

# The Project Gutenberg eBook of Little Tom, by Václav Tille

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## LITTLE TOM

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### LITTLE TOM

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TOLD  
BY V. TILLE  
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## CHAPTER ONE.

### THE CHRISTENING OF LITTLE TOM.

THE WIDOW THAT GATHERED HERBS. CHRISTMAS EVE.  
THE MESSENGER OF THE KING OF THE GOBLINS.  
THE CHRISTENING OF LITTLE TOM.  
WHAT LITTLE TOM'S GODMOTHER FOUND IN THE WELL NEAR THE CHAPEL.

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**I**n a little wooden hut within the shadow of the forest and close to a noisy brook, a poor widow dwelt alone. She passed her days gathering and drying plants and herbs, from which she was forever making strange simples which proved very helpful to the village people and their cattle when illness came upon them. But the villagers only came to visit her when they had need of her medicines, and these had such wonderful power to cure that it was whispered about the lonely old woman to be a witch.

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The villagers also told strange stories about her, for no one knew whence she came or when she had taken up her solitary abode apart from the village.

Many said that she sprang from the race of knights, who, in an age long past, lived in their great castle deep in the woods and on the hill which rose above the little hut. But no knights lived there now, nor had they for many, many years, and the castle had been in ruins for a longer time than the oldest people could remember. In fact, all that now remained of the great place which the old folks liked to tell their grandchildren about, was a little chapel near the edge of the dark woods and, beside it, an old, old well, now entirely filled up and overgrown with weeds.

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But the widow was not lonely, nor did she wish anyone to help her care for her little house and the garden she loved so dearly, or even the field beyond where grazed her cow, »Speckle«. Whenever anyone came to her in trouble or in illness, she was glad to put aside on the instant whatever task she was about and to give her advice or administer the medicine which always brought relief and cure, for she understood all troubles and illnesses and knew the simples for each.

Inside the little hut, everything was as clean and orderly as one would find in the castles of the nobility, where many servants toiled and swept. Over the thatched roof an old lime tree spread its

friendly branches, and all day long there sounded about the fragrant buds and blossoms sounded the cheerful humming of swarms of grateful bees.

The great beams along the walls of the hut were rubbed clean with red earth and on the whitewashed spaces, between the little windows and the door, were painted red and yellow flowers with leaves of green, while in its bed of earth a blue strip of real flowers ran all around the house.

On the gable ledge blossomed red and pink carnations and from the little balcony under the peak of the roof, with its carved wooden posts and railing, peered dried poppy heads, ears of yellow corn, sage and all manner of herbs and spices with strange odors. All these had been gathered in the clear, white light of the full moon before the dew had begun to fall.

Besides all these pleasant things, the garden was full of roses, mignonette and tall mallow. Close to the fence which ran all about it, grew gooseberries, currants and raspberries; and in the very middle of the garden was a bed of luscious red strawberries, flanked by rows of cabbages, lettuce and peas. Against the walls of the hut, between the windows, old, gnarled vines ran clear to the eaves, bearing bunches of delicious grapes.

The hut had one large room, a small chamber and the black kitchen, with its great fireplace and broad chimney. From the outside, it looked not unlike the houses of the villagers; but, inside, stood furniture of an older day. In a corner stood a bed of polished wood, piled high with white, downy quilts and covers. In the middle of the room was a round table with smooth, polished chairs set against it. Next to the wall was a beautifully carved old chest for clothes; on the wall, a clock with brass weights and a cuckoo that called the hours; and between the windows through which blossomed fuchsias and other plants, stood a rare old linen press, ornamented with flowers, birds, and hammered silver work.

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But, most precious of all her possessions, was a little altar carved in ivory. In size, it was no larger than an apple; but it had two little doors, which, opening, showed a little stall, in which sat the Holy Virgin with the Child on her lap and, behind, a yellow ox and a grey donkey looking out across the manger and breathing upon the two. On the left, knelt the shepherds surrounded by their fleecy sheep; and, from the right, came the three kings with golden crowns on their heads and dressed in cloaks of violet, red and green. The black one was smiling and showing his white teeth, as they offered their gifts. All of the figures were just like life! The Virgin had a beautiful face with blue eyes and dark eyebrows, and the Babe was all pink and held in His hands a little golden apple.

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It was a rare and precious piece of work, which the herb woman had been told was a relic of olden times, having come from the castle in the wood above the hut, to which it had been brought by one of the knights from the Holy Land.

All day long, the herb woman had much to do in caring for her house, fetching and drying her herbs and brewing her medicines. From one week's end to the other, she was never idle. But, on Sunday afternoons, when her work was done, she would take the little altar and place it on the press between the windows. Sitting down before it in a comfortable leather armchair, she would read to herself from a very old book, ornamented with hammered brass and with colored stones set in the covers. Her book told all about the patient Griselda, the siege of Troy, about Siegfried, Brunswick, Blanik, and many other brave heroes. Around the first letter of each story, were painted knights, princesses, men-at-arms, magic castles, and scenes from strange, oversea countries.

Looking at the pictures in her book and at the little figures of the altar, the old woman would think of bygone days when she was a bright little child, playing with her friends in make-believe weddings and christenings before this same little altar; and when her grandmother, sitting in the same old chair, would read to them stories from the old book and tell them of the former fame of their knightly home; of how the knights fared forth to the Holy Land, while their wives sat at home in the great castle, embroidering silks and cambrics, and the little children played in the

castle garden.

Her thoughts travelled back to herself, growing into beautiful girlhood; then, as a bride and the happy wife of a good husband; later, as the mother of two beautiful babies; then, sad memories crowded her weary head. Her husband and the two little children had died and she was left alone, without any relatives and without money, and with only this little hut in the shadow of the wood where she might live and earn her food.

Often she sat like this, until the shadows of night had gathered around her; and the older she grew, the more heavily these sad thoughts weighed upon her. Each year, she felt herself growing weaker and began to be fearful that she could not manage to work at home and to gather the herbs in the woods and fields. In the winter, when the garden was covered with snow and the great drifts kept her from the village, she became even more sad to think how alone she was, the last of her race, with no one to whom she could tell her troubles and who would be a companion to her.

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Now, one year, it was the day before Christmas. The snow had drifted against the little house clear to the eaves. As was her custom, she had brought from the forest a little Christmas tree and, having set it in a box, in earth carried from the wood, began to trim it. She hung from the branches gilded nuts and draped the tree with festoons of colored paper. Then, she fastened tiny, wax candles to the branches and then she peeled some apples and, finally, lighted the little candles, thinking of the used to dance and play olden days at home when they danced and played around the Christmas tree. The fire burned cheerily in the broad hearth with its green glass tiles. The room was warm and filled with the odor of mint and of lavender. As she sat thus, alone before the tree, presently, her head fell forward upon her hands which rested upon the linen press, and she slept.

The old lady dreamed she was a girl again, in her Sunday dress and with her braided hair held by a red ribbon, kneeling before the little altar. Suddenly, she saw the Holy Virgin smiling at her and the little Baby stretching out its tiny hands and handing the golden apple to her; the sheep began to bleat, the shepherds were bowing, and the three kings swung their burning censers and walked toward her over the shining surface of the linen press. She even heard them call her by name and speak to her.

The old lady woke with a start, but the voices seemed to call to her faintly, as if from a great distance. She looked about her, but saw no one. The same faint sound of voices was still to be heard, and, now, right under the tree, she perceived a tiny little man in a red coat, just as if one of the three kings had really come from the altar and wakened her. Not one whit surprised, she bent toward him. It seemed to her that she had always known him.

The little man scrambled up to the edge of the old book which still lay upon the press, bowed, stroked his black beard, and spoke: »Honored lady, my people send me to ask of you, in the name of our king, a favor. A prince has been born to us and we should like to celebrate his christening here before this little altar, which is most precious to us. Our kingdom lies in the corridors under the old castle and extends to the well by the little chapel, and even to your hut. Our forefathers were true servants of your ancestors, the knights of the castle, and guarded for them their treasure. In this little altar are pictured the faces of our former kings.«

The old lady was pleased that the gnomes wished thus to honor her little altar and readily gave her consent, that they might come to it in order to celebrate the christening of their prince. The messenger bowed and, running quickly down her dress to the floor, disappeared through a little hole by the hearth. Immediately, from behind the great hearth, came the most wonderful procession she had ever seen.

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First, came the pipers and the band of musicians, playing on strange, curved trumpets and beating drums that sounded like the hum of many flying insects. Behind them walked the old king and the young queen in long robes of spotted butterfly wings and wearing golden crowns that glistened with precious stones; then the nurse, bearing a little baby upon a cushion of silver cobweb, tied with a hair of gold. Following them were many dignitaries in gorgeous cloaks and, last of all, came men and women of the people, hurrying across the floor like little insects, for they were hardly any larger.

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When the procession of tiny folk reached the old lady's shoe, they fearlessly climbed up her skirt to her lap and on across her arms which rested on the press. She laughed to see the great crowd walk over her and was careful not to move—indeed, she hardly breathed—lest she might hurt one of them.

When all had gathered around the tree, one old man took the little prince in his arms and, as the others knelt before him, he made them a long speech. The old lady could not understand it at all, for it sounded to her like a fly buzzing on the window pane; but, when the old man had finished, all shouted together: »Long live our prince, Tom! May he reign happily!«

The girls began to dance around the tree and all the little people jumped and laughed and shouted with merriment. The king and the queen, followed by the nurse with the little prince, stepped upon the old book, which made a good platform, and thanked the herb woman for her kindness. The king then begged her to be a kind godmother to the prince and to continue to be a good friend to his people, just as her ancestors had been. The old lady promised this with pleasure, for she felt a great love for the little folk who brought back so vividly the days when her people were rich and famous.

The queen started to take the wrappings from the tiny baby, which were bound round and round about him, and the herb woman and the old king talked of the golden days gone by. The king told her the tales he had from his forefathers, of the brilliant life in the great castle; how the gnomes nestled in the soft tapestries by the great marble hearths; how they cleaned and polished the gold and precious stones in the underground chambers; how, on clear moonlight nights, they danced graceful figures with the fairies; and how, with grasshoppers as horses, they held noisy tournaments.

Whenever there was a newborn baby in the castle, the gnomes, in the night, wove beautiful dreams which they spread out in the rays of the moon under the canopy of the mother's bed and guarded the baby in its silver cradle.

The old lady listened happily, gazing at the gathering of the gnomes, lighted by the trembling rays of the candles, now almost burned out. Many of the young men had clambered into the branches of the tree and were swinging in the paper chains and sitting astride the golden nuts and red apples. Little girls were sliding back and forth on the slippery surface of the press, while serious old men and grayhaired women walked sedately in groups around the base of the tree. There were so many of the little people that they could not be counted.

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The herb woman looked at the swiftly moving, variegated crowd until her eyelids drooped. She was already half asleep when the old king came to bid her good-by and, as in a dream, she heard him say: »Honored lady, for centuries your race protected us and, today, we would like to reward you. The great treasures of your family long ago disappeared, but, in the old, choked-up well, there still remains much gold. This we have carefully guarded from generation to generation and kept in clean and good order. In the well casing, in the fifth circle of stones from the top, you will find one engraved with a horseshoe. Behind this stone, you will find the money which your forefathers hid there; but be careful to replace the stone and not to disturb our underground realm.«

When the old woman awoke, all was quiet and dark in the room. The candles on the tree had quite burned out, the cuckoo in the clock called twelve, and from the village, came the sound of bells, ringing the glad tidings of Christmas Day. Across the brook, she could see the lanterns flickering in the village square and the people gathering for church. But she did not feel strong enough to go to the midnight service. Then she thought, with a smile, of what she had seen on Christmas Eve, but she said to herself with a sigh, »It was only a dream«, and took herself off to bed.

In the morning she milked Speckle and, as she drank the good, warm milk, she laughed to herself over her dream. But it would not leave her mind and, presently, she went to the hearth to see whence the procession of gnomes had come. She found nothing but a hole in the floor, large enough for a cat to pass through; but she thought to herself, »Why should I not go to the well by the chapel?«

Over her shoulders she threw a warm sheepskin coat, with the wool inside and flowers embroidered on the outside, such as the country people wear, and, taking a hoe and a lantern, went to the chapel.

There had been a keen frost and the fields were covered with snow, which sparkled in the sun. The snow was also away up to the eaves of the chapel, while from the blackberry stalks over the well, hung transparent icicles. The herb woman pushed aside the bushes and, crawling into the well, dug away the rubbish until she had uncovered the fifth circle of stones with which the well was lined.

She laughed at herself to think that she should believe in dreams; but her heart was beating rapidly as she lighted her lantern and, digging away the gravel, looked at one stone after the other. »When I do not find the stone with the horseshoe,« she thought, »I will be convinced that it was only a dream.« But as she touched the damp moss on one stone, she felt a little depression and, when she had cleaned it, there was the horseshoe.

The stone was large and heavy and her hands trembled as she set her hoe into the fissure; but lo! the stone was not cemented like the rest and was easily loosened. When she had pulled it out,

from behind the stone, came shining gold pieces, as bright and clean as if they had been minted only the day before. Off came her apron, in which she tied up the money; but the bundle was so heavy that she could hardly lift it.

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She would have liked to look still further into the realm of the gnomes, for behind the stone was a hole running deep into the ground; but she thought of the old king's request and, setting the stone in its place, hurried back home with her treasure.

Now, she was rid of all worry as to how she should keep herself when she should grow very old. In her heart, she thanked the little gnomes for their care of her and decided to remain in her little hut as long as she lived.

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## CHAPTER TWO.

### HOW LITTLE TOM WAS FOUND BY HIS GODMOTHER.

THE SPRING. THE FLOOD.  
HOW THE GODMOTHER FOUND LITTLE TOM  
IN A NUTSHELL.  
HOW LITTLE TOM TOOK UP HIS ABODE ON CASTLE  
EASTER EGG.  
HOW THE GODMOTHER BROUGHT LITTLE TOM  
HIS OUTFIT.  
WHAT LITTLE TOM TOLD HIS GODMOTHER  
ABOUT THE REALM OF GOBLINS.

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**T**he winter was cruelly cold. Snow covered the paths and drifted high against the little hut. With difficulty the herb woman made paths to the stable and to the brook.

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In the night, when she could not sleep, she listened to every slight sound, in the hope that her little friends would appear again. But nothing ever happened; it was only the hoot of an owl outside, or the squeak of a mouse. The gnomes never came forth again from their underground realm.

So, in the day time she read and sewed, pondering how she could go to the nearest town to change her money and buy many little things for her comfort and for the improvement of the little hut. Her gold pieces she had hidden well behind a green tile on the hearth.

Finally, the snow began to melt, the sun became warmer, the fields lost their coat of white, the meadows became green, and spring had come. When Easter arrived, she had already planted her garden and stripped the roses of their winter coverings. The snow drops and gillyflowers were blossoming by the brook; the cowslips were poking their yellow caps out of their beds, and over the fields the larks sang joyously.

The herb woman placed her treasure in a covered basket, shut the hens in their coops, put fresh grass in Speckle's manger, let the dog, Rover, into the yard, locked the door of the little hut and went on her way to town. She walked lightly, as if she had grown younger during the winter and did not at all mind the long journey.

In town she was surprised at what she received for her gold; if she should live a hundred years, she could not use all her money. So it was placed in a bank for safe keeping and the people treated her with great respect. They knew that she had come from a good family, but as she had lived so modestly, no one knew how wealthy she was.

When she had made her purchases and finished her business, she wished to rest awhile in town, but word had come that the heavy rain in the mountains had caused the snow to melt and the



water to rush down in torrents. She knew very well how bad the brook became when it was swollen and she worried lest the hut might be carried away and something happen to Speckle. So she hurried home and, on the way, she saw the swollen brook stretched out over the meadows like a lake.

When she reached the village, it was dark, and already the people were beginning to light up their houses. Many of the little foot bridges had been swept away, the water reached nearly to the village square and she found it impossible to cross the stream. The torrent raged and stormed, bearing along branches, small trees and cakes of ice.

In vain the old lady peered across the bank to the farther shore in the attempt to see if her little hut was still standing; but the darkness was so thick that you could cut it with a knife. There was nothing left for her to do but to ask the good villagers for shelter over night.

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The next day, when the sun shone out, the torrent had subsided and the brook was running between its banks in a steady stream. The hut was still standing, but the bank was undermined and the little bridge carried away. So the widow had herself taken across in a boat and, in great anxiety, hurried to the hut to see what changes had been wrought. The garden was covered with mud and on the meadow were little pools of glistening water. Out of the yard bounded Rover barking heartily and, from her stall, Speckle mewed a welcome. The hens came hurrying out of their coop, flapping their wings and cackling, and straightway began to scratch in the ground in search of little worms. Inside the hut, the hall was wet through and in the best room stood little pools of water.

The herb woman took her broom and swept out some of the water and with a cloth mopped up the little pools. Near the hearth the water was quite deep and swirling around and running away through the hole behind. On the water swam a tiny barge formed from a hazel nut, and in this boat was a very small lad indeed, rowing with his oars of straw and working with all his might, so that the whirlpool should not carry him back into the hole.

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The widow lifted up the shell very carefully and placed it on the palm of her hand. The tiny lad, letting go his oars, clasped his hands and said, »Dear Godmother, I thank you very much for saving me. I am Little Tom, but am so very tired that I can hardly sit up.« But his weariness came only from his efforts to keep himself from being swept back into the hole.

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His Godmother placed the little fellow gingerly on the table and next to him she put a drop of milk and beside it a crumb of bread. Little Tom gulped the milk eagerly and ate nearly the whole crumb. When she placed near him a tiny bit of cloth for a pillow, Tom lay down and fell asleep.

She watched the little fellow tenderly as he lay there so quietly and all worn out with his hard work. He was now a fullgrown lad, finely built and with black hair. His little hands he had clasped across his breast. She felt very badly to think of his sufferings through the night in that terrible flood and she wondered what might have happened to the underground realm of the gnomes.

While he was sleeping, she started to work. She scrubbed the floor very clean, then sifted dry sand all over it; cleaned up the garden, and then put some soup to cook over the fire in the kitchen. When she returned to the big room, Little Tom was sitting up, rubbing his blue eyes with his little fists and calling for his mother. As he looked around, he recognized his Godmother and began to cry bitterly. The old lady tried to soothe him, begging him not to cry and to tell her all that had happened. But, for a long time, he could not be quieted. When he had cried himself out, he told her what misfortunes had come upon the underground realm.

All the gnomes were quietly sleeping, utterly unconscious of any danger, when, all of a sudden,

great waters came from under the well, flooded the entire town, tore down the walls and rose to the upper floors. His mother woke Little Tom and ran with him to the upper corridor, through which was already running the stream which was their main river.

On this stream stood the great navy of the gnomes, made from walnut shells. The entire court entered the ships and started rowing to the east from the underground country; but the stream continued to rise and the over-crowded ships began to rock, until they sank one after the other and all the gnomes were lost. Little Tom knew how to swim very well but he would surely have been drowned, if he had not caught hold of a hazel-nut boat. This was taken up by a little current and swept through the hole by the hearth into the Godmother's large room.

Instantly, Little Tom knew where he was, for his parents had often told him of his christening and how kind the Godmother was to them all; so he continued to row with all his might, hoping that his Godmother would return in time to save him.

She was surprised to find him grown up, for at Christmas time, he was only a tiny baby, wrapped up in his cushions. Little Tom explained, that with the gnomes each week is counted as a year, so that he was now fifteen years old. Before that age, no prince may ever leave the underground realm, but must be studying and learning and, after that, he may only go into the outside world for experience. They were just preparing to celebrate his coming of age at his Godmother's and to send him on his journey into the world, when the great flood came and destroyed the whole kingdom. Little Tom was the only one of them to be saved, and that seemed to be through a miracle.

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The Godmother did not wish to remind him of his misfortunes, so she told him that she would take good care of him and that he would find it very pleasant in her hut; but she was worried how she should find a suitable place for him to sleep, and how she should clothe him and provide the things necessary for his comfort.

She placed him on the top of the linen press and opened the altar for him; and when he saw the faces of the little figures, Tom became very cheerful, saying that the lady with the Child on her lap was very much like his mother. While Little Tom was looking at the kings, the shepherds and the manger, his Godmother found a nice, large Easter egg that was all hollow and gaily painted in red and yellow. With a pin she pricked out a door on one side, and on the other, two windows; then she set the egg firmly in the earth, under the tree and told him this would be his home and that he should carry some earth inside, and stamp it into a hard, level floor. She wanted to give him something to keep him busy, so that he would not think of the misfortunes that had befallen him.

Little Tom crawled inside and admired the great hall, beautifully arched from the finest alabaster, standing under the wonderful tree with its golden fruit. He asked his Godmother to set him in the branches, so that he might look at the golden nuts and taste of the figs and dates. He was happy to think that this magic tree from the outside world would shelter him for many, many years.

Then he climbed down the trunk, lowering himself by the little spines as if they were the rounds of a ladder. He decided to build a wall all around Castle Easter Egg and to lay out a garden under the tree.

The herb woman left him busily working and, taking her hoe, went to the well by the chapel to learn how the kingdom of the gnomes had fared. She took out the stone engraved with the horseshoe and dug behind in until she saw a little corridor, in which was a confusion of stones, mud and water. Everything was torn down and ruined and of the gnomes, she heard not a sound. She felt very sad to think they all had perished and she started to cover the hole and replace the stone. But when she took it up, she was surprised to find how light it seemed. Examining it more carefully, she noticed at the back a tiny, polished metal door. Upon pressing this with her finger, it opened and she saw that the inside of the stone was entirely hollowed out and filled with many little particles.

It occurred to her that, perhaps after all, some possessions of the gnomes remained that might prove useful to Tom; so she put the stone on her shoulder and taking care that nothing should fall out, carried it home.

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When she came into the big room, she found that Tom had already made the floor inside his castle and was now engaged in building a wall around it out of shining, little pebbles. The Godmother laid a cloth on the top of the press and placed the stone on the cloth.

»Little Tom,« she said, »I have brought you something for remembrance. Your kingdom is all gone; but do not be sorry, for you will stay with me and we will live happily together. Now, perhaps you will find something in this stone that will be useful to you.«



Tom crawled sadly into the stone, but, at once, shouted with pleasure. »Dear Godmother,« he called, »this is our royal treasury and it contains furniture, clothes, linen, arms and dishes; all sorts of things. Now, I have everything I need and you will see how nicely I will arrange my new home.«

At once, he began to carry out of the stone the rich stores he found there. His Godmother placed a tiny piece of cloth by the stone and when Tom had piled it high with cupboards, tables and chairs, she raised it very carefully and placed it under the tree. In spite of all her care, it happened that she broke the leg of a chair and knocked off a corner of cupboard. She was very sorry, but Tom soothed her by saying that he would repair everything. When he began to bring out the dishes, painted porcelain left by his grandmother, cups, saucers and pitchers, old silver pieces and other treasures, he was very fearful that she might break these, too. To her, they seemed like tiny bits of glistening sand; but she made him a little wooden staircase that she set against the tree box, and up and down this he climbed, carrying his treasures to his castle. He worked so hard all day that by night he was completely tired out.

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In the meantime, the Godmother had gone about her own work; but when, in the evening, she came back into the room she found that the stone had been cleaned out. In the door of Castle Easter Egg hung a flowered carpet for a curtain and at the windows were little shades. Inside, the furniture had all been set in order, but, outside, there still remained piles of the precious stores. She was sorry she could not see inside very well to look at Tom's housekeeping, and was afraid to touch the egg lest his castle should go to pieces.

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In the morning, he was early awake and went carefully over his garden, measuring out the paths and deciding where he would have lawns, and where he would start a forest of moss. Then he made a store room for his surplus supplies, dug a well and completed the wall around the castle.

His Godmother helped him as best she could, cutting tiny pieces of wood and cloth for his use. The well they made from an old thimble. She left him busy at work, noting how diligent and orderly he was and how well he had been educated; for he seemed to understand everything that needed to be done. She was pleased that he had so much to keep him busy, that he would have no time for bitter reflections.

During the day, each went about his or her own work; but in the evening they sat together, the Godmother at the table eating her thick soup and potatoes. Upon the table Tom had his own little table and chair opposite her. For his supper, he had a baked grain of wheat, a hash of sunflower seed, or two or three grains of millet fried in butter. He always ate with delicacy. His food tasted good to him and after it was eaten, he drank some milk.

When they had cleared away the things they talked together. The Godmother wished to know how the gnomes lived in their underground kingdom and Tom told her all that he could. What they did outside in the fields, he did not know, for he had been obliged to remain at home and study in the schools; but he described very well all that happened in the underground town which had bustled with people. He had seen long lines of them bringing home food, riding on grasshoppers, making traps for flies and butterflies, bringing in the captured tree insects and the spotted bugs which were kept in roomy stalls.

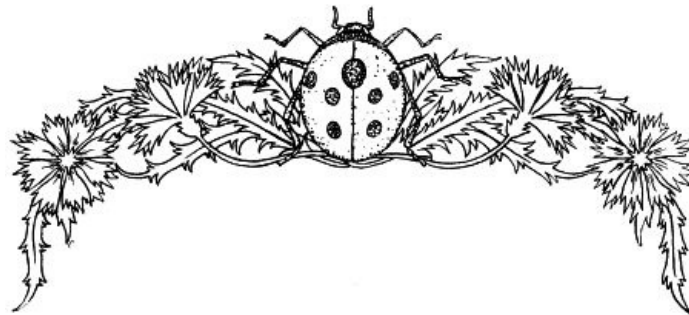
For himself, he had a fine grasshopper, which carried him along the corridors lighted by torches from dried wood which gave out soft blue flames. He told how his father and mother used to play with him and about his little friend Chrysomela, a sweet little girl who had been educated with him. Together, they used to run and play and watch the gnomes digging in the mountains or go for a row on the underground river. Then he spoke of the frequent visits of foreign guests, gold beetles, and spotted wood bugs who came in stately processions and brought fine messages of greeting and beautiful presents. He told especially of a visit, just before the flood, made by many black ants whom the gnomes feasted and welcomed with great honor. His father, the king, presented them to him, telling him how diligent and orderly they were and what good friends they were to him. He promised Tom that when he should grow up he would send him to them for their teaching, so that he might learn how to rule over the kingdom.

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Tom would often speak of these things he remembered, but, at the end, he would always become sad, when he thought how all his kingdom had been destroyed and everything had disappeared, and that he would never again see his loved ones.

The Godmother listened to his stories with great pleasure, but she realized that Tom must have some occupation that would keep him busy and not only prevent him from thinking too much of the past, but also prepare him for the life he was to lead in the future.

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### CHAPTER THREE.

## LITTLE TOM'S TRIP AROUND THE WORLD.

LITTLE TOM'S HOUSEHOLD.  
LITTLE TOM WRITES A DIARY.  
HE LEARNS TO READ THE BOOKS OF MEN.  
HOW LITTLE TOM READ WITH HIS FEET AND HOW HE  
TURNED THE LEAVES.  
LITTLE TOM LEARNS GEOGRAPHY AND WANTS TO  
MAKE A TRIP ROUND THE WORLD.  
WHAT HE WROTE IN HIS DIARY ABOUT THIS TRIP.

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Little Tom had his day well planned. He rose early and, as his Godmother placed every night on his castle grounds an earthen-ware plate full of fresh water he would jump into it the first thing and swim all around in it. When he had finished his bath he would take his breakfast in the garden.

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Under the tree was his store of provisions: A hazel nut with an end cut off so that he could take out little bits from time to time, lasting him a whole month; a beechnut; sunflower seeds; a piece of sugar; and a wonderful apple, into which he cut a narrow passage so that it would not dry up from the outside.

When he had breakfasted he would sweep the carpet in his room, clean his clothes and shoes, exercise with his weapons so that he would not forget the arts of defence he had learned at his home, and then go into the garden to plant and weed. Sometimes, he hunted for the ugly worms that dug great ditches in the vegetable beds.

When the Godmother rose she would come to say good morning to Tom, look at his work, praise and advise him. When she saw it was necessary to water the tree, she would tell Tom to take away his tools and would then pour water over the tree from a fine sprinkler. Tom loved to run about in this rain and was happy to think that he could so bravely bear the heavy shower.

After she had gone away, he would write in his diary, describing everything he had been doing, as well as all those things he could remember from his former kingdom, so that nothing should be forgotten. For this purpose, he had a beautiful, smooth parchment, tanned from the skins of white tree bugs, sharp pens, made from the bills of gnats, and fine writing sand from the powder of butterflies' wings. He only lacked ink, but he found a way to get that. On the tree, he discovered the smoky wicks from the candles; mixing the soot with water he made himself some excellent ink; but in doing this, he became so black that when his Godmother saw him she feared that he had turned into a negro.

He took his dinner alone, but always looked forward to the evening meal when he could sit down and talk with his Godmother.

Thus the days passed happily. He worked about his castle and in the garden and was kept busy with his housekeeping. Every day he was becoming more manly and strong and, as he grew up, he thought more and more of his past, of his birth and what he would have accomplished had he become a king and ruled over his underground realm.

One evening, when they were sitting together and Little Tom was speaking of all the things in the world he would like to do, his Godmother said, »Dear Little Tom, before you can do great things in the world, it is necessary that you should learn how to read and write as large people do, so that you can know what they are doing«.

But Tom answered, »I know how to read and write very well, Godmother. I will show you what I have written.« And when, at his request, she placed him on the press, he ran into the castle and brought out a whole armful of parchments; but it seemed to her that they were only a lot of tiny petals from cherry blossoms.

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When he had thrown the parchments into her lap she put on her spectacles and took one of the little sheets in her palm; but she could make nothing out of it at all.

Tom offered to read some of it to her and taking up the sheet, read it with much expression. In spite of this, the Godmother shook her head. »You read very nicely what you yourself have written,« she said, »but you must learn human letters as well, so that you can read and study our books.«

Therefore, she brought her book to the table, and reached for Little Tom to place him upon it, but he was nowhere to be seen. She looked all about and finally spied him clinging desperately to the table cloth. The wind caused by turning the leaves had blown him over to the very edge of the table and he had barely saved himself. He was calling for help when his Godmother rescued him from his perilous position. So it nearly happened that, at the very outset, a misfortune might have prevented the reading altogether; but, as soon as he had recovered from his fright, Tom offered at once to begin.

He crawled quickly up the golden edge of the book and surveyed the broad white plain covered in every direction, with curving black lines. He ran at once to the upper left hand corner, stepping gingerly on the first large letter. After he had walked all over it, he stopped and declared confidently that it was a capital »O«. In like manner he went on to »N« and »C« and »E« and a little further, until he had no longer to run completely over a letter but could place himself in the middle and looking all about him could tell at once what it was. One after the other he spelled and his Godmother was surprised to see how quickly the reading progressed.

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It was only when he came to the end of the page that he found difficulty, for then he had to crawl down while she turned the page over; but he thought of a way to get around this. When he had reached the end of the next page he procured one of his long spears and crawling a little way down the sloping edge of the opened book, thrust his spear between the leaves and raised the sheet high enough to crawl under it. Then, on his hands and knees, he worked his way to the middle of the book and exerting all his strength, he was able to turn the page over.

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In a short time, he learned to read so rapidly that he could run swiftly along the lines and in this way could cover five or six pages in a day. He liked especially to linger by the pictures, looking at the little knights gazing from the battlements of the castle, or the beautiful ladies spinning or embroidering in great rooms; for it seemed to him that these were pictures of his former life and reminded him of his lost realm. But, after a moment, he would diligently continue his reading.

He was very curious to discover what real people know, so that he also might learn; but it seemed to him that he would never be able to read fast enough, and so he began to ask his Godmother to teach him from her own knowledge. She soon perceived that in some things, like mathematics and physics, he was much better educated than herself; but of other subjects, such as history and geography, he knew nothing at all.

So she told him how the earth was shaped and about the sun, moon and stars. She explained how the sun rose in the East and then there was day; and after it had crossed the sky and set in the West, then night came. She told him that in the Far North there is perpetual snow on great, white plains, so broad that you can not see across them; and in the South great deserts of sand, without water, where lions and tigers roam and it is so hot that the people become black like the king in the altar. Between all the countries stretch seas of salt water, which are filled with strange monsters and across which travel large ships.

Little Tom listened breathlessly, and then was eager to learn how people came to know all these things. His Godmother told him that there were famous travelers who went all over the earth, experiencing many dangers, and then came home to describe what they had seen.

That night, Little Tom in his excitement could not sleep for a long, long while and, finally, when he began to doze, he dreamed that he was walking through the snow, climbing the mountains that reached to the sky and crossing the primeval forests. Then he wandered in deserts and swam the sea in the midst of fierce sharks.

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Next day, he was all the time thinking of the great wonders of the world, and his work was not so pleasing to him. He could hardly wait for the evening to come so that he might learn more from his Godmother. When she had told him other things that she knew, he asked her where was the end of the earth. She explained that the world was round and that, if any one walked on and on, he would come to the place whence he had started.

Little Tom became quite confused, for with his growing mind he could not understand how the world could be so great, or how it could be round! Neither did he know what it meant to travel. There was only one thing that he remembered and that was, if he started in one direction and kept on going, in the end he would come back home. His heart was very brave and he was not afraid of danger. He wanted very much to gain experience and do heroic deeds, even if he did not know where he was going.

So he decided that he would become a great traveler and go round the world. He made careful preparations for the trip. In secret, he filled a bundle with nourishing food, which he put on his back and hung a bottle of water from his neck. On his feet he put heavy shoes, made from strong caterpillar leather, belted his sword around his waist and, as soon as his Godmother had left in the morning, started on his journey round the world.

He looked forward to his Godmother's surprise on his return, when he would tell her all that had happened to him and thereby gain great fame.

He walked down from the box that held his castle and crossed the press straight to his Godmother's bed. He judged that the window through which the light was streaming, was in the East and that, therefore, he was going directly to the North.

When the Godmother returned to her room in the evening she was greatly surprised that Little Tom was not there to welcome her. She called and looked for him everywhere, but could not find him. She feared that he had crawled to some place where he had fallen down and died miserably. She swept the floor most carefully, but in vain. Sadly, she went to the hearth to get some wood to replenish the fire, for it was a cold Spring day. As she took out some pieces, there she found Tom asleep with a tiny bundle upon his back. He was sleeping so soundly, that he did not stir when she called to him, so she took him up carefully and placed him under the tree on her handkerchief. She feared that something had happened to him. Many times during the night she got up to look at him, but Little Tom slept quietly until the morning.

When he finally awoke, he did not at first know where he was. When he remembered, he avoided telling his Godmother where he had been the day before; but he begged her forgiveness and promised that he would never again crawl down from the linen press. She did not insist on an explanation, for she thought that he had been curious and had run around the room and thus become lost. When she went away, he started diligently to write in his diary. This was what he wrote:

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*Castle Easter Egg,  
The 114th day of my life.*

When I was one hundred and twelve days old, believing it to be the duty of a man to accomplish great deeds, I decided that I would be a traveler and go round the earth—Godmother having told me that it is round—so that I could see for myself the wonders she has described. I made my preparations in secret. In the morning, when Godmother had gone away, I started for the hills on the northern horizon, stretching across the plain on which my castle stands.

I expected that beyond those northern hills would lie the snowy plains about which she told me; and that, if I kept straight on, I should reach the deserts of the hot, tropical country and, beyond them, by crossing the forests, I should come to the great ocean. I had planned, if I could find a boat by the ocean, to cross to the other side and, by traveling over the countries there, finally return home.

Godmother had said that the sun, during the day and the night, goes from the East to the West and clear around the earth until it comes back again to the East. I judged that if I should hurry my journey, it would not take any longer than the sun, so I made up my mind to go from the North to the South.

The hills stretch clear across the plain which is sloping and smooth. At first, I could not find a suitable place to climb; but, finally, coming to the end of the plain before a steep precipice, I saw a little fissure by which I might ascend to the very top. With great difficulty I managed to make my way by this fissure until I came to the summit, where I could look over and, as I had expected, I saw before me a vast, white plain stretching out to infinity.

With great care I crawled upon it at the place where it touches the hills and, stepping on it, I found that it was elastic and yielding, like the snow Godmother described. One can really walk on it with ease and I was surprised to find, moreover, that one can so easily overcome the difficulties of those desolate countries. Also I did not feel any cold.

After a time, I came to a place where the white plain began to slope downwards, until it formed, in front of another hill that appeared in the distance, a dark and very deep chasm. I made my way at good speed into this chasm and was already looking forward to the time when I should come out of this inhospitable place, when, all of a sudden, the ground began to slip from under my feet. In vain I tried to hold myself with my hands. Faster and faster I fell, until, head first, I plunged against the wall of the precipice, where I lay unconscious.

When I came to myself, I found that I was on another broad plain; but, instead of snow, this one was very rough and covered with coarse sand. My arms and legs pained me from my fall, so I rested while I refreshed myself with some food from my bundle and drank a little water from my bottle. Then I started farther on my way. After this, I proceeded with great caution. As I did not in the least doubt that I was now on the dangerous desert of Sahara, which is filled with tigers and lions, I took care that I should not be pounced upon unawares.

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But nothing living appeared; only before me stretched the rocky, limitless desert. I hoped that I should come to some oasis where I might find palms and a stream of fresh water, but was disappointed. Finally, I saw before me a mountain that rose so far into the sky that I could not even discern its top. As I came nearer, I perceived that it was warm, so I concluded that I had now come to the tropical country and that behind this great mountain, lay the deep forests and the ocean of which Godmother had told me.

I began to climb the steep side of the mountain, which grew warmer all the time, so that my hands were nearly blistered. From the mountain itself, there seemed to come forth a great heat, so that I was fearful that I had come upon a volcano and that I might fall into the crater. I wanted to go back, but my head became dizzy when I looked over the narrow ledge on which I stood, into the deep chasm I had left behind me. I rested awhile; then, after a drink from my water bottle, I crawled down at the risk of my life.

Reaching the level, I decided to walk around the mountain to see if I could discover some valley. At this point, I would have preferred returning to my home, but did not know how I should climb up the steep slope of the snow plain down which I had fallen.

I followed along the foot of the mountain until I came to a vast forest which, from under its cliffs, stretched a long distance away. I hoped when I should reach the other side that I should come to the ocean. In the forest were only bare trunks of trees fallen in every direction and many turned up by the roots. Perhaps a great earthquake had destroyed it and the heat from the mountain had dried up the trees.

With difficulty, I made my way into the tangle. It soon became darker and with the trunks piled high one on top of another, it seemed to me that there would be no end to it. On and on I went, hoping each moment to see a glimmer of light, when suddenly I ran into a steep, rough wall, but it was unlike anything my Godmother had told me about. On both sides, to the left and right I went, trying to find a way out; but there was not even a hole. Only, on each side was another wall like the one I had run into, and so I found myself in a great cave which, perhaps, in olden times had been caused by an earthquake and now by way of the forest led into the heart of the mountain.

I became frightened and lonely, lost in this desolate place, and feared that I might never again come out into God's world. However, I did not want to give up without making another effort, so I turned around and started back through the forest by the way that I had come, dragging myself wearily over the tangled trunks. Many times I stumbled and fell, until, finally, weariness overcame me and I sank down in the wood too worn out to go further. Before I fell asleep, in my thoughts I said good bye to my dear Godmother, fearing that I might never wake up again.

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In my dreams, it seemed as if the whole forest was shaken violently and that I was lifted bodily and carried to great heights; but I could not call out or even open my eyes.

When I finally awoke, I found myself lying on the carpet in front of my castle in broad daylight. I was uncertain whether I had simply dreamed all about my journey; but, when Godmother came, she asked me with much concern where I had been and how I had come to be among the great faggots by the hearth.

I did not understand at all what she meant, but at least my journey was not a dream and I knew that I had escaped a great danger. I did not want to tell whither I had been wandering and, moreover, I was sorry that my courageous efforts had been without success. It seems to me that, for the present, the journey around the world is too great for my strength and that I should wait until I am better prepared and know fully about the direction and the dangers I shall be apt to meet.



Last evening, I read my diary to Godmother, so that she might tell me the mistakes I had made and how I can better prepare for my next journey. While I read, she laughed until the tears ran down her cheeks. I was sorry that she made so light of my efforts and that the dangers I had encountered seemed so laughable to her, but she endeavored to soothe me by saying that she was the one who had made the mistakes and had instructed me badly.

She told me that the journey was over her great feather bed, across the floor to the hearth, and into the niche where the faggots for the fire lay. I had no idea that the lodging of human beings is so vast and imagine that the earth itself must be a great deal larger and that I shall have to give up my idea. Godmother also advises me to give it up until I shall be more experienced. In the meantime, she will tell me stories of the great heroes, their adventures and the wonderful deeds they accomplished.

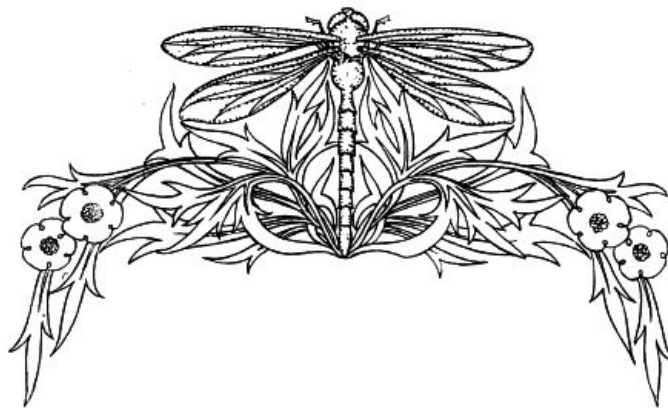
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#### **CHAPTER FOUR.**

### **LITTLE TOM IN THE ENCHANTED CASTLE.**

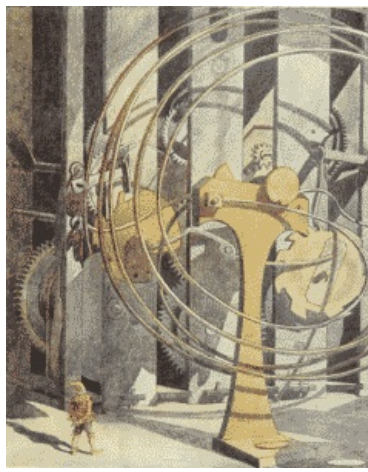
THE GODMOTHER TELLS LITTLE TOM STORIES.  
LITTLE TOM FINDS HIMSELF IN A CLOCK WITH  
A CUCKOO AND THINKS HE IS IN AN ENCHANTED  
CASTLE.

WHAT ADVENTURES HE HAD IN THE CLOCK.

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The Godmother was very sorry that she had told Little Tom so many things he had not understood. She realized that it would be impossible to tell him all about the world until he had seen it for himself; so, taking him in her hand, she carried him from the bed to the hearth, from there to the cupboard, then to the door and the window. Everything she showed him she called by name and explained the uses of the different things so that he might understand and, another time, not lose his way. [Pg 44]

Then she placed him on the floor and Tom, looking around, measured the distances with his eye, so that he would know how far he would have to travel to each object. He crawled around the corners, examined the feet of the furniture and remembered all the things she told him could be moved, like the chairs, the poker and the foot-stool, so that he could make no mistakes as to his whereabouts in case he could not find one of the household articles in its place. Very soon he learned to know the whole room as well as his own dwelling, and the Godmother, when she left him in the morning, found she could put him on the floor without fear and permit him to run where he pleased and to examine everything; but she was afraid to take him outside the hut lest something should injure him or he should get lost.

Little Tom was quite satisfied, for his explorations kept him busy. Every evening, he told his Godmother all the things he had found under the cupboard and the linen press and around the hearth, and she was surprised to learn how her room appeared when looked at from the floor.

Then she told him more stories and became as interested herself in the fairy tales as when she first heard them as a child. Often they sat thus together even into the night. Little Tom could not hear enough of the sweet princesses taken away by the wizards into deep caverns; the brave heroes fighting the dragons and the witches; the glass castles which revolved on the nightmare's foot; the valiant tailor who fought with the giants; the clever shoemaker who had a magic sack; and of how the strong blacksmith cheated the devil and death.

But, best of all, he liked the story of the enchanted castle, suspended high above the earth. This castle seemed deserted, but whoever could sleep there three nights, and, without saying a word, let himself be tormented and tortured by the wicked spirits, would set free a beautiful princess who had been enchanted by a witch. And so, one day, a brave lad hid himself in the bucket which was lowered each morning to the earth and let himself be pulled up to the castle, where he stayed three nights. Every night he heard terrible noises; the spirits came and pounded him, pinched him and squeezed him; but he valiantly stood the torture and never spoke, screamed or cried out with pain. After the third night, an enormous griffin flew in the window, bearing on his back the beautiful princess who had been freed. The brave lad also climbed on his back and the griffin flew with them down to the earth. There he married the princess and they lived happily together ever afterwards in their kingdom. [Pg 45]

Little Tom liked the manly courage of this hero. He seemed braver than all the other knights, for he knew how to suffer and bear torture and to sacrifice himself for the poor princess. Tom thought that such sacrifice was more beautiful than all the heroic deeds. He wished that he could have such an adventure and give himself to torture, so that he might free a princess.

One morning, before going to the field, the Godmother placed Tom on the floor as usual, and then went out to get Speckle. As Tom ran about the room, he came suddenly upon a great brass cylinder.

Never before had he seen it there and he wondered what it could be. He wanted to climb up but it was so round and so smooth that he could find no foothold. He ran to the hearth and taking a strong twig which he rested against the cylinder clambered to the top; but when he got there his twig slipped and fell down on the floor.

Tom then noticed that on the top of the cylinder was a little depression and, in its centre, a hook from which a strong chain ran up in the air. He seated himself by this hook and was almost breathless when he thought that it might be a bucket lowered to the earth by its great chain from an enchanted castle in the sky. He sat waiting for the chain to pull him up, trembling with pleasure at the thought that he would get into the castle and rescue the enchanted princess.

He was not at all afraid of the pain or the torture, for he knew that if he did not cry out, the great

bird would fly into the castle bearing the princess he had set free.

At that moment, the Godmother returned, took up her cloak and was about to leave the room again when she suddenly remembered that she had forgotten to wind the clock. So she went to the wall, and taking hold of the little hook, lifted the run-down weight from the floor to the clock. She did not notice Little Tom sitting on the weight; but he heard a terrible noise and felt himself hoisted by the chain into the sky. He did not speak or cry out, for he knew if he should make a noise, the evil spirits would tear him to pieces.

The Godmother went out to her work in the field and there sat Little Tom on the weight at a dizzy height, up in the air under the enchanted castle. The rattling of the chain had ceased, but above him in the castle, Tom heard a strong voice repeating, »Tick, tack, tick, tack«.

At first Tom was frightened by this moving spectre, but he soon discovered that it never went away from the wall. This calmed his fears and he decided that he would go farther into the dark rooms of the castle, in spite of the poisonous odors that came from them.

Returning to his chain he clambered higher and higher, until he came to the powerful cylinder around which the chain was wound. Everywhere, it was dusty and musty with much dark, greasy slime which soiled his hands and clothes. Such a desolate, lonely castle he had never dreamed could exist. Nowhere, a living soul.

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Little Tom sat down on the big cylinder, waiting to see what would happen and wondering what tortures lay before him. Resolutely, he said to himself that he would not scream, no matter if the spectres should tear him into little pieces.

Suddenly, the cylinder under him moved and shook so that he nearly fell off; but he caught hold of the chain and lay quite still, stretched out to his full length. Then he saw something bright, and directly above him move, and the giant tooth of a great wheel bent over and caught him by the coat. Tom thought that his torture was about to begin, but he resolved that he, would not give up easily; so, bravely grasping the tooth itself, he pulled himself up with all his strength until he sat astride the great wheel.

Now, he felt easier, but the wheel started to move carrying him still higher. In a moment, he was lifted high above the great cylinder and saw another wheel, with other great teeth approaching, which fitted closely into the notches of the wheel on which he sat and, with powerful force, turned it up and up. He was afraid that he would be caught between the two, so climbing over his wheel, he worked his way back to the cylinder; but this was also moving, so that he could not stand upright on it. As his eyes had by this time become accustomed to the darkness, he saw about him in every direction, wheels, levers, teeth and cylinders. Everything was moving and turning around. Poor little Tom was suddenly snatched by a great metal talon which almost tore out his shoulder and he was terribly pinched, squeezed and pressed.

Setting his teeth so that he would not cry out, he drew his dagger and cut away a piece of his coat, which was already caught between the two cylinders, and sprang blindly to one side, not knowing where he would land. His hand touched an upright steel post which he grasped firmly and, climbing upward, he reached a great globe that seemed to stand quite still. Here he felt safe for the moment, but he knew that this was not the end of his tortures.

Close to the globe was a large, metal vessel, to which he clambered and, working his way to the top, where it was fastened, sat down to rest. He hoped that this would not move. From his safe perch he looked below him into the tangle of wheels and teeth and levers, where everything was rustling, growling, and whirring. From all this he had barely escaped with his life.

He wondered how long he had been bearing this torture and when it would end. While he sat there thinking, all of a sudden the globe which he had just left, raised itself, something below rustled and the globe struck itself against the vessel with a deafening clang. The great vessel trembled and resounded with a terrible noise, so that Tom almost fell from his seat. He perceived that this was a new kind of torture, worse even than the first. His arms and legs shook with the vibration, his spine prickled and his head began to whirl. Again the globe beat against the vessel, and again. The clock was sounding three quarters of the hour.

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After this, everything became quiet and Little Tom heaved a sigh of relief. On the great bell he sat very sadly. He would have returned into the machinery below him, for the whole world, as he thought a crowd of witches and spirits were storming there and waiting to tear him to pieces if he should utter a single sound. But he could see no other way out, for around him was nothing but darkness and gloom. He hoped that when the torture should stop, the castle would open and the great griffin would appear to carry him safely back to earth. He wondered what sort of a princess she would be whom he would save and whether she would be as beautiful as his own mother had been.

In this way, another quarter of an hour passed; but to Tom, sitting there in the darkness, it seemed like an eternity. Again, the machinery began to whirl and the castle shook. The globe beat into the bell as if it were crazy. Little Tom was stiff with fright as he shook and trembled under the powerful blows.

Suddenly, the little doors in front of him flew open, letting the light of day into the castle; and he saw the great cuckoo, which he at once took for the griffin. The bird ran out a little way from the roof and called »Cuckoo, cuckoo«.

Tom sprang from the bell to the bird and cried out victoriously. He thought that his torture was at an end and that he had broken the spell of the enchanted castle. Now, he wanted to find the princess he had set free. But, suddenly, the doors closed with a bang, catching Tom between them and squeezing him so hard that he nearly lost his breath. He was terribly afraid, fearing lest he had cried out too soon and spoiled the rescue and now would be torn to pieces by the spectres.

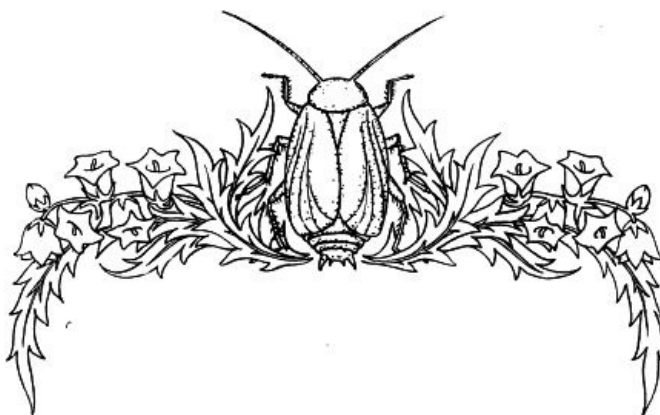
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He struggled in vain to tear himself loose. Below him, the clock was moaning and groaning; and, far down, he looked into the depths of the chasm. Already, he bade farewell to the world and started shouting at the top of his lungs.

At this moment, his Godmother came in from the field and, hearing the clock rattling, she wondered what could be the matter with it, that it should make such a noise. Looking at the partly closed doors, she perceived that something was caught between them. Stepping up on a chair, she saw Little Tom struggling and crying for help. She released him at once and carried him safely down. He told her what had happened saying that he wanted to rescue the princess in the enchanted castle, but had spoiled the rescue by crying out too soon.

This time, the Godmother did not laugh at him. She was afraid that he had been hurt and was very sorry that her stories had brought him into such danger. For a long time, Tom could not believe that he had been mistaken and that in the clock there were no spectres. She raised him up to the dial plate, showed him the painted roses and the numbers, explaining all about them and showing how the little hands worked all by themselves, day and night, to tell how the time was passing. He became very much encouraged, as he began to understand. Then he sat astride the long hand as if he were on a horse and liked it so much, that the Godmother had to warn him not to slide down and kill himself.

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## CHAPTER FIVE.

### LITTLE TOM'S ADVENTURES IN THE GARDEN.

THE GODMOTHER TELLS LITTLE TOM ALL ABOUT HELL  
AND PARADISE.  
LITTLE TOM IN MIRMEX'S GARDEN, ON THE ROSE-BUSH,  
ON THE POPPY-BED AND AMONG THE  
STRAWBERRIES.  
THE STRIKE. LITTLE TOM IN THE BLACK KITCHEN.  
THE COCKROACH.  
WHERE THE GODMOTHER FOUND LITTLE TOM.

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The Godmother realized that it would not do to tell Tom too many fairy tales, so, instead, she said that she would tell him other stories more beautiful than the made-up ones.

During the day, Little Tom recovered from the adventures of the morning and looked forward to the evening, when he was to hear something new. After their supper, the Godmother spoke about the wickedness in the world and told him that, in the next world, would come justice and rewards; that those who had lived rightly and stood the trials of this world patiently, would live in Paradise, where there is eternal life and pleasure, where beautiful flowers grow, sweet fruits ripen and angels fly about the blue heaven and sing; that those who had lived wickedly and committed crimes would be taken away by wicked spirits and punished.

Tom was greatly affected by this explanation and longed to see Paradise; but he was fearful lest he had done something wrong and that the little devils would carry him away. He asked his Godmother what he should do to live right and so earn Paradise. She promised that she would instruct him in order that he might know how to avoid sin. As it was now late in the evening, they went to bed, Little Tom dreaming all night long of Paradise, of walking through the delightful groves and listening to the angels' songs.

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In the morning, when the Godmother arose, she found that it was a warm, bright day and opened the window through which came the scents of the old lime tree, the carnations and the roses. Then she went into the black kitchen, started the fire and hung a pot of potatoes to cook for lunch, on the hook over the hearth. She told Tom that she was going to the village and that he should not run around and again get into danger. Having promised not to run around the room, Tom sat down by Castle Easter Egg, under the fir tree, and wrote of the experiences through which he had passed.

But, after she had gone, he became curious to know whence came the lovely fragrance. He ran down from his garden, crossed the linen press to the window and stood upon the ledge. Above him he saw the blue sky and the golden sun; he heard the blackbirds and thrushes singing in the lilac bushes; and such a beautiful perfume came to him that his heart was filled with joy. Without realizing what he was doing, he felt he must go out and look at this magic world. Grasping the old vine by the window, he slid down very carefully through the transparent green leaves, jumped into the middle of a red carnation among its opening petals, and felt as though he were in a cloud of perfume. He waded through the soft, little petals, pressing them with his hands, and was sure that he was in Paradise itself! Yes, it must be the Paradise his Godmother had so beautifully described. What lights, colors and odors were here! What pleasure to gaze at the broad forest of red, white and pink bouquets and on the infinite green plain beyond, on which other blossoms like these were growing!

As Tom walked to the edge of this flower, it bent over and he fell into the grass. But he did not mind this at all. He waded through the grass until he came upon a path, full of hard, shining little stones.

He felt easy in his heart and shouted with delight, drinking the dew drops on the blades of grass and saying over and over to himself. »I am in Paradise, the place of eternal life and eternal pleasure.« He wanted to cross the path to the other side, where he saw great trees growing with broad crowns—his Godmother's rose bushes—and he was curious to learn what other charming things he might discover.

But it was not easy for him to cross the path. He fell into little holes and stumbled over the sand grains which seemed to him like high stones. When he stood in the middle of the path, he saw a great black creature, with six legs and two horns, about to run by him. He stopped, instinctively placing his hand on the hilt of his dagger, but at the same time the creature stopped also and gazed at him with bulging eyes, raising its horns in the air.

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Little Tom went on bravely and at once recognized an ant. At first, it retreated, then ran towards him and said, »Prince, it pleases me very much that I have found you again. I was once at your father's court, with a message from our people to thank him for his hospitality and for the shelter he gave us when our town was attacked. I am Mirmex and I knew your father very well. All of us were deeply grieved when we learned that your town was flooded and destroyed.«

Tom was heartily glad to meet some one with whom he could speak on a basis of equality and began at once to tell the ant about his adventures; but Mirmex excused himself, saying that he was too busy to stop long; so he asked Tom to accompany him. Tom was surprised to learn that Mirmex had work in his Godmother's Paradise, but Mirmex was already running ahead and Tom could hardly catch up with him.

They crossed the path and waded through the grass to the trunk of the rose-bush, up which Mirmex climbed quickly. Tom saw on the trunk a crowd of little ants, each carrying a small bit of



earth in its antennae. Presently, Mirmex came back to Tom. »There is a great obstacle up there,« he said, pointing to the bush. »The trunk is covered all the way around with some sticky grease and our workmen can not crawl over it to get to the leaves. We are now trying to build a bridge across this place, but are not succeeding very well.«

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Little Tom promised to help them. Four strong workmen raised him over their heads and pushed him up the trunk to the dangerous strip, where he sat on a crooked thorn and saw how the ants were putting bits of earth on the grease to build a bridge across it; but it was too thick and the feet of those who were in front were caught in it. Tom drew his dagger and, stepping out on the thorn, dug the ants free and then scratched a broad path in the grease. Over this the ants sifted sand and soon began to run across it in such crowds, that the leaves appeared all black.

With difficulty, Tom crawled up after them and, finding a seat on a rosebud, watched them working. Those on the leaves were biting out little round pieces which they threw to the ground, where others were waiting. These at once put the green circles over their heads like parasols and, in a long stream, hurried to the fence. Tom wanted to know what they were going to do with the leaves and called to Mirmex as he was passing near him. Mirmex answered that just then, he had no time; but, later, he would explain everything.

Tom then asked Mirmex to have him carried down to the ground, as he wished to look at the other wonders of Paradise. »With pleasure,« answered Mirmex, »but perhaps you would like a horse to ride upon around the garden.« Before Tom could reply, a beautiful, green steed jumped upon the rose bud. Tom climbed upon him, the grasshopper spread his wings, flew to the ground, and then, with great leaps, carried him to the poppy beds.

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In the green shade among the high stalks, it was agreeably cool. Little Tom rode through this giant forest, above which flamed red and white blossoms like huge lamps. The beauty of it all was enchanting. When Mirmex came to him, Tom spoke of the place with enthusiasm; but Mirmex merely waved his hand. »This is only a useless desert,« he said. »There are many like it in the garden; but ride after me and I will show you a more beautiful place.«

Mirmex ran rapidly ahead over the bed of carrots, through the strawberry plants and under the gooseberry and currant bushes, where he stopped.

»Here,« he said, »is the most beautiful spot in the whole land which you call Paradise. Here are the stalks of the sweetest things in the world and there are so many that whole towns could live on them. The only problem is how to carry them away. You can stop here and, if at any time you should wish to visit our Black Town, you will always find here some of our workmen who will tell me of your wishes. In the meantime, be happy and enjoy yourself.« Mirmex ran quickly away and Little Tom, climbing down from his horse, began to look at the wonderful fruit.

He crawled up a gooseberry bush and saw many yellow barrels hanging among the leaves. He stuck his dagger into one and found that it was filled with excellent wine; so he cut the stems of several others which fell to the ground. He then went to the second bush, full of red globes that shone like glass. He cut into one and found that it held a delicious, tart wine. When he crawled down again, he had in the grass a stock of fine drinks that would last him many days.

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He was still looking for food when he came upon the strawberries, which seemed like giant lumps in the leaves over his head. Selecting the largest, he began to cut away its stem with his cutlass; the green stalk bent and the strawberry fell heavily to the grass, leaving Tom barely time to jump to one side, as the great mass fell. As it was, it struck him on the shoulder and threw him head foremost into the grass; but he did not regret the misfortune. With his cutlass he dug out the yellow seeds and cut great, juicy slices, enjoying huge mouthfuls of the delicious fruit.

Never had he eaten anything so good. When he could eat no more, he made up his mind that he would remain in this Paradise, and establish his home here. For the moment, he had forgotten his Godmother and how sad she would be when she could not find him.

First, he thought he would sleep awhile and then bring together the timbers for his house; but, at this moment, along came his horse, pawing restively and rubbing his head against him, as if asking Tom to hurry. It seemed strange to Tom that he should obey so readily; but he climbed

upon his steed's back at once and the grasshopper started from the bush with a great jump and passed under the fence as if some one was chasing him.

The grass struck Tom in the face, so that he could hardly keep his seat; but the grasshopper took no notice; he only hurried the faster to the brook to hide himself in the sorrel close to the water. Suddenly, a huge shadow swept over the earth. Tom saw great wings and an open bill. He fell on the ground and the grasshopper disappeared, carried away by a huge shrike. Rolling in the dust in front of the Godmother's hut, Tom saw the great bird sitting on a shrub close to the fence. Holding the poor grasshopper in his bill, he jumped upon the branches, impaled the grasshopper on a sharp thorn and flew away. Pierced by the thorn, the grasshopper struggled to get away buzzing with his wings and kicking his feet desperately in the air, but to no avail. He was held fast by the thorn which was thrust firmly through his breast.

Little Tom watched his struggles, breathless with fright. What did it all mean? He thought of the wicked spirits his Godmother had told him about, who carried away those who had done wrong, to torture them. He became more frightened when he thought how he had taken advantage of his Godmother's goodness.

He did not doubt in the least that the great winged creature had come for him to transfix him on the thorn, so that he might suffer his punishment and that, only by chance, it had caught the grasshopper instead of himself. He did not know where he was. All about him was bare, hard ground. Crawling up the little step before the door of the hut, he squeezed through a little crack and found himself in a great, dark hall.

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With a sigh of relief, he thought that, now, he might escape the terrible punishment and that here the flying, wicked spirit could not find him. He did not know that he was in the hall of his Godmother's hut; but it did seem to him to be that of a human dwelling. He went further along the wall, until he found a crack under a door, through which he crawled into the black kitchen.

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Here it was dark, but far away was shining a great, hot fire on the hearth. Little Tom did not know what this meant. He went through the darkness towards the red light, wading through the dust until he came to the hearth, where, in the mortar, he discovered a little hole. Not minding how the rough mortar cut his hands, he crawled up the broad fireplace under the chimney and stood astonished.

Before him was a black plain covered with soot and in the middle was a tripod holding a huge pot, from under which flames darted forth. The fire itself crackled and hissed; sparks were flying through the darkness as big as Tom's head, while clouds of steam rose to the chimney. From under the cover of the pot, came a great noise of sputtering and bubbling, like the quarreling of many angry voices.

Tom felt attracted by the fierce light. He could not turn his eyes away from it and great fear pressed upon his heart. After all, he could not escape the wicked spirits and he would be punished for having deceived his Godmother. Perhaps a devil would come to catch him. Soon, he thought the devil actually did appear. A terrible being, twice as big as himself, all in shining armor and with great whiskers, came quickly from out of the darkness and stood directly in front of him, looking at him, till his heart grew faint. Tom thought he was lost, but determined to defend himself with all his might.

Drawing his cutlass, he waited. The cockroach raised his feelers and ran towards him. Little Tom stood firm and when the cockroach drew near, he thrust his sharp cutlass under his chin up to the very hilt. The cockroach fell dead on Little Tom, throwing him down by his weight.

When the Godmother returned for lunch, she looked for Tom in the room in vain. Calling him, she hunted in all of the corners, through the wood by the hearth, and even in the clock, but all to no purpose. Tom was nowhere to be seen.

Very sadly, she went back into the black kitchen for the potatoes and spied a cockroach by the oven. She was about to sweep it across the floor, when something sparkled under it. It was Little

Tom's golden cap. She placed the poor little fellow in her palm and carried him tenderly into the great room, calling him by his name until he wakened; but even then he did not recognize her. He had a fever and would only say, »Go away from me, you ugly devil«. He kept waving his hands and reaching for his sword screaming as if defending himself.

It was some time before he came to himself and recognized his Godmother, so that he could tell her what he had experienced. She thought that he was still in fever and did not know what he was saying. She forgot what she had been telling him about Paradise and the place of the wicked spirits. Only when he had quite recovered and could walk about in his garden by Castle Easter Egg did she learn what had happened to him.

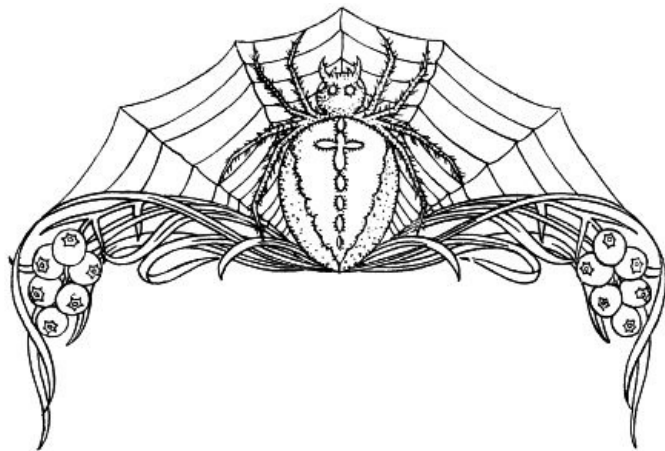
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She then realized that she could not keep Little Tom at home all the time and that the room could not satisfy his brave, curious little soul. So she decided that she would take him out and show the world to him, in order that he might have pleasure under the great sky and gain some experience of life.

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## CHAPTER SIX.

### LITTLE TOM'S EXCURSIONS.

LITTLE TOM'S EXPEDITION BEFORE THE COTTAGE.

HIS WALK THROUGH THE CORN-FIELD.

THE COBWEB AND THE FIGHT WITH THE SPIDER.

LITTLE TOM FINDS HIMSELF IN THE COURT-YARD

AMONG CHICKENS.

HE RUNS AWAY AND IS PURSUED BY ROVER.

HE TUMBLES INTO A BROOK AND IS GOBBLED UP BY

A TROUT, WHICH SPITS HIM OUT AGAIN INTO THE

GRASS.

HE TAKES A WALK ON THE MEADOW WITH

HIS GODMOTHER.

THE BUMBLE-BEE TALKS LITTLE TOM INTO GETTING

DRUNK.

LITTLE TOM IS BEING TIED TO A THISTLE AND FINDS

HIMSELF IN THE MOUTH OF A COW.

HE IS PUT INTO A WOODEN SHOE BY HIS GODMOTHER,

BUT IS ENDANGERED BY A HAILSTORM.



One bright summer morning, as his Godmother was getting herself ready to go to the village, she said to him, »Dear Little Tom, if you want to see what God's world is like, I will let you come out in front of the hut; although I am afraid that you will lose your way, or that some animal will harm you.«

Tom encouraged her by saying that he would put on his weapons and that he knew how to defend himself. She did not give much thought to his valour but she felt that, because of his small size, no animal would notice him; so she took him in her hand and carried him outside in front of the hut, through the garden and barn to the brook, pointing out everything of interest and telling him the name of objects and places so that he could recognize them again. Then she put him on the ground before the door and told him, in a severe voice, that he should not run far away; she hoped to return soon and, in the meantime, he would not meet with any misfortune.

When she had crossed the bridge, she turned around, but no longer saw him. He had absolutely disappeared among the stones of the path. He was very pleased that he could make an exploration on his own account and felt that he was now much more clever. He understood what a human dwelling was, a garden, a path, a brook and a lime tree; and he was not afraid of anything. He decided to go over the same way his Godmother had taken him around the hut, so that he might see for himself all its surroundings.

First, he went around the fence to the field, crossed the path and passed into the thick, rustling grain. He felt he was in a vast, old forest. Above him buzzed wasps, flies, gnats and gadflies. All around him were worms, insects and caterpillars, which took no notice of him whatsoever, but kept diligently about their own work. He seemed to be in a new world and found so many strange objects and animals, that he had not time to look at all of them carefully.

He strode forward into the grain, but was careful not to go too far and lose his way. As he walked along the edge of the path, he looked at the grain, thinking that he would like to cut down one of the stalks and make a good, light lance out of it. While he was trying to select one that would suit him, he came upon a cobweb stretched between two thistles. It was beautifully woven of thin, well-tied threads, and seemed to Tom to be a powerful net which some hunter had placed there as a trap for wild game.

He wished to see the hunter and learn how game is caught, so he sat down in some wild thyme not far away and waited; but nothing happened. Then he got up and went nearer, feeling the lines with his hand to see how tightly they were drawn. But no sooner had he touched the net than he felt it shake and saw, running across it, a great, eight-footed creature, with a cross on its back and horrible jaws, rushing straight at him.

He drew his sword at once, but a strong, elastic rope was thrown around his body, binding his hips and legs. He struggled to free himself, but more and more ropes enveloped him. In a very short time, he was tangled up in them and tightly bound to the net. Then the great monster darted at him with his cruel jaws open.

Brave Little Tom waved his sword; this frightened the spider, which drew back. At once he cut the ropes around him, tore himself out of the net and ran, beside himself with fear, until he fell rolling on the gravel in the path. He expected the monster to rush out after him and eat him; but when the spider saw that his prey had escaped him, he started to repair his net and paid no further heed to Tom.

Tom was glad to have escaped so easily and no longer wished to go in the field and cut down a stalk. He went back very rapidly along the path, deciding that he would remain near the hut. He wanted to see his Godmother's farm, so he passed through the gate to the little grassy place beyond among the daisies and dandelions. As soon as he reached the spot, a lot of little yellow chickens came running to him and, gathering around him, looked at him with surprised eyes; for that kind of a worm these little chicks had never seen before.



Little Tom was frightened, for these birds appeared to him as large as the ostriches his Godmother had shown him in the natural history book, only they were yellow. The chickens looked at him sideways, peeping and calling the mother hen. She was scratching in some sweepings not far away and when she heard the peeping, she hurried up, all a flutter, to see what was the matter and who the enemy was. When she saw only Little Tom, she pecked at him angrily with her bill, then picked him up, but let him drop as he did not seem good for eating. Scolding her chicks, she drove them away in search of real worms.

Tom was so badly hurt that he fell down as if dead. His coat was torn and his hand was bleeding. After a moment, he struggled to his feet and fled out of the yard, away from such terrible enemies. In front of the yard, the Godmother's woolly-haired dog, Rover, was running about. Without seeing Tom he stepped on him with his great, hard foot. When Tom cried out in pain, Rover stopped, turned around and smelled at Tom with his moist nose.

Little Tom was overcome with another great fear. He was dusty, bruised and bleeding and so unhappy that he did not know what to do. He ran on, stumbling and limping, while Rover, thinking he was some strange insect, ran after him, barking and jumping around him, until he drove him to the brook. Little Tom wanted to hide himself among the leaves near the water; but, as he stepped on them, he slipped and fell head first into the brook.

The water refreshed him and, knowing how to swim very well, he was at first pleased to think he had escaped this enemy; but the brook, which seemed to him a river, was carrying him away. He had no idea that he could reach the shore. He already felt himself lost, believing that the waves would dash him against a stone, when, suddenly, a trout came out of the water and gobbled him up in his great mouth. But the trout did not like this morsel and spat him out again into the grass under the bridge.

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Catching hold of a grass stem, Tom pulled himself into the bushes and sat there, shaking as with a chill. Wet through and cold, with hands bruised and bleeding, he could hardly hold himself on the grass which the wind waved back and forth.

As he became weaker and weaker and was about to give up hope that he would ever come of his adventure alive, he suddenly heard his Godmother calling to him. She was coming across the little foot-bridge and calling loudly, so that she might not by mistake step on him. Tom immediately answered as loud as he could shout, »Here I am Godmother. Here I am«. But she had to look a long while before she discovered whence came the thin, little voice. Then she promptly rescued him from his perilous position. Poor Little Tom was so worn out from his bruises and his tremendous exertion, that he could hardly feel anything and it was only after he had eaten well and drunk some milk, that he could tell his Godmother about all the terrible adventures that had befallen him. How in the deep forest of the grain he had been ensnared by the terrible robber in his frightful net; how the great, yellow ostriches had pursued him and, when he was escaping from them, how a rough, hairy dragon had come upon him and chased him into the river, where he was first swallowed by an enormous whale and then cast out upon the shore.

The kind Godmother was very, very sorry for poor Little Tom and began to realize the danger of leaving him alone, outside the hut, so she promised him that she herself would take him to the field. Tom no longer wanted to travel alone amid such terrible dangers and was pleased that he could accompany his Godmother; but they did not know in just what way they could accomplish this. She thought of taking him in her pocket, but Tom was afraid of such a dark place, among crumbs of bread and huge keys.

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On her breast, the Godmother, had a brooch which pinned together the ends of the kerchief she wore around her throat; so Tom sat down on the pleat of the cloth behind the brooch, grasping the bar to keep his hands steady. As she walked along, he thrust out his little head to look at the field, the meadow and the forest on top of the hill, where he hoped to run around with his Godmother, and wondered what new things he should see.

When they reached the meadow under the slope of the hill, the Godmother stood Little Tom upon a stone among the heather and said, »I am going to gather the hay and I must hurry, as the weather looks as if it were going to change. While I am gone, you can walk around on this stone and look at the flowers, but do not crawl down, or you will surely get lost and I would look in vain for you.«

Obediently, Tom walked around on the top of his rock. He crawled over the pebbles, peered into the various holes and examined the small, red carnations, the tall, blue monks-hoods and the pink thistles growing there. As he walked along, he heard a great buzzing in the air as if some one were angry and, on coming closer, he perceived a hairy bumble-bee staggering among the blossoms.



Tom became confused as he had never seen such a creature before. He thought it might be a wild beast that would attack him. But the bumble-bee was quite harmless and, moreover, he had been sucking the sweet honey from the flowers so steadily since the early morning, that his head had become quite dizzy. As soon as he saw Little Tom, he sidled towards him and welcomed him as if he had known him all his life.

»Brother,« he said, »what are you doing here and how are you? I am pleased that I have now found a comrade. Come, let us drink together.«

It seemed strange to Tom, that this stout, old gentleman should appear to know him so well and should address him so familiarly. The old fellow went on to urge him, to fly with him up on the monks-hood, saying that there they would find a delicious drink. Tom tried to excuse himself, saying that he had given his promise not to leave the rock; but the bumble-bee said, »Oh just come along with me. I will bring you back. Let us be merry now.«

Catching Tom in his arms, the bumble-bee carried him up the stem and seated him on a flower with an arched, blue bell over it, and then gave him a push right into the blossom. From the heart of this blue bell extended two horns with thick heads, which powdered him with a yellow dust that made him sneeze. At this, the bumble-bee laughed heartily and began to take long drinks from the cup under the blossoms.

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Carefully, Tom crawled a little lower, stretched himself on his stomach and also drank. The juice was as clear as water and as sweet as honey. He drank gluttonously and, in a little while, became so merry and so light at heart that he could have embraced the whole world. When they had finished this cup, Tom crawled into another blossom and drank again.

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The bumble-bee had chosen another blossom for himself and between sips contentedly murmured to Tom, »This is my only pleasure. See how good it tastes to you also. Now you can see what it is to be merry«.

Tom no longer knew what he was about. He sat in the blossom, singing and drinking, and forgetting everything around him. Presently, the bumble-bee, paying no further attention to Tom, flew away; but Tom did not notice this and was soon so befuddled, that he hardly knew anything at all.

After a while, the Godmother came to the rock to see what he was about. Not finding him on top of the stone, she looked carefully around and soon discovered him peeping out of the monks-hood blossom. His little face was very red. He laughed and shouted and paid no attention to her when she spoke to him. At this she became angry, for she saw that he had been up to mischief; so she plucked the flower and took Tom out of it.

»Will you not obey,« she said, »there is nothing else to do but to tie you up, or you will lose your life somewhere.«

Taking him to the meadow, she pulled a hair from her head and tied him to a great thistle. Tom was so overcome by the sweet juice of the monkshood, that he lay down and immediately fell asleep.

When he awoke after a while, he had a severe headache. He thought over what he had done and was very much ashamed that he had allowed himself to be misled by the drunken bumble-bee. He saw that he had been tied up and felt very sorry, wondering how he should excuse himself to his Godmother when she should return to him.

In the meantime, Speckle, the cow, who had been grazing not far away, was all the while coming nearer and nearer to the spot where Tom had been fastened. He was lying flat on his back, gazing up into the sky, when suddenly a great mouth opened above him, extending from the earth to the sky, and—presto—as if a strong wind had blown, everything around him disappeared.

With a great rattle, the jaws with their powerful teeth closed over him and Tom found himself in complete darkness. All doubled up behind one back tooth, he screamed lustily; but Speckle was moving her tongue and grinding the grass and did not feel Tom at all. Holding his breath, he waited until Speckle opened her mouth, when he ran quickly out on her lip and up on her nose to

her forehead, where he held himself by grasping the hair between her horns. He gave a great sigh of relief as he saw that he was saved.

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When Speckle turned her head, Tom sat quietly, then got up and started for a walk along her neck and head.

It happened that the Godmother turned and saw Speckle just as she bit the thistle. »Oh Tom, Tom, you poor little child,« she cried, running towards Speckle as fast as she could. She thought surely that the cow had swallowed him and that would be the last that she should see of him; but, as she came close, she heard a little voice calling from Speckle's back, »Here I am, Godmother, here I am.«

She took him carefully in her hand and carried him off to the meadow where she was at work. There she seated him in one of her wooden shoes and saying, »Now you must not move from here until I come,« off she went to her work again; for she had to hurry with the hay, as dark clouds were coming up in the sky.

Little Tom sat quietly in the shoe for a while. It was like a big hut to him. Then he thought he would have a look around, so he clambered down the side of the shoe and started to walk a little way on the meadow, when a big rain drop splashed on him and made him all wet. He was greatly surprised, as he did not know what it was that came down in such a flood and splashed on the ground all around him. With the rain came hail stones, like rocks of ice, larger than Tom's head. They bounded away and then came down so thickly, that Tom did not know which way to run.

He turned back toward the shoe and ran for it with all his might, but on the way a great hailstone hit him and nearly killed him. He managed to clamber over the side of the shoe and fall inside, fainting. With such strength as he had left, he crawled away up in the toe of the shoe where he could hide. The hail rattled down like cannon balls and very soon the whole shoe was filled with the little balls of ice. When the Godmother came hurrying up, she could hardly find Tom who was curled up among the hailstones in the far end of the shoe, half frozen and completely exhausted. Taking him carefully in her warm hand, she hurried home with him.

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Thus, his expedition with his Godmother turned out very sadly and she saw that, even when he was with her, he could not be sure of his life.

When they had thoroughly dried themselves and eaten their supper, the Godmother said, »There is nothing to do, Tom, except for you to stay at home and study and not try for yourself to see the wonders of the world. It is a miracle that you did not die today.«

Little Tom himself realized that, outside in the great world, there was no happiness for him and he readily promised that he would stay at home. But it made him sad to think how terrible and cruel the world is, and that in it there seemed to be no safe place for him.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN.

### LITTLE TOM AND CHRYSOMELA.

SEVEN SPOT'S VISIT.  
LITTLE TOM IS INVITED TO PAY A VISIT TO THE  
KINGDOM OF THE SEVEN SPOTS.  
HE SETS OUT ON A DRAGONFLY AND COMES TO THE  
POOL IN THE FOREST.  
THE BANQUET ON THE LEAF OF THE WATER-ROSE.  
LITTLE TOM IS PROCLAIMED KING OF THE KINGDOM  
OF THE SEVEN SPOTS.  
HE MEETS CHRYSOMELA AGAIN. THE FESTIVAL.  
THE VISIT TO THE WOOD-BUGS.  
THE DWELLING IN THE HOLLOW BEECH-TREE.

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Little Tom spent many days at home alone on top of the linen press. Outside, the sun shone and through the windows the flowers breathed a wonderful fragrance; but he no longer wished to go out, for he knew there only awaited him terrible traps and dangers. He worked sometimes in his garden, or wrote in his diary, or went over to the window to look out sadly between the flower pots to the wide world beyond.

One day, as he was standing on the window ledge and looking into the garden, he perceived on a fuchsia near the window a beautiful, red ladybird with shining wings, crawling on the blossoms and looking sideways at him. His Godmother had been away since early morning and he knew that she would not return until evening, so he was very lonely there all by himself.

The lady-bird opened its wings and flew over to the window. Alighting on the edge it started to crawl along, all the time looking towards Tom who thought to himself: »What is that gentleman looking for and does he know me?« But the lady-bird coming to him said, »Good morning Little Tom. How are you? I am very pleased to find you. I am Seven Spot from the lady-bird kingdom on the forest pool. We all thought that you had perished with the others in the terrible flood.«

Little Tom was surprised to learn that this gentleman knew him so well, but he did not wish to inquire how it happened; so he replied that he was very pleased to meet Mr. Seven Spot, as he had no companions at all. They talked together for some time. Seven Spot told him all about the forest pool and how beautiful it was; and Little Tom, on his part, confided to his new friend his various adventures. Seven Spot listened attentively; but also seemed to have something on his mind. Presently he invited Tom to visit the lady-bird kingdom; but Tom declined, as he wished never again to act contrary to his Godmother's instructions and make an independent excursion into the great world.

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Seven Spot persisted, but when he saw that Tom would not be persuaded, he said: »My dear Tom, it is true that you suffered very much when you came out; but that is because you live with human beings and do not know your true place in life, nor your own friends. What kind of a life have you among humans? Although your Godmother loves you, you are neither her child nor her friend. Your real life is among the gnomes, but, since there are none left, you should dwell with their good friends who are like you in many respects. They will welcome and honor you. With them you can live in peace and happiness, and who knows if you might not find among them some one dear to your heart? But if you do not wish to go, I will fly back to my people and tell them that my mission was in vain.«

After this long speech, Mr. Seven Spot raised his shells indifferently and aired his wings; but he did not fly away. Instead, he lighted on the pistil of the fuchsia and started to crawl slowly into the blossom. Little Tom was greatly surprised at what he had heard. Who had sent this messenger and who was thinking of him? He begged Seven Spot not to go away, but to tell him everything he knew. Seven Spot smiled.

»Do you think, Little Tom,« he said, »that I would dare to enter the dwelling of a human being without reason, unless I felt sure of finding you here? Friend Mirmex told me about you on the meadow, where with his workmen he is collecting stores of grain. Then, someone else whom you know very well told us about your past life in the realm of the gnomes. We asked Mirmex to find out how you are living and what you are doing. So, while you were sleeping in the night, his workmen found a way to you, looked over everything very carefully and made a report to us. We realized that you would not find your happiness with human beings and we have, therefore,

decided to ask you to come to us and rule over the lady-bird realm on the forest pool, since your own kingdom has perished. If you do not wish to accept, we shall all be very sorry and, later, you will recognize that your decision to remain with humans was not to your advantage and somebody will cry for you.«

Little Tom was very curious to know who would cry for him and his heart was torn with the hope that he might see again one of his own people. Perhaps, after all, he was not alone in the world, but he feared that he might be terribly disappointed. He begged Seven Spot not to torture him, but to tell him who was expecting him. That gentleman only replied that he could say nothing further, as he had given his word of honor, but that Tom should go with him and see for himself.

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Tom felt as if on thorns. He said that he could go and see, but to remain was impossible, as he could not bind himself to do that. Moreover, he did not know how to get to the wood. Seven Spot was pleased to see that Tom was yielding and said, »Only prepare your things and dress in your finest clothes. In a few minutes, I will return, and you need not bother about your transportation.« And off he flew.

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Tom at once set himself to pack his tiny hand-bag. Then he put on a beautiful suit of green and belted his sword about him. When he was ready, he was impatient to leave. He had barely completed his preparations however, when Seven Spot appeared at the window.

Little Tom, snatching his bag, ran to him at once. There, on the ledge, he saw a gorgeous dragonfly with golden eyes, slim, blue body and transparent rainbow wings. Tom was a little embarrassed before such a magnificent creature; but Seven Spot, without any hesitation, placed Tom's bag upon the dragonfly and told him to get on its back. In a trice, they were flying like a shot through the warm, summer air.

Such a wonderful journey it was, under the blue sky, over the broad stretches of land, high above the earth. The dragonfly, as if not feeling the burden, sparkled and glistened in the rays of the sun, while above them Seven Spot was flying in great circles.

Tom was intoxicated by the swift flight through the beautiful sunshine and the fresh breeze, which, far below them, rippled the sea of grain into little waves. Over the slope they flew, across the fields and into the cool twilight of the forest, among the pine trees and the beeches. Under the thick, quiet arches of the leaves, Tom looked around in surprise; but the dragonfly winged his way unerringly, deeper and deeper into the wood, until they came, at last, to the valley where, beyond the ferns and the colts-foot, shone a dark pool covered with yellow and white pond lilies.

There the dragonfly settled into the cool moss. Tom stepped down, but before he could turn and thank this kind friend, the dragonfly had sped up in the air like a colored spark and disappeared among the yellow candles of the cat tails.

It seemed to Tom as if he had landed in some magic kingdom. All about him were growing gigantic willow-herbs with thick bunches of little red blossoms, broad crowns of yellow lettuce and water crow-feet on thin, spreading stalks, with their tender little heads sparkling like white flames. Everything was radiant, glittering with bright colors, and perfumed with the sweet odors of the forest.

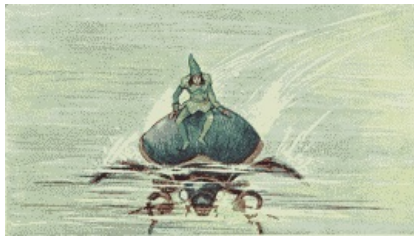
When Tom turned around, he found Seven Spot standing beside him. He invited Tom to come with him, saying that all the lady-birds were waiting. They went under an arch of green leaves and through a lofty green palace to the sprays of sweet-smelling mint by the water. On the leaves of the mint, were sitting, side by side, hundreds and hundreds of lady-birds, in colors of gold, brown, violet, red and yellow. All crowded forward to see the guest, whom they greeted with cheers.

Little Tom was led by the crowd to the shore of the pool, where a great water-bug waited. Tom sat on this smooth, shiny back, and off he went like a shot over the water to a broad water-lily leaf, where a grand banquet was prepared. The lady-birds flew ahead and, lighting on a leaf, waited for him, their brilliant colors looking like a border of sparkling gems. When Tom arrived,

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Seven Spot stepped out from the crowd and welcomed him with a touching speech.



»Prince Tom, be welcomed to our Lady-bird Kingdom. Long have we waited for you and now respectfully beg you to be our king, rule over our land and take for your wife the true comrade of your youth, who, at the time of the flood, was visiting us and so was saved.«

As soon as Seven Spot stopped speaking, the water lily opened and out stepped a golden haired girl in a violet dress. »Chrysomela« cried Tom and ran to her with open arms.

»Long live our King, Little Tom!« was shouted on all sides in a loud chorus, while a great crowd of golden flies flew around and around the pool and a merry choir sang to celebrate the fête.

Tom was quite beside himself with happiness. The sad past faded away and he saw only before him the goldenhaired girl, who smiled at him from her blue eyes. They held each other's hands and talked and talked, until Seven Spot interrupted them to ask them to sit down to the banquet and accept the homage of their subjects.

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The banquet was magnificent. Stuffed tiny snails, salad of flower tendrils, a giant whitebait born by four cooks on a dog-rose leaf, mint candies, and, for drinking, blackberry wine drawn directly from a great berry standing on the edge of the leaf.

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When they began to feast, beautiful music sounded. It was the famous Gnat Quartette, two gnats playing violins, a small cicada, the cello and a wood-bee, the bass viol. Joyous strains rang through the warm summer air. Presently, a swarm of gnats hovered over the water close by, dancing a graceful ballet; and, when they had finished, there came a dragonfly who gave an acrobatic performance with giddy jumps and dizzy whirling.

The rest of the kingdom of the lady-birds were sitting all around the shore of the pool on mint and ferns, cheering and shouting with joy. On a fallen trunk by the water, sat a sedate group of water-bugs chewing young tendrils and nodding approval with their beards.

By the time the celebration was finished, evening had come and a serious brown water-bug came up to invite them to visit the wood-bugs mines. In a long procession, they followed him to a powerful, old beech, where he conducted them through deep, long corridors to a hollow in the tree arranged as a beautiful hall, in which Little Tom and Chrysomela might have their home. Tom was wondering how they could live there without furniture or utensils; but when he stepped inside, he was struck with surprise.

The great hall was lighted from above by dry wood, which glowed with a subdued, blue light showing all his own furnishings from Castle Easter Egg, neatly arranged around the walls; all the drawers were in the cupboards, all the utensils were there, not even a cup was missing.

By the entrance stood Mirmex, with a whole regiment of his ants. He said, »I welcome you to your new kingdom and ask you to be our good neighbor, as we used to be with your father.«

When Tom had flown away to the lily pond, the ants had moved all his belongings and arranged everything in the new palace. They knew very well, when Tom had seen Chrysomela, that he would not return to his Godmother.

Tom thanked them all very heartily and Mirmex asked him to visit their Black Town on the morrow, which he gladly promised to do, remembering how his father had planned to send him

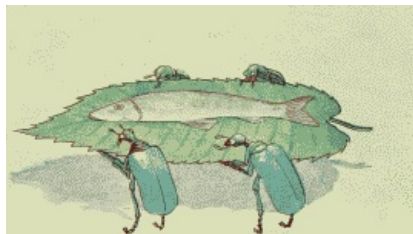


there to learn how to rule a kingdom.

After all had said good night, Little Tom and Chrysomela remained in their new home while the crickets under the beech sang them a serenade.

In the morning, when they came out of the old beech, they were greeted by a choir of crickets whose music rang clear to the tops of the trees. Already, Mirmex and some of the ants, were standing before the entrance, among them a brilliant, green rose-bug for carrying Tom to Black Town.

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Many onlookers stood about. The Lady-birds greeted their new king, while snails on the mushrooms stretched up their heads, so that they, too, could see what was going on. Golden flies crowded around in swarms, while on the path stood a line of wood-bugs as a guard of honor.

After saying good-bye to Chrysomela, Tom went down to the moss and greeted his friends the ants. Chrysomela was very sad that he was leaving her so soon and almost wept. She was afraid that she might lose him again, as they were so alone in the great world; but Tom soothed her by saying that he would surely return the next day, and that he was obliged to make this visit to their neighbors to honor them and fulfil his father's wish.

Then they arranged with Seven Spot where they should meet him and Seven Spot proposed that, immediately on his return, Tom and Chrysomela should accompany him to inspect their own kingdom.

When all preparations had been completed, Tom, in full armor, jumped upon the rose-bug, the noisy trumpets of the gadflies sounded and the great procession started for Black Town.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT.

### THE ANTS' TOWN.

LITTLE TOM GOES INTO THE CITY OF THE ANTS.  
MIRMEX TELLS HIM ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF THE ANTS.  
THE WELCOMING. THE WALK THROUGH THE CITY.  
THE WORMS AND THE CHRYSALISES.  
MIRMEX TELLS ABOUT THE REDHEADS AND THEIR  
SLAVES.  
THE DESERTED CITY.  
THE STORE-HOUSES, THE STABLES, THE HOT-BEDS.

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The procession went on through the silent wood and the morning mists. Thousands of dew drops sparkled like diamonds in the moss. Overhead hung branches of billberry heavily laden with dark fruit, while, on either side, bright red berries peered from the leaves. After they had passed the moss plain, they came upon gigantic rocks strewn along the pathway of the ants in the dry spines. They crossed by these stones over little valleys and passing across tree roots, came to a clearing on the border of the Ants kingdom.

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There was a great crowd of ants waiting to welcome them. An old ant greeted Tom in the name of the whole community and, thanking him for the honor of his visit, placed himself in front of the procession, which at once began to move along the broad path.

Tom noticed how the surroundings immediately changed. On all sides, were gangs of diligent workers, crossing or walking along the path, pulling beams, stones and dead flies, hurrying in their work and paying no heed to the procession. The nearer they came to the town, the greater became the crowds, while the path broadened and was hard, level and free from all obstructions. Presently, it opened into a broader clearing, from which moss, grass and sticks had been cleared away. In the background, appeared a great mound known as Black Town.

On the way, Mirmex sat with Little Tom on the rose-bug and explained to him how the town was founded. First, a sheltered location was chosen under a tall pine tree, in the clear sun, but with the branches serving as a protection in case of rain. Then, paths were laid out in various directions where there was plenty of building materials, while messengers were sent out to explore the broader country beyond where one could find precious grains of grass or hunt green bugs. To such places they at once laid out the shortest paths, stamped hard and made perfectly smooth, tore out all the roots and built bridges over the marsh and other inaccessible places.

While Mirmex talked, he became very affable. Tom listened to him most attentively and while he did not understand everything that was told him, nevertheless, he recognized that there was a great difference between the realm of the ants and that of the ladybirds. The latter were living a carefree life, dancing and making merry the whole day long, while the ants had a very strict discipline, divided their work carefully among themselves and made provision for the welfare of their descendants and for the protection of the town.

Tom decided that, on this visit, he would merely look over their arrangements, and, later, would return to them with Chrysomela, in order to study their methods of administration, so that he could apply them in his ladybird kingdom.

Finally, they arrived at the level plain before the town, where the noise of the working ants did not cease. The entire surface of the town was covered by workers, running and building, while there was a constant crowd carrying burdens through the gates of the town. Tom noticed a strong perfume that seemed to come from the town itself. After he had dismounted from the rose-bug, he was led through a broad corridor within the ants mound, where in a low, but solidly constructed hall, refreshments had been prepared, consisting of grass grains, delicious, palatable bulbs that seemed to melt on the tongue, and sweet juices of which Tom had never seen the like, but which tasted very good to him.

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According to their habit the ants ate so rapidly, that Little Tom could hardly keep up with them. After they had finished, Mirmex asked what he would like to see first: The building, the division and character of the daily work, or the storehouses. Tom replied politely that everything was of interest to him and that he would leave the selection to Mirmex's judgment.

They took leave of the others, who were becoming anxious to return to their work and then Mirmex said, »First, I will show you what is most precious and dear to us and our future generation«.

They walked through a long corridor, deep in the town. In the darkness, Mirmex ran along confidently, only here and there touching the walls, while Little Tom was obliged to grope his way. He was hot and the strong fragrance was almost overpowering, while every now and then he bumped into workmen hurrying and quickly passing around them. Finally, they came into a series of dry, warm halls, and when Tom became accustomed to the darkness, he perceived thousands of little, light worms that were stretching their necks and turning their little black heads.

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Workmen were running among them, pushing into their little mouths a sweet porridge and thus feeding them. Mirmex silently watched the careful attention of the workers for a moment and then said, »These are our youth, our pride and hope. They were born from eggs and when they grow up, will enclose themselves in chrysalises from which they will come out as ants, our descendants. Our chief concern is that they have a good living place, neither wet nor cool and that they have enough porridge, so that they will develop properly.«

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Tom was greatly touched by the ants' care of their little ones, and was surprised that they had such experienced and skilful nurses who seemed to love their wards so tenderly.

They went up one story higher and found, lying on the floor, thousands of white chrysalises all wrapped up in silken coverings. A number of the ants were taking these chrysalises in their strong jaws and carrying them out through a broad corridor at the end of which daylight was shining. Following them, Tom and Mirmex came out under a thick arch of pine needles, through which circles had been bitten, to allow the rays of the sun to strike the ant hill. On these dry places where the sun was shining, the ants placed the chrysalises side by side, so that they should be warmed in its rays.

The entire top of the town was covered by stones over which were placed pine needles to shed the water when it rained. Mirmex and Tom stepped up on one of these stones and looked about them. They saw roads like white threads, that lost themselves in the high grass and moss. All over the town were the thickly crowded workmen, while other groups were hurrying along the paths.

Mirmex explained to Tom the troubles they had with the chrysalises. In the mound were corridors of different temperatures so that, according to the weather, the chrysalises could be taken where the conditions were favorable, while, on clear, dry days, they were brought out in the sun.

Returning inside into a different hall, Little Tom was given a surprise. On the floor were lying many chrysalises and on them were ants biting and tearing their silk coverings. Tom thought that the ants wanted to eat their young, but soon saw that from the white coverings, little black heads with shining black bodies were trying to get out and with what pleasure the nurses were welcoming them, cleaning them, stretching their cramped legs and their bent-up feelers, bringing them food and teaching them how to eat.

It was touching to see the little fellows, looking around in surprise, falling clumsily about and throwing themselves eagerly on the sweet porridge. From the hall led two other corridors, sloping downward, and, as Tom was looking into them, Mirmex came to him and said: »These are safety exits. When danger threatens, through one of these the workers carry the chrysalises outside, where they crawl on the flowers and the grass, as our enemies cannot reach these heights. Through the second, they can go into the depths of the town and there hide the chrysalises in the secret chambers.«

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As Mirmex led him through the first exit which opened at the opposite end of the town, directly into the highgrowing grass, which the ants had spared, Tom wondered what sort of enemies threatened the ants. As they walked along Mirmex enlightened him.

»Since unremembered time, the ants have had a great enemy, the Redheads. They are larger than we, ugly, red fellows and cruel, rough fighters. From early childhood they do nothing but perfect themselves in fighting and robbing. They do not understand work and do not even know how to eat by themselves. They have long jaws sharp as a lance, with which, at one stroke, they can pierce an enemy's head. Their slaves do all their work, build their town, care for their children, gather their stock and also feed them. The slaves are in greater numbers than their masters and could let them die from hunger, yet they never revolt, having no idea of the freedom and liberty of the ants in their independent realm. That is because they have never lived in freedom. The Redheads are not interested in their grown-up enemies, whom they slay, but they steal the chrysalises, which they give into the care of the slaves. These the slaves care for, bringing up the little ants and teaching them how to work for their masters. The youths know

nothing of the life of the nation from which they came, only knowing how to work for their masters and their descendants.«

»You see how efficiently one works here with us. Everyone knows exactly his task and does it unceasingly until his last breath, and all work for the good of the community. The workman gladly performs his task. He is modest and knows neither pleasure nor idleness. His only consolation is the proper result of his labors, but he feels himself free, knowing that he is creating strong and healthy descendants and is insuring the freedom and liberty of the whole nation.«

»Our descendants would prefer to die rather than serve foreign masters. This the Redheads well know and, therefore, they take the ungrown children, who know nothing of the world, and train them as their slaves. Many, many thousands of our people are serving them truly and devotedly, but are forever lost to us.«

»But why do you not instruct them,« asked Tom excitedly? »Why do you not explain how degrading it is to deny one's own people and serve strangers, altogether abandoning one's own nation?«

»That is all in vain,« replied Mirmex. »Who grows up a slave will remain a slave. They are quite satisfied with their fate and do not understand why they would be better off with us. If they should leave their masters, they would not feel happy with us.«

»Then why do you not prepare yourselves and not let them capture the chrysalises? Why do you not perfect yourselves in fighting and kill them when they come against you?« Little Tom was almost beside himself with anger and longed to lead an expedition against the Redheads and destroy them, but Mirmex remained cool and undisturbed.

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»They are stronger in body and more skilled in fighting,« he answered. »If we wanted to ruin them, we should have to give up our manner of living; we should have to devote ourselves to fighting, warring and gaining skill in arms. Who among us would then attend to the agricultural work? Then we should be like them, murderers and robbers, living only on the work of others, and that we do not wish to be. We try to defend ourselves and at the same time not change our mode of life. We build our towns far from the Redheads and, if necessary, would rather move away from them. We station guards over our entire territory and, if we are attacked, meet the enemy bravely. We also know how to fight. Our workmen are skilful and when the worst comes, they become very good fighters. We have often defeated the Redheads and driven them away from our town; but we do not attack their towns or rob them. The Redheads avoid our large towns and attack those that are young and newly established. Only when they lack slaves, do they attack our principal communities. As for us, we are satisfied to stand up for our rights, defend our liberty and our young ones, and live according to our destiny.«

Little Tom looked admiringly at Mirmex, who was talking quietly and earnestly, but Tom felt his genuine loyalty to his native town and his passionate love for freedom.

In the meantime, they came to a lonely part at the back of the town, where the corridors were ruined and the surface covered with dust. Tom asked in surprise, why such a large part of the town was left in ruins. Mirmex explained that this was the oldest portion which had been well founded, but, overhead in the pine tree, something had happened. A branch had been torn off by the wind, so that the town was not properly protected from the rain and the chrysalises were threatened by the dampness. Therefore, they started to build new halls a little farther along, where it was drier and better sheltered, until the town was higher and larger, into which they would then move their stores and the chrysalises.

Then Mirmex asked Tom to go with him and look at the storehouses; so they went back to the town and passed through winding corridors to great rooms, where they met many ants carrying heavy burdens. Tom saw the rooms piled clear to the top with little grains dried and cleaned. In one room many ants were sitting, some cleaning the grains, others blowing away the chaff and still others stacking up the finished product. Others gathered up the refuse and carried it outside the ant hill.

»These,« said Mirmex, »are our granaries and our stores for bad seasons. There are enough supplies here to support the town for a long while.«

Then they went to a hall higher up, where the porridge for the chrysalises was being prepared, and there Tom saw workers hurrying out of the nests with empty coverings of the chrysalises. He thought how this soft silk used to be brought by the gnome merchants to his father and how, at home, they were woven into precious silken garments.

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From the granaries and kitchens, they came to the stalls, where Tom saw green bugs, fat and

lazy, crawling under a low arch. From the back of each bug extended two little tubes, through which the ants were sucking as they tickled the bugs with their feelers. Tom was surprised again, when Mirmex explained that, through these tubes, the bugs let out a sweet juice, of which the ants are very fond. »We keep many of them here,« continued Mirmex, »for the workers engaged in the town. Those who are working outside, have their large stalls on the flowers.«

Tom asked why the bugs on the flowers did not run away and Mirmex told him, that where there were enough bugs on a flower, the ants surrounded it with trenches and ramparts, so that the bugs were in captivity and could not escape. »There they stay in their captivity and do not have to be fed and the workmen do not have to return to the town to drink,« he added.

Little Tom sincerely admired the whole arrangement of the ants town. This pleased Mirmex. »Let us go a little further,« he continued. »I will next show you our hot-beds.« They went along a narrow corridor, and Tom, touching the walls, found them damp. They passed through rooms that were very hot, until they reached a low chamber which was filled with damp, round leaves, while the walls were covered with mildew. Tom did not care to go into this damp hot bed, but Mirmex laughed.

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»Do you remember,« he inquired, »how you helped us build a crossing over the strip of glue on the rose-bush in the garden? At that time you were curious to know why we were biting out little circles from the rose leaves and were carrying them away. Here you see the leaves piled up in heaps. In this part of the mound grows a mushroom. Here it is damp. The water comes from a near-by mossfield and the dampness is good for the mushroom mildew. It puts out little thin stalks that grow up from the rose leaves.«

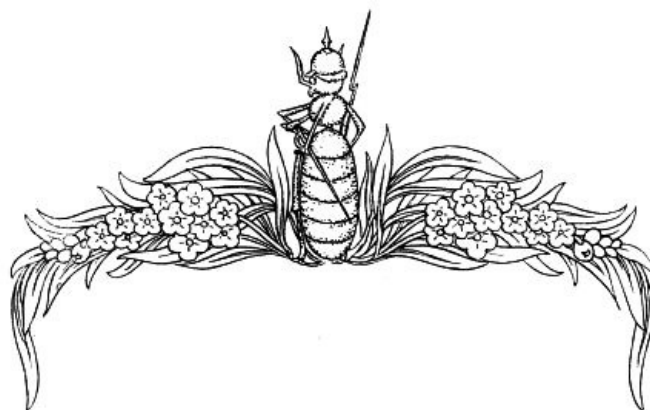
Tom noticed that the heaps were covered with long stalks which surrounded them like grass. While he was looking at them, many ants came into the room. One examined the stalks to see if they were sufficiently grown and then they started to work. One after the other, they bit the shoots on the end. Mirmex conducted Tom into the second room, so as not to be in the way of the workers. There were no longer stalks on the leaves but, in their place, stunted, round bulbs as if the heap were covered with pin heads.

»If we should allow the shoots to grow«, remarked Mirmex, »they would fill the whole room and be of no use; therefore, we must bite them on the end, and so the shoots are stunted and grow into the broad, juicy bulbs which are our best food.«

Tom tasted one or two of the bulbs and found them very good. They were slightly sweet and full of juice. He envied the ants their clever mode of living. He doubted if he would be able to bring the Ladybirds to such a degree of perfection; but when they were leaving the halls, he thought that, after all, the life of the Ladybirds was better, more beautiful, fresher, and more joyous, being spent in pleasure under the great, bright sky, without troubles, without heavy labor, and full of happiness and merriment.

He thought that he would speak to Mirmex about it and ask him why the ants have no pleasure and merriment, if life is so serious that all the time it is necessary to worry and work and be on guard and not to have one moment of relief or time for one's own pleasure.

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## CHAPTER NINE.

### THE WAR OF THE ANTS.

THE PREPARATIONS FOR WAR.  
LITTLE TOM BECOMES THE COMMANDER OF THE  
BLACK TOWN.  
THE AMBUSCADE OF THE REDHEADS.  
LITTLE TOM'S VICTORY. THE PURSUIT OF THE ENEMY.  
LITTLE TOM TAKEN CAPTIVE.





When they came to the square before the town, Tom told Mirmex of his doubts, but before the latter could answer they perceived an ant hurrying at great speed out of the moss and barely succeeding in staggering around them to the gate. Mirmex looked after him in astonishment, but, at this moment, a crowd of the workmen ran out, quickly divided themselves into groups, and took their stations on the roads in every direction.

The whole town was swarming with workmen, hurrying out, and with the nurses who were quickly carrying the chrysalises from the place where they had been sunning themselves, inside the mound. Some exciting message had set the town in an uproar.

Mirmex immediately disappeared through the gate and Tom was left to look on the excited turmoil. It seemed to him the wildest disorder, that every one was hustling and running around, as if bereft of reason; but he soon saw that all this bustling was part of a carefully directed plan and that something was being carried out that he did not understand.

From the gates were coming ants who stretched themselves in long, well-ordered lines and then disappeared in the moss. Work in the town ceased, and at once the whole surface was deserted; but from all the roads, crowds of ants came quickly into the square, where they formed themselves in battle array.

Tom finally recognized that the preparations were for battle. At that moment, Mirmex came up to him and started leading him into the town, telling him that news had come of a marauding expedition of the Redheads.

The guards on the borders had seen some Redheads spying about and had caught some black slaves, from whom they learned that, since early morning, the Redheads had been planning a most formidable expedition. At first, they thought the Redheads were planning to attack a small town by the brook, in the forest, but they sent out some spies of their own who came upon a great crowd of Redheads gathering by the stumps on the clearing leading to Black Town, and they at once sent in the messenger to give the alarm.

»This will be a battle such as we have never seen,« said Mirmex. »The Redheads have all gone into this attack in which they have formed great armies. In all probability, they wish to rob us, not only of our children but of our large harvests. They themselves live deep in the valley, where there is little grass and the country is not rich, while they know that we are close to the fields and gardens from which we have, this year, gathered great stores of food. This time it will be a fight for life or death. Fortunately, we have time to send out messengers and collect all our strength and to form our army.«

Tom was trembling with excitement and asked to be allowed to fight in the first rank and to help in the victory over the robbers. Mirmex thanked him. »You will be most welcome,« he said, »but you cannot go into the field, for you do not know our way of fighting. It is not a question of personal bravery but of a sound plan based on our knowledge of the ground. We are not afraid of the result, for we are well prepared and all that we need is the full strength of our numbers to equalize the greater weight and the better fighting equipment of our enemies. The only thing we fear is the treacherous attack of some reserve force, for the Redheads are very crafty and know how to conceal their plans and we are quite likely to be attacked in the town while our forces are all in the field.«



»We ought to leave a garrison to defend the town. Therefore, we will ask you to remain for its defense, in which case a small group with you will be sufficient. Then we will not fear that anything will happen behind our backs, while we are out in the field.«

Tom thanked Mirmex for this confidence and promised him that he would defend the town to his last breath.

In the meantime, the last divisions were disappearing in the moss and in the grass. The town became quiet; only some guards were running on the stones at the top and crawling up the flowers in the square. A small garrison remained at the crossroads and watched the last of the soldiers marching toward the depths of the wood. Mirmex quickly said good-bye and also disappeared. Tom returned to the town, as he wanted to mount to the top and take a look around the country.

Thus a terrible war started which completely changed Tom's fate.

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The broad country around the ants' town was almost deserted. Tom saw only his garrison in the square, the guards hiding in the blossoms of hawkweed and grass stems, groups of workmen putting various things in order, and the nurses in perturbation, running all over the town and taking care of the entrances where they had placed the chrysalises.

Tom ran down from the top of the mound, saw that there were guards at the magazines and went out to take a look at the surroundings. At the gate, he met two guards who were leading his rosebug steed out of the stall, having been ordered by Mirmex to get him ready, in case Tom should need him in the fight. Tom at once mounted and rode to the heather, to see if there was any danger threatening the town in that direction.

On the way, he thought of his friends and wondered how they were getting on in the fight; then he thought of Chrysomela and decided that after the battle he would send her a message, lest she should worry about him.

As he rode through the moss, he saw behind a stone at one side, two little red spots moving. They seemed, at first, only two dry twigs, but their movement was suspicious. He rode along slowly as if he did not see them, but when he had come up to them, he jumped down suddenly and with drawn sword threw himself behind the stone; there he found a Redhead whom he cut in two. The moss moved and there were two other Redheads running away. Tom left them, mounted hurriedly and rode back to the town as fast as he could go. It was high time.

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The reserves of the Redhead army were stealing through the heather to the town, hoping to find it weakly guarded and to plunder it. When a messenger reached them reporting how a giant had killed one of their spies, they were greatly surprised; but they did not suspect that Tom was an ally of the Black Ants, so they became quieted, thinking that the giant had met their spies only by accident, and started forward toward the town.

Tom ordered all the guards to be brought back to the town, so that they should not be surprised by the attack of the Redheads, and placed part of the garrison on top of the town and the rest in the grass close by. He already knew whence the attack would come and was prepared to meet it.

The Redheads crawled carefully through the moss and when they did not encounter any guards, they thought that the Black Ants did not suspect that they had reserves. They soon came out on the square and ran in a great crowd to the town which seemed to be deserted. As soon as they came close, Tom sent the garrison hidden by the gates to attack them. Although taken by surprise, the Redheads defended themselves bravely.

They struck the defenders with their long, sharp jaws and in a compact body, pushed forward toward the main gate. At this moment, out of the gate came Tom with his band of selected workers, and wherever he struck with his sword, off flew a red head or a foot. Then, two or three of his companions would throw themselves on the red fighters, biting their feet and backs. The Redheads became afraid and leaving many dead and wounded on the square, ran headlong for the moss.

At this moment, a great company of Black Ants that had hidden in the grass, came out and met

them. A terrible fight followed and only a few of the Redheads were able to beat their way through the black ranks and return as best they could to the rest of their army.

Tom was not satisfied with this victory. He sat on his rose-bug and, in his rage, wished to exterminate the Redheads altogether. All his friends begged him not to leave the town, but he was burning for revenge. Leaving the older men on guard, he chose a group of young, enthusiastic workers and hurried with them after the retreating enemy.

Moss, red and blue berries, sped by them as they hastened on and, whenever they came to one of their foes lagging behind, they immediately cut him to pieces. The rose-bug, who also became enthusiastic over the fight, was soon running at the head of the scattered crowd and wherever he saw a Redhead easily overtook him, when Little Tom would cut him down with his sword. So they ran blindly ahead, paying little heed to anything, intoxicated with their victory.

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Now brave Little Tom did not know the sly cunning of his foes. The fleeing ones scattered broadly as they made for their home. The strongest among them, however, stopped a moment and, hiding themselves, noticed that Tom was riding almost alone, having outridden his own troop. Then they ran as fast as they could to their home, where they found a swarm of slaves awaiting the results of the main battle. With them were many of their masters in great excitement. They had received many discouraging reports. Many fighters had been lost and the army was being pressed back, step by step.

Tom was really dreaming how he would attack the deserted Red Town, start a revolt of the black slaves and fall upon their army in the rear, thus completing the victory. He did not even wait for his scattered party to catch up with him and, as soon as he saw the black slaves, immediately urged his steed after them. The slaves became frightened at the sight of this victorious giant on a golden horse and turned around, running in desperate fright with Tom galloping after them.

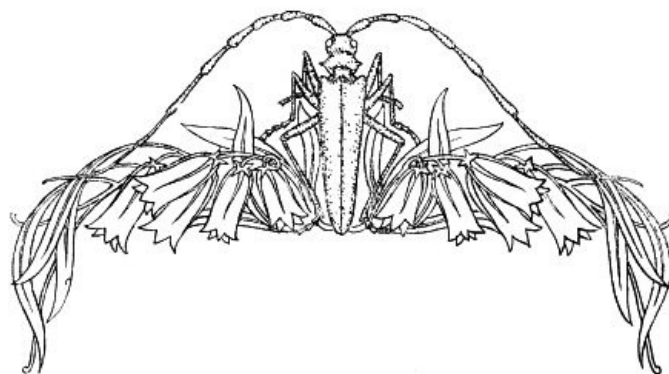
At this moment, some of those who were retreating came up and reported that just behind them was a great giant at the head of a band of Black fighters, heading straight for their town. Immediately, they gathered themselves together and, hiding all along the path, sent some black slaves toward Tom. They knew these slaves could not fight, but would start to run away from Tom and thus draw him on.

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Already, before him, appeared the town and he was almost on the square in front of it, when the Red fighters came out of their ambush and threw themselves on the rose-bug. He stopped. Tom struck around him into the red bodies which squirmed under his blows; but the clever fighters, protected by the bodies of their fallen comrades, attacked him by biting his feet with their powerful jaws, until he slipped and fell to the ground.

Before he could get up, they rendered him unconscious and ordered the slaves to drag him victoriously into the town. There they took away everything that he had, bit his clothes to pieces and left him unconscious in a dark dungeon.

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## CHAPTER TEN.

# LITTLE TOM IN CAPTIVITY AND FREEDOM.

THE DEFEAT OF THE REDHEADS.

MIRMEX TRIES TO FIND LITTLE TOM.  
LITTLE TOM IN PRISON.  
THE BANQUET OF THE REDHEADS.  
LITTLE TOM BECOMES AN ARCHITECT.  
HIS WALKS TO THE BROOK.  
SEVEN SPOT DISCOVERS THE WHEREABOUTS OF  
LITTLE TOM.  
LITTLE TOM SAVED BY THE WOOD-BUG.  
LITTLE TOM AND CHRYSOMELA.  
THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE WINTER-SLEEP.  
LITTLE TOM AND CHRYSOMELA SET OUT ON THEIR  
WAY TO THE ABODES OF MEN.

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The Red fighters returned to their nest in disorder and were very angry. They had lost the battle. The Blacks, after chasing them away, stopped the pursuit and returned to their homes. Mirmex hurried along among the first to learn how things were going in the town. When he approached, the guards hurried out to meet him with great joy and told him how Tom had defeated the treacherous attack of the Reds and how the town was untouched.

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Mirmex at once looked for Tom to thank him and was surprised that he did not come to greet him. When he learned that Tom had gone in pursuit of the fleeing enemy, he was greatly troubled. He knew Tom's brave heart and also the cool, treacherous Redheads and he feared for the worst.

The town quickly resumed its normal life. Workers cleared the square and removed the dead bodies, while the nurses carried the chrysalises back to the upper stories; everything moved along in the regular channels, only Mirmex ran impatiently out to the paths looking and waiting for Tom's return.

But he did not return. Towards evening, the tired warriors who had accompanied him, returned and told of his brave fight and his capture. They related how he was overpowered and pulled away before they could run to his rescue.

The entire town was very sad over the fate of its brave defender. Mirmex went himself to announce the sad news to Chrysomela and the Ladybird kingdom. There was no thought of rescue. In their defenses the Red fighters were invincible. This the Black Ants knew very well. Therefore they gave up the idea of trying to free Tom. They again took up the work that had been interrupted by the fight and could no longer be delayed, as they were preparing for the winter.

In the meantime, Tom was lying wounded and unconscious in the nest of the Redheads, who crawled over him and looked at him with the greatest curiosity. When he finally revived, he could not move and lay for a long while trying to think where he was. He felt the touch of feelers and feet, which he began to push away, but was at once bitten. Then he remembered his defeat and that he was in captivity.

When the Redheads saw that Tom was becoming conscious, they gathered around him. He raised himself to a sitting position with difficulty and looked about. He saw that they had brought him a kind of porridge with little seeds in it, but he was not hungry. His wounds burned and he had a fever. When he fully recalled all that had happened, he almost cried with sorrow. All his dreams of capturing the town had melted away, and his friends had vanished. What was to happen to Chrysomela? In vain, she would be waiting and watching for her hero to return. And what would happen to him?

When the Redheads had looked at Tom long enough to satisfy their curiosity, they left him alone; but he noted that the little hall was well guarded and that they were watching to see what he would do when he could again control the strength of his limbs. After his pain and sadness had passed, he did not by any means give up all hope. He thought that Mirmex would surely learn of his fate and tell what had happened to the ladybirds, and his friends would plan how to set him free.

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Of course they were powerless against the Redheads and would not dare to attack their town. He himself, without armor and with torn clothes would not dare to pit his strength alone against his captors. He had observed that they were quarrelsome, doughty and well armed.

If he should stand up against them, even if he could kill some of them, he would be wounded and very likely be killed himself. He realized that, first of all, he must regain his strength, act very quietly so as not to arouse suspicion, and wait for an opportunity to escape. Therefore, he sat quietly all day long, ate the unpalatable seed porridge, until he felt that he had quite recovered his strength.

The Redheads noticed that he was beginning to walk about and appearing better; so, one morning, they sent a few slaves to him to request him to go out with them. He accompanied them quietly through the corridors and out on the square where many fighters had gathered. They sat around him in a dense circle, proud in manner and not seeming to notice anything while they were being served by their slaves.



Tom saw how the slaves swarmed about them, bringing to them quantities of food. Each fighter simply opened his terrible jaws and the obliging slaves quickly and skilfully thrust in morsels of tasty food. None of them wanted to be kept waiting a minute, and if he did not immediately get his morsel he would pitilessly grasp the slave by the foot and remind him of his duty.

Tom paled with anger when he saw all this, and waited to see what would happen next. When the masters had eaten enough, they formed into dense battle array for an expedition and started off, while in the town only the slaves and a few guards remained, walking about without noticing Tom in the least.

Some of the slaves ran to Tom and led him through corridors to a great hall, whose ceiling had fallen. With their feelers, they pointed to a heap of stones and spines. He understood that they were asking him to help. He thought the best thing to do would be to work and thus gain their confidence, so that he would not remain all of the time locked up in his dark cell.

He started bravely at the work and the ants saw with surprise how well he knew how to handle the stones and beams, and what a gigantic strength he had. The slaves began to obey him, when he showed them how to clear away the fallen pieces, and the fighters themselves admired him, when they saw that he knew how to build, how to support the ceiling with beams, fasten the walls and smoothly level the corners.

Tom was very glad to have the work, for the time forgetting his wounds and humiliation, and hoped that through it he would regain his freedom. When the evening came, the work had advanced more than the slaves could have accomplished in weeks; when they had finished, they led Tom back to prison.

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On the way, he saw a group of fighters joyously returning. They brought with them many white chrysalises, which the slaves at once took to the nest as if they were their own. The last comers brought grains and immediately all began to feast, the slaves as usual bringing them food, until they could eat no more.

Tom knew that, somewhere, they had robbed a Black nest and compensated themselves for their recent defeat. He was sorry that he, too, was their slave and obliged to serve them like his black comrades, but he did not see any other way, if he hoped to escape from their clutches.

Next day, he continued his building and the Redheads were greatly surprised, for they had never seen such construction. Then they began to show him a little consideration, feeding him well, but not allowing him to go out of the nest. Five or six fighting men never left his side. But Tom thought out a clever plan. He began to look for large, heavy branches, showing them that it was necessary to have strong, heavy pillars, in place of the thin spines. The Redheads at once sent out the slaves, but they could not drag such heavy beams into the nest. Then they sent Tom with a guard into the wood to select his own beams and bring them back. He purposely went very far and kept looking about, as if he could not find anything quite suitable.

The guards followed him patiently and did not leave him a moment. There was no idea of flight on Tom's part. He noticed that the appearance of nature had changed. Blossoms had disappeared, the grass was dry and yellow, the heather was rustling and through the wood a mist was blowing. It was cold, and Little Tom was very uncomfortable in his torn dress.

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Presently, they came to a little brook where there was a lot of cut twigs in a pile. There Tom stopped and began to look for hard, straight small pieces. The ants were biting the dried leaves and the blossoms, until he had his bundle of beams ready. Then he took one on his shoulder and carried it back to the nest. Thus, he worked for a few days, sure of being allowed to go outside. Every day they would go out, Tom preparing the beams, and hauling them back, while the slaves smoothed the roadway.

One day, Tom saw on a blackberry a red spot that moved. He looked more closely and recognized his friend, Seven Spot. His throat tightened with delight, but he did not know how to give him a sign without arousing the suspicion of the ants. Then he began to sing at his work as loud as he could. Seven Spot spread his wings and flew away as if he had not seen him. Then Tom knew that everything was well—and that his friends had not forgotten him.

He was so happy that he worked hard all day long, and the Redheads were amazed and delighted with his diligence. Then they began to consider how fine it would be if Tom would ally himself with them, and go against the Blacks and help them to victory. But they did not know Tom.

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Tom, at first, had planned to jump in the brook and swim to the other side, when he should be given an opportunity, but he did not know how he should get to the Ladybirds' kingdom and was afraid that he would lose his way and perish. But now he did not mind, for he hoped that Seven Spot would show him the way. All night long he did not sleep from excitement, and in the morning hurried early to the brook.

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But when they reached it, Seven Spot was not to be seen. Tom looked all around, but, all day, his friend did not appear. He was quite desperate when he returned in the evening. The outside work was almost finished. They had beams enough and were now preparing for the winter.

What if Tom had made a mistake and Seven Spot had appeared only by chance and had not noticed his King? Tom made up his mind that if Seven Spot should not come again, he would jump into the brook and swim across. He preferred to die in the wood rather than to spend the rest of his life in captivity with the Black Ants.

When, next day, Tom came with his guards to the brook, there was no sign of Seven Spot. The last beams were prepared and only waiting to be carried to the nest. Tom stooped to take up one, wondering how he should reach the brook, when out of the pile he saw two great, bulging eyes looking straight at him. The pile moved a little, then appeared a pair of fierce whiskers and two pincer-like feelers and out came a giant Wood-bug with broad shoulders and a powerful breast.

Tom became frightened and dropped the beam. The Redheads ran towards him, but the Wood-bug with a few steps met them. One he bit in two, the second he crushed under his foot and, jumping upon the pile, he caught Tom carefully in his jaws and ran with him into the forest. The slaves were horrified and ran away on all sides; the guards stood stupified, but where was the Wood-bug?

He ran quickly through the blueberries and, when they were far away, he stopped. Placing Little Tom on the ground, he said, »Now sit on me and it will be easier for us both«. Not another word did he say why he had come, or who had sent him.

With delight, Tom threw his arms around his neck and could not ask him enough questions, but the Wood-bug did not say very much and only waved his foot. »Crawl up, crawl up. You will soon

know all. Do not keep them waiting.«

Tom did crawl quickly upon his back and could hardly believe that he was free. The Wood-bug ran without stopping until they came to the old beech. Into the corridor he slipped and carried Tom right into his chamber. As soon as his whiskers appeared in the corridor, Chrysomela had come running out, caught Tom in her arms and cried from very joy.

When Tom jumped down, the Wood-bug turned and disappeared without waiting to be thanked. As he looked at Chrysomela, Tom became alarmed to see how she had changed. She was pale and thin and only her true, violet eyes were as bright as formerly.

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At this moment came Seven Spot, dragging himself sleepily along and hardly able to keep his feet. He welcomed Little Tom and was pleased that everything had turned out so well. Tom wanted to thank him, but Seven Spot disregarded his speech, saying that everything had been done through Chrysomela and that, without her, nothing would have been accomplished.

After they had eaten and drunk, they all sat down together and Seven Spot related how frightened they all were when Mirmex brought the news that the Redheads had captured Tom and taken him to their town. The Ladybirds flew everywhere to find their King and made inquiries of the snails, the ground beetles and the grubs, but none of them had seen him. This was probably during the time that he was kept a close prisoner in the Redheads' nest.

They had begun to fear that the Redheads might have killed Tom for revenge and buried him in some place. Mirmex, also, for a long time, had been sending out spies and had headed a searching expedition on which he had captured some of the slaves, from whom he learned that Tom was alive and well and working inside the town.

Mirmex would have liked to have gone to Tom's rescue, but the Black Town was very busy in getting ready for the long winter, while the Ladybirds themselves were beginning to succumb to the coming sleep and were disappearing one after the other. Even Seven Spot was becoming drowsy as the winter languor began to steal over him. With difficulty he kept himself from yielding to the desire for sleep, yawning much in secret, but Chrysomela encouraged him with praise of his real willingness to help. Every day he flew to the neighborhood of the Red Town, crawling all around it, until, one day, he was rewarded by seeing Little Tom come out of the town with his guards.

Seven Spot did not want to show himself, so he flew high above the procession, lighting here and there on the bushes, until he discovered the exact spot where Tom was working. Then he sat hidden near by, on a wild briar bush, until he discovered the store of beams Tom was collecting. The next day, he came very early and lighting low down, on a blackberry, crawled about conspicuously so that Tom would be sure to see him. When he learned that Tom had seen him, he flew back immediately to Chrysomela to tell her the good news.

Then they planned how they should help Tom to escape, but no good plan occurred to them. All that night they could not sleep, and in the morning they again took counsel with one another, but without result, until, towards evening, when Seven Spot was again describing how Tom was working close to the brook, the Wood-bug suddenly thrust his head into the room and asked just where the spot was. He had been working in the corridor preparing his winter quarters and had overheard what Chrysomela and Seven Spot were discussing. When Seven Spot had described the place to him and just how one could reach it, Chrysomela begged him to help them with his advice. The Wood-bug listened very carefully, nodding his head now and then. When Seven Spot had finished, he only said »To-morrow I will bring him«, and at once left the room.

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All that night and the next day they waited in the greatest anxiety, until, finally, the Wood-bug, true to his word, arrived with Little Tom. When Chrysomela had finished her story, they heard Seven Spot snoring loudly and they could hardly waken him. Seven Spot looked up, rubbing his eyes, heavy with sleep.

»Oh, King,« he said, speaking with some difficulty, »I am happy that I again see you, but be good enough to excuse me, for already the winter sleep is upon me and I hardly know where I stand.«

They took leave of each other and Seven Spot disappeared languidly into the corridor, while Tom was left alone with Chrysomela in their dwelling. They sat together until late in the evening, as they had much to talk about. When, finally, they were ready to retire, they told each other that in the morning they would look over their kingdom.

In the morning, when they had come out of the beech, they could see nothing around them but a white fog which lay on every object. Through the mist, they groped their way to the pool; but there was now no sign of the green arches, the yellow cattails, or the red willow herbs. Everywhere, were only the ends of bare, brown trunks and dry, rustling bushes, while the ground was muddy and the moss soaked with water and even from the pool the beautiful water-lilies had disappeared. All around them, there was not a single living creature. Empty and sad was their kingdom, without color, light or perfume.

Nowhere was there a sign of the former life, or its delightful charm. They sadly returned to their home, wet and cold, where the Wood-bug awaited them. When he finally espied them, he shuffled about on his six feet, nodded with his whiskers and aired his wing shells, until he found courage to speak.

»When are we going to clear up?« he inquired.

Neither understood him and asked what he meant. Wood-bug was puzzled that his meaning was not plain. »Why, clear up for the winter,« he said. »Where do you wish to sleep?«

They tried to explain to him that they did not sleep during the winter. Now it was the Wood-bug's turn to be puzzled. Tom did not know what winter was, but when he saw that the whole Ladybird kingdom had disappeared and that all the creatures were preparing for a long sleep, he felt that they must surely perish in the lonely wood. Nothing was left to do, but to seek his Godmother and take Chrysmela to her, asking her to forgive them and allow them to stay with her during the winter.

Tom begged the Wood-bug to take them to the Godmother in the little hut by the field behind the wood, near the brook. The Wood-bug listened without understanding until he heard the words, »field behind the wood«. Then he said, »I know where that is. It is where there are no trees and no bark. There we will go. In the meantime, I will clear up here and close in everything for the spring.«

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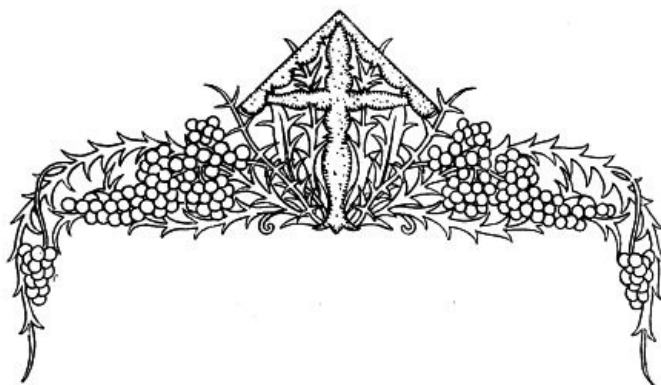
Tom put on a warm suit, belted on his sword and prepared a bundle of food, while Chrysmela put on a warm cloak of mole's fur lined with the silk of ants. When they were ready, they stepped out and looked around over their kingdom for the last time.

The sun shone through the clouds, brightening the dry stumps, while the cold wind whirled showers of leaves and yellow beech nut shells over the dark water. The Wood-bug was waiting for them, so at once they sat down on his back and started to ride through the forest.

For a long time they rode quietly. The Wood-bug walked heavily but quickly, as the winter sleep was not yet on him. Finally they came to the edge of the forest where there was a road with deep ruts, in which stood pools of water. The Wood-bug crossed the road to the stubble field, where he put them down and said, »This is the field and the path of human beings. It is not for us for, if we walk along it, before we are aware, we are crushed. Go along the stubble field. There it is safe and somewhere down there, you will find the hut.«

They wanted to thank him, but the good Wood-bug was already running back across the path, hurrying to reach his own little den; so the two travelers started out by themselves to find the human dwelling.

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN.

### CHRYSOMELA'S DEATH.

LITTLE TOM AND CHRYSOMELA BETAKE THEMSELVES  
TO TOM'S GODMOTHER.  
THEY REST UNDER THE DOG-ROSE.  
THE WIND SWEEPS THEM INTO A FURROW.  
THEY WANDER IN THE DARK AND MEET A HAMSTER.  
IN THE HAMSTER'S BURROW.  
CHRYSOMELA FALLS ILL AND DIES. THE FUNERAL.  
THE HAMSTER TAKES LITTLE TOM THROUGH THE SNOW  
TO THE CHAPEL.  
LITTLE TOM LEARNS, FROM A MOUSE, ABOUT THE  
DEATH OF HIS GODMOTHER AND VISITS HER TOMB.  
HE RETURNS WITH THE HAMSTER.  
THE SLEDGE OF QUEEN FAIRY.

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Tom walked with Chrysomela along the edge of the stubble field, down the road; that was all they knew of their direction—that they must always be going down. They expected that the way would not be long, for they remembered that, in one day, the ants had brought all their possessions from the Godmother's house to the wood. They forgot that the ants knew the direction and therefore walked straight over everything, while they, not knowing where to go, had to travel the path of the humans and therefore traveled in a wide circle.

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Chrysomela was well wrapped up in her cloak and over her head she had pulled a cobweb veil, so that her golden hair should not fly around, but on her feet she had only little, light shoes of birch bark. After she had gone a little way, she felt how heavily she was walking over the clods by the stubble field and stumbled so that she had to lean on Tom's strong arm.

Tom tried to encourage her by telling her that they would soon see the human dwellings. He decided that if they should see any human being he would speak and ask that they be carried to the Godmother, so that Chrysomela should not suffer. She was very weak by the time the sun had gone down and fogs were coming over the woods. Day after day she had been sinking. Sorrowing over Tom's captivity had only made her worse, but she was of a brave heart and therefore went on uncomplaining, not wishing to trouble Tom. She wondered what she would find at the Godmother's house.

On the way, they did not meet a single living creature. All the little animals were already hidden and only tiny spiders were wafted above them on silvery threads. The cold breeze blowing through the stubble field was becoming stronger and turning against them. Chrysomela began to cough. She controlled herself as best she could, but finally she was obliged to ask Tom if they could rest a bit, as the walking was tiring her.

By this time, they had reached the end of the stubble field and had come to a wild briar bush, behind which was a freshly ploughed field full of glistening furrows. Tom placed Chrysomela on a few dried leaves under the briar and offered her seeds of beech nut and a nice red berry, but she was not hungry and only drank thirstily the blackberry juice from his bottle. Her hands were hot, her little forehead burning; she trembled all over with cold, while her eyes were shining with fever's brightness.

Tom stroked her hair and soothed her by telling her how comfortable they would be at Castle Easter Egg with the Godmother. He told her of the tree with the golden nuts and sweet dates, and the precious little altar with the kings, shepherds, the Mother and the Baby; but Chrysomela no longer heard him. She leaned her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes.

Tom realized that they would not be able to go any farther that day and dreaded the night under the open sky. He covered Chrysomela with a briar leaf and seated himself beside her. In a little while, as he was very tired, he fell asleep.

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Suddenly, he awoke. Already, the darkness was stealing over the county, the evening wind was whistling through the wild briar and playing with the leaves. Tom wanted to protect Chrysomela. He put his arm around her waist and wrapped a rolled up beech leaf around her, but the strong wind caught it up and, whirling it with many others, carried them through the air until they fell into a deep furrow.

Here they were sheltered, at least, from the wind and, crawling out from the leaf, they looked

around them, but everywhere they could only see black earth slippery and soft like high hills with nowhere any sign of human traces. They did not know where they were, or whither the wind had carried them.

All about them was only the dark night, while the cold of the evening pierced them to the bone. Chrysomela pressed close to Little Tom, but she was so weary, she could hardly stand on her feet. Tom feared to leave her, lest he might lose her, so, supporting her as best he could, stumbled on with her along the furrow until they came to a broad hole. He wanted at once to step in with Chrysomela, not caring who was there, and to ask for shelter, when, suddenly, out of the darkness, came a gigantic animal in a fur coat, with bristling whiskers and puffed out cheeks. It was the Hamster.

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He was about to slide into the hole, when he smelled something strange. He sniffed about him and peered into the darkness with his close-set eyes. When he saw the poor little travelers and how they were pressing together close to the hole, trembling with the cold, he said kindly, »Hullo there. Where are you going so late, you little travelers?«

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Tom advanced and, bowing politely before the Hamster, asked him for shelter for a weak, ill traveler. When the Hamster saw that there was a lady with Tom, he acted very courteously, and immediately invited them to come in. He ran ahead and returned at once with a torch of rotten wood, with which he lighted them along the corridor, until they came to his dining-room.

There it was warm and cosy. The torch shone brightly and, when Chrysomela had removed her cloak and sat on the Hamster's bed, he wondered at her beauty. Then he ran to the pantry, shook out the grains which he had hidden in his baggy cheeks and, choosing from his store the best morsels, placed them before his guests. They were so dainty and delicate that they just melted in their mouths.

Chrysomela rested. She gathered her golden, wind-blown hair into braids and thanked the good Hamster for his kindly courtesy with a sweet smile. For a little while, the fever left her and she seemed to be gaining strength.

The Hamster outdid himself with attentions and brought out everything good that he had; but Chrysomela said that she only wanted to rest, so they prepared a soft bed for her, covered her with a warm coat and said good night. They then went into the pantry where there was room for both Tom and the Hamster.

The Hamster had a wonderful store for the winter and showed Tom all his rooms filled with grain. One held oats, a second, wheat, and the third, rye. Everything was thoroughly peeled, cleaned and carefully put away in dry places. Tom praised his fine housekeeping and when the Hamster asked whence they had come and whither they were going, he told him their adventures.

They talked late into the night, and when the Hamster learned that Tom was a prince and king of the Ladybirds' realm, he said that he had never seen gnomes but had heard very much about them from a mouse family that lived under the chapel by the forest.

When Tom heard him speak of the chapel, he remembered that his Godmother had found the treasure in the wall near it and he asked the Hamster whether he could take them to her. The Hamster laughed. »Why should I not know her? On her field I am as if at home. She is a good woman. She does not know how to chase me or throw stones at me. There I have gathered my very best stores. This year, she did not come at all. All the grain had grown together and I could take what I wanted. Only, later, strange people came and gathered the grain; but, by that time I had all mine at home.« He promised that he would take Tom to the chapel with Chrysomela and from there, the mice would show them the way to the Godmother's hut.

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When they had talked enough, they went to bed. Tom fell asleep, confident that their troubles were at an end and that tomorrow he would see his Godmother and that she would be greatly pleased with Chrysomela. He slept soundly. In the morning the Hamster woke him, excitedly; he said that he should at once look at Chrysomela, for all was not well with her.



Tom ran to her at once and took her by the hand, but she did not recognize him. Her blue eyes were veiled and she was calling Seven Spot and the Wood-bug to save Tom; and then she would sing summer songs. She was in delirium. Tom did not know what to do. He sat by her bed, while the Hamster ran around bringing food and, finally, sat down in a corner by himself, desperate and sad.

Thus they sat through the whole day. From time to time, Chrysomela became conscious, drank something and stroked Tom's hand. Then she would hear the music of gnats and the swarm of golden flies above the water, or would scream with fright.

All night long, Tom and the Hamster did not sleep. They tried to care for Chrysomela and only towards morning did they themselves fall asleep. When they awoke, they found her sitting up in bed apparently well, but very weak.

Tom was very happy that the illness had left her and that she was herself again. He knelt beside her, while the Hamster came running with pleasure and asked what she would have to eat; but the sad girl stroked the Hamster's fur and said to Tom in a thin voice, »My dear Tom, it is the end. It is not permitted to me to live with you and to be merry at the Godmother's house. I am growing weaker and weaker and, by evening, I will not be with you any more. Do not forget me in the world and remember that I was always your true comrade. You, Hamster, I thank for your good heart. You are not of us, but you are a good friend and perhaps I will meet you there, where our little nation has gone forever.«

She lay down and closed her eyes with weariness. Tom fell down on the bed and wept. The Hamster ran away and hid himself and did not come out any more. Chrysomela wakened again, soothed Tom and told him that he should not despair, that they would surely meet in the other world, when their days would begin again.

Tom did not want to be soothed and only controlled his grief, so that he could make her last hour easier. He was sitting by her looking into her dying eyes, when, suddenly he saw that she brightened, looking over him into the darkness and he heard what she was whispering, »The Queen, our Queen is coming. I hear her horses neighing. She is nodding to me, nodding, Little Tom. We will meet.« Then she became quiet and her face, deathly pale. Tom knelt silently by her bed, hearing nothing, knowing nothing.

He did not know how long he was there, until the Hamster came and said, as if with an indifferent voice, »Come, now it is time. We will lay her away so that she can sleep easily«.

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Tom obeyed blindly, covering her with her cloak, then raised her in his arms and walked behind the Hamster through a long corridor until they came to a small niche which the Hamster had dug and lined with daisies for Chrysomela. When they had laid her there, Tom said good bye to her, the Hamster closed in the niche, and they went back to the lonely dining-room.

They sat there for a long time without speaking, until the Hamster suddenly said, »My dear Tom, I am as fond of you as a brother. Stay here with me. I have food enough. It will be better for us both. We will think of your poor Chrysomela until the Spring comes, and then I can drive you to the Ladybird kingdom.«

Tom thought of the Ladybirds, looked at the empty bed and cried bitterly. He never wanted to go back to the Ladybirds without Chrysomela, and only wished to get to the Godmother so that he could hide himself with her for the rest of his life. He asked the Hamster to take him there at once, for, here, his heart was breaking with grief. The Hamster said that, outside, there was a terrible snowstorm and they would have to wait until the next day. Perhaps, over night, Tom would reconsider.

So they talked together without thinking of sleep. They thought of Chrysomela's death and Tom remembered how, in her delirium, she seemed to see a Queen. The Hamster then became thoughtful and said, »I do not know, but I think that such a Queen exists. She rules over all living creatures on the earth. All do not know her, only the chosen ones. There are rumors about her among those who live on the earth, in the air and in the water. All honor and acknowledge her. Whoever knows anything of her, does not talk about it.«

Tom begged him to tell him everything that he knew. He was trembling with excitement, believing, that, perhaps, after all, Chrysomela was not dreaming, but was arranging for their meeting.

»I do not know a thing,« replied the Hamster. »I am only an underground creature and it is not given to us to know the secret; but I believe that she exists, for the larks are singing of her, when I am running through the fields, the bees are buzzing about her in the grass and the flowers are dreaming of her, when in the evening they are breathing out their fragrance.«

The Hamster rose and went out, coming back to say that it was now possible to ride out and he would not try any longer to delay Tom.

Tom went to say farewell to Chrysomela's last resting place; then he took his seat in the Hamster's fur coat and started out of the hole. Tom was greatly amazed when he looked around. Far and wide, wherever the eye could see, there was a great, white plain, and, everywhere, the snow was sparkling in the sun. The Hamster hurried through the snow, with the snow-dust rising behind them. Tom held on to his fur and could hardly breathe in the fresh morning air. They ran down by the field, crossed the meadow and saw the chapel under the wood, shining in the plain



Tom looked around in vain; even from the stone steps of the chapel, he could not see it. All at once, a bright, little mouse stuck her sharp nose from under the rail and welcomed the Hamster. »How do you do, Godfather,« she cried. »You have brought us a guest. How is it that you still take walks in the snow?«

The Hamster introduced Little Tom and told her that they were seeking the widow's hut, but could not find it. The Mouse was surprised. »You are my neighbor and do not know it?« she asked incredulously. »Long since the widow has been sleeping under the ground of the chapel. In the Spring, she was ill and did not even chase us when we visited her. In the Summer, she lay down and died. They tore down her hut seeking some treasure. Now, they want to build here, I do not know what.«

The Mouse knew all the news for miles around and was very greatly pleased that she could talk with someone. The Hamster thanked her for all the information and asked where the lady was lying, for he suspected that Little Tom would like to say farewell to her. The Mouse took them through the hole under the floor, until they came into the crypt, where were standing the old, decaying coffins of the former knights and, in the middle, a black new one, the Godmother's.

Tom stood before it and was so unhappy, that he did not even feel his great suffering. Then they came out into the daylight and said good-by to the talkative Mouse. Tom sat in the Hamster's fur and they started to return.

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The sky, in the meantime, was covered with clouds, a gentle wind came up, and small flakes began to fall from the darkened sky. On the plain far away, Tom saw a reddish leaf and noticed how it was running, as if blown by the wind straight towards them. It seemed strange to him. The Hamster became confused, as he looked around; he looked once more, then doubled with fright into the snow, whispering, »The Queen!«

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The leaf came nearer; but it proved to be not a leaf at all, but a beautiful sledge drawn by four black crickets. On the box, sat a speckled coachman and, beside him, the footmen—centipedes, while, behind, nestled a most beautiful lady, all wrapped up in the green and black fur of a butterfly caterpillar. The little bells were ringing on the horses and the coachman snapped his whip as they approached the Hamster.

The lady, leaning out of the sledge and shaking her finger at Little Tom, said, »You wanderer. Where are you going now? For a long time I have been looking for you. Everyone is expecting you and here you are, running around with such an underground monster. Come at once and sit down. You will go with me.«

The Hamster buried himself still deeper in the snow, but Tom bowed and said, »Dear Queen, the Hamster is my good friend. He helped me to take care of my beloved Chrysomela. I can not go where he may not, for I will not be untrue to him.«

The Queen smiled at the Hamster. »Look at this. Sometimes, even the Hamsters have good hearts. But now don't trouble about him. Hamster, go to your den, and when the time comes, speak and we will open to you.«

Tom said good-by to the Hamster, took his seat in the sledge, the Queen wrapped him up in her fur cloak, and soon they were flying and disappearing through the whirling flakes into the realm of Queen Fairy.



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## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

- Page [15](#) « removed after "when she had cleaned it, there was the horseshoe."
- Page [27](#) extra r removed from measurring: "measuring out the paths"
- Page [31](#) typo corrected: Godmocher to Godmother in "when his Godmother saw him"
- Page [53](#) changed , to . in "ride upon around the garden.« Before"
- Page [59](#) replaced deseived with deceived in "punished for having deceived his Grandmother."
- Page [67](#) corrected typo: of to if in "if you want to see what God's world is like,"
- Page [67](#) inserted space between valour and but in "She did not give much thought to his valour but"
- Page [68](#) inserted space between monster and darted in "Then the great monster darted"
- Page [69](#) mill corrected to milk in "drunk some milk,"
- Page [70](#) bloosom corrected to blossom in "push right into the blossom."
- Page [74](#) space removed from the middle of today. "It is a miracle that you did not die today."
- Page [81](#) smelling corrected to smelling in "sweet-smelling mint by the water."
- Page [90](#) typo corrected from Axterl to After in "After he had dismounted"
- Page [93](#) hin corrected to him in "Mirmex came to him and said:"
- Page [94](#) healty corrected to healthy in "knowing that he is creating strong and healthy descendants"
- Page [94](#) Readheads corrected to Redheads in "This the Redheads well know"
- Page [95](#) duplicate "and" deleted in "defeated the Redheads and driven them away"
- Page [96](#) comma inserted: "Let us go a little further," he continued
- Page [103](#) hat corrected to that in "from whom they learned that,"
- Page [111](#) changed wery to were very in "and were very angry."
- Page [112](#) comma inserted in "Tom was very glad to have the work, for the time"
- Page [119](#) hin corrected to him in "ran with him into the forest"
- Page [120](#) The corrected to Then in "Then he sat hidden near by,"
- Page [121](#) duplicate "of" deleted in "Nowhere was there a sign of the former life,"
- Page [122](#) missing « added after "you will find the hut.«"
- Page [131](#) hyphen put in dining-room for consistency "until they came to his dining-room."
- Page [132](#) excitedly corrected to excitedly in "the hamster woke him excitedly;"
- Page [134](#) neighfor corrected to neighbor in "»You are my neighbor"
- Page [134](#) missing hyphen put in good-by in "and said good-by to the talkative Mouse."
- Page [134](#) full stop added after "and said good-by to the talkative Mouse."
- Page [134](#) increduously corrected to incredulously in "she asked incredulously."
- Page [136](#) hin corrected to him in "It seemed strange to him."

The use of » and « for open and close quotation marks respectively has been retained.

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