happen next; but it was really amazing to go floating through the air, without knowing how you did it, with a talking fish for a companion. What did happen next was that Joe suddenly came down very hard on his feet, so hard that he lost his balance and sat down, overturning the basket in his fall, and the fish began to scold very loudly.

"You great, stupid boy," it shrieked, "you bumped me out on my nose. What do you mean by such awkwardness? I've a great mind to leave you alone to be cuffed and worked all your life!"

Poor Joe apologized very humbly, putting the indignant trout back into the basket, and arranging the ivy leaves with such care that the creature was finally restored to a good humor. Then the boy looked about him and did not recognize the place; it must have been a long distance from the abbey, though they had not been long in coming. Out here was a wide, smooth stretch of country, little broken by tors or wooded land, a beautiful green spot; and only a little way off was a great house of gray stone, mantled with ivy, and behind it were pasture lands, with cattle grazing, and an orchard, and some fields of grain. Joe rubbed his eyes and looked at it in amazement; where could he be? But the voice of the fish aroused him from his wonder.

"If you do as I tell you," said the trout, "you will be a fortunate boy. Take me in this basket and go to that house; on the south side is the rose garden, and there you will find Lady Gilbert; offer me for sale, and you will see what will happen."

A little doubtful after his last experience, but still

very curious, Joe obeyed; and sure enough, there in the rose garden he found a sweet-faced gentlewoman walking to and fro, looking at the flowers. At first, she did not see the boy, but presently she looked up and smiled.

"What do you want, my lad?" she asked, in the kindest voice that Joe had ever heard.

"If you please, madam," stammered Joe, "will you buy a fish?" and he gave an anxious look at his basket expecting to see the trout cutting a pigeon-wing; but the knowing creature lay as quietly as possible on the green leaves, quite the finest fish out of water.

"What a beautiful trout," said Lady Gilbert, looking at it in admiration. "Where did you catch it, my child?"

At this Joe turned very red and stared at the fish for help, and, to his amazement, he heard a voice like his own replying.

"It came out of the Abbot's Pool, my lady," the fish answered for him.

"Out of the Abbot's Pool," she cried, in surprise, quite unconscious of the trick that had just been played upon her; "you cannot mean the pool near Buckfast, child! Why, 't is very, very far off — two

days' journey, at least — and this fish is just out of water."

"It did come out of the Abbot's Pool though," said Joe stubbornly, speaking for himself this time.

Lady Gilbert shook her head. "I fear you are not a truthful boy," she remarked sadly; "tell me faithfully, child, who are you?"

The lad looked up at the kind face — the sweetest he had ever seen — and spoke from his heart, for he greatly admired this lovely woman and he wanted her to believe in him.

"I am only Joe," he said; "'Joe the Foundling,' they call me at Buckfast Abbey, because the abbot found me in the street in London, when I was only a baby. I am the kitchen boy there, madam. I scrub the floors, and wash the pans, and turn the meat on the hempen cord, when it is roasting, and I weed the cook's garden, and carry the wood, and draw the water, and, sometimes, I help rub down the abbot's mules, and I run errands, too — I do all I can."

"Dear me, you do a good deal, poor child," said my lady, kindly, "and I see how toil-worn your hands are, and how tired you look; but child, child, how *could* you bring that fish from the Abbot's Pool to me?" and she shook her head in doubt.

Poor Joe did not know how to convince her, and again he regretted that he had ever seen the fish.

"I did bring it," he stammered; "but I came in the strangest way, — indeed, my lady, I do not think you would believe me if I told you how I really did come. And I want you to believe me," he added sadly, "because I never saw any one so good and so beautiful before — and no one ever spoke so kindly to me."

She smiled a little at this. "I 'm afraid you are a flatterer, Joe," she said; "but, indeed, my child, I will believe you, if I can; but tell me how you came?"

And then, determined not to be balked by the fish, Joe set the basket on the ground and told the whole strange story, from the beginning, when he saw the fish in the frying-pan. Lady Gilbert listened very kindly and patiently, but I am afraid she did not believe the story, or thought that Joe had dreamed it; and I do not know quite what she would have done, if something had not happened which convinced her that the boy told the truth. He had scarcely finished his tale, when lo, the fish rose up in the basket and bowed to Lady Gilbert. She gave a little cry of surprise and stepped back,

but the next minute she was more amazed still, for the shining, silvery, speckled skin of the trout began to shrivel and curl up, like burnt paper, and out of the remnants rose the most charming little pixy, all dressed in green, with a gray cock's feather in his cap — which was the green cup of a young acorn. Both Joe and Lady Gilbert were too much amazed to say anything, and stood looking at the dainty apparition in wide-eyed bewilderment. Seeing their dismay, the pixy gave way to the merriest of merry laughter, and bowed low to each, with his hand on his heart.

"You both seem a little surprised, dear Lady Gilbert and dear Joe," said the fairy; "yet I do not see why you should be. We pixies are so fond of a little fun, and the abbot is so easy to tease, that we often do fret the old gentleman for a day or two; and as it came in my way to do you both a service, I stayed in my fish skin to pay you a visit."

"You are kind, I am sure," Lady Gilbert replied, very much embarrassed; "but you are the first pixy I ever saw, and it is a surprise."

The fairy smiled kindly upon her. "You may not have seen us," he retorted, "but we have always liked you, and we know how you have grieved over

the loss of your children, and your lonely life here, while Sir Humphrey Gilbert is away at court and fighting those horrid battles; so for a long time we have been considering some plan of helping you, and, at last, I believe I 've hit on the very thing."

"I am grateful for your good-will," she replied; "all my life, I have heard of the pixies, or hill folk, and it is really a pleasure to see one. And such a charming one, too," she added, with her sweetest smile.

The pixy laid his hand on his heart. "Madam," he said, "the pleasure is more on my side than yours. My name is Good Deeds, dear Lady Gilbert, and when I saw how poor and — excuse me — how dirty and miserable little Joe was, I thought of you. Here is a page for my lady, I thought, and one she can teach, and take care of, and help." With these words the pixy suddenly touched little Joe with a wand of green willow wood, and the poor, coarse, patched clothing fell away, and there stood the boy, clad in the daintiest and richest of page's suits. A doublet of blue velvet, with ruffles of lace, and long silk hose, and velvet shoes with big gold buckles, and a cap of blue velvet with a white plume, and Joe's hair, that had been rough and tangled, fell

now in glossy curls, and you would never have known him for the same boy who worked in the abbey kitchen. The little scullion looked like the son of a prince, and he was really handsome, though no one had ever seen it before — or looked for it. Lady Gilbert laughed and clapped her hands with pleasure.

"Well done, and well done, little Good Deeds!" she cried, "here is the finest page in all England, and I fear the queen will take him away from me, if ever she sees him."

But Joe — suddenly transformed from an awkward kitchen boy into a courtly lad — knelt on one knee at her feet.

"Nay, my dear lady," he said very earnestly, "if I may be your page, and grow up in your household, not even the queen shall ever get me away! For all my fine clothes, I am only little Joe the Foundling, and I will never forget the first kind words that were ever spoken to me."

"That 's right," put in the pixy; "fine feathers do *not* make fine birds, and if you don't behave you will be quite as hateful in velvet as you would be in serge."

"I will do my best," replied Joe, "and no one

can do more; but, perhaps, Lady Gilbert does not want a scullion boy for a page," he added, hanging his head, for he thought of the hard work and hard blows with a sinking heart, after this peep at something better; but Lady Gilbert set his mind at rest.

"Indeed you shall be my own little page," she said kindly, "and when you grow up you shall follow my husband, Sir Humphrey, to court. We will make a man of you yet, little Joe, and I will see the good abbot about it, so that no one will be displeased."

The little boy kissed her hand and then turned to thank the pixy, but Good Deeds had disappeared, as completely as if he had never existed, and they would have doubted that he ever had, if they had not heard the ripple of merry laughter off in the distance.

And this was the beginning of Joe's good fortune. He became Lady Gilbert's page, living in comfort in the great house, and learning to do many useful things; and when he was older, he went with Sir Humphrey, as she had said, and was trained for a soldier, as all boys were trained in those days; and he did his duty so well, and was so wise, and honest, and brave, that the Gilberts came to love him like a

son, and after a while, they really did adopt him. So it was that from such a small thing, — a little kindness to a fish, — poor Joe, the neglected, sad, friendless foundling, won a home, and a fortune, and a great name, for Sir Humphrey gave him his own, and Joe was careful never to disgrace it.

But what happened after Joe left the Abbey of Buckfast, where the poor old abbot had swallowed a pixy alive? Ah, thereby hangs a tale; but it is such a long one that it must be told all by itself — the story of the Madness of the Abbot of Buckfast.

THE MADNESS OF THE ABBOT OF BUCKFAST