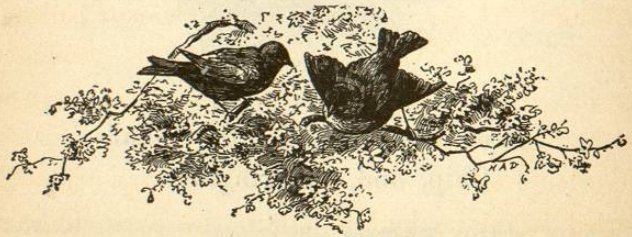
Make all the April woods
  Merry with singing.

Younger than we are,
  O children! and frailer;
Soon in blue air they 'll be
  Singer and sailor.

We, so much older,
  Taller, and stronger;
We shall look down on the
  Birdies no longer.

They shall go flying,
  With musical speeches,
High overhead in the
  Tops of the beeches.

In spite of our wisdom
  And sensible talking,
We on our feet must go
  Plodding and walking.



XXVII. THE WATER BABIES.

By Charles Kingsley.

CHAPTER I.

ONCE upon a time there was a little chimney sweep, and his name was Tom. That is a short name, and you have heard it before, so you will not have much trouble in remembering it. He lived in a great town in the North country, where there were plenty of chimneys to sweep, and plenty of money for Tom to earn and his master to spend.

He could not read nor write, and did not care to do either; and he never washed himself, for there was no water up the court where he lived. He had never been taught to say his prayers. He never had heard of God, or of Christ, except in words which you never have heard, and which it would have been well if he had never heard.

He cried half his time, and laughed the other half. He cried when he had to climb the dark flues, rub-

bing his poor knees and elbows raw; and when the soot got into his eyes, which it did every day in the week; and when his master beat him, which he did every day in the week; and when he had not enough to eat, which happened every day in the week likewise.

And he laughed the other half of the day, when he was tossing half-pennies with the other boys, or playing leapfrog over the posts, or bowling stones at the horses' legs as they trotted by; which last was excellent fun, when there was a wall at hand behind which to hide.

As for chimney sweeping, and being hungry, and being beaten, he took all that for the way of the world, like the rain and snow and thunder, and stood manfully with his back to it till it was over, as his old donkey did to a hailstorm; and then shook his ears and was as jolly as ever; and thought of the fine times coming, when he would be a man, and a master-sweep, and sit in the public house with a quart of beer and a long pipe, and play cards for silver money, and wear velveteens and ankle-jacks, and keep a white bull-dog with one gray ear, and carry her puppies in his pocket, just like a man. And he would have apprentices,[1] one, two, three, if he could.

How he would bully them, and knock them about,

[1] **ap-pren'ti-ces**, persons bound by law to do service.

just as his master did him; and make them carry home the soot sacks, while he rode before them on his donkey with a pipe in his mouth and a flower in his buttonhole, like a king at the head of his army. Yes, there were good times coming; and when his master let him have a pull at the leavings of his beer, Tom was the jolliest boy in the whole town.

One day a smart little groom rode into the court where Tom lived. Tom was hiding behind a wall to heave half a brick at his horse's leg, as is the custom of that country when they welcome strangers; but the groom saw him, and hallooed to him to know where Mr. Grimes, the chimney sweep, lived. Now, Mr. Grimes was Tom's own master, and Tom was a good man of business, and always civil to customers; so he put the half-brick down quietly behind the wall, and proceeded to take orders.

Mr. Grimes was to come up next morning to Sir John Harthover's, at the Place, for his old chimney sweep was gone to prison, and the chimneys wanted sweeping. And so he rode away, not giving Tom time to ask what the sweep had gone to prison for, which was a matter of interest to Tom, as he had been in prison once or twice himself.

Moreover, the groom looked so very neat and clean, with his drab gaiters, drab breeches, drab jacket, snow-white tie with a smart pin in it, and

clean round ruddy face, that Tom was offended and disgusted at his appearance, and considered him a stuck-up fellow, who gave himself airs because he wore smart clothes, and other people paid for them; and went behind the wall to fetch the half-brick after all, but did not, remembering that he had come in the way of business, and was, as it were, under a flag of truce.

His master was so delighted at his new customer that he knocked Tom down out of hand, and drank more beer that night than he usually did in two, in order to be sure of getting up in time the next morning; for the more a man's head aches when he wakes, the more glad he is to turn out and have a breath of fresh air. And when he did get up at four the next morning, he knocked Tom down again in order to teach him (as young gentlemen used to be taught at public schools) that he must be an extra good boy that day, as they were going to a very great house, and might make a very good thing of it if they could but give satisfaction.

And Tom thought so likewise, and, indeed, would have done and behaved his best, even without being knocked down. For, of all places upon earth, Harthover Place (which he had never seen) was the most wonderful; and of all men on earth Sir John (whom he had seen, having been sent to jail by him twice) was the most awful.

Harthover Place was really a grand place, even for the rich North country; with a house so large that in the frame-breaking riots, which Tom could just remember, the Duke of Wellington, with ten thousand soldiers and cannon to match, were easily housed therein, — at least, so Tom believed; with a park full of deer, which Tom believed to be monsters who were in the habit of eating children; with miles of game preserves,[1] in which Mr. Grimes and the collier lads poached[2] at times, on which occasions Tom saw pheasants, and wondered what they tasted like; with a noble salmon river, in which Mr. Grimes and his friends would have liked to poach, — but then they must have got into cold water, and that they did not like at all.

In short, Harthover was a grand place, and Sir John a grand old man, whom even Mr. Grimes respected, for not only could he send Mr. Grimes to prison when he deserved it, as he did once or twice a week; not only did he own all the land about for miles; not only was he a jolly, honest, sensible squire as ever kept a pack of hounds, who would do what he thought right by his neighbors as well as get what he thought right for himself; but, what was more, he weighed full fifteen stone, was nobody

[1] **game preserves**, places where game is kept for the private shooting of some wealthy person.

[2] **poached**, stole game from a preserve.

knew how many inches round the chest, and could have thrashed Mr. Grimes himself in fair fight, which very few folk round there could do, and which, my dear little boy, would not have been right for him to do, as a great many things are not which one both can do and would like very much to do.

So Mr. Grimes touched his hat to him when he rode through the town, and called him a "buirdly awd chap,"[1] and his young ladies "gradely lasses,"[2] — which are two high compliments in the North country, — and thought that that made up for his poaching Sir John's pheasants.

Now, I dare say you never got up at three o'clock on a midsummer morning

Some people get up then because they want to catch salmon; and some, because they want to climb Alps; and a great many more, because they *must*, like Tom. But I assure you that three o'clock on a midsummer morning is the pleasantest time of all the twenty-four hours, and all the three hundred and sixty-five days; and why every one does not get up then, I never could tell, save that they are all determined to spoil their nerves and their complexions by doing all night what they might just as well do all day.

But Tom went to bed at seven, when his master

[1] "**buirdly awd chap**," stout old fellow.
[2] "**gradely lasses**," willing girls.

went to the public house, and slept like a dead pig; for which reason he was as piert[1] as a gamecock (who always gets up early to wake the maids), and just ready to get up when the fine gentlemen and ladies were just ready to go to bed.

CHAPTER II.

SO he and his master set out; Grimes rode the donkey in front, and Tom and the brushes walked behind; out of the court, and up the street, past the closed window shutters and the winking, weary policemen, and the roofs all shining gray in the gray dawn.

They passed through the pitmen's village, all shut up and silent now, and through the turnpike; and then they were out in the real country, and plodding along the black dusty road, between black slag walls, with no sound but the groaning and thumping of the pit engine in the next field.

But soon the road grew white and the walls likewise; and at the wall's foot grew long grass and gay flowers, all drenched with dew; and instead of the groaning of the pit engine, they heard the skylark saying his matins[2] high up in the air, and the pit-bird warbling in the sedges,[3] as he had warbled all night long.

[1] **piert**, active.
[2] **mat'ins**, morning prayers.
[3] **sedges**, marshes covered with water plants.

All else was silent, for old Mrs. Earth was still fast asleep; and, like many pretty people, she looked still prettier asleep than awake.

The great elm trees in the gold-green meadows were fast asleep above, and the cows fast asleep beneath them; nay, the few clouds which were about were fast asleep likewise, and so tired that they had lain down on the earth to rest, in long white flakes and bars, among the stems of the elm trees and along the tops of the alders by the stream, waiting for the sun to bid them rise and go about their day's business in the clear blue overhead.

On they went; and Tom looked, and looked, — for he never had been so far into the country before, — and longed to get over a gate, and pick buttercups, and look for birds' nests in the hedge; but Mr. Grimes was a man of business, and would not have heard of that.

Soon they came up with a poor Irishwoman, trudging along with a bundle at her back. She had a gray shawl over her head, and a crimson madder[1] petticoat; so you may be sure she came from Galway. She had neither shoes nor stockings, and limped along as if she were tired and footsore; but she was a very tall, handsome woman, with bright gray eyes, and heavy black hair hanging about her cheeks. And she took Mr. Grimes's fancy

[1] **mad′der**, a red dye.

so much that when he came alongside he called out to her, —

"This is a hard road for a gradely foot like that. Will ye up, lass, and ride behind me?"

But perhaps she did not admire Mr. Grimes's look and voice, for she answered quietly, —

"No, thank you; I'd sooner walk with your little lad here."

"You may please yourself," growled Grimes, and went on smoking.

So she walked beside Tom, and talked to him, and asked him where he lived, and what he knew, and all about himself, till Tom thought he had never met such a pleasant-spoken woman. And she asked him at last whether he said his prayers; and seemed sad when he told her that he knew no prayers to say.

Then he asked her where she lived; and she said, "Far away by the sea." And Tom asked her about the sea; and she told him how it rolled and roared over the rocks in winter nights, and lay still in the bright summer days for the children to bathe and play in it; and many a story more, till Tom longed to go and see the sea, and bathe in it likewise.

At last, at the bottom of a hill, they came to a spring, — a real North country limestone fountain, like one of those in Sicily or Greece, where the old

heathen fancied the nymphs[1] sat cooling themselves through the hot summer's day, while the shepherds peeped at them from behind the bushes.

Out of a low cave of rock at the foot of a limestone crag, the great fountain rose, quelling,[2] and bubbling, and gurgling, so clear that you could not tell where the water ended and the air began; and ran away under the road, a stream large enough to turn a mill, among blue geranium, and golden globe-flower, and wild raspberry, and the bird cherry with its tassels of snow.

And there Grimes stopped and looked, and Tom looked too. Tom was wondering whether anything lived in that dark cave, and came out at night to fly in the meadows. But Grimes was not wondering at all. Without a word he got off his donkey and clambered over the low road wall, and knelt down and began dipping his ugly head into the spring, and very dirty he made it.

Tom was picking the flowers as fast as he could. The Irishwoman helped him, and showed him how to tie them up; and a very pretty nosegay they had made between them. But when he saw Grimes actually wash, he stopped, quite astonished; and when Grimes had finished, and began shaking his ears to dry them, he said:

[1] **nymph**, a goddess of the woods and waters.
[2] **quell'ing**, becoming still.

"Why, master, I never saw you do that before."

"Nor will again, most likely. 'T was n't for cleanliness I did it, but for coolness. I 'd be ashamed to want washing every week or so, like any smutty collier lad."

"I wish I might go and dip my head in," said poor little Tom. "It must be as good as putting it under the town pump; and there is no beadle[1] here to drive a chap away."

"Thou come along," said Grimes. "What dost want with washing thyself? Thou did not drink half a gallon of beer last night, like me."

Grimes was very sulky because the woman preferred Tom's company to his; so he dashed at him with horrid words, and tore him up from his knees, and began beating him. But Tom was accustomed to that, and got his head safe between Mr. Grimes's legs, and kicked his shins with all his might.

"Are you not ashamed of yourself, Thomas Grimes?" cried the Irishwoman over the wall.

Grimes looked up, startled at her knowing his name; but all he answered was, "No; nor never was yet," and went on beating Tom.

"True for you. If you ever had been ashamed of yourself, you would have gone over into Vendale long ago."

[1] **bea'dle**, an officer.

"What do you know about Vendale?" shouted Grimes; but he left off beating Tom.

"I know about Vendale, and about you, too. I know, for instance, what happened in Aldermire Copse,[1] by night, two years ago come Martinmas."[2]

"You do?" shouted Grimes, and, leaving Tom, climbed up over the wall and faced the woman. Tom thought he was going to strike her; but she looked him too full and fierce in the face for that.

"Yes; I was there," said the Irishwoman, quietly.

"You are no Irishwoman, by your speech," said Grimes, after many bad words.

"Never mind who I am. I saw what I saw; and if you strike that boy again, I can tell what I know."

Grimes seemed quite cowed,[3] and got on his donkey without another word.

"Stop!" said the Irishwoman. "I have one more word for you both; for you will both see me again before all is over. Those that wish to be clean, clean they will be; and those that wish to be foul, foul they will be. Remember!"

And she turned away, and through a gate into the meadow. Grimes stood still a moment, like a man who had been stunned. Then he rushed after

[1] **copse**, a wood consisting of small trees.
[2] **Mar'tin-mas**, the feast of St. Martin, November 11.
[3] **cowed**, frightened.

her, shouting, "You come back!" but when he got into the meadow the woman was not there.

Had she hidden away? There was no place to hide in. But Grimes looked about, and Tom also, for he was as puzzled as Grimes himself at her disappearing so suddenly; but look where they would, she was not there.

Grimes came back again, as silent as a post, for he was a little frightened; and getting on his donkey, filled a fresh pipe and smoked away, leaving Tom in peace.

CHAPTER III.

AND now they had gone three miles and more, and came to Sir John's lodge gates.

Very grand lodges they were, with very grand iron gates, and stone gate posts, and on the top of each a most dreadful bogy,[1] all teeth, horns, and tail, which was the crest which Sir John's ancestors[2] wore in the Wars of the Roses;[3] and very prudent men they were to wear it, for all their enemies must have run for their lives at the very first sight of them.

Grimes rang at the gate, and out came a keeper on the spot, and opened.

[1] **bo'-gy**, goblin, monster.
[2] **an'-ces-tors**, parents and grandparents; forefathers.
[3] "**Wars of the Roses**," a famous series of wars between two great families, the head of each of which claimed the right to be king of England. Each family had a rose for its symbol; one red, the other white.

"I was told to expect thee," said he. "Now, thou 'lt be so good as to keep to the main avenue, and not let me find a hare or a rabbit on thee when thou comest back. I shall look sharp for one, I tell thee."

"Not if it 's in the bottom of the soot bag," quoth Grimes, and at that he laughed; and the keeper laughed and said,—

"If that 's thy sort, I may as well walk up with thee to the hall."

"I think thou best had. It 's thy business to see after thy game, man, and not mine."

So the keeper went with them; and, to Tom's surprise, he and Grimes chatted together all the way quite pleasantly. He did not know that a keeper is only a poacher turned outside in, and a poacher a keeper turned inside out.

They walked up a great lime avenue a full mile long, and between their stems Tom peeped trembling at the horns of the sleeping deer, which stood up among the ferns. Tom had never seen such enormous[1] trees, and as he looked up he fancied that the blue sky rested on their heads. But he was puzzled very much by a strange murmuring noise, which followed them all the way; so much puzzled that at last he took courage to ask the keeper what it was.

[1] **e-nor'mous**, very large.

He spoke very civilly, and called him Sir; for he was horribly afraid of him, which pleased the keeper, and he told him that they were the bees about the lime flowers.

"What are bees?" asked Tom.

"What make honey."

"What is honey?" asked Tom.

"Thou hold thy noise," said Grimes.

"Let the boy be," said the keeper. "He 's a civil young chap now, and that 's more than he 'll be long if he bides with thee."

Grimes laughed, for he took that for a compliment.[1]

"I wish I were a keeper," said Tom, "to live in such a beautiful place, and wear green velveteens,[2] and have a real dog-whistle at my button, like you."

The keeper laughed; he was a kind-hearted fellow enough.

"Let well alone, lad, and ill too at times. Thy life 's safer than mine at all events, eh, Mr. Grimes?"

And Grimes laughed again; and then the two men began talking quite low. Tom could hear, though, that it was about some poaching fight; and at last Grimes said surlily,

"Hast thou anything against me?"

[1] **com'pli-ment**, praise; pleasant speech.

[2] **vel-vet-eens'**, clothes made of velveteen, a kind of cloth.

"Not now."

"Then don't ask me any questions till thou hast, for I am a man of honor."

And at that they both laughed again, and thought it a very good joke.

And by this time they were come up to the great iron gates in front of the house, and Tom stared through them at the rhododendrons and azaleas, which were all in flower, and then at the house itself, and wondered how many chimneys there were in it, and how long ago it was built, and what was the man's name that built it, and whether he got much money for his job.

These last were very difficult questions to answer. For Harthover had been built at ninety different times, and in nineteen different styles, and looked as if somebody had built a whole street of houses of every imaginable[1] shape, and then stirred them together with a spoon.

But Tom and his master did not go in through the great iron gates, as if they had been Dukes or Bishops, but round the back way, and a very long way round it was, — and into a little back door, where the ash boy let them in, yawning horribly. And then in a passage the housekeeper met them, in such a flowered chintz[2] dressing-gown that Tom mistook her

[1] **im-ag'i-na-ble**, that can be thought of.
[2] **chintz**, cotton cloth; calico.

for My Lady herself; and she gave Grimes solemn orders about, "You will take care of this, and take care of that," as if he was going up the chimneys, and not Tom. And Grimes listened, and said every now and then, under his voice, "You'll mind that, you little beggar?" and Tom did mind, — all at least that he could.

And then the housekeeper turned them into a grand room all covered up in sheets of brown paper, and bade them begin, in a lofty and tremendous[1] voice; and so, after a whimper or two and a kick from his master, into the grate Tom went, and up the chimney, while a housemaid stayed in the room to watch the furniture; to whom Mr. Grimes paid many playful and chivalrous[2] compliments, but met with very slight encouragement in return.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW many chimneys Tom swept I cannot say; but he swept so many that he got quite tired, and puzzled too, for they were not like the town flues to which he was accustomed,[3] but such as you would find — if you would only get up them and look, which perhaps you would not like to do — in old country houses, large and crooked chimneys, which had been

[1] **tre-men'dous**, terrible; very great.
[2] **chiv'al-rous**, knightly; polite.
[3] **ac-cus'tomed**, used to.

altered again and again, till they ran one into another, so that Tom fairly lost his way in them; not that he cared much for that, though he was in pitchy darkness, for he was as much at home in a chimney as a mole is underground. But at last, coming down as he thought the right chimney, he came down the wrong one, and found himself standing on the hearthrug in a room the like of which he had never been in before.

Tom had never seen the like. He had never been in gentlefolks' rooms but when the carpets were all up, and the curtains down, and the furniture huddled together under a cloth, and the pictures covered with aprons and dusters; and he had often enough wondered what the rooms were like when they were all ready for the quality[1] to sit in. And now he saw, and he thought the sight very pretty.

The room was all dressed in white: white window curtains, white bed curtains, white furniture, and white walls, with just a few lines of pink here and there. The carpet was all over gay little flowers, and the walls were hung with pictures in gilt frames, which amused Tom very much. There were pictures of ladies and gentlemen, and pictures of horses and dogs.

The horses he liked; but the dogs he did not care for much, for there were no bulldogs among them, not even a terrier. But the two pictures which took

[1] **qual'-i-ty**, rich or noble people.

his fancy most were: one, a man in long garments, with little children and their mothers round him, who was laying his hand upon the children's heads.

That was a very pretty picture, Tom thought, to hang in a lady's room. For he could see that it was a lady's room by the dresses which lay about.

The other picture was that of a man nailed to a cross, which surprised Tom much. He fancied that he had seen something like it in a shop window. But why was it there? "Poor man," thought Tom; "and he looks so kind and quiet. But why should the lady have such a sad picture as that in her room? Perhaps it was some kinsman[1] of hers who had been murdered by the savages in foreign parts, and she kept it there for a remembrance." And Tom felt sad and awed, and turned to look at something else.

The next thing he saw, and that, too, puzzled him, was a washing-stand, with ewers and basins, and soap and brushes and towels, and a large bath full of clean water. "What a heap of things, all for washing. She must be a very dirty lady," thought Tom, "by my master's rule, to want as much scrubbing as all that. But she must be very cunning to put the dirt out of the way so well afterwards, for I don't see a speck about the room, not even on the very towels."

And then, looking toward the bed, he saw that dirty lady, and held his breath with astonishment.

[1] **kins'-man**, relative.