

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Tom, Dot and Talking Mouse and Other Bedtime Stories

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: Tom, Dot and Talking Mouse and Other Bedtime Stories

Author: C. Kernahan

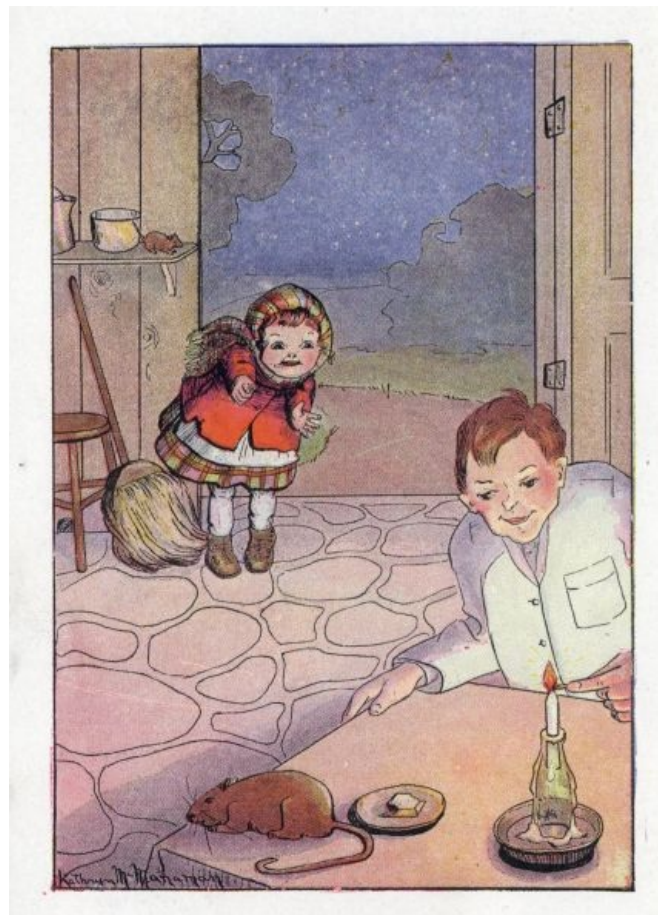
Author: J. G. Kernahan

Release date: September 29, 2006 [eBook #19409]

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK TOM, DOT AND TALKING MOUSE AND OTHER BEDTIME STORIES ***

E-text prepared by Al Haines



[Frontispiece: Tom Lecky]

TOM, DOT AND TALKING MOUSE
AND
OTHER BEDTIME STORIES

BY J. G. & C. KERNAHAN

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
THE PLATT & MUNK CO. INC.

COPYRIGHT, 1916, BY
THE PLATT & PECK CO.

CONTENTS

The Miller's Mouse

The Old Rocking Horse

The Message of the Lily

Water-Lily's Mission

ILLUSTRATIONS

Tom Lecky *Frontispiece*

Little girls with flowers

Tom dreaming

Mouse at mouse-hole

Mouse at cobweb ladder

Little girls picking flowers

Child with basket of flowers

THE MILLER'S MOUSE

The reason why every one loved Tom Lecky so much was, I believe, that he was so good-tempered, so cheerful and so unselfish.

Tom was not good-looking, and, indeed, if one were disposed to be critical in such matters, one could have found fault with almost all his features except his eyes. These were brown like sealskin, and nearly always brimming over with merriment. But no one ever thought of criticising Tom's features, and there really was a common belief among the villagers that Tom was a handsome fellow. And indeed he was, for his beautiful unselfish soul gave to his face a beauty which merely regular features can never do.

Tom Lecky owned a flour-mill, which was situated a little way from Ellingford, the village where he had been born. He was "well-off," for the mill brought him a good deal of money. He had no relations, but hoped to have a very near one—a wife. This was Anne Grey, the blacksmith's daughter, who was as pretty as she was winsome. She was fond of pretty things too, flowers especially, so it was Tom's delight to gratify her fancy.

For this reason he bought Brooks's cottage, which had a lovely garden. And week by week he purchased this or that to make his cottage pretty and home-like for his bride. It would be difficult to tell how much pleasure Tom found in furnishing this cottage. He would wander in the garden-paths among the rose-bushes, smiling to himself as he thought of the many surprises in store for Anne. But a surprise was in store for him which was not at all pleasant. Anne Grey married some one else.

When Tom heard it, he locked up the pretty cottage, put the key in his pocket, and went to the mill to live. To Anne he spoke no word, though he saw her with her husband coming from the church. In fact, he spoke to no one, but did his work at the mill like a man in a dream. Some there were who tried to break through his stony reserve, but no one succeeded. Tom Lecky had become hard and soured. He remained alone in the mill—except for the mice, and for these he set traps. He caught a great many, and plunged them, trap and all, into a bucket of water. When he found a trap with a mouse in it he would look at the little creature beating itself against its prison, turning rapidly round, forcing its pointed nose between the wire bars, while its long

tail hung down through the bars on the other side. He would watch the bright little eyes almost start from their sockets in fear and agony, and yet no feeling of sorrow or pity came into his heart for the tiny captive, and after a time with a smile on his face he would drown the little creature. Could this be the Tom Lecky who had had almost the tenderness of a woman at the sight of pain?

Tom's "living-room" was in the basement of the mill. In it were a table, a chair, a bed, and a cupboard. There was also a hanging bookshelf, with a row of books on it, which Tom never opened now. Through the ceiling of this room descended a ladder white with flour. If you climbed this ladder you found yourself in a room smothered with flour-dust, and your ears were almost deafened by the sound of the machinery overhead which the wind-impelled mill-wheel kept in motion, while the descending stream of ground flour travelled unceasingly down from the grinding-wheel to the bin below. There was a ladder from this room to the one above where the machinery was. There was also a room over this from which you could get outside and regulate the small spiny-looking wheel at the top so as to gain all the force of the wind. All these rooms were festooned with cobwebs quite white with flour. The spiders were white, too, which made them look larger. Even the mice caught in the traps were white with flour.

Now at eight o'clock every evening Tom sat down at the round wooden table, and ate his bread and cheese by the light of a tallow candle inserted in the neck of a bottle. And every night at this time there crept out from a crevice near the cupboard a tiny brown mouse, covered with flour-dust. This little mouse seemed eager and hungry, but it never ventured near the traps where the alluring cheese smelt so deliciously. It would wait for Tom to drop a crumb, and then would dart after it and frisk away into its hole, to return and watch again for another crumb. This happened night after night, till Tom began to watch for the little creature with some eagerness. The sound of its tiny scampering feet on the floor would call up a feeling of pleasure like that which one feels when the knock of a dear friend is heard on the door. But Tom was bitter for all this, and at times he had a savage hope that the little mouse would after all be lured into one of the traps. He did not want to feel tender or kindly any more to anything. He wanted to feel cruel and heartless, because his tenderness had cost him so much pain.



[Illustration: Little girls with flowers]

One autumn evening, when the air was still, and a sweet afterglow rested on the sky like an echo of the sunset, Tom sat thinking in his chair. It was then that he saw something which he never forgot. He saw his small friend watching one of the traps in which another mouse had just been caught. "Now it will shun me," thought Tom. "It has seen what the traps are for." But the tiny brown creature did not run away, as might have been expected, but crept up to the miller as trustfully as ever; indeed, more so, for it came upon the table and nibbled at a piece of bread close to Tom's hand. Then Tom arose, and went towards the trap, and, instead of drowning the captive, opened the door and set it at liberty. From that time he set no more traps. And he fell to thinking with shame that he had not given even a "Good-day" to those who had brought their corn to him to grind, and that when he passed through the village he had spurned children and dogs who had once been favourites of his, and had come to him with the confidence of old playmates. He remembered that some he had known and cared for had passed through sickness and trouble, and he had not gone to cheer them with a single word. And all this because he was unhappy.

And as he pondered with ever-increasing shame, the mouse crept up again and nibbled at his bread. "In spite of what this mouse has seen, it can still trust me," he thought, "and I, because one deceived me, have mistrusted all the world!"

Then he got up and put on his hat, and went out into the twilight. A little breeze had sprung up, and the trees seemed to be whispering together. He seemed to know what they said, though he could not have put it into words. He felt as if his old happiest self were rising once more from the tomb in which his resentment had buried it. It was not the light-hearted self which had once been, but it was the old loving, unselfish Tom for all that. He wandered on aimlessly at first, but afterwards with definite intentions. He would go to Brooks's cottage. He could bear to do so now. He would see how the neglected garden had done without him, and perhaps to-morrow put it to rights.

When Tom reached the garden gate (it was a tall wicket-gate through which you could get a peep at the garden) he undid the padlock, and in the half-light saw a tall holly-hock stretching itself across the entrance as if barring the way. "The garden is ours—mine and the rest of the flowers," it seemed to say. "Why do you come to disturb our peace?—you who have forsaken us."

And the miller's heart answered, "If one who has forsaken you should come back, would you not receive him?" And then there came into his mind a glad thought. Anne Grey might some day turn to him in trouble, and then he would help her, and never—certainly never—reproach her. This thought warmed his heart as he passed into the garden. How sweet was the breath of the flowers! How their delicate shapes outlined themselves in the twilight! There was the little arbor over which Tom had trained the honeysuckle and blush-roses. He had often fancied Anne sitting there in the long summer afternoons sewing and singing to herself. Now the trailers of the rose half hid the entrance, and a bat flew out at the sound of Tom's step. Night moths flitted hither and thither, and winged beetles made the air vibrate with their drowsy buzzing. The stars began to peep out one after another, and a hush seemed to fall on the garden as if the flowers were asleep.

Then Tom stooped his tall form under the rose-trailers and entered the arbor. There was a table in it, and a sort of fixture-seat all round. Tom had made it himself at leisure moments. "If we have little ones," he had said to himself, "there will be a seat for them all." Now he sat in the arbour alone, and the rose-trailers moved in and out with a rustling sound.

The sounds and scents made Tom quite drowsy, and he presently imagined he really saw and heard things which never could have happened. But they were so beautiful that he liked to think them real even afterwards.

The table in the centre of the arbour was fixed, and upon it Tom leaned his arms. So he could see the glimmer of the sky between the branches, and one single bright star that looked, as he thought, kindly on him. He gazed and gazed at the star, and at the outlined branches, and at the peep of sky, till all his heart seemed to open to good

—and that is to God. He gazed till self was forgotten in a beautiful dream. Ah! happiness, he saw, did not consist in self-gratification, but in giving up for others. Then he closed his eyes like a child who has wept but is comforted; and it was then that he heard the little brown mouse talking with the flowers. Now the mouse was at the mill, as we know, so this was very odd.



[Illustration: Tom dreaming]

"Why is the miller so sad?" asked a tall lily.

"First of all," said the mouse, "because Anne Grey is married to some one else, but most of all because he has made so many others bear his sorrow."

"And did making others bear his sorrow make his pain less?" the sunflower asked.

"No," said the mouse, "it made it more; for he had to feel cruel as well as unhappy."

Then a tiny late linum-flower spoke.

"I have not lived a long while," said the linum-flower; "I came out late. I don't quite understand it, but I think it must be best to wait for one's joy. It may be the miller is to have more joy because he has to wait."

Then a yew-tree spoke.

"You are right, little linum-flower; my relations in the graveyard have told me as much. They hear what the dead say at midnight. It is those who wait who get the truest joy!"

Then the miller heard a voice which was not like the others. It was a baby-voice with tears in it. "I is hungry," it said; and Tom started up, his eyes wide open, and in the star-glimmer he saw a tiny child looking at him. Yes, he was awake, and the child was a real child.

"I comed in here," said the little one, "betause the gate was open."

The miller took the little one in his arms and kissed it.

"So you are hungry," he said caressingly. "Well, I must take you home. What is your name?"

"Dot," said the child; "and home is gone away on wheels, and uncle don't want me no more."

"Uncle," repeated Tom reflectively. "Then have you no mother or father, little one?"

"Never had none of these things," said Dot positively. "Some of the other children had, though," she added, as if for the sake of accuracy.

"What other children?" Tom asked with interest.

"Them as was with us in the van," said Dot.

"Did you live in a van, Dot?" inquired Tom.

"Yes," said the child, "the van as has runned away. There's baskets and chairs and things all over the top of it. Uncle said he was agoing to leave me somewhere, and now he's done it."

"How old are you, Dot?"

The child shook her head. "I didn't have no birfdays," she said wistfully. "Ned and Polly and Jim did, but not me."

"Little Dot," cried Tom, hugging the small creature, "so they wanted to get rid of you, did they! Well, you shall come home with me; and, Dot, you shall begin to have birthdays to-morrow!"

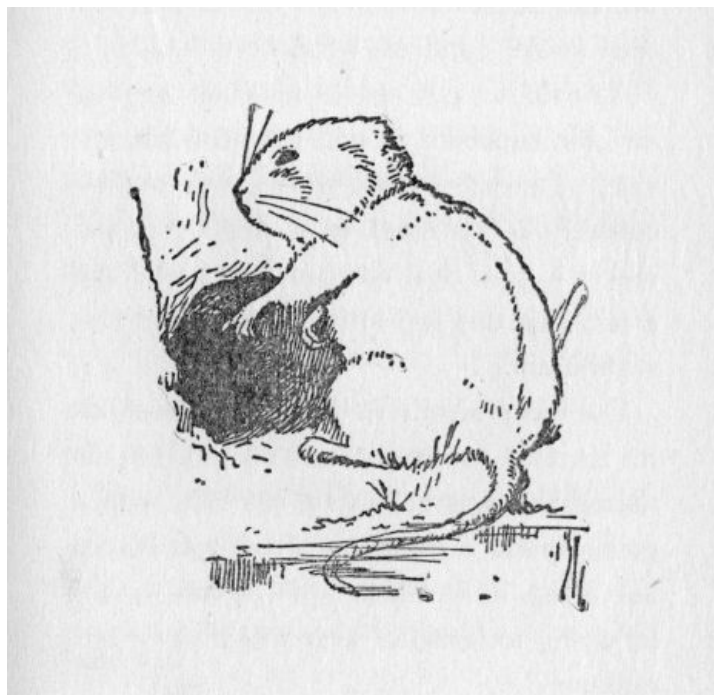
"And some bread and dripping to-night—all across the loaf?" Dot asked anxiously.

"Yes, Dot, lots of times across the loaf if you want it."

"I will sell feather brushes for you," said Dot with enthusiasm.

Tom laughed. He had never laughed before all the summer through.

When Tom and Dot reached the mill it was quite dark, and Dot had to stand still in the doorway while the miller lit his candle. When the candle was lit the first thing Dot saw was the little brown mouse scudding across the table. She clapped her hands with delight, for she was not a bit afraid of mice. But the noise she made frightened the mouse, and it ran into its hole and never came out again all that night.



[Illustration: Mouse at mouse-hole]

Tom slept on a heap of flour bags, for you see he had tucked Dot up snugly in his bed; but he slept soundly and well, for it is not so much the kind of bed we lie on, as the thoughts we lie down with, that give us pleasant sleep, and of all thoughts the best is that of having done some good and unselfish action in the day.

Dot proved uncommonly useful next morning. Tiny creature though she was, she was quite learned in domestic affairs. She lit the fire and tidied up the room before Tom was even awake. Indeed, when he did wake, it was to see her perched on his chair peeping into the cupboard to find the breakfast service. Tom's breakfast service was not extensive. It consisted of a huge cup and saucer a good deal chipped, two plates and a jam pot, this last article doing duty as a sugar-basin.

Dot was evidently well used to make-shifts, for she even invented a new one. Upon the mantelshelf was a curious old vase with a griffin's head surrounding it. It was shaped like a jug, so Dot took it down and washed it, saying to herself, "This will make a fine milk-jug."

"A fine milk-jug?" yawned the miller from his flour-bag couch. "Ah, to be sure! children want milk to drink." And with this he threw on his clothes, and hastily washed himself in a water-butt which stood near the mill steps. Then he called to Dot. "Come, little one, bring your milk-jug; we will go to the farm for milk for your breakfast."

"But we want to *fetch* the milk in a *can*," objected Dot.

Tom scratched his head in a bewildered way for a moment, then a happy thought struck him. "My beer-can will do, won't it?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Dot seriously, "only first it must be scrubbed."

So Tom scrubbed the can obediently, and when it shone sufficiently the two started off to a neighbouring farm to buy the milk.

On the way from the farm a strange thing happened. Tom and Dot were trudging merrily along a little lane, when they perceived a woman crouching under a hedge, holding in her arms a bundle wrapped in a shawl. The woman might have escaped notice, perhaps, had not a cry proceeded from the bundle. Tom had of late heard so many cries in his heart, that his ear readily lent itself to one from outside. He came up to the woman, therefore, at once and said, "You have a little one wrapped in that, haven't you? Is it hungry? If it is, here is some milk."

At first the woman did not raise her head. It was hidden in the shawl which covered the infant, so the miller repeated his question. Then the woman looked up, and the eyes which met Tom's were those of Anne Grey. She knew Tom at once, but it was with no smile of pleasure that she greeted him. Her words, too, when they came, were hard and cold. She only said, "So, Tom Lecky, you see what I have come to; rejoice in it!"

"Does the little one want food?" Tom asked again, without noticing in any way the words or the tone of the woman.

"And if it does?" said Anne, with a bitter little laugh.

"Why, if it does, I'm ready to give it some," said Tom, passing his coat-sleeve before his eyes for a moment. Then removing it suddenly he smiled into the woman's face—an April sort of smile, which scarcely knows whether to cloud over or to beam out with full warmth—and said, "And if you want anything I can give, it is yours for the taking."

The woman burst into tears, and the child, which was scarcely more than a baby, cried to bear her company. It was then that little Dot came forward and took the shawled bundle in her own baby arms, and commenced to feed it from the milk-can.

"How is it you are so early?" inquired Tom anxiously, for he knew that Anne's new home was many miles away.

"I have been here all night," she made answer.

"Anne, the cottage is still there, and the bit of furniture in it; go there, Anne—go now."

So Anne went after all to the cottage, which had been so long prepared for her, but it was not with Tom. He stayed at the mill with little Dot. And every night, when the child lay sleeping, the brown mouse crept out to bear the miller company. It was about this time that Tom thought the mouse began to talk to him as it had talked with the flowers in the garden the night he had found Dot.

"Miller," said the mouse, "is it not small things which make one happy?"

"Some things may content one, but it takes great ones to make one happy," said he.

"Contentment is happiness," said the mouse.

Now while the mouse was speaking, the candle, which was, as we have said, in the neck of a bottle instead of a candlestick, went out, and dropped right to the bottom of the bottle. There was a tiny spark seen for some time through the green glass, and by its light the miller saw many strange things, and the mouse was mixed up with them all.

The first thing he saw was a misty little ladder, made apparently of the cobwebs which festooned the mill. The ladder reached from the table right up through the floor and through the next floor, and from thence right up through the roof. A star was seen gleaming on its top. Up this strange ladder the little mouse ran, and the miller saw it by the light of the tiny spark, which somehow shot out upward rays which lit the ladder from top to bottom. When the mouse reached the top a tiny creature floated down from the star and presented it with a gift. This the mouse brought down and laid on the table before the miller. At first he thought it was sparks from the candle, but as he looked closer he found glittering words were formed by them; but they were in a language he could not read.



[Illustration: Mouse at cobweb ladder]

"What is the language?" he asked the mouse.

"The language of the eyes," answered the mouse.

"Read it to me," said the miller.

And the mouse read: "Tom, I am sorry—I am lonely; my husband and parents are dead. Tom, have you forgotten the old days?"

"It must be Anne's eyes which say this," cried the miller. "Yes, I might have read it all along."

Then the filmy ladder disappeared, and in the green light rose the little garden where the spring flowers were growing now. Within the arbour where Tom had gone to sleep one night sat Anne, her hands engaged in knitting, her eyes looking far away.

"Mouse, what is she thinking?" asked the miller. "You seem to know everything."

"Her eyes are talking," said the mouse.

"And what do they say?"

"They say, 'The miller only pities me; he no longer loves me.'"

"Ah, the eyes are wrong," cried Tom. "I will go to her and tell her so."

"Not yet," said the mouse. "Wait."

And then among the flowers there appeared a little child, and the child spoke low to the flowers.

"Listen," said the mouse.

"Oh, flowers, I have no father," murmured the child.

"Stop," cried the miller, "I must go."

And as he said this the light went quite out, and in the dim starlight which shone through the window he saw the mouse nibbling a crust of bread near his elbow. But for this little rustling sound, and Dot's breathing, all was silent. Yet there were voices in the miller's heart which made themselves heard well enough. One was the voice of Hope, the other the voice of Love.

So next day, when the sun was setting, Tom put on his best clothes, and, taking Dot by the hand, walked towards Brooks's cottage. When they reached it, Anne's little child stood in the gateway.

"Little one," said Tom, stooping and kissing the child, "is mother in the garden?"

The child pointed to the arbor.

"Stay together, children," said the miller; and then he entered the arbor.

"What did I tell you?" said the mouse. The miller was in the old room at the mill for the last night.

"It matters little what you told me," said the miller—"you *taught* me so much."

Now from this time the mouse spoke no more to Tom, though he often saw the little brown creature. It is only to the lonely and sorrowful that mice and trees and clouds and wind talk much. And the miller was happy, for had not Anne consented to marry him, and was not the wedding-day no farther distant now than to-morrow?

Anne visited the mill with her husband a week later, and she said, "There are many mice here. Why don't you set traps for them?"

"I cannot do *that*," said the miller. "One mouse has taught me more than all the books I have read. The mice are welcome to what they take of the grain."

And Anne questioned no more. It was enough for her that she and Tom were together. So I suppose the little brown mouse, or at least its descendants, still live on unmolested at the mill.

THE OLD ROCKING-HORSE

He was a very old rocking-horse indeed. His first master, sunny-headed little Robbie, had grown into a man with a beard, and had given his old playmate to his sister's children.

These children had in their turn grown into great schoolboys, so the old horse, like the other toys, was left forsaken in the big nursery at the top of the house. Broken-down furniture and old magazines had found their way there, together with travelling-trunks and portmanteaux. Spiders had spun their webs over the windows, and dust lay thick on everything.

When little Basil found his way into the old nursery it seemed to him like an enchanted palace. The spiders and dust only made him think that somewhere he would find the "sleeping beauty." The litter of toys and paper and boxes suggested hidden treasure. Once in this room of delightful possibilities, he did not care how long his mother and aunt continued their wearisome talks downstairs of what they called "old times." He stretched himself on a faded couch while he considered where to begin his operations, and stared at the deeply-cut initials on the mantelshelf, and regretted that the chimney-piece in the nursery at home, being stone, did not lend itself to similar delights. With a sigh he rolled over, and the rocking-horse met his gaze. He looked at it so long that his eyes blinked. Older people would have said that just then the old horse *creaked*—as old things have a way of doing. But children understand these things better than old folks who have grown dull. Basil knew quite well that the old horse had *sighed*, and he asked him what was the matter.

"I was only wishing some one would smarten me up a bit," said the horse. "My left eye is in that box with the tin soldiers. My tail is tied to a stick in that cupboard where the tools are—a bit of glue would stick both in. And one stirrup is nailed to the table-drawer for a handle. It could be got off, and tied to my saddle-strap with a bit of string. My mane is gone for ever. Johnny put it on a mask for whiskers one Guy Fawkes' day, and Herbert threw it in the bonfire. I don't suppose any of the nails can be got out that Tom knocked into my sides; they are in too tight. Nor can the buttons and marbles be got out of my inside that Johnny put in through the hole in my neck. But I might be smartened up a little!"

"Oh, if that is all you want I dare say I can help you," said Basil, jumping up and running to the cupboard. "Here's your tail, anyway! and here's a bottle of liquid glue too. Now I'll look for your eye."

"You know," went on the old horse, "I heard the mother saying the other day that she would send me back to my old home if I were not so shabby."

Basil, who had found the missing eye, was now fixing it in its place with plenty of glue, which ran down and dropped off the horse's nose. Basil was sure he saw a tear drop from the other eye.

"Does it hurt?" he asked sympathetically.

"Oh, I don't mind that," said the horse. "It is like old times to be hurt by a little boy; besides, one must always suffer if one would look fine."

"Yes; nurse says something like that when I cry while she combs my hair," said Basil.

"Robbie didn't cry to have his hair combed," said the horse shortly. "He didn't even

cry when the soap was in his eyes. By now he has grown into a brave man! When he fell off me and made his leg bleed he said it was nothing, and just got on me again. But he did cry when he parted from me."

"Well, he was a coward *once*, anyway."

"No, he wasn't," snorted the horse. "It isn't cowardly to cry because you are leaving some one you love."

"All the same, don't toss your head like that, or your eye will drop out again," cried Basil warningly. "But you may go on telling me about Robbie."

"I was his dearest friend," went on the horse. "He told me all about his troubles, and showed me all his new things; and he used to learn his lessons sitting on my back. When he had a piece of cake he used to push a bit in through the hole in my neck, and rock me to make it drop into my stomach."

"Oh! then the hole has been there a long time."

"Yes; Robbie made it to feed me through; those other boys only put buttons and marbles in, and old nails. Robbie always gave me a bit of cake with the biggest plum in it. When he was ill he asked for me, and the mother had me put by the bedside, and I watched him night and day. His little hand grew so thin and pale, and he used to slip it out from under the quilt to stroke me."

"There! your tail's in now," cried Basil. "So now I will see if I can get the stirrup off the drawer; then I'll sponge you a bit."

"If you could only make me look nice they would send me back for Robbie's boy, and I should see Robbie again before I die. You are a kind little boy, and Robbie will love you."

"Tell me some more. You look ever so much better already," said Basil, tugging away at the stirrup. "And I dare say when you get back to Robbie he will have you painted up, and then you will feel just like you used to feel."

"Yes," said the old horse; "he will have me done up like new, and he will tell his little boy to love me for his sake, and all my happy days will begin again. Often at night I have listened to the wind roaring in the chimney and have shivered with cold, and have thought how Robbie would have put a rug over me if he were here."

Just then the gong sounded for luncheon. "I must go now," said Basil, "but I will come up again and finish you."

"Auntie," Basil began, when he was seated at the table, "I have been mending up the old rocking-horse; won't you send it to Uncle Robbie's boy?"

Basil was too wise to repeat all the old horse had told him, for he knew that grown-up people never understand that toys talk to the children.

"Yes, I think I will," auntie replied.

The gas was lit in the entrance-hall of a big house in a country town. A little white-frocked child raced to the door to meet a tall, handsome man who had just entered.

"Papa! papa! the old wocking-horse is tum—it was youse when you was ickle boy; tum and see it."

The father perched his little son on his shoulder and mounted the stairs to the nursery, where the firelight danced on the walls.

The old rocking-horse was waiting, almost faint with joy; he was soon to see his beloved master, to feel his caress.

The father placed his son on the floor, and advanced to his old playmate.

"What an old scarecrow!" he exclaimed, laughing. "Whatever could your aunt have been thinking of to send it! We will despatch it to be chopped up for firewood, and buy you a new one."

So the old horse was carried off to the back yard.

But nobody knew that his heart was broken!

THE MESSAGE OF THE LILY

"Little flower, little flower," said the birdie, "why are you so silent and sad?"

"I am not sad, sweet sister," whispered the flower gently; "ah! no, but I have seen an angel. Yestere'en, as I slept, my birdie, being all aweary with gazing up into your bird-land home among the branches, and watching the merry sunlight come and go, and strike shafts of golden flame among the green, I dreamt of heaven and of the holy angels; and lo! when I awoke, one there was who stood beside me, beautiful even as is the sunlight or the dawn, and her voice, when she spoke, was low and tender, like the restful ripple of the rain. And to the flowers, as you know, my birdie, the hearts of the pure lie ever open and unsealed, and I saw into her heart, that the thought of it was white and spotless as a lily, and I saw that her thought was a prayer, and that she said, 'Dear Lord, I thank Thee for making this little flower so fair and lovely, and I ask Thee that I may be, in heart, as pure and holy as she!'"

MORNING

"Wake up, little flower, and hear what I have to tell you," said the bird gaily, "for I, too, have seen your angel—and angel is she none, but the fairest maiden from the town beyond the hillside."

And to her the flower made low reply:

"Can any one as fair as she be found out of heaven? And, moreover, I looked into her heart, and saw that the thought of it was white, and pure as the morning."



[Illustration: Little girls picking flowers]

"It is only the flowers that can see into hearts," said the bird gravely; "but this I know, that your angel is of earth, not heaven." So saying, she spread her silken wings and flew away.

But the flower said, "Is there, in all heaven, anything more fair than a maiden?"

NOON

"I would not pluck you to please my idle fancies, dear blossom," said the maiden gently, "for I cannot bear to see the wild flowers wither and fade! But I know of one who lies ill and dying, to whom the scent and sight of a wild flower may bring some passing moment of peace. Tell me, then, you who are so pure and lovely, will not you spare a space of your slender life, that so you may make happy the heart of a sorrowing one?"

Then the flower said, "Dear maiden, I will"; but inasmuch as it spake not the maiden's language, it breathed forth all its perfume, like sweet music, in consent. And, though the maiden knew not that the flower had heard her words, and had answered her, yet at heart she was strangely though sweetly saddened. "Even in heaven I should long for the earth-flowers!" she said, as she drank in the fragrance. "Is there anything, in all heaven, more fair than a flower?"

Then the maiden plucked the flower, and bore it away from the birds and the sunshine, away from the wind and the trees, to a squalid court in a great city, where a dying woman lay, haggard and wan, upon a bed. And as the flower looked into the soul of the dying woman, its fair leaves seemed to wither and wilt, as though some foul breath had come forth upon it, for therein it could see nothing because of the blackness and the sin. And at first the flower shrank into itself, and would fain have gathered up its perfume, but it thought of the prayer in the maiden's heart, and, opening out its snowy petals to their full, it breathed forth a fragrance which filled the foul room as with music and light. And as the dying woman looked upon the flower, she thought of the white lilies which she had gathered and placed upon her dead mother's bosom—many, ah! so many weary years ago; and she thought of the days when she too was pure and beautiful, and had knelt at that mother's knee, to whisper, after her, the hallowed words to the Father in heaven.

Then the flower saw that in the woman's heart there was some strange and sudden commotion, as though the light were seeking to win in its way, and to drive out the

darkness and sin.

And, folding her wasted hands together, the dying woman turned to the light, and said, "Dear Lord Jesus, make me—even me—white and pure as this lily, and wash away all my sins in Thy precious blood. Amen."

And when the dawn came, the flower lay withered and drooping; but, ere it died, it saw into the woman's heart that it was white and pure as the snow-flake.

And there passed from that room a shining angel, *and lo! on her bosom lay a little flower.*

WATER-LILY'S MISSION

"Come away, beautiful flower," said the kingfisher; "do not waste your beauty in this melancholy mere; float away down the gleaming river where tall bulrushes grow and where you shall find companions."

But the water-lily said, "No, I cannot go, for up in yonder tower is a prisoner, and I cheer his lonely days. He watches me and smiles, and forgets that he is a captive. I cannot leave one so unhappy."

"As you like," said the kingfisher, "but you would not catch me spending my life under those barren walls," and away flew the kingfisher.

A swallow came and wheeled round and round the tower. "Swallow," called the water-lily, "come to me." And the swallow came twittering down.

"I am in a great hurry," he said; "what do you want?"

"Bite through my stem, swallow, and carry me up to the grating in the tower, and place me on that window-sill."

"But you will die—and you are so beautiful," said the swallow, looking regretfully at the lily.

"Ah, some deaths are better than living," said the water-lily.

So the swallow plucked the water-lily and carried her up to the prisoner's window. A thin hand passed through the bars and took the flower. The captive pressed her passionately to his lips, and his tears fell fast on the waxen petals. As the tears fell the water-lily revived.

"How beautiful you are," said the captive, and he took his tin mug of water from a shelf and tenderly placed her in it so she would not die.

Just then a jailer entered, "Ho, ho!" he said, "how did you come by that; it will just do for my button-hole." And he seized the water-lily and placed it in his coat.

The poor prisoner fell upon his knees and begged hard that the flower might be left to him. "Let me have a few days' joy," he pleaded. "The flower will soon die, and you are free, and can gather the flowers when you will."

But the rough jailer only laughed, and departed to his own pleasant room, leaving the captive in tears.



[Illustration: Child with basket of flowers]

"Look here," said the jailer to his little daughter, "there is a flower I have just taken away from the prisoner in the tower. I don't know how he got it, but he cried like a baby when I took it away."

"Poor prisoner!" said the little girl, with tears in her own eyes.

"Nay, my little maid, do not weep," said the jailer, taking the child in his arms.

But the little one hid her face against her father's breast and sobbed.

"See, my Lily, I will take his flower back to him, only do not cry so," said the jailer.

"Father, may I take it to him?" said the little girl, raising her tear-stained face to her father's, and gazing at him eagerly.

"Won't it do if I take it?" asked the jailer.

"Oh, *please* let me take it," said the child.

The rough jailer had such tenderness for his child that it was difficult for him to refuse her anything. So it was that when the prisoner lifted his weary head as he heard his door open, he beheld a beautiful child with blue eyes and yellow hair, and in her hand stretched out to him was the water-lily.

"Oh, but it is an angel!" cried the prisoner, a smile lighting his haggard face. "An angel from heaven; I must be going to die."

"No, poor man, it's little Lily," said the child, and she slid a round arm about his neck. "I am so sorry for you!"

The prisoner burst into passionate weeping, and kissed the small hand that lay

upon his shoulder.

The jailer blew his nose like a trumpet.

"You may be called anything," said the prisoner, "but you are surely an angel."

From this time Lily came to see her prisoner every day, and he grew almost gay.

In the meantime the water-lily drooped and died, but she was happy, for she had fulfilled her mission.

The prisoner took the dead flower and laid it on his heart. "Poor little dead flower," he said, "it was you who brought me my little comforter."

As he said these words he fancied he felt the dead flower move; but it might have been the beating of his own heart.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK TOM, DOT AND TALKING MOUSE AND
OTHER BEDTIME STORIES ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

**Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project
Gutenberg™ electronic works**

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C

below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are

confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.