

# WHITTINGTON AND HIS CAT.

## I. THE CITY.

There was once a little boy whose name was Richard Whit'ing-ton; but everybody called him Dick. His father and mother had died when he was only a babe, and the people who had the care of him were very poor. Dick was not old enough to work, and so he had a hard time of it indeed. Sometimes he had no break-fast, and sometimes he had no dinner; and he was glad at any time to get a crust of bread or a drop of milk.

Now, in the town where Dick lived, the people liked to talk about London. None of them had ever been to the great city, but they seemed to know all about the wonderful things which were to be seen there. They said that all the folks who lived in London were fine gen-tle-men and ladies; that there was singing and music there all day long; that nobody was ever hungry there, and nobody had to work; and that the streets were all paved with gold.

Dick listened to these stories, and wished that he could go to London.

One day a big wagon drawn by eight horses, all with bells on their heads, drove into the little town. Dick saw the wagon standing by the inn, and he thought that it must be going to the fine city of London.

When the driver came out and was ready to start, the lad ran up and asked him if he might walk by the side of the wagon. The driver asked him some questions; and when he learned how poor Dick was, and that he had neither father nor mother, he told him that he might do as he liked.

It was a long walk for the little lad; but by and by he came to the city of London. He was in such a hurry to see the wonderful sights, that he forgot to thank the driver of the wagon. He ran as fast as he could, from one street to another, trying to find those that were paved with gold. He had once seen a piece of money that was gold, and he knew that it would buy a great, great many things; and now he thought that if he could get only a little bit of the pave-ment, he would have everything that he wanted.

Poor Dick ran till he was so tired that he could run no farther. It was growing dark, and in every street there was only dirt instead of gold. He sat down in a dark corner, and cried himself to sleep.

When he woke up the next morning, he was very hungry; but there was not even a crust of bread for him to eat. He forgot all about the golden pavements, and thought only of food. He walked about from one street to another, and at last grew so hungry that he began to ask those whom he met to give him a penny to buy something to eat.

"Go to work, you idle fellow," said some of them; and the rest passed him by without even looking at him.

"I wish I could go to work!" said Dick.

## II. THE KITCHEN.

By and by Dick grew so faint and tired that he could go no farther. He sat down by the door of a fine house, and wished that he was back again in the little town where he was born. The cook-maid, who was just getting dinner, saw him, and called out,—

"What are you doing there, you little beggar? If you don't get away quick, I'll throw a panful of hot dish-water over you. Then I guess you will jump."

Just at that time the master of the house, whose name was Mr. Fitz-war' ren, came home to dinner. When he saw the ragged little fellow at his door, he said,—

"My lad, what are you doing here? I am afraid you are a lazy fellow, and that you want to live without work."

"No, indeed!" said Dick. "I would like to work, if I could find anything to do. But I do not know anybody in this town, and I have not had anything to eat for a long time."

"Poor little fellow!" said Mr. Fitz-war-ren. "Come in, and I will see what I can do for you." And he ordered the cook to give the lad a good dinner, and then to find some light work for him to do.

Little Dick would have been very happy in the new home which he had thus found, if it had not been for the cross cook. She would often say,—

"You are my boy now, and so you must do as I tell you. Look sharp there! Make the fires, carry out the ashes, wash these dishes, sweep the floor, bring in the wood! Oh, what a lazy fellow you are!" And then she would box his ears, or beat him with the broom-stick.

At last, little Alice, his master's daughter, saw how he was treated, and she told the cook she would be turned off if she was not kinder to the lad. After that, Dick had an eas-i-er time of it; but his troubles were not over yet, by any means.

His bed was in a garret at the top of the house, far away from the rooms where the other people slept. There were many holes in the floor and walls, and every night a great number of rats and mice came in. They tor-ment-ed Dick so much, that he did not know what to do.

One day a gentleman gave him a penny for cleaning his shoes, and he made up his mind that he would buy a cat with it. The very next morning he met a girl who was car-ry-ing a cat in her arms.

"I will give you a penny for that cat," he said.

"All right," the girl said. "You may have her, and you will find that she is a good mouser too."

Dick hid his cat in the garret, and every day he carried a part of his dinner to her. It was not long before she had driven all the rats and mice away; and then Dick could sleep soundly every night.

### III. THE VENTURE.

Some time after that, a ship that belonged to Mr. Fitzwarren was about to start on a voyage across the sea. It was loaded with goods which were to be sold in lands far away. Mr. Fitzwarren wanted to give his servants a chance for good fortune too, and so he called all of them into the parlor, and asked if they had anything they would like to send out in the ship for trade.

Every one had something to send,—every one but Dick; and as he had neither money nor goods, he staid in the kitchen, and did not come in with the rest. Little Alice guessed why he did not come, and so she said to her papa,—

"Poor Dick ought to have a chance too. Here is some money out of my own purse that you may put in for him."

"No, no, my child!" said Mr. Fitzwarren. "He must risk something of his own." And then he called very loud, "Here, Dick! What are you going to send out on the ship?"

Dick heard him, and came into the room.

"I have nothing in the world," he said, "but a cat which I bought some time ago for a penny."

"Fetch your cat, then, my lad," said Mr. Fitzwarren, "and let her go out. Who knows but that she will bring you some profit?"

Dick, with tears in his eyes, carried poor puss down to the ship, and gave her to the captain. Everybody laughed at his queer venture; but little Alice felt sorry for him, and gave him money to buy another cat.

After that, the cook was worse than before. She made fun of him for sending his cat to sea. "Do you think," she would say, "that puss will sell for enough money to buy a stick to beat you?"

At last Dick could not stand her abuse any longer, and he made up his mind to go back to his old home in the little country town. So, very early in the morning on All-hal-lows Day, he started. He walked as far as the place called Hol-lo-way, and there he sat down on a stone, which to this day is called "Whitting-ton's Stone."

As he sat there very sad, and wondering which way he should go, he heard the bells on Bow Church, far away, ringing out a merry chime. He listened. They seemed to say to him,—

"Turn again, Whittington, Thrice Lord Mayor of London."

"Well, well!" he said to himself. "I would put up with almost anything, to be Lord Mayor of London when I am a man, and to ride in a fine coach! I think I will go back and let the old cook cuff and scold as much as she pleases."

Dick did go back, and he was lucky enough to get into the kitchen, and set about his work, before the cook came down-stairs to get break-fast.

#### IV. THE CAT.

Mr. Fitzwarren's ship made a long voyage, and at last reached a strange land on the other side of the sea. The people had never seen any white men before, and they came in great crowds to buy the fine things with which the ship was loaded. The captain wanted very much to trade with the king of the country; and it was not long before the king sent word for him to come to the palace and see him.

The captain did so. He was shown into a beautiful room, and given a seat on a rich carpet all flow-ered with silver and gold. The king and queen were seated not far away; and soon a number of dishes were brought in for dinner.

They had hardly begun to eat when an army of rats and mice rushed in, and de-voured all the meat before any one could hinder them. The captain wondered at this, and asked if it was not very un-pleas-ant to have so many rats and mice about.

"Oh, yes!" was the answer. "It is indeed un-pleas-ant; and the king would give half his treas-ure if he could get rid of them."

The captain jumped for joy. He remembered the cat which little Whittington had sent out; and he told the king that he had a little creature on board his ship which would make short work of the pests.

Then it was the king's turn to jump for joy; and he jumped so high, that his yellow cap, or turban, dropped off his head.

"Bring the creature to me," he said. "If she will do what you say, I will load your ship with gold."

The captain made believe that he would be very sorry to part with the cat; but at last he went down to the ship to get her, while the king and queen made haste to have another dinner made ready.

The captain, with puss under his arm, reached the palace just in time to see the table crowded with rats. The cat leaped out upon them, and oh! what havoc she did make among the trou-ble-some creatures! Most of them were soon stretched dead upon the floor, while the rest scam-pered away to their holes, and did not dare to come out again.

The king had never been so glad in his life; and the queen asked that the creature which had done such wonders should be brought to her. The captain called, "Pussy, pussy, pussy!" and the cat came up and rubbed against his legs. He picked her up, and offered her to the queen; but at first the queen was afraid to touch her.

However, the captain stroked the cat, and called, "Pussy, pussy, pussy!" and then the queen ventured to touch her. She could only say, "Putty, putty, putty!" for she had not learned to talk English. The captain then put the cat down on the queen's lap, where she purred and purred until she went to sleep.

The king would not have missed getting the cat now for the world. He at once made a bargain with the captain for all the goods on board the ship; and then he gave him ten times as much for the cat as all the rest came to.

The captain was very glad. He bade the king and queen good-by, and the very next day set sail for England.

## V. THE FORTUNE.

One morning Mr. Fitzwarren was sitting at his desk in his office. He heard some one tap softly at his door, and he said,—

"Who's there?"

"A friend," was the answer. "I have come to bring you news of your ship 'U-ni-corn.'"

Mr. Fitzwarren jumped up quickly, and opened the door. Whom should he see waiting there but the captain, with a bill of lading in one hand and a box of jewels in the other? He was so full of joy that he lifted up his eyes, and thanked Heaven for sending him such good fortune.

The captain soon told the story of the cat; and then he showed the rich present which the king and queen had sent to poor Dick in payment for her. As soon as the good gentleman heard this, he called out to his servants,—

"Go send him in, and tell him of his fame; Pray call him Mr. Whittington by name."

Some of the men who stood by said that so great a present ought not to be given to a mere boy; but Mr. Fitzwarren frowned upon them.

"It is his own," he said, "and I will not hold back one penny from him."

Dick was scouring the pots when word was brought to him that he should go to the office.

"Oh, I am so dirty!" he said, "and my shoes are full of hob-nails." But he was told to make haste.

Mr. Fitzwarren ordered a chair to be set for him, and then the lad began to think that they were making fun of him.

"I beg that you won't play tricks with a poor boy like me," he said. "Please let me go back to my work."

"Mr. Whittington," said Mr. Fitzwarren, "this is no joke at all. The captain has sold your cat, and has brought you, in return for her, more riches than I have in the whole world."

Then he opened the box of jewels, and showed Dick his treasures.

The poor boy did not know what to do. He begged his master to take a part of it; but Mr. Fitzwarren said, "No, it is all your own; and I feel sure that you will make good use of it."

Dick then offered some of his jewels to his mistress and little Alice. They thanked him, and told him that they felt great joy at his good luck, but wished him to keep his riches for himself.

But he was too kind-heart-ed to keep everything for himself. He gave nice presents to the cap-tain and the sailors, and to the servants in Mr. Fitz-warren's house. He even remembered the cross old cook.

After that, Whittington's face was washed, and his hair curled, and he was dressed in a nice suit of clothes; and then he was as handsome a young man as ever walked the streets of London.

Some time after that, there was a fine wedding at the finest church in London; and Miss Alice became the wife of Mr. Richard Whittington. And the lord mayor was there, and the great judges, and the sher-iffs, and many rich mer-chants; and everybody was very happy.

And Richard Whittington became a great merchant, and was one of the foremost men in London. He was sheriff of the city, and thrice lord mayor; and King Henry V. made him a knight.

He built the famous prison of New-gate in London. On the arch-way in front of the prison was a figure, cut in stone, of Sir Richard Whittington and his cat; and for three hundred years this figure was shown to all who visited London.

Source:

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