

Whatever I'm doing ('t is certainly hard,)
At once I must go to be milked in the yard.

"I've no will of my own, but must do as they
please,

And give them my milk to make butter and cheese;
I've often a vast mind to knock down the pail,
Or give Suke a box on the ear with my tail."

"But, ma'am," said the ass, "not presuming¹ to
teach —

Oh, dear! I beg pardon — pray finish your speech;
I thought you had done, ma'am, indeed," said the
swain;²

"Go on, and I'll not interrupt you again."

"Why, sir, I was only a-going to observe,
I'm resolved³ that these tyrants no longer I'll serve,
But leave them forever to do as they please,
And look somewhere else for their butter and cheese."

The ass waited a moment to see if she'd done;
And then, "Not presuming to teach," he begun,
"With submission,⁴ dear madam, to your better wit,
I own I am not quite convinced⁵ yet of it.

¹ pre-sum'ing, taking the liberty.

² swain, a young man; here used of a young animal.

³ re-solved', determined.

⁴ sub-mis'sion, giving way; yielding.

⁵ con-vinced', persuaded; made to believe.

"That you're of great service to them is quite true,
But surely they are of some service to you:

'T is their nice green meadow in which you regale;¹
They feed you in winter when grass and weeds fail;

"'T is under their shelter you snugly repose,
When, without it, dear ma'am, you perhaps might
be froze.

For my own part, I know I receive much from man,
And for him, in return, I do all that I can."

The cow, upon this, cast her eyes on the grass,
Not pleased at thus being reproved by an ass;
"Yet," thought she, "I'm determined I'll benefit²
by 't,

For I really believe the fellow is right."

XI. HOW LITTLE CEDRIC BECAME A KNIGHT.

BY ELIZABETH HARRISON.

A LONG time ago there lived a little boy whose
name was Cedric.³ At the foot of a high hill,
on the top of which stood a grand old castle, was
the stone hut in which he lived. The little boy had
many a time watched the strong iron gate rise slowly

¹ re-gale', refresh; feast. ² ben'e-fit, profit. ³ Ced'ric (Ked'rick).

from the ground as out of the courtyard of the castle would ride Sir Rollin Dubois and his faithful soldiers.

There were sometimes two or three visiting knights and their followers, and they were a gay sight as the sun shone on their glittering¹ armor of steel, and glanced from their bright helmets. They looked so strong and resolute² as they sat, calm and erect, in their saddles. A glance into their fine faces would have assured you that they were noble and brave, and could be trusted by everybody, from the King to the poorest peasant in the land. Their very horses seemed proud to carry them as they galloped along.

Little Cedric thought there never was anything more beautiful than these knights as they came down the hill on some quest³ of adventure or errand of mercy.

One day Cedric had been playing with his pet kitten. After a good romp with her, he had thrown himself down on the soft green grass to rest, and the queer little kitten had gone out into the middle of the dusty road and curled herself up for a nice nap.

Suddenly Cedric looked up and saw five knights with all their squires and pages⁴ galloping down the road! In a moment more his eye fell upon

¹ glit'ter-ing, shining. ² res'o-lute, bold. ³ quest, search.

⁴ squires and pages, attendants on great persons.

the kitten lying fast asleep in the middle of the highway. Fearing that the horsemen would not see her, he sprang to his feet, ran quickly forward, and gathered the soft little thing up in his arms just in time to save it from the horses' feet.

As the riders passed, one of the tall knights slackened his horse, and, smiling down upon Cedric, said, "My little fellow, you are almost brave enough to be a knight some day." He then galloped on to join his party, and soon the yellow dust which they had raised from the ground settled down again.

Cedric stood looking after the horsemen until they seemed a mere speck in the distance, and then disappeared altogether. He did not even notice the kitten in his arms when she put her nose up against his cheek.

At last he turned to go into the house, and as he went he said softly to himself, "To be a knight some day!" He ate his simple supper of bread and milk in silence. His mother noticed how quiet he was, but she said nothing; for she knew that in his own good time he would tell her all that was in his heart.

That night as he undressed for bed he looked up at the stars and said in a soft, low tone, "Beautiful stars, do you know what a wonderful thing Sir Rollin said to me to-day? He told me that perhaps some day I might be a knight!" He could hardly

sleep, he was so happy. The great knight had spoken to him, had praised his courage, and, best of all, had said that perhaps some day he, Cedric, might be a great knight himself!

"Could such a thing possibly come to pass?" He asked himself this question over and over again, until at last he fell asleep and dreamed that he was a large, strong man, and wore a shining armor of steel, and rode a splendid black horse, and carried a great sword, and that all the people of the country round about honored and loved him because he was one of the bravest knights in the whole land.

Just as he was dreaming that he was about to rescue a beautiful princess from an ugly giant who had shut her up in a prison, he heard his mother calling him. He opened his eyes and saw that the sky was all pink and gold with the clouds of the sunrise, and that he was only little Cedric in his attic chamber. He dressed himself quickly and climbed down the wooden ladder to the room below.

He was soon busy and happy, helping his mother feed the doves, and water the cow, and fetch hay for the two horses. After his father had eaten his breakfast and had gone to his work in the field, the little would-be knight and his mother washed the dishes and tidied the two small rooms. Cedric was very fond of thus helping her with the work, and she often said, "My little boy is both son and

daughter to me." By and by she sat down to her sewing.

Then Cedric could keep his secret no longer. Going up to her, he put his arm around her neck and whispered to her the story of the knight, how he had stopped and spoken, and what he had said. "Do you think I could ever grow up to be a knight, mother?" asked he.

His mother smiled, and then looked sober as she brushed his brown hair back from his forehead and said, "Knights have many, many hard things to do, my son, and oftentimes their lives are in danger."

"Yes, I know," answered Cedric, eagerly, "but think, mother, how brave they are, and how good! Do they not protect our country?"

"Yes," said his mother, "I know all that. I could not sleep at night when our enemies are near at hand if I did not know that Sir Rollin Dubois and his brave soldiers were on the hill close by. But you are a very little boy, Cedric. Run out to your play now."

Many times during the next few weeks little Cedric thought of the grand knights, and how one of them had smiled at him and had spoken as if he, Cedric, might some day be a great, strong knight, and ride a beautiful horse, and do brave deeds.

Weeks passed by, and the spring had changed into summer. One evening, just as the setting sun was

turning all the white clouds into gold and crimson, Cedric stood in the low doorway, wondering if where the angels lived could be more beautiful than was the sky over his dear mountain home. He suddenly heard the tramp of horses' feet, and, looking down across the plain, he saw a gay party of horsemen. Their armor flashed and shone in the light of the setting sun, and their long white plumes waved in the gentle evening breeze.

Cedric's face lighted up with a glad smile, for he knew that it was Sir Rollin Dubois and his soldiers returning from the terrible war to which the King had sent them. They soon came near enough for Cedric to see their faces, as the heavy steel visors¹ of their helmets were lifted so that they might breathe more freely the soft summer air. It had been a warm day, and Cedric noticed that even the tallest knight among them looked tired, and as if he would be glad to get to the castle and lay aside, for a while at least, his heavy armor.

Just as they were passing the door in which Cedric stood, one of them stopped his horse, and leaning forward said, "My little man, will you give me a drink of water?" Cedric ran quickly and filled a cup with fresh, cool water from the spring near by, and brought it to the knight. "Thank you," said

¹ vis/or, front piece of a cap or helmet.

the nobleman, as he handed the cup back to Cedric. "I am very glad to be able to serve you," said Cedric, quietly. The knight smiled, gathered up the reins of his horse, and said, "You are as courteous² as a knight, my boy."

That evening Cedric told his mother of this second speech, and then he asked, as a wistful² look came over his face, "Ah, mother dear, do you think I can ever become a knight?"

Weeks passed into months and the soft, gray snow clouds had covered the green hills with the white mantle of winter. Whenever Cedric felt like being rude, or cross, or selfish, he thought of the bright smile on the great knight's face that summer evening when he had asked for the cup of cold water, and he felt sure the smile would change into a frown if the knight should see him do a discourteous³ or a selfish act.

A year or two had passed, when one day something happened which Cedric never forgot. His father came in from his work and said, "Sir Rollin Dubois wants a young lad to come to the castle to take the place of his page who has lately been promoted.⁴ Do you think, wife, that our Cedric is strong enough for such an office?"

¹ cour'-te-ous, polite.

² wist'ful, wishful; longing.

³ dis-cour'te-ous, impolite.

⁴ pro-mot'ed, advanced in station.

Cedric's heart almost stopped beating while he listened for his mother's answer. She thought for a few moments, and then said slowly, as if weighing each word, "Yes, I think he would try very hard to do his duty, and I should like to have him learn more of knighthood. Perhaps some day he too may be a knight, who knows?" she added, as she turned smilingly to the radiant face of her boy.

That very afternoon she made a bundle of his few clothes, and his father took him by the hand, and walked with him up the steep hill to the great castle gate. Cedric had never before been so near the castle, and when his father lifted the heavy iron knocker, and brought it down with two or three loud knocks, it seemed to him that his heart was knocking almost as loudly. Not that he was afraid, but he was stirred by the thought of going into the presence of the great and noble Sir Rollin, whom all people loved and revered.¹

The huge iron gate slowly lifted. The drawbridge was already thrown across the ditch of water which surrounded the castle, and in a few moments Cedric and his father had passed under the stone archway and were standing within the courtyard. A man took them into a large room whose walls and floors were of stone, and bade them sit down on a wooden bench which stood near a door, saying at

¹ re-vered', greatly respected.

the same time, "I will tell Sir Rollin that you are here."

They had been waiting some time when a door at the other end of the room opened, and a large, well-built man, who looked so tall and straight that he reminded Cedric of a mountain pine, came forward. He was not dressed in armor, but Cedric knew at once that it was Sir Rollin Dubois. The knight talked a few moments with Cedric's father, and then, turning to Cedric, he said, "And you think you would like to become a knight, my boy? Are you sure that you will not mind hard work, and will remember always to be true and pure, brave and unselfish?"

Cedric's smile was so bright that no answer was needed. The knight turned again to his father and said, "Do you realize that it will take ten years or more of discipline and hard work on the part of your boy before he can hope to be promoted to a position of responsibility?"¹ "Yes," said the father, quietly, "but I think he is willing to try it."

After a little talk, it was decided that the boy should begin his training then and there. So his father bade him good-by, and left. Cedric was taken by an older boy up some stone stairs to a small room whose ceiling, walls, and floor were of stone. In the corner of the room lay a pile of straw,

¹ re-spon-si-bil'i-ty, trust; duty.

over which had been thrown a sheepskin. At one side of the room was a small table. No other furniture was in the apartment save a cedar chest, which was doubtless intended to serve for both chair and wardrobe.

There was a narrow, pointed window in one side of the room through which the sunlight came. Cedric went up to the window and looked out, but it was so high that he could see only the blue sky and a soft white cloud. "Ah," thought Cedric to himself, "I can at least see the stars at night and the sunlight each morning. Will they not remind me always of the good God who watches over me?"

That night his supper consisted of some coarse barley bread and a bowl of broth. Cedric, however, was used to simple food, and did not mind this part of his discipline.¹ As he lay down upon the pile of straw and drew the sheepskin over him, he thought of his nice warm bed at home; but instantly came this other thought, "I must learn to be hardy and strong if I am ever to do any great work in the world. So I will not mind such little discomforts as these."

Cedric soon found that he had not only to eat coarse food and sleep on a hard bed, but that he had to practice standing very straight, running very swiftly, and managing a horse; to jump on and off

¹ *dīs'ci-pline*, training.

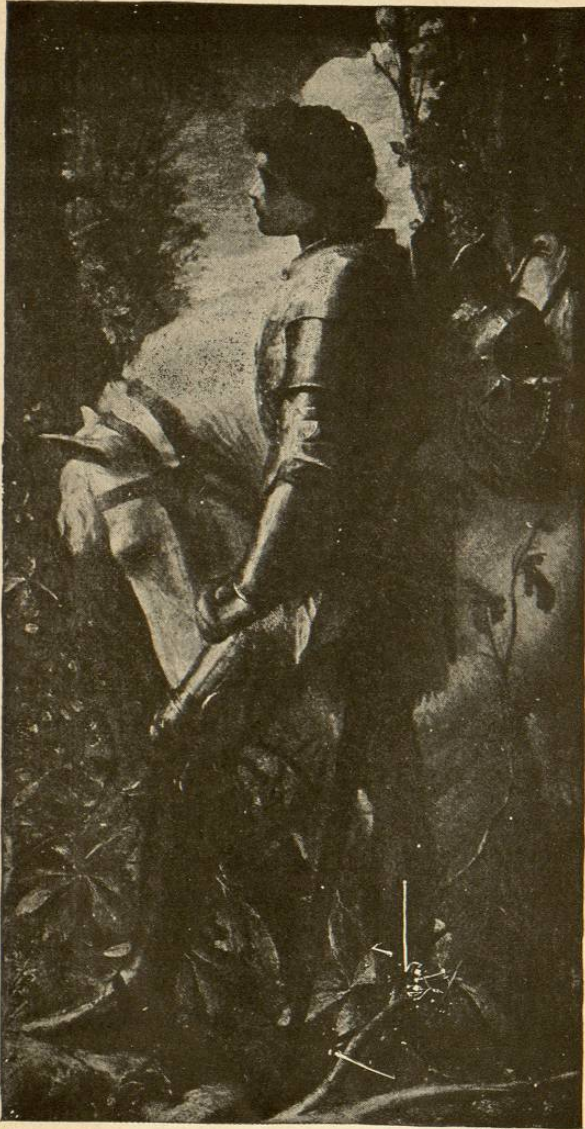
while the horse was in full gallop, to throw his spear with unerring accuracy,¹ and also that he must be prompt and ready to obey a call from Sir Rollin; that he must not only learn to do errands faithfully and quickly, but to wait patiently and quietly oftentimes when he could not understand why he waited.

Year after year passed by, and little Cedric had grown large and tall. When he visited his home he used often to laugh at the little bed which had once held him so cosily. Not only had he grown strong and tall, but he had grown even more in thoughtfulness and courtesy toward all about him.

One day Sir Rollin sent for him. "Cedric," said he, "I wish you to take a message to the King. It is quite an important one, and it must reach him before to-morrow night. Get ready as quickly as you can. Take my gray horse, as he is the swiftest one in the stables, and remember that I have trusted you much by sending you upon this errand."

Cedric's heart beat wild with joy as he thought, "At last I have proved faithful enough to be sent with a message to our great King." He was ready in less than half an hour, and, jumping on the splendid gray charger, he went galloping down the highway. On and on he rode.

¹ *un-err'ing ac'cu-ra-cy*, true aim.



G. W. WATTS.
*"Jumping on the splendid gray charger, he went galloping
 down the highway" (page 65).*

At last he entered a thick forest of pine trees. The road grew very dark and lonesome.

"What if I should meet some wild beast?" thought Cedric; but he added, half aloud, "If I am ever to be a knight, I must learn to be brave, and face every danger."

It was not long before he was quite sure that he heard a deep,

low growl. His heart beat fast, but he rode steadily forward, and soon the growl was repeated, this time nearer and more distinctly; and Cedric saw in the dim light a great wild boar coming towards him.

The creature's eyes were shining like fire, and his white tusks overhung his lower jaw in a fierce and forbidding fashion. Cedric knew that this must be the beast which had destroyed so many of the cattle of the neighboring peasants, but who was so strong and savage that no one had dared to go near him. He spurred his horse forward as he thought, "If I kill this wild boar, I shall already have begun to be of service to the people of my country." So he lifted the spear which he carried at his side from its leathern socket, and, raising it high in the air, hurled it swiftly at the beast, who was ready to spring upon him.

In a moment more the wild boar rolled over upon the ground dead. Cedric reached down and drew his spear from its side, and as he rode on again he thought, "Wolves and wild boars must not stop the way of a messenger of the King. I must fear nothing if I am to be a knight."

After a time his road lay out of the forest into the sunlight. As he approached a small village he heard a great noise as of much shouting, and soon he saw a group of boys who were evidently hoot-

ing and laughing at something in their midst. He rode up to where they were, and felt himself growing indignant¹ as he saw an old deformed man standing in their midst, at whom they were jeering.²

In a moment he sprang from his horse, and pressing through the crowd of boys he stood beside the old man. On his face was a flush of indignant anger. "How dare you," he exclaimed, "laugh at or insult an old man like this?" The boys drew back frightened. Although he was really no taller than they, he seemed to tower above them. "My!" exclaimed one of them in a whisper, "does n't he look like a knight as he stands there?" "I should n't wonder if he were one," said another.

Cedric turned to the old man, who was trembling in every limb. "Where are you going?" asked he kindly. "Only to the next village," said the old man, "but these boys stopped me on my way. I cannot help my deformity³ nor my old age. I wish I could." The tears stood in his eyes as he spoke. "Come," said Cedric, gently, "let me help you upon my horse. I, too, am going to the next village."

When they had reached the next village, Cedric

¹ in-dig'nant, angry with cause.

² jeer'ing, mocking; taunting.

³ de-form'ity, unnatural shape or form.

helped the old man from the horse at his own door. Then, mounting, he thought to himself, "I am very hungry; I think I will stop at the village inn and get a good warm supper. No," said he, on second thought, "I cannot stop now. I have had to travel so slowly because of the old man that I must make up for lost time." With that he tightened the rein of his beautiful horse, and the two had soon left the village far in the distance. Cedric reached back to a leather pouch behind him and took from it a dry biscuit, which had to serve for his supper that night.

Late in the evening he reached the house at which he was to rest his horse, and he himself slept for a few hours. By dawn the next day he was up and off on his journey. As he was riding by a small stream of water he noticed a poor little fish that some thoughtless fisherman had thrown upon the bank as too insignificant¹ to be taken home for breakfast. The tiny creature was struggling and gasping for breath as it vainly tried to get back into the water. "Ah! you poor little thing," thought Cedric, "I wish I had time to put you back into the stream, but I have n't!" and so he rode on.

Then came the thought, "A knight would take time to help anything that was suffering. If ever I am to be a knight, I must do so, too." With

¹ in-sig-nif'i-cant, small; worthless.

this thought he turned, and was soon back again at the spot where the little fish lay. He got down off of his horse, and, taking the poor creature in his hand as gently as possible, he stooped down and put it into the stream of water. It swam rapidly away as if glad, beyond words, to get back into its own element.¹ Its swiftly moving tail seemed to Cedric, as he watched it for a moment, to say, "Thank you, Cedric, thank you, thank you!" He then jumped on his horse again and rode on.

The day grew very warm, but Cedric knew that he must not stop for his own comfort; his errand was an important one, and he must reach the King's palace before night.

At last the beautiful palace came in sight, and in a few moments Cedric had ridden into the courtyard. He gave his letter to a servant to carry to one of the squires, who gave it to a courtier, who presented it to the King; for, you must remember, in those days a king was a very great person, and only those men who had risen high in rank could approach him.

Among other things, the note contained this message: it told the King that the bearer was a young lad who had been in training for knighthood; that Sir Rollin had found him always brave and trustworthy, true and noble, kind and courteous; and

¹ el'e-ment, the place naturally suited for any creature's existence.

that he, Sir Rollin, thought if the King wanted him in his army, he would find him worthy of the place.

The King sent for Cedric to come to him personally. Our little boy had grown into a tall youth, you know, and his frank, pure face was good to look upon. The King told him that he wished to put him in office in his army; and thus Cedric went to live in the King's household, and here he learned many things which he could not have learned at the castle of Sir Rollin Dubois.

Several years passed by, and Cedric had been intrusted with many enterprises both difficult and dangerous. At last, one day, the King sent for him to come into the throne room. There sat the King upon a beautiful throne of gold; beside him sat the Queen. Over their heads was a crimson velvet canopy.¹ Standing about the room was a great number of courtiers and grand ladies. As Cedric entered the room, the King said, "Come forward!"

Cedric stepped forward and kneeled upon one knee before the throne, as was the custom in those days. The King raised his beautiful golden scepter² and struck Cedric lightly upon the shoulder with it, saying, at the same time, "Rise, Sir Cedric of Altholstane." And Cedric knew that he was at last a knight!

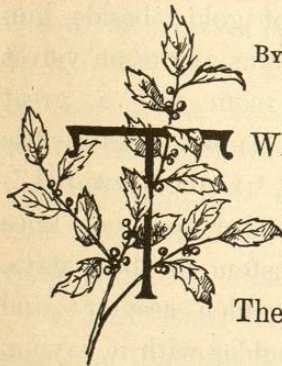
can'o-py, an ornamental covering.

² scep'ter, a staff borne by a ruler as an emblem of his power.

In time he had a beautiful castle of his own, and splendid armor, and a beautiful black horse. The handsome horse used to prance and toss his head proudly in the air, as if he knew what a noble young knight he was carrying. After a while Cedric had a lovely wife and three sweet little children of his own; and, as he rode abroad over the country, many a time the peasants, standing in their cottage doors, would say to one another, "There goes the brave Sir Cedric of Altholstane. God bless him! May he live long to help protect our country!" And all the people loved him.

XII. A VISIT FROM SAINT NICHOLAS.

BY CLEMENT C. MOORE.



T WAS the night before Christmas,
 when all through the house
 Not a creature was stirring, not
 even a mouse;
 The stockings were hung by the
 chimney with care,
 In hopes that Saint Nicholas soon would be there;
 The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
 While visions of sugarplums danced through their
 heads;

And mamma in her kerchief, and I in my cap,
 Had just settled our brains for a long winter's
 nap,—

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
 I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
 Away to the window I flew like a flash,
 Tore open the shutters, and threw up the sash;
 The moon, on the breast of the new-fallen snow,
 Gave a luster of midday to objects below;
 When, what to my wondering eyes should appear
 But a miniature¹ sleigh and eight tiny reindeer,
 With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
 I knew in a moment it must be Saint Nick!
 More rapid than eagles his coursers² they came,
 And he whistled and shouted and called them by
 name:

"Now Dasher! now Dancer! now Prancer! now
 Vixen!

On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Dunder and Blitzen!
 To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
 Now dash away, dash away, dash away, all!"
 As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
 When they meet with an obstacle,³ mount to the
 sky,

So, up to the housetop the coursers they flew,
 With a sleigh full of toys, — and Saint Nicholas, too.

¹ min'-i-a-ture, very small. ² cours'ers, horses usually, here reindeer.
³ ob'sta-cle, something in the way.