

He could not get on. The sun was burning, and yet he felt chill all over. He was quite empty, and yet he felt quite sick. There were but two hundred yards of smooth pasture between him and the cottage, and yet he could not walk down it. He could hear the stream murmuring only one field beyond it, and yet it seemed to him as if it were a hundred miles off.

He lay down on the grass, till the beetles ran over him and the flies settled on his nose. I don't know when he would have got up again if the gnats and the midges had not taken compassion¹ on him.

But the gnats blew their trumpets so loud in his ear, and the midges nibbled so at his hands and face wherever they could find a place free from soot, that at last he woke up, and stumbled away, down over a low wall, and into a narrow road, and up to the cottage door.

And a neat, pretty cottage it was, with clipped yew hedges all round the garden, and yews inside too. And out of the open door came a noise like that of the frogs when they know that it is going to be scorching hot to-morrow,—and how they know that I don't know, and you don't know, and nobody knows.

He came slowly up to the open door, which was

¹ com-pas'-sion, pity.

all hung round with clematis¹ and roses; and then peeped in, half afraid.

And there sat by the empty fireplace, which was filled with a pot of sweet herbs, the nicest old woman that ever was seen, in her red petticoat, and short dimity² bedgown, and clean white cap, with a black silk handkerchief over it tied under her chin. At her feet sat the grandfather of all the cats; and opposite her sat, on two benches, twelve or fourteen neat, rosy, chubby little children, learning their Chris-cross-row; and gabble enough they made about it.

Such a pleasant cottage it was, with a shiny clean stone floor, and curious old prints on the walls, and an old black oak sideboard full of bright pewter and brass dishes, and a cuckoo clock in the corner which began shouting as soon as Tom appeared; not that it was frightened at Tom, but that it was just eleven o'clock.

All the children started at Tom's dirty black figure. The girls began to cry, and the boys began to laugh, and all pointed at him rudely enough; but Tom was too tired to care for that.

"What art thou, and what dost want?" cried the old dame. "A chimney sweep! Away with thee! I'll have no sweeps here."

"Water," said poor little Tom, quite faint.

¹ clem'-a-tis, a climbing plant.

² dim'-i-ty, a kind of cloth.

"Water? There's plenty i' the beck,"¹ she said quite sharply.

"But I can't get there; I'm most clemmed² with hunger and drought."³ And Tom sank down upon the doorstep and laid his head against the post.

And the old dame looked at him through her spectacles one minute, and two, and three; and then she said, "He's sick; and a bairn's a bairn,⁴ sweep or none."

"Water," said Tom.

"God forgive me!" and she put by her spectacles, and rose, and came to Tom. "Water's bad for thee; I'll give thee milk." And she toddled off into the next room, and brought a cup of milk and a bit of bread.

Tom drank the milk off at one draught, and then looked up, revived.

"Where didst come from?" said the dame.

"Over fell, there," said Tom, and pointed up into the sky.

"Over Harthover? and down Lewthwaite Crag? Art sure thou art not lying?"

"Why should I?" said Tom, and leant his head against the post.

"And how got ye up there?"

"I came over from the Place;" and Tom was so tired and desperate he had no heart or time to think

¹beck, brook. ²clemmed, starved. ³drought, thirst. ⁴bairn, child.

of a story, so he told all the truth in a few words.

"And thou hast not been stealing, then?"

"No."

"Bless thy little heart! I'll warrant not. Why, God's guided the bairn because he was innocent. Away from the Place, and over Harthover Fell,¹ and down Lewthwaite Crag! Who ever heard the like, if God had n't led him? Why dost not eat thy bread?"

"I can't."

"It's good enough, for I made it myself."

"I can't," said Tom, and he laid his head on his knees and then asked, "Is it Sunday?"

"No, then; why should it be?"

"Because I hear the church bells ringing so."

"Bless thy pretty heart! the bairn's sick. Come wi' me, and I'll hap² thee up somewhere. If thou wert a bit cleaner I'd put thee in my own bed, for the Lord's sake. But come along here."

But when Tom tried to get up he was so tired and giddy that she had to help him and lead him.

She put him in an outhouse upon soft sweet hay and an old rug, and bade him sleep off his walk, and she would come to him when school was over, in an hour's time.

And so she went in again, expecting Tom to fall fast asleep at once.

¹fell, stony hill.

²hap, put; take care of.

CHAPTER VIII.

BUT Tom did not fall asleep. Instead of it he turned and tossed and kicked about in the strangest way, and felt so hot all over that he longed to get into the river to cool himself; and then he fell half asleep, and dreamt that he heard the little white lady crying to him, "Oh, you're so dirty; go and be washed;" and then that he heard the Irishwoman saying, "Those that wish to be clean, clean they will be."

And then he heard the church bells ring so loud, close to him, too, that he was sure it must be Sunday, in spite of what the old dame had said; and he would go to church and see what a church was like inside, for he had never been in one, poor little fellow, in all his life. But the people would never let him come in all over soot and dirt like that.

He must go to the river and wash first. And he said out loud again and again, though being half asleep he did not know it, "I must be clean, I must be clean."

And all of a sudden he found himself, not in the outhouse on the hay, but in the middle of a meadow over the road, with the stream just before him, saying continually, "I must be clean, I must be clean." He had got there on his own legs, between sleep and awake, as children will often get out of bed

and go about the room when they are not quite well.

But he was not a bit surprised, and went on to the bank of the brook and lay down on the grass, and looked into the clear limestone water, with every pebble at the bottom bright and clean, while the little silver trout dashed about in fright at the sight of his black face; and he dipped his hand in and found it so cool, cool, cool; and he said, "I will be a fish; I will swim in the water; I must be clean, I must be clean."

So he pulled off all his clothes in such haste that he tore some of them, which was easy enough with such ragged old things; and he put his poor hot, sore feet into the water, and then his legs; and the further he went in, the more the church bells rang in his head.

"Ah!" said Tom, "I must be quick and wash myself; the bells are ringing quite loud now, and they will stop soon, and then the door will be shut, and I shall never be able to get in at all."

And all the while he never saw the Irishwoman, — not behind him this time, but before, — for just before he came to the river side, she had stepped down into the cool water, and her shawl and her petticoat floated off her, and the green water weeds floated round her sides, and the white water lilies floated round her head, and the fairies of the stream

came up from the bottom and bore her away and down upon their arms; for she was the Queen of them all, and perhaps of more besides.

"Where have you been?" they asked her.

"I have been smoothing sick folk's pillows, and whispering sweet dreams into their ears; opening cottage casements,¹ to let out the stifling² air; coaxing little children away from gutters and foul pools, where fever breeds; doing all I can to help those who will not help themselves; and little enough that is, and weary work for me. But I have brought you a new little brother, and watched him safe all the way here."

Then all the fairies laughed for joy at the thought that they had a little brother coming.

"But mind, maidens, he must not see you, or know that you are here. He is but a savage³ now, and like the beasts which perish; and from the beasts which perish he must learn. So you must not play with him, or speak to him, or let him see you; but only keep him from being harmed."

Then the fairies were sad, because they could not play with their new brother; but they always did what they were told.

And their Queen floated away down the river; and whither she went, thither she came. But all this

¹ case'ments, windows.

² sti'fling, choking; foul.

³ sav'age, a wild, ignorant person.

Tom, of course, never saw or heard; and perhaps if he had, it would have made little difference in the story; for he was so hot and thirsty, and longed so to be clean for once, that he tumbled himself as quick as he could into the clear, cool stream.

And he had not been in it two minutes before he fell fast asleep,—into the quietest, sunniest, coziest sleep that ever he had in his life; and he dreamt about the green meadows by which he had walked that morning, and the tall elm trees, and the sleeping cows; and after that he dreamt of nothing at all.

The reason of his falling into such a delightful sleep is very simple; and yet hardly any one has found it out. It was merely that the fairies took him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE kind old dame came back at twelve, when school was over, to look at Tom; but there was no Tom there. She looked about for his foot-prints; but the ground was so hard that there was no slot,¹ as they say in dear old North Devon.

So she went in again quite sulky, thinking that little Tom had tricked her with a false story, and shammed² ill, and then ran away again.

But she altered her mind the next day. For when Sir John and the rest of them had run them-

¹ slot, track.

² shammed, pretended.

selves out of breath, and lost Tom, they went back again, looking very foolish.

And they looked more foolish still when Sir John heard more of the story from the nurse; and more foolish still, again, when they heard the whole story from Miss Ellie, the little lady in white. All she had seen was a poor little black chimney sweep crying and sobbing, and going to get up the chimney again. Of course she was very much frightened; and no wonder. But that was all. The boy had taken nothing in the room; by the mark of his little sooty feet, they could see that he had never been off the hearth rug till the nurse caught hold of him. It was all a mistake.

So Sir John told Grimes to go home, and promised him five shillings if he would bring the boy quietly up to him, without beating him, that he might be sure of the truth. For he took for granted—and Grimes too—that Tom had made his way home.

But no Tom came back to Mr. Grimes that evening; and he went to the police office to tell them to look out for the boy. But no Tom was heard of. As for his having gone over those great fells to Vendale, they no more dreamed of that than of his having gone to the moon.

So Mr. Grimes came up to Harthover next day with a very sour face; but when he got there, Sir John was over the hills and far away, and Mr.

Grimes had to sit in the outer servants' hall all day, and drink strong ale to wash away his sorrows,—and they were washed away long before Sir John came back.

For good Sir John had slept very badly that night; and he said to his lady, “My dear, the boy must have got over into the grouse moors, and lost himself; and he lies very heavily on my conscience, poor little lad. But I know what I will do.”

So at five the next morning up he got and into his bath, and into his shooting-jacket and gaiters, and into the stable yard, like a fine old English gentleman, with a face as red as a rose, and a hand as hard as a table, and a back as broad as a bullock's, and bade them bring his shooting pony, and the keeper to come on his pony, and the huntsman, and the first whip, and the second whip, and the under keeper with the bloodhound in a leash,—a great dog as tall as a calf, of the color of a gravel walk, with mahogany ears and nose, and a throat like a church bell.

They took him up to the place where Tom had gone into the wood; and there the hound lifted up his mighty voice and told them all he knew.

Then he took them to the place where Tom had climbed the wall; and they shoved it down, and all got through.

And then the wise dog took them over the moor,

and over the fells, step by step, very slowly; for the scent was a day old, you know, and very light from the heat and drought. But that was why cunning old Sir John started at five in the morning.

And at last he came to the top of Lewthwaite Crag, and there he bayed, and looked up in their faces as much as to say, "I tell you he has gone down here."

They could hardly believe that Tom would have gone so far; and when they looked at that awful cliff, they could never believe that he would have dared to face it. But if the dog said so, it must be true.

"Heaven forgive us!" said Sir John. "If we find him at all, we shall find him lying at the bottom." And he slapped his great hand upon his great thigh, and said,—

"Who will go down over Lewthwaite Crag, and see if that boy is alive? Oh that I were twenty years younger, and I would go down myself!" And so he would have done, as well as any sweep in the country. Then he said,—

"Twenty pounds to the man who brings me that boy alive!" And, as was his way, what he said he meant.

Now among the lot was a little groom boy, a very little groom indeed; and he was the same who had ridden up the court and told Tom to come to the Hall, and he said,—

"Twenty pounds or none, I will go down over Lewthwaite Crag, if it's only for the poor boy's sake. For he was as civil a spoken little chap as ever climbed a flue."

So down over Lewthwaite Crag he went. A very smart groom he was at the top, and a very shabby one at the bottom; for he tore his gaiters, and he tore his breeches, and he tore his jacket, and he burst his braces, and he burst his boots, and he lost his hat, and, what was worst of all, he lost his shirt pin, which he prized very much, for it was gold; but he never saw anything of Tom.

And all the while Sir John and the rest were riding round, full three miles to the right, and back again, to get into Vendale and to the foot of the great crag.

When they came to the old dame's school, all the children came out to see. And the old dame herself came out too; and when she saw Sir John she courtesied very low, for she was a tenant of his.

"Well, dame, and how are you?" said Sir John.

"Blessings on you as broad as your back, Harthover," says she, — she didn't call him Sir John, but only Harthover, for that is the fashion in the North Country, — "and welcome into Vendale! but you're no hunting the fox this time of year?"

"I am hunting, and strange game too," said he.

"Blessings on your heart! and what makes you look so sad the morn?"

"I'm looking for a lost child, a chimney sweep that is run away."

"Oh, Harthover, Harthover!" says she, "ye were always a just man and a merciful; and ye'll no harm the poor little lad if I give you tidings of him?"

"Not I, not I, dame! I'm afraid we hunted him out of the house all on a miserable mistake, and the hound has brought him to the top of Lewthwaite Crag, and —"

Whereat the old dame broke out crying, without letting him finish his story.

"So he told me the truth after all, poor little dear! Ah, first thoughts are best, and a body's heart'll guide them right, if they will but hearken to it." And then she told Sir John all.

"Bring the dog here, and lay him on," said Sir John, without another word, and he set his teeth very hard.

And the dog opened at once, and went away at the back of the cottage, over the road, and over the meadow, and through a bit of alder copse; and there, upon an alder stump, they saw Tom's clothes lying.

And then they knew as much about it all as there was any need to know.

And Tom?

CHAPTER X.



AH, now comes the most wonderful part of this wonderful story. Tom, when he woke, for of course he woke, — children always wake after they have slept exactly as long as is good for them, — found himself swimming about in the stream, being about four inches long, and having round his neck a set of gills, just like those of a sucking eft,¹ which he mistook for a lace frill, till he pulled at them, found he

hurt himself, and made up his mind that they were part of himself, and best left alone.

In fact, the fairies had turned him into a water baby.

A water baby? You never heard of a water baby? Perhaps not. That is the very reason why this story was written. There are a great many things in the world which you never heard of.

"But there are no such things as water babies!"

How do you know that? Have you been there to see? And if you had been there to see, and had

¹ eft, a small lizard.

seen none, that would not prove that there were none. If Mr. Garth does not find a fox in Eversley Wood, that does not prove that there are no such things as foxes.

"But surely if there were water babies, somebody would have caught one, at least!"

Well, how do you know that somebody has not?

"But they would have put it into a bottle of spirits, and sent it to Professor Owen,¹ or to Professor Huxley,² to see what they would say about it."

Ah! my dear little man, that does not follow at all, as you will see before the end of the story.

No water babies, indeed! There are land babies; then, why not water babies? Are there not water rats, water flies, water crickets, water crabs, water tortoises, water scorpions, water tigers and water hogs, water cats and water dogs, sea lions and sea bears, sea horses and sea elephants, sea mice and sea urchins, sea razors and sea pens, sea combs and sea fans; and of plants, are there not water grass and water crowfoot, water milfoil, and so on without end?

Do not even you know that a green drake, and an alder fly, and a dragon fly live under water till they change their skins, just as Tom changed his? And if a water animal can continually change into a land

¹ Professor Owen, a distinguished English professor of anatomy and physiology.

² Professor Huxley, a noted naturalist and philosopher.

animal, why should not a land animal sometimes change into a water animal?

If the changes of the lower animals are so wonderful, and so difficult to discover, why should not there be changes in the higher animals far more wonderful, and far more difficult to discover? And may not man, the crown and flower of all things, undergo some change more wonderful than all the rest?

Till you know a great deal more about nature than Professor Owen and Professor Huxley put together, don't tell me about what cannot be, or fancy that anything is too wonderful to be true!

Am I in earnest? Oh, dear, no! Don't you know that this is a fairy tale, and all fun and pretense; and that you are not to believe one word of it, even if it is true?

But at all events, so it happened to Tom. And therefore the keeper, and the groom, and Sir John made a great mistake, and were very unhappy (Sir John at least) without any reason, when they found a black thing in the water, and said it was Tom's body, and that he had been drowned. They were utterly mistaken. Tom was quite alive, and cleaner and merrier than he ever had been. The fairies had washed him, you see, in the swift river, so thoroughly that not only his dirt, but his whole husk and shell had been washed quite off him, and the pretty little

real Tom was washed out of the inside of it, and swam away, as a caddis¹ does when its case of stones and silk is bored through, and away it goes on its back, paddling to the shore, there to split its skin and fly away as a caperer,² on four fawn-colored wings, with long legs and horns. They are foolish fellows, the caperers, and fly into the candle at night, if you leave the door open. We will hope Tom will be wiser, now he has got safe out of his sooty old shell.

But good Sir John did not understand all this; and he took it into his head that Tom was drowned. When they looked into the empty pockets of his shell, and found no jewels there, nor money, — nothing but three marbles and a brass button with a string to it, — then Sir John did something as like crying as ever he did in his life, and blamed himself more bitterly than he need have done.

So he cried, and the groom boy cried, and the huntsman cried, and the dame cried, and the old nurse cried (for it was somewhat her fault), and my Lady cried. The keeper did not cry, though he had been so good-natured to Tom the morning before; and Grimes did not cry, for Sir John gave him ten pounds.

And the little girl would not play with her dolls for a whole week, and never forgot poor little Tom.

¹ *cad'-dis*, a kind of fly that is hatched in the water.

² *ca'-per-er*, a kind of insect.

And soon my Lady put a pretty little tombstone over Tom's shell in the little churchyard in Vendale, where the old dalesmen all sleep side by side between the limestone crags.

And the dame decked it with garlands every Sunday, till she grew so old that she could not stir abroad; then the little children decked it for her. And always she sung an old song, as she sat spinning what shall be called her wedding dress. The children could not understand it, but they liked it none the less for that; for it was very sweet and very sad, and that was enough for them. And these are the words of it:—

“When all the world is young, lad,
 And all the trees are green,
 And every goose a swan, lad,
 And every lass a queen;
 Then hey for boot and horse, lad,
 And round the world away;
 Young blood must have its course, lad,
 And every dog his day.

“When all the world is old, lad,
 And all the trees are brown;
 And all the sport is stale, lad,
 And all the wheels run down;
 Creep home and take your place, there,
 The spent and maimed among:
 God grant you find one face there
 You loved when all was young!”

Those are the words, but they are only the body of it; the soul of the song was the dear old woman's sweet face, and sweet voice, and the sweet old air to which she sang; and that, alas! one cannot put on paper. And at last she grew so still and lame that the angels were forced to carry her; and they helped her on with her wedding dress, and carried her up over Harthover Fells, and a long way beyond that too; and there was a new schoolmistress in Vendale.

And all the while Tom was swimming about in the river, with a pretty little lace collar of gills about his neck, as lively as a grig,¹ and as clean as a fresh-run salmon.

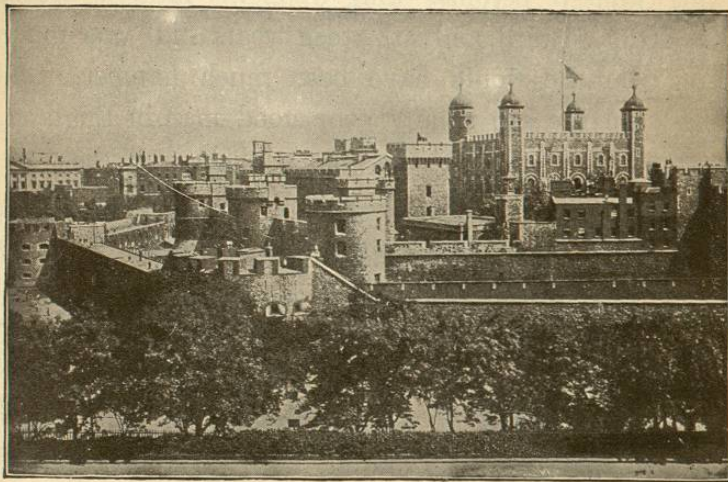
Now, if you don't like my story, then go to the schoolroom and learn your multiplication table, and see if you like that better. Some people, no doubt, would do so. So much the better for us, if not for them. It takes all sorts, they say, to make a world.

XXVIII. KING EDWARD THE FIFTH.

MANY and many a boy has wished that he were a king, and many a girl has thought that, if she were only a queen, she should be perfectly happy; for boys and girls, and sometimes grown

¹ grig, cricket.

people, think that kings and queens must be happy; that they have nothing to do but what they please; that other people must obey them, and that no one can direct them,—and what boy or girl does not like that?



THE TOWER OF LONDON.

But kings and queens are not always happy. Indeed, I doubt very much whether any boy or girl who reads this is not happier in wishing to be a king or queen than if the wish were gratified. Kings and queens usually lead very hard lives, and they cannot by any means do all that they would like to do.

There was once in England a boy who was a king. His name was Edward, and he was called Edward