



Children's Stories That Never Grow Old.

DICK WHITTINGTON

1.
WHEN Dick Whittington was yet a very little boy his father and mother died, leaving him penniless. One day as he was going from door to door begging for food, ragged and ill-kept, he met a man driving a wagon to London. Dick had heard that the streets of London were paved with gold, and he was very much pleased when the man agreed to take him with him. But, poor boy, he was very much disappointed when he saw the streets covered with dirt, instead of gold, and found himself in a strange place, without friends and money.

Dick was very cold and hungry, and wished he was back in the country again in a good, warm kitchen. At one of the houses at which he had vainly asked for help, a man said: "Go to work, you idle rascal."

"That I will," said Whittington, "with all my heart if you will only give me something to do."



2.
THE man thought this a saucy answer, and gave the lad a blow with a stick.

Fainting for want of food, and unable to go further, he threw himself down at the door of a house further on. The cook saw him and ordered him to go on, just as her master, Mr. Fitzwarren, a merchant, came up the street. "Go off to work, you beggar," he said.

"I'll be glad enough to work if anybody will employ me," said Dick. He then told Mr. Fitzwarren how he had not eaten any food for three days, and being only a poor country boy, he knew nobody and could not get any work to do. He made an effort to get up, but he was so weak that he fell back, exhausted.

Mr. Fitzwarren pitied the boy when he saw how weak he was, and told the cook to take him in and give him something to eat. "Let him stay and help you in the kitchen," he said to the cook.



3.
WHITTINGTON would have been very happy now had he not been knocked about at every turn by the cross cook. Little sleep did he get, for the garret where he slept was full of rats and mice, and kept him awake running over him.

One day a gentleman who was stopping with his master gave Whittington a penny for brushing his shoes. As luck would have it, that day he met a woman in the street carrying a black cat in her arms. "She is a good mouser," the woman said, and at first scorned his offer to buy her for a penny. She finally, however, gave Whittington the cat, and he took her at once to his garret, for fear the cook would beat her if she should see her in the kitchen.

The rats and mice left shortly after pussy's advent, and thereafter Dick slept as soundly as a top.



4.
SOME time later the merchant, who had a ship ready to sail for foreign parts, called his servants, as was his custom, in order that each of them might send something to try their luck. All came but Whittington, who could not think of anything to send.

Miss Alice, the merchant's daughter, who always befriended Whittington, offered to give him something, but her father said: "That will not do; it must be something of his own."

Whereupon poor Whittington said: "I have nothing in the world but my black cat."

"Fetch your cat, boy," said the merchant, "and send her."

Whittington brought puss and gave her to the captain, with tears in his eyes.

Whittington, after this, was so badly treated by the cook that at last he made up his mind to run away. Early one morning he packed up the few things he had and slipped away.

5.
HE walked as far as Halloway, where, while seated on a stone, he heard the church bells of Bow. As they rang out, he thought they said to him:

"Turn again, Whittington,

Thrice Lord Mayor of London!"

"Lord Mayor of London!" said he to himself; "what would I not endure to be Lord Mayor of London. Well, I'll go back again and gladly bear the beatings from the cook, rather than miss the chance of being Lord Mayor," and home he went.

We must now follow Miss Puss to the coast of Africa. The ship on which she sailed was driven out of the course by winds, and finally landed on the coast of Barbary, a place inhabited by Moors, and unknown then to the English people.

The captain and his men were received with kindness, and the king invited the captain to dinner at his palace. Scarcely had the dishes been placed on the table when a great number of rats and mice ran from all quarters upon the table and quickly ate up all the food. The captain, of course, was very much surprised.



6.
"O KING! why do you not get rid of these vermin?" he asked.

"I will give half my treasure to be free of them," the king replied.

Then the captain remembered Whittington's cat and said to the king: "I have a creature on board the ship that will kill all these rats and mice in a short time."

"Bring the creature to me," he said, "and I will load your ship with gold and jewels in exchange for her."

"I cannot part with the puss, but you may have the kittens," the captain replied.

The king agreed and gave the captain a box of jewels, which were worth a great fortune. They then took leave of the king and his court and sailed for England.



7.
ON arriving in London, the captain hastened to Mr. Fitzwarren with the good news.

When they told him the adventures of the cat, and showed him the box of jewels, which belonged to Whittington, he cried out in great earnestness: "Go, send him in, and call him Mr. Whittington by name."

Mr. Whittington was at this time cleaning the kitchen, and wished to excuse himself from going into the counting house. The merchant, however, insisted, and ordered a chair for him.

Dick, thinking they intended to make sport of him, said: "Do not mock a poor, simple fellow. Let me go about my business."

The merchant took him by the hand and said: "Indeed, Mr. Whittington, I am in earnest. Your cat has made for you much more money than I myself am worth. May you long enjoy it and be happy."



8.
WHITTINGTON begged his master to keep it himself, but Mr. Fitzwarren refused to touch it. Mr. Fitzwarren offered him his house to live in until he could get one for himself.

With his face washed and his hair curled, and in fine clothes, Whittington was a very genteel-looking young fellow, and as wealth helps very much to give a man confidence, in a short time he asked Miss Alice to be his wife. They had a fine wedding and lived very happily.

Whittington was made Sheriff of London first, and later, Lord Mayor three times.

King Henry V, out of respect for his good character, later knighted him Sir Richard Whittington.

