

## DICK WHITTINGTON AND HIS CAT.

**M**ANY, many years ago there lived in a little English village an orphan lad named Dick Whittington. His mother and father had died when he was very young, and though the folk round about were kind and did their best for the lonely boy, they were very poor themselves and had little to spare. So, for the most part, he lived on hard crusts and the odds and ends on which the dogs are usually fed.

When Dick had grown to be a big lad, he made up his mind to go to London, for he had heard many wonderful stories of the great City—how the streets were paved with gold, and gay lords and ladies were as plentiful as acorns—and he felt sure, being a sharp fellow, that once he got there he would quickly make his fortune.

One day, hearing that a waggoner he knew was going to London with fruit and vegetables, he induced the man to find room for him.

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They had a rough journey, for the weather was very bad, and the deep ruts in the road made the waggon jolt horribly; but Dick was so busy building castles in the air, and thinking of the wonderful things he was going to do, that no discomfort troubled him.

At last they rumbled into the great City; and the kindly waggoner put Dick down in a dingy street and drove off to the market. Dick walked through street after street, expecting every moment to come in sight of the golden pavement, and thinking that he would then only have to break off a piece to have as much money as he wanted. But he saw nothing but narrow, dirty, winding streets that did not please him at all.

All the people who passed seemed too busy even to notice him. He kept on walking, feeling more and more hungry, in the hope of getting food and work somewhere. He saw a few fine lords and pretty ladies, but not a sign of the golden pavement.

At last night came on, and Dick had nowhere to go for shelter, so, being by this time quite worn-out, as well as cold and hungry, he crept into the doorway of a large house and soon fell fast asleep.

This house chanced to belong to one of the richest merchants of London, Master Fitzwarren. When Dick woke next morning he found some of the merchant's servants standing over him and proposing to have him sent to jail. At this moment the owner of the house came out.

"Why did you lie here, my lad?" asked the merchant in a kind voice.

Dick explained that he had only done so for shelter, and begged so hard to be allowed to do some work that the merchant gave orders that he was to be taken to the kitchen, given a good breakfast, and then set to whatever dirty work the cook required.

Dick worked so well that he was allowed to remain in Master Fitzwarren's house; and he would have been quite happy had it not been for the cook, who was a cross old dame and treated him very badly. Often she would hit him on the head with the frying-pan and call him all sorts of nasty names. But Dick put up with this ill-treatment because of his master's pretty young daughter, Mistress Alice, who had always a kind word and a smile for him. The footman, too, was good and taught him to read.



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The cook was a cross old dame and would often hit Dick on the head with the frying-pan, calling him all sorts of nasty names.

One day Dick had a penny given to him by Mistress Alice, and with it he bought a cat from a poor girl, because there were so many rats and mice in the cellar where he slept that they kept him awake at night as they scampered over the floor and across the bed. The cat proved to be a splendid "mouser" and soon cleared all the rats and mice. Dick grew so fond of his pet that he rarely moved without her.

After Dick had lived in the merchant's house for some months, Master Fitzwarren one day called all his servants into the parlour, and, telling them that he was sending a ship to trade in foreign parts, asked if they would like to send any money or goods, so that the captain might do a little business for them.

All the servants sent something except Dick. Mistress Alice offered to lend him some money for the venture, but the merchant said that this would bring no luck, and Dick must send something of his own or nothing at all.

"But I have nothing but my cat, for which I paid a penny," said Dick woefully.

"Then, send your cat, lad!" said Master Fitzwarren with a laugh.

So Dick, with tear-stained eyes, brought his

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beloved Puss and handed her over to the captain.

“Now I shall be kept awake all night by the rats and mice,” he lamented.

At this the captain and all the ship's company laughed, for it seemed a droll idea that a cat should form part of a trading venture.

After the ship had sailed, Dick had a worse time than ever, for the cook grew more ill-tempered and spiteful every day. Now that his cat had gone, and pretty Mistress Alice was away from home, he had no one to comfort him. At last he felt so unhappy that he made up his mind to run away.

Early on the morning of All-Hallow Day he rose and dressed long before any one else was awake, and, having bundled his few belongings into a handkerchief, crept quietly out of the house, and set off along the Great North Road.

He walked for a long time, feeling very lonely and very miserable, and at last came to Highgate Hill, where he sat on a milestone to rest. While he sadly wondered what he should do next, he heard far away the bells of Bow Church; and it seemed as he listened that they were chiming a message to him:

The King was greatly delighted and declared that he must have the cat at all costs, for he had never seen so wonderful an animal before.





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“Turn again, Whittington,  
Thrice Lord Mayor of London!”

“Ah!” thought Dick; “to be Lord Mayor of London would suit me very well. But if I am to be Lord Mayor, I must not run away.”

Still he listened to the bells, and again it seemed that they chimed the words:

“Turn again, Whittington,  
Thrice Lord Mayor of London!”

His hopes renewed, Dick sprang to his feet and turned his steps again to London Town, feeling sure the future held something good in store for him. He hurried back to the merchant's house, and was just in time to slip into the kitchen as the cross old cook came downstairs, grumbling as usual.

But Dick did not in the least mind the cook's bad temper now; he felt cheerful and happy and did his work so well that no one could find fault with him. Gentle Mistress Alice, when she returned, still smiled on him so sweetly when they met on the stairs that Dick fell hopelessly in love with her, and made up his mind that if ever he *did* become Lord Mayor of London he would certainly marry her—provided, of course, she would have him,

which, somehow, he was bold enough to believe she would.

Meanwhile, the ship, with Dick's precious cat on board, had crossed the seas to the coast of Barbary. Here the captain took his goods on shore to sell to the King of the country.

The King was pleased to buy a number of things, and invited the captain and his chief mate to come back to the palace. Here a grand feast was provided; but just as the dishes were set before the company a fearful swarm of rats and mice ran on to the table and carried off most of the food, scattering pieces of meat all over the room.

The King apologized for these pests, but explained that his land was overrun with them, and that he could never eat a meal in peace. "In fact," he said, "I would give half my treasures to any one who would rid me of this plague."

The captain at once thought of Dick's cat, and next day, when he again came to dine with the King, he brought Puss with him. Half-way through the meal the rats and mice again scampered on to the table. Instantly the cat sprang from the captain's arms and

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pounced upon the creatures, killing many and scaring the rest away.

The King was greatly delighted, and declared that he must have the cat at all costs, for he had never seen so wonderful an animal before. In fact, he gladly gave the captain a hundred times as much gold for Dick's cat as for all the other goods put together.

So Puss was left behind in Barbary, to feed on rats and mice to her heart's content, and the captain set sail for England. Soon after landing he repaired to Master Fitzwarren's house to render an account of his voyage.

The servants were all called into the parlour to hear the results of their trading; but the cook told Dick that it was useless for him to go, as "all he would get would be his old black cat again."

When the captain had told the story of the King, and displayed the bags of gold and treasure that had been paid for Dick's cat, the merchant cried, "Why, Dick will be the richest lad in all London!"

The cross cook begged him not to think of giving so much treasure to a mere scullion who would not know what to do with it;

Dick came running in with a soup-ladle he was polishing in his hands. He could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw the pile of money-bags and gold plate.



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but to take a fair portion himself and share the rest among the other servants. But the merchant declared that Dick should have every penny.

So Dick was sent for in a hurry, and came running in with a soup-ladle he was polishing in his hands. He could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw the pile of money-bags and gold plate. The honest merchant refused to take any of the money himself, but invited Dick to stay in the house as his guest until he could find a house suitable for his new degree.

No need to tell you how delighted Dick was with his good fortune. He had looked handsome even as a scullion, but when the tailor had made him a costly suit of rich velvet, Mistress Alice vowed that she had never seen a properer man, and it was not long before he persuaded her to be his bride.

As the years passed, Dick traded with his fortune, and grew richer and richer; and the message of the bells of Bow Church came true, for he was thrice Lord Mayor of London (some people say four times) and was made a Knight.

At one of the splendid banquets he gave, he was honoured by the presence of King

Henry the Fifth; and, knowing that the King was greatly in need of money for the war in France, he offered him the whole of his fortune.

The King gladly accepted a portion only, and exclaimed gratefully, "Never had Prince such a subject!"

To which Sir Richard replied very gallantly, "Never had subject such a Prince!"

Sir Richard lived on, happy and respected to the end of his days. Remembering his own early years, he was always very good to the poor, and if ever you go to the Royal Exchange, in London, you will see a fine picture which shows him dispensing his charities. We may be pretty sure also that he was always good to *cats*.