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At the Back of the North Wind

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AT THE BACK OF THE NORTH WIND

Eleventh Impression

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* * * * *

[Illustration: NORTH WIND, WHO WAS DANCING WITH HIM, ROUND AND ROUND THE LONG BARE ROOM *Page 111*]

George Macdonald Stories For Little Folks

AT THE BACK OF THE NORTH WIND

Simplified by

ELIZABETH LEWIS

Author of "The Princess and the Goblin Simplified"

With Six Full Page Illustrations in Color by Maria L. Kirk

[Illustration]

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AT THE BACK OF THE NORTH WIND

CHAPTER I

DIAMOND MAKES THE ACQUAINTANCE OF NORTH WIND

There was once a little boy named Diamond and he slept in a low room over a coach house. In fact, his room was just a loft where they kept hay and straw and oats for the horses. Little Diamond's father was a coachman and he had named his boy after a favorite horse.

Diamond's father had built him a bed in the loft with boards all around it, because there was so little room in their own end of the coach house. So when little Diamond lay there in bed, he could hear the horses under him munching away in the dark or moving sleepily in their dreams. His father put old Diamond, the horse after whom he was named, in the stall under the bed because he was quiet and did not go to sleep standing, but lay down like a reasonable creature.

Little Diamond sometimes woke in the middle of the night and felt his bed shaking in the blasts of the north wind. Then he could not help wondering if the wind should blow the house down and he should fall down into the manger, whether old Diamond might not eat him up before he knew him in his night gown. And though old Diamond was quiet all night long, yet when he woke up he got up like an earthquake. Then little Diamond knew what o'clock it was, or at least what was to be done next, which was--to go to sleep again as fast as he could!

Often there was hay at little Diamond's feet as he lay in bed, and hay at his head, piled up in great heaps to the very roof. Sometimes there was none at all. That was when they had used it all and had not yet bought more. Soon they bought more, and then it was only through a little lane with two or three turnings in it that he could reach his bed at all.

Sometimes when his mother undressed him in her room and told him to trot away to bed by himself, he would creep into the heart of the hay first. There he would lie, thinking how cold it was outside in the wind and how warm it would be inside his bed; and how he would go to his bed when he pleased; only he wouldn't just yet; he would get a little colder first. As he grew colder lying in the hay, his bed seemed to him to grow warmer. Then at last, he would scramble out of the hay, shoot like an arrow into his bed, cover himself up, snuggle down, and think what a happy boy he was!

He had not the least idea that the wind got in at a chink in the wall and blew about him all night. But the back of his bed was of boards only an inch thick, and on the other side of them was the north wind. Now these boards were soft and crumbly, and it happened that a soft part in them had worn away.

One night after he lay down, little Diamond found that a knot had come out of one of them and the wind was blowing in upon him. He jumped out of bed again, got a little wisp of hay, twisted it up and folded it in the middle. In this way, he made it into a cork and stuck it into the knot-hole to keep the wind out. But the wind began to blow loudly and angrily. Just as Diamond was falling asleep, out blew his hay cork and hit him on the nose!

It was just hard enough to wake him up and let him hear the wind whistling through the hole. He searched about for his hay cork, found it, and stuck it in harder. He was just dropping off to sleep once more, when pop! with an angry whistle behind it, the cork struck him again, this time on the cheek. Up he rose once more, got some more hay to make a new cork, and stuck it into the hole as hard as ever he could. But he was scarcely laid down again, before pop! it came on his forehead. So he gave it up, drew the bed-clothes over his head, and was soon fast asleep.

[Illustration: AGAINST THIS HE LAID HIS EAR, AND THEN HE HEARD THE VOICE QUITE DISTINCTLY]

Next day, little Diamond forgot all about the hole. But his mother found it when she was making up his bed and pasted a piece of thick brown paper over it. So when Diamond snuggled down into his bed that night, he did not think of it at all. But before he dropped asleep, he heard a queer sound and lifted his head to listen. Was somebody talking to him? The wind was rising again and beginning to blow and whistle. Was it the wind? He moved about to find out who or what it was, and at last, happened to put his hand upon the knot-hole with the paper pasted over it. Against this he laid his ear and then he heard the voice quite distinctly.

"What do you mean, little boy, by closing up my window?"

"What window?" asked Diamond.

"You stuffed hay into it three times last night! I had to blow it out again three times!"

"You can't mean this little hole? It isn't a window. It is a hole in my bed."

"I did not say *a* window. I said it was *my* window!"

"But it can't be a window!" said Diamond. "Windows are holes to see out of."

"Well, that is just what I made this window for."

"But you are outside," answered Diamond. "You can't want a window."

"You are quite mistaken. Windows are to see out of, you say. Well, I am in my house, and I want windows to see out of."

"But you have made a window into my bed."

"Well, your mother has three windows into my dancing hall, and you have three into my garret."

"Dear me!" said Diamond. "Still you can hardly expect me to keep a window in my bed for you. Now, can you?"

"Come!" said the voice. "You just open that window!"

"Well," said Diamond, "mother says I should be obliging. Still it is rather hard. You see, the north wind will

blow right in my face if I do!"

"I am the North Wind!" said the voice.

"O-o-oh!" said Diamond. "Then will you promise not to blow in my face if I open your window?"

"I cannot promise that," said the North Wind.

"But you will give me the tooth-ache. Mother has it already."

"But what is to become of me without a window!" cried the voice.

"I am sure I don't know. All I say is that it will be worse for me than for you."

"No, it will not," replied the voice. "You shall not be the worse for it--I promise you that. You will be much the better for it. Just believe what I say, and do as I tell you."

"Well, I *can* pull the clothes over my head," said Diamond. So he felt around with his little sharp nails, got hold of one edge of the paper and tore it off. In came a long whistling stream of cold that struck his little naked chest. He scrambled and tumbled in under the bed-clothes and covered himself up. There was no paper between him and the voice now, and he felt--not frightened exactly--but a little queer.

"What a strange person this North Wind must be," thought Diamond, "to live in what they call 'Out-of-Doors,' I suppose, and make windows into people's beds."

Now the voice began again. He could hear it quite plainly, even with his head under the bed-clothes. It was still more gentle now, though it was six times as large and loud as before. And he thought it sounded a little like his mother's.

"What is your name, little boy?" it asked.

"Diamond," answered Diamond under the bed-clothes.

"What a funny name!"

"It is a very nice name," replied the boy.

"I am not so sure of that," said the voice.

"Well, I am!" returned Diamond. "I think it is a very pretty name."

"Diamond is a useless thing, rather," said the voice.

"That is not true. Diamond is very useful--and as big as two--and so quiet all night! But doesn't he make a jolly row in the morning, getting up on his four great legs! It is like thunder!"

"You do not seem to know what a diamond is!" cried the voice.

"Oh, don't I, just! Diamond is a great and good horse, and he sleeps right under me. He is old Diamond and I am young Diamond. Or, if you like it better, Mr. North Wind, if you are so particular, he is big Diamond and I am little Diamond. And I do not know which of us my father likes best!"

A beautiful laugh, soft and musical, sounded somewhere near him. But the boy kept his head under the clothes.

"I am not Mr. North Wind," said the voice.

"You told me you were the North Wind," cried Diamond.

"I did not say *Mr.* North Wind," said the voice.

"Well, I *do* say Mr. for my mother tells me always to be polite."

"Then let me tell you that I do not think it at all polite for you to say Mr. to me," answered the voice.

"Isn't it? Well, I am sorry then."

"But you ought to know better," said the voice. "You can't think it is polite to lie there with your head under the bed-clothes and never look to see what kind of a person you are talking to! I want you to come out with me."

"I want to go to sleep!" said Diamond.

"Will you take your head out of the bed-clothes?" said the voice a little angrily.

"No!" said Diamond crossly.

The moment he said the word a fierce blast of wind crashed in the wall and swept the clothes off him. He started up in a fright. Leaning over him was the large, beautiful, pale face of a woman. Her dark eyes had begun to flash a little but the rest of her face was very sweet and beautiful. What was very strange, though, was that away from her head streamed out her black hair in every direction like dark clouds. Soon it fell down about her again and then her face came out of it like the moon out of the clouds.

"Will you go with me now, little Diamond?" asked the North Wind bending over him and speaking very gently.

"Yes, yes!" cried Diamond, stretching out his arms toward her. "Yes, I will go with you, dear North Wind. I am not a bit afraid. I will go! But," he added, "how shall I get my clothes? They are in mother's room and the door is locked."

"Oh never mind your clothes. You will not be cold. Nobody is cold with the North Wind."

"I thought everybody was," said Diamond.

"That is a great mistake. People are not cold when they are *with* the North Wind--only when they are against it. Now will you come?"

"Yes, dear North Wind. You are so beautiful I am quite ready to go with you."

"Ah, but I may not always look beautiful. If you see me with my face all black, don't be frightened. If you see me flapping wings like bat's wings, as big as the whole sky, don't be afraid. If you hear me raging, you must believe that I am just doing my work. Nay, Diamond, if I change into a serpent or a tiger, you must not let go your hold of me, for it will be I just the same. And now, come!"

She turned away and went so swiftly that she was gone before Diamond was more than started. When he finally got down the stairs and out into the yard, no one did he see. And there he stood with his bare feet on the hard stones of the paved yard.

"I dare say she is hiding somewhere to see what I will do," said Diamond. So around the end of the stable he went to see if he could find her. But at once, sharp as a knife, the wind came against his little chest and bare legs. And stronger and stronger the wind seemed to blow. It was *so* cold! All at once, he remembered that she had said that people were not cold if they went *with* the North Wind. So he turned his back and trotted again toward the yard and sure enough, he began to feel almost warm once more!

On and on, North Wind blew him and, presently, she seemed to shove him right against a small door in a wall. It opened and she blew him through it and out into the very middle of the lawn of the house next door. It was here that Mr. Coleman lived who was his father's master and who owned big Diamond. So little Diamond did not feel entirely strange, and then, too, there was a light in one window that looked friendly. As long as he could see that, Diamond could not feel quite alone or lonely. But all at once, the light went almost out. Then indeed, he felt that it was dreadful to be out in the night alone, when every body else was gone to bed! That was more than he could bear and it was not strange that he burst out crying.

Some one in the house heard the sound of his sobbing and came out and found him there. He was taken into the house and into a room which had a bright light and a warm fire in it. Beside this, he found Miss Coleman, the young lady daughter of the house, who was having her long dark hair brushed out before going to bed. Somehow in that state, she looked just like the beautiful North Wind that he had been searching for. Without stopping to think, he ran right into her arms for comfort.

After he was warmed and comforted, they took him back home and knocked on the door to arouse his mother, to come and get him. She was much surprised to see him, you may be sure. She carried him up to his bed again and tucked him snugly in. And there he fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER II

DIAMOND'S FIRST TRIP WITH THE NORTH WIND

Diamond awoke very early the next morning and thought what a curious dream he had had. But the memory of it grew brighter and brighter until it did not look altogether like a dream. In fact he began to doubt whether he had not really been abroad in the wind at night.

All that week it was hard weather. The grass showed white in the morning with the hoar frost which clung to every blade. As Diamond's shoes were not good and his mother had not saved up quite enough money to get him the new pair she so much wanted for him, she would not let him run out. But at length, she brought home his new shoes. No sooner did she find that they fitted him, than she told him he might run out into the yard and amuse himself.

The sun was going down when he flew from the door like a bird from its cage. A great fire of sunset burned over the top of the gate that led to the stables. Above the fire in the sky, lay a large lake of green light, above that a golden cloud, and over that the blue of the wintry heavens. Diamond thought that next to his own home, he had never seen any place he would like so much to live in as that sky.

As he wandered about, he came to stand by the little door which opened upon the lawn of the house next door. That made him remember how the wind had driven him to this same spot on the night of his dream. So he thought he would just go in and see if things looked at all as they did then. But not a flower was to be seen in the beds on the lawn! Even the brave old chrysanthemums and Christmas roses had passed away before the frost. What? Yes! There was *one*. He ran and knelt down to look at it.

It was a primrose--a tiny, tiny thing, but perfect in shape--a baby wonder. As he stooped his face to see it close, a little wind began to blow. Two or three long leaves that stood up behind the flower shook and wavered and quivered. But the primrose lay still in the green hollow, looking up at the sky and not seeming to know at all that the wind was blowing. It looked like a golden eye that the black wintry earth had opened to look at the sky with.

That very same night, after Diamond had been asleep for a little, he awoke all at once in the dark.

"Open the window, Diamond," said a voice.

Now Diamond's mother had once more pasted up North Wind's window.

"Are you North Wind?" said Diamond. "I do not hear you blowing."

"No, but you hear me talking. Open the window for I haven't over much time."

"Yes," said Diamond. "But please, North Wind, where's the use? You left me all alone last time."

"That was your fault," returned North Wind. "I had work to do and you kept me waiting."

Diamond was already scratching at the paper like ten mice and, getting hold of the edge of it, tore it off. The next instant a young girl glided across the bed and stood on the floor.

"Oh, dear!" said Diamond quite dismayed. "I didn't know--who are you, please?"

"I am North Wind."

"But you are no bigger than I am!"

"Do you think I care how big or how little I am? And of course, I am little this evening! Didn't you see me behind the leaves of the primrose? Didn't you see them blowing? Make haste, now, if you want to go with me! Dress as fast as you can and I will go and shake the leaves of the primrose till you come!"

"Don't hurt it!" said Diamond.

North Wind broke out into a little laugh like the breaking of silver bubbles and was gone in a moment. Diamond saw the gleam of something vanishing down the stair. He dressed himself as fast as ever he could and crept out into the yard, through the door in the wall, and away to the primrose. Behind it stood North Wind leaning over it.

"Come along!" she said jumping up and holding out her hand. She led him across the garden and with one bound was on top of the wall. Then she reached down her hand to Diamond. He gave a great spring and stood beside her.

Another bound, and they stood in the road by the river. It was full tide and the stars were shining clear in its depths. But they had not walked beside it far before its surface was covered with ripples and the stars had vanished. North Wind was now as tall as a full-grown girl. Her hair was flying about her head and the wind was blowing a breeze down the river. But she turned aside and went up a narrow lane.

"I have some rather disagreeable work to do to-night," she said. "And disagreeable work must be looked after first."

So saying, she laid hold of Diamond and began to run, gliding along faster and faster. She made many turnings and windings. Once they ran through a hall where they found both the front and back doors open. At the foot of the stair, North Wind stood still and Diamond, hearing a great growl, started in terror. There, instead of North Wind, was a huge wolf by his side! He let go his hold and the wolf bounded up the stair. The windows of the house rattled and shook and there came the sound of a fall.

"Surely," thought Diamond, "North Wind can't be eating one of the children!"

He started to rush up after her, but she met him on the stair, took him by the hand and hurried him out of the house.

"I hope you haven't eaten a baby, North Wind!" he said very solemnly.

North Wind laughed merrily and went tripping on faster. Her grassy robe swept and swirled about her steps. Wherever it passed over withered leaves, they went fleeing and whirling away and running on their edges all about her feet. "No, I did not eat a baby," she said, "as you would know if you had not let go of me. I merely scared an ugly nurse who was calling a child bad names. I flew at her throat and she tumbled over with a crash. I had to put on a bad shape before she could see me. I put on a wolf's shape for that is what she is growing to be inside."

They were now climbing the slope of a grassy ascent. At the top, North Wind stood and turned her face toward London. The stars were still shining clear and cold overhead. There was not a cloud to be seen.

"Now," said North Wind, "do not let go of me again. I might have lost you the last time, only I was not in a hurry then. Now I am in a hurry."

As she spoke, she was growing larger and larger. Her head went up and up toward the stars. As she grew, her hair, longer and longer, lifted itself from her head and went out in black waves. She put her hands behind her head and began weaving and knotting her hair together. Then she took up Diamond in her hands and threw him over her shoulder saying, "I have made a place for you in my hair. Get in, Diamond."

Diamond soon found the woven nest and crept into it. The next moment he was rising in the air. North Wind grew towering up to the place of the clouds. Her hair went streaming out from her till it spread like a mist over the stars. She flung herself abroad in space. Diamond made a little place through the woven meshes of her hair and peeped through that, for he did not dare look over the top of his nest.

The earth was rushing past like a river or a sea below him. Trees and water and green grass hurried away beneath. Now there was nothing but the roofs of houses sweeping along like a great torrent of stones and rocks. Chimneys fell and tiles flew from the roofs. There was a great roaring for the wind was dashing against London like a stormy sea. Diamond, of course, at the back of North Wind, was in a calm but he could hear it. Around and around and around, swept North Wind, her dark hair rolling and flowing, sweeping the people all into their homes and the bad smells out of the streets.

Suddenly, Diamond saw a little girl coming along a street. She was dreadfully blown by the wind, and a broom she was trailing behind her was very troublesome. It seemed as if the wind had a spite at her! It kept worrying her and tearing at her rags. She was so lonely there!

"Oh, please, North Wind," cried Diamond, "won't you help that little girl?"

"I cannot leave my work, Diamond. But you can help her if you like. Only, I can't wait for you. And mind, the wind will get hold of you too!"

"But how shall I get home again," cried Diamond, "if you don't wait for me?"

"Well, you must think of that!" said North Wind.

"Oh," cried Diamond. "I am sure the wind will blow her over! I *must* help her anyway! Let me go!"

Without a word, North Wind dropped into the street and set him down. The same moment, he was caught in the coils of the blast and all but swept away. North Wind vanished. The wind was roaring along the street. The little girl was scudding before it, her hair flying, while behind her she dragged her broom with which she swept her crossing. Her little legs were going as fast as they could, to keep her from falling.

"Stop! stop! little girl!" shouted Diamond, starting in pursuit.

"I can't!" wailed the girl. "The wind won't let me!"

Diamond ran after her and caught hold of her frock but it tore in his hand. Then he ran fast enough to get in front of her and turning around, caught her in his arms. Just then, he thought he got a glimpse of North Wind turning the corner in front of them. They must go with her of course, and sure enough, when they turned the corner after her, they found it quite quiet there.

"Now, you must lead me," said Diamond. "You show me the way you must go to get home and I will take care of you."

So the little girl put her free hand in his and began to lead him. They went around turning after turning, till they stopped at a cellar-door in a very dirty lane. There the little girl knocked.

"What an awful place!" said Diamond. "I should not like to live here."

"Oh yes, you would, if you had no where else to go!" answered the girl. "I only hope they'll let me in."

"Don't they always let you in?" said Diamond.

"No, they don't. And then I have to stay in the street all night and scud back to my crossing the first thing in the morning. You see they don't answer, now!"

"Well," said Diamond, "I don't want to get in. I want to go back to my mother. Come with me and I will take you to my own home."

The little girl thought this would be much better than sitting in the streets all night. So they started off. The trouble was that Diamond was not at all sure that he could find the way without North Wind. But the only thing to do was to try. So they wandered on and on, turning in this direction and that, without any reason for one way more than another. At last, they got out of the thick of the houses into a kind of waste place. By this time, they were both very tired, and Diamond was inclined to cry. For he said to himself that he had not done the little girl any good and he had lost his own way home. But in this, he was wrong for she was far happier in having him with her, and making people happier is one of the best ways of doing them good.

[Illustration: IT WAS THE BACK DOOR OF A GARDEN]

They sat down and rested themselves a little and then went on. After a time, they found themselves on a rising ground that sloped rather steeply on the other side. The moment they reached the top, a gust of wind seized them and blew them down hill as fast as they could run. Nor could Diamond stop before he went bang! against one of the doors in a wall. To his dismay, it burst open. When they came to themselves, they peeped

in. It was the back door of a garden.

"Oh! oh!" cried Diamond after staring for a few moments. "I know this place--know it well! It is Mr. Coleman's garden and here I am at home again. Oh, I am so glad! Come in, little girl! Come in with me and my mother will give you some breakfast."

"No, no! I can't!" said the little girl. "We have been so long coming. Look up! Don't you see that it is morning now? I must hurry back to my crossing and sweep it and get money to take home or they will beat me! I cannot stay. Good-bye, little boy, good-bye!"

She started back at once, ran up the hill and disappeared behind it. Diamond called after her and called, but she did not even turn round. He was sorry to see her go but there was no help for it. So when she was gone quite out of sight, he shut the door of the garden as best he could, and ran through the kitchen garden to the stables. And wasn't he glad to get into his own blessed bed again!

CHAPTER III

NORTH WIND SINKS A SHIP

It was some time before he saw North Wind again. He saw the little girl before that but it was only for a moment. It happened in this way. His father was taking the horse, Diamond, to have new shoes put on him, and knowing that little Diamond, like all small boys, liked a ride, he set him on the horse and taking the bridle led the two Diamonds away.

The blacksmith's shop was some distance away, deeper in London. As they crossed the angle of a square, Diamond, who was looking about to see if any one noticed him riding upon the big horse like a man, saw a little girl sweeping a crossing before a lady and holding out her hand for a penny. The lady had no penny and the little girl was disappointed.

Diamond could not stand that. He knew the little girl and he knew that he had a penny in his pocket. He slid off the horse in a sort of tumble and ran to her, holding out the penny. She did not know him at first, but when he smiled at her, she did. He stuffed the penny into her hand and ran back, for he knew his father would not care to wait. After that, he did not see little Nanny for a long time.

He played often now on the lawn of the house next door--Mr. Coleman's lawn--as the summer drew near, warm and splendid. One evening, he was sitting in a little summer-house at the foot of the lawn, before which was a bed of tulips. They were closed for the night but the wind was waving them slightly. All at once, out of one of them, there flew a big buzzing bumblebee.

"There! That's something done!" said a voice--a gentle, merry, childish voice but *so* tiny! "I was afraid he would have to stay there all night."

Diamond looked all about and then he saw the *tiniest* creature, sliding down the stem of the tulip.

"Are you the fairy that herds the bees?" he asked kneeling down beside the tulip bed.

"I am not a fairy," answered the little creature. "You stupid Diamond, have you never seen me before?"

As she spoke, a moan of wind bent the tulips almost to the ground and then he recognized North Wind.

"But there!" added the little creature, "I must not stay to chatter. I have to go and sink a ship to-night."

"Sink a ship!" cried Diamond. "And drown the men and women in it? How dreadful! Still I cannot believe you are cruel, North Wind!"

"No, I could not be cruel, and yet I must often do what looks cruel to those who do not know. But the people they say I drown, I only carry away to the back of the north wind--only I never saw the place."

"But how can you carry them there if you never saw the place? And how is it that you never saw it?"

"Because it is behind me. You cannot see your own back, you know. But run along now if you want to go with me to-night. I cannot take you till you have been to bed and gone to sleep. I'll look about and do something till you are ready. Do you see that man over there on the river in the boat who is just floating about? Now watch!"

She flashed like a dragon-fly across the water whose surface rippled and puckered as she passed. The next moment, the man in the boat glanced about him and bent to his oars. The boat flew over the rippling water. The same instant almost, North Wind perched again upon the river wall.

"How did you do that?" asked Diamond.

"I just blew in his face and blew the mist out of him."

"But what for? I don't understand!" said Diamond. Hearing no answer, he looked down at the wall. North Wind was gone. Away across the river went a long ripple--what sailors call a cat's paw. The man in the boat at once put up his sail. The moon was coming to herself on the edge of a great cloud and the sail began to shine white. Diamond rubbed his eyes and wondered what it was all about. But he felt that he could not know more till he had gone to bed, so he turned away and started for home. He stopped to look out of a window before going to bed. Above the moon, the clouds were streaming different ways, and the wind was rising as he fell asleep.

He woke in the middle of the night and the darkness. A terrible noise was rumbling overhead like the rolling beat of great drums. For a while, he could not come quite awake. But a second peal of thunder broke over his head and a great blast of wind followed which tore some tiles off the roof and, through the hole this made, sent a spout of wind down into his face. At the same moment, he heard a mighty, yet musical voice say, "Come up, Diamond! It's all ready. I am waiting for you." Then a gigantic arm was reached down which drew him up and clasped him against North Wind's breast.

"Oh, North Wind!" he murmured. But the words vanished from his lips as he had seen the soap bubbles, that burst too soon, vanish from the mouth of his pipe. The wind caught them and they were no-where.

At the same moment, a peal of thunder which shook Diamond's heart against his side boomed out of the heavens; I cannot say, out of the sky, for there was no sky. Diamond had not seen the lightning for he had been busy trying to find the face of North Wind. Every moment, the folds of her garment would sweep across his eyes and blind him. But between them, he could just catch glimpses of the great glories of her eyes looking down at him through the rifts of the huge clouds over his head.

"Oh dear North Wind!" cried the boy. "Why do you do like this? Must you go and sink the ship? It is not like you! Here you are, taking care of a poor little boy like me, with one arm, and there you are, sinking the ship with the other! No, no! It can't be like you!"

"Then you must believe that I am cruel," answered the strong voice of North Wind, sounding about him out of the clouds.

"No, dear North Wind, I can't believe that. I don't believe it. I will not believe it. How could you know how to put on such a beautiful face if you did not love me and love all the rest too? No! You may sink as many ships as you like--though I shall not like to see it!"

"That is quite another thing!" said North Wind.

As she spoke, she gave one spring from the roof and rushed up into the clouds. As if the clouds knew she had come, they burst into fresh thunderous light. Diamond seemed to be borne through an ocean of dazzling flame. The winds were writhing around him like a storm of serpents. For they were in the midst of the clouds and mists which of course took the shapes of the wind, eddying, and wreathing, and whirling, and shooting, and dashing about like gray and black water.

Now it blinded him by smiting him upon the eyes. Now it deafened him by bellowing in his ears. But he did not mind it. He only gasped at first, and then laughed, for the arm of North Wind was about him and he felt quite safe, though he knew that they were sweeping with the speed of the wind itself toward the sea! But before they reached it, Diamond felt North Wind's hair beginning to fall down about him.

"Is the storm over, North Wind?" he called out.

"No, Diamond. I am only waiting for a moment to set you down. You will not like to see the ship sunk and I am going to give you a place to stop in till I come back. Look!"

With one sweep of her great white arm, she flung yards deep of darkness, like a great curtain, from before the face of the boy. And lo! it was a blue night lit up with stars. Where it did not shine with stars, it shimmered with a milky whiteness of stars except where, just before them, the gray towers of a cathedral blotted out the sky.

"A good place for you to wait in," said North Wind and swept down upon the cathedral roof. They went in through an open door in one of the towers. Diamond found himself at the top of a stone stair which went twisting away down into the darkness. North Wind held his hand, and after a little, led him out upon a narrow gallery which ran all around the central part of the church. Below him, lay the inside of the church like a great silent gulf hollowed in stone. On and on, they walked along this narrow gallery till at last they reached a much broader stairway leading on down and down until at length, it led them down into the church itself.

There he felt himself clasped in the arms of North Wind who held him close and kissed him on the forehead. The next moment, she was gone, and Diamond heard a moaning about the church which grew and grew to a roaring. The storm was up again and he knew that North Wind's hair was flying.

The church was dark. Only a little light came through the windows which were almost all of that precious old stained glass so much lovelier than the new. There was not enough light in the stars to show the colors in them. Diamond began to feel his way about the place, and for a little while went wandering up and down. His pattering foot-steps waked soft answering echoes in the stone house. It was as if the great cathedral somehow knew that his little self was there and went on giving back an answer to every step he took.

At last, he gave a great sigh and said, "I am *so* tired!" He did not hear the gentle echo which answered from far away over his head. For at that moment, he came against the lowest of a few steps that stretched across the church, and fell down and hurt his arm. He cried a little at first, and then crawled up the steps on his hands and knees. At the top, he came to a little bit of carpet on which he lay down. And there he lay staring at the dull windows that rose nearly a hundred feet above his head.

The moon was at that moment just on the edge of the horizon. And lo! with the moon, lovely figures began to dawn in the windows. He lay and looked at them backward over his head, wondering if they would come

down. He heard a low, soft murmuring as if they were talking to themselves about him. But his eyes grew tired, and more and more tired. His eyelids grew so heavy that they *would* keep tumbling down over his eyes. He kept lifting them and lifting them. But every time, they were heavier than the last. It was no use! They were too much for him. Sometimes before he got them half way up, down they went again. At length, he gave it up quite, and the moment he gave it up, he was fast asleep!

When his eyes came wide open again, there were no lovely figures--or even windows--but a dark heap of hay all about him. The small panes in the roof of his loft were glimmering blue in the light of the morning. Old Diamond was coming awake down below in the stable. In a moment more he was on his feet and shaking himself so that young Diamond's bed trembled under him.

"He is grand at shaking himself!" said Diamond. "I wish I could shake myself like that. But then I can wash myself and he can't. What fun it would be to see old Diamond washing his face with his hoofs and iron shoes! Wouldn't it be a picture!"

He dressed himself quickly and ran out. Down the stairs he went and through the little door out upon the lawn of Mr. Coleman's house next door. He wanted to see how things looked since last night. There was the little summer-house with the tulip bed before it where he had been sitting the evening before, crushed to the ground! Over it lay the great elm tree which the wind had broken across! As he stood looking at it, a gentleman who was staying at the Coleman house came out upon the lawn.

"Dear me!" said the gentleman. "There has been terrible work here! This is the North Wind's doing! What a pity! I wish we lived at the back of it, I am sure!"

"Where is that, sir?" asked Diamond.

"Away in the Hyperborean regions," answered the gentleman. He smiled for he knew well enough that Diamond would not understand that big word which means the country away in the far, far north.

"I never heard of that place," returned Diamond.

"No," said the gentleman. "I suppose not. But if this tree had been there, it would not have been blown down. There is no wind in that country."

"That must be the place," said Diamond to himself, "where North Wind said she would take the people whom she sunk with the ship. Next time I see her, I am going to ask her to take me to see that land, too."

CHAPTER IV

THE LAND AT THE BACK OF THE NORTH WIND

One morning, Diamond's mother did not think he was feeling very well and when he told her that he had a little headache, she was sure of it. Now there was an aunt of his living at Sandwich and his mother decided to send him there for a change. So giving him two pence for spending money, she packed him off to Sandwich for a visit.

He soon made great friends with an old woman who kept a toy-shop there, where he spent his two pence. One hot day when he had been walking about more than he ought and was tired, he went into the toy-shop to rest. The old woman had gone out but he thought it would be all right for him to sit down on a box and rest.

All at once, he heard a gentle whirring somewhere amongst the toys. Among them was a whistle that had a wind-mill at the end which turned when you blew the whistle. No one was blowing the whistle now and yet

the wind-mill was turning and turning and turning.

"What can it mean?" said Diamond out loud after watching for a few moments.

"It means *me*," answered the tiniest voice he had ever heard.

"Who are you, please?" asked Diamond.

"Well, really, I begin to be ashamed of you!" cried the voice. "You are as bad as a baby that doesn't know its mother in a new bonnet!"

"Not quite so bad as that, dear North Wind," said Diamond. "And I am so glad to see you. Did you sink the ship?"

"Yes."

"And drown everybody?"

"Not quite. One boat got away with six or seven men in it."

"And you took the others to that queer place the gentleman spoke of," said Diamond to himself. Aloud he said, "Please, North Wind, I want you to take me to the country at the back of the north wind."

"That is not so easy," said North Wind and was silent so long that he thought she must have gone away. But presently she spoke again.

"It is not so easy," she said thoughtfully. "But we shall see. We shall see. You must go home, now, my dear, for you do not seem very well."

So Diamond went home. That afternoon, his head began to ache very much and he had to go to bed. In the middle of the night, his aunt came in to feel his forehead and to give him a drink of lemonade. Then he went off to sleep, but was awake again soon, for a burst of wind blew open his lattice window. The same moment, he found himself in a cloud of North Wind's hair, with her beautiful face, set in it like a moon, bending over him.

"Quick! Diamond!" she said. "I have found such a chance!"

"But I am not well," said Diamond.

"I know. But you will be better for it."

"Very well," said Diamond; and getting out of bed, he jumped into North Wind's arms. Sure enough, the moment he felt her arms fold about him, he began to feel better. It was a moonless night and very dark, with glimpses of stars when the clouds parted.

"We shall soon get to where the waves are dashing about," said North Wind. And soon, Diamond looking down saw the white glimmer of breaking water far below him.

"You see, Diamond," said North Wind, "it is very difficult to get you to the back of the north wind for that country lies in the very north itself. Now, of course, I cannot blow northwards, for then I should have to be South Wind. The north is where I come from--it is my home though I never get nearer to it than the outer door. I can only sit on the door-step and hear the voices in there, behind me. Since I cannot blow in that

direction to get there, I have just to draw into myself and grow weaker and fainter as I go. That makes it hard for me to carry anything--even you--with me when I go that way. So I must get some help. Let me get rid of a few of these clouds. There! What do you see now?"

"A boat," said Diamond.

"A ship," said North Wind, "whose captain I know well. I have often helped him to sail his eighty miles a day northward."

"He must have tacked often to do that," said Diamond who had been watching the ships at Sandwich.

"Yes, that gave him a share in the business. It is not good at all--mind that, Diamond--to do everything for those you love and not give them a share in the doing. It is not being really kind to them. If South Wind had blown that ship straight north, the captain would just have smoked his pipe all day and got stupider and stupider. But now I am going to put you aboard his ship. Do you see that round thing on the deck like the top of a drum? Below that is where they keep their spare sails. I am going to blow it off and drop you through upon the sails. You will find it nice and warm and dry. Just coil yourself up there and go to sleep."

A moment more, and he felt himself tumbled in on the heap of sails. Hour after hour, he lay comfortably there. He could hear the straining of the masts, the creaking of the boom, and the singing of the ropes with the roaring of the wind; also the surge of the waves past the ship's sides and the thud with which every now and then one would strike her.

All at once arose a terrible uproar. The cover was blown off again, a fierce wind rushed in, snatched him up and bore him aloft into the clouds. Down below, he saw the little vessel, he had been in, tossing on the waves like a sea-bird with folded wing. Near it was a bigger ship which was on its way to the north pole.

"That big ship will give us a lift now," said North Wind. Swooping down she tucked him snugly in amongst some flags. And now on and on, they sped toward the north. How long it was, Diamond did not know, but one night she whispered in his ear, "Come up on deck, Diamond."

Everything looked very strange. Here and there on all sides, were huge masses of floating ice looking like cathedrals and castles and crags, and beyond them a blue sea. Some of the icebergs were drifting northward, one passing very near the ship. North Wind seized Diamond and with a single bound, lighted on it. The same instant, South Wind began to blow and North Wind hurried Diamond down the north side of the berg and into a cave. There she sat down as if weary on a ledge of ice.

Diamond was enraptured with the color of the air in the cave, a deep, dazzling, lovely blue that was always in motion, boiling and sparkling. But when he looked at North Wind he was frightened.

He saw that her form and face were growing, not small, but transparent like something dissolving away. He could see the side of the blue cave through her very heart. She melted slowly away till all that was left was a pale face with two great lucid eyes in it.

"She is dying away!" he said. "Of course, as we go northward, she is dying away more and more."

After a little, he went out and sat on the edge of his floating island and looked down into the green ocean. When he got tired of that, he went back into the blue cave. He felt as if in a dream. He was not hungry, but he sucked little bits of the berg at times.

At length, far off on the horizon, there rose into the sky a shining peak, and his berg floated right toward it. Other peaks came into view as he went on, and at last his berg floated up to a projecting rock. Diamond

stepped ashore and a little way before him saw a lofty ridge of ice with a gap in it like the opening of a valley. As he got nearer, he saw it was not a gap but the form of a woman, her hands in her lap and her hair hanging to the ground.

"It is North Wind on her door-step!" said Diamond joyfully and hurried on.

[Illustration: HE WAS SURE IT WAS NORTH WIND BUT HE THOUGHT SHE MUST BE DEAD AT LAST]

She sat motionless with drooping head and did not move nor speak. He was sure it was North Wind but he thought she must be dead at last. Her face was white as the snow, her eyes blue as the ice cave, and she had on a greenish robe like the color in the hollows of a glacier.

He walked toward her instantly and put out his hand to lay it on her. There was nothing there but intense cold. All grew white about him. He groped on further. The white thickened about him and he felt himself stumbling and falling. But as he fell, he rolled over the threshold. It was thus that Diamond got to the back of the north wind.

And what did he find? There was no North Wind in sight nor snow nor ice. It was a country where even the ground smelled sweetly, though Diamond thought the odour must come out of the flowers. A gentle air breathed in his face but he was not quite sure he did not miss the wind. A river as clear as crystal ran not only through the grass but over it too. It murmured a low, sweet song as it ran. There was no sun nor moon but a pure cloudless light always, and the blue arch of the sky seemed like a harp playing the soft airs of Heaven. There were many people there and all the people seemed happy and yet as if they were going to be happier some day.

Nothing ever went wrong at the back of the north wind and the only thing one ever missed was some one he loved who had not yet got there. But if one at the back of the north wind wanted to know how things were going with any one he loved, he had only to go to a certain tree, and climb up and sit down in the branches.

One day, when Diamond was sitting in this tree, he began to long very much to get home again. And no wonder! For he saw his mother crying. Now if you wished anything at the back of the north wind, you could follow your wish if you could find the way. So Diamond knew that he must now find North Wind. He could not go home without her and therefore he must find her. He went all about searching and searching. One day as he was looking and looking, he thought he caught a glimpse of the ice ridge and the misty form of North Wind seated as he had left her. He ran as hard as he could. Yes, he was sure it was she. He pushed on through the whiteness, which began to thicken around him. It was harder and harder to go but he struggled on and at last reached her and sank wearily down at her knees. At that same moment, the country at her back vanished from Diamond's view.

North Wind was as still as Diamond had left her. But as he touched her, her face began to change like that of one waking from sleep. He clambered up upon her breast. She gave a great sigh, slowly lifted her arms, and slowly folded them about him, until she clasped him close.

"Have you been sitting here ever since I went through you, dear North Wind? It has been like a hundred years!" said Diamond.

"It has been just seven days," said North Wind smiling. "Come now, we will go."

The next moment, Diamond sat alone on the rock. North Wind had vanished. But something like a cockchafer flew past his face. Around and around him in circles it went.

"Come along, Diamond," it said in his ear. "It is time we were setting out for Sandwich."

It seemed to drop to the ground but when he looked Diamond could see nothing but a little spider with long legs which made its way over the ice toward the south. It grew and grew till Diamond discovered that it was not a spider but a weasel. Away glided the weasel and away went Diamond after it. The weasel grew and grew and grew till he saw it was not a weasel but a cat. Away went the cat and away went Diamond after it. When he came up with it, it was not a cat but a leopard. The leopard grew to a jaguar and the jaguar to a Bengal tiger.

Of none of them was Diamond afraid for he had been at North Wind's back and he could be afraid of her no longer whatever she did or grew to be. The tiger flew over the snow in a straight line for the south, growing less and less to Diamond's eyes till it was only a black speck upon the whiteness. Then it vanished altogether.

And now Diamond felt that he would rather not run any further and that the ice had got very rough. Besides he was near the precipices that bounded the sea. So he slowed up his pace to a walk and said to himself, "North Wind will come back for me, I know. She is just teasing me a little. Then, too, she *must* get started some way to grow bigger and bigger all the time!"

"Here I am, dear boy," said North Wind's voice behind him.

Diamond turned and saw her as he liked best to see her, standing beside him a tall, beautiful woman.

"Where is the tiger?" he said. "But of course, you were the tiger. It puzzles me a little. I saw it such a long way off before me, and there you are behind me. It is odd, you know."

"None of these things is odder to me than to see you eat bread and butter," said North Wind.

"I should just like to see a slice of bread and butter!" cried Diamond. "I am afraid to say how long it is since I had anything to eat!"

"You shall have some soon. I am glad to find you want some!"

She swept him up in her arms and bounded into the air. Her tresses began to lift and rise and spread and stream and flow and flutter. And North Wind and Diamond went flying southward. The sea slid away from under them like a great web of shot silk, blue shot with gray, and green shot with purple. The stars appeared to sail away past them, like golden boats on a blue sea turned upside down. Diamond himself went fast, fast, fast--he went fast asleep in North Wind's arms.

CHAPTER V

DIAMOND'S FATHER LOSES HIS EMPLOYMENT

When he woke once more, a face was bending over him. It was not North Wind's, however; it was his mother's. He put out his arms to her and she clasped him to her heart and burst out crying.

"What is the matter, mother?" cried Diamond.

"Oh, Diamond dear! You have been so ill!" she said.

"Why no, mother dear. I have only been at the back of the North Wind," returned Diamond.

"I thought you were dead," said his mother.

At that moment, the doctor came in. He drew his mother aside and told her not to talk to Diamond. He must be kept as quiet as possible. And indeed, Diamond felt very strange and weak. But he soon got better with chicken broth and other nice things.

And it was a good thing that he could get well and strong again. For since he had come to Sandwich, a sad thing had happened to his father. Mr. Coleman, his father's employer, had failed in business. It had come about in this way. Miss Coleman, who had looked so like North Wind that night on which he had seen her having her long black hair combed beside the fire, had a lover, a Mr. Evans. Now Mr. Evans was poor and felt ashamed to marry Miss Coleman until he had made more money and could live finely. This was a sort of false pride and it brought about great trouble for them all.

For Mr. Coleman took Mr. Evans into partnership to help him along. As soon as that happened, Mr. Evans began to urge Mr. Coleman to go into business ventures which were not honest but in which they could make a great deal of money. It was not so bad at first, but as they went on, it became more and more dishonest.

They could not seem to get out of it, however, and get back to carrying on their business in the right way. So North Wind had to take a hand and teach them better. It was Mr. Coleman's ship she sank that night when she carried Diamond into the cathedral to wait for her. In the one boat-load of people which North Wind drove off to a desert island, was Mr. Evans. He had gone along on the ship to manage the business. Now he found that it would have been better to have been poor and stayed at home to marry Miss Coleman than to be ship-wrecked and have to live on a desert island because he longed so to be rich.

The loss of the ship ruined Mr. Coleman. He had to sell off his house and his horses, old Diamond among them, and go and live in a poor little house in a much less pleasant place. He had to begin again to work and learn how much better it is to be honest and contented than to try to get rich quickly. And poor Miss Coleman thought her lover was drowned and was very, very unhappy.

Nobody suffers alone. When old Diamond was sold, young Diamond's father was thrown out of work. Then he had no way to earn money to keep Diamond and his mother and the new little baby brother who had come to them. How Diamond did wish he was big enough to do something! But of course, he could think of nothing he could do. Besides he had to get well and strong first, anyway. His father sent word that he and his mother were to stay down at Sandwich until he found something to do and a place where he could make a home for them. It was a very fortunate thing that Diamond's aunt was glad to keep them with her as long as ever they were willing to stay.

One day when Diamond was getting strong enough to go out, his mother got his aunt's husband, who had a little pony cart, to carry them down to the sea-shore. A whiff of sea air, she said, would do them both good. They sat down on the edge of the rough grass which bordered the sand. Away before them stretched the sparkling waters of the ocean, every wave of which flashed out its delight in the face of the great sun. On each hand, the shore rounded outward, forming a little bay. Dry sand was about their feet, and under them thin wiry grass.

After a time, his mother stretched out her hand for the basket which she had brought with her and she and Diamond had their dinner. Diamond *did* enjoy it, the drive and the fresh air had made him so hungry! But he was sorry that his mother looked so sad and depressed. He knew she was thinking about his father and how they now had no home. But there was nothing for him to do. So he lay down on the sand again, feeling sleepy, and gazed sleepily out over the sand. "What is that, mother!" he said.

"Only a bit of paper," she answered looking where he pointed.

"It flutters more than a bit of paper would, I think," said Diamond.

"I'll go and see if you like," said his mother.

She rose and went and found that it was a little book partly buried in the sand. Several of its leaves were clear of the sand and these the wind kept blowing about in a very fluttering manner. She took it up and brought it to Diamond.

"What is it, mother?" he asked.

"Rhymes, I think," said she.

"I am so sleepy," he said. "Do read some of them to me."

"Well, I will," she said and began one. "But this is such nonsense," she said again. "I will try to find a better one."

She turned the leaves, searching, but three times with sudden puffs the wind blew the leaves rustling back to the same verses.

"I wonder if that is North Wind," said Diamond to himself. To his mother he said, "Do read that one. It sounded very nice. I am sure it is a good one."

His mother thought it might amuse him although she could not find any sense in it. So she read on like this:

I know a river whose waters run asleep, run, run ever, singing in the shallows, dumb in the hollows sleeping so deep; and all the swallows that dip their feathers in the hollows or in the shallows are the merriest swallows of all!

"Why!" whispered Diamond to himself sleepily, "that is what the river sang when I was at the back of the north wind."

And so with the daisies the little white daisies they grow and they blow and they spread out their crown and they praise the sun; and when he goes down their praising is done and they fold up their crown till over the plain he is rising again and they're at it again! praising and praising such low songs raising that no one hears them but the sun who rears them! and the sheep that bite them awake or asleep are the quietest sheep with the merriest bleat! and the little lambs are the merriest lambs! they forget to eat for the frolic in their feet!

"Merriest, merriest, merriest," murmured Diamond as he sank deeper and deeper in sleep. "That is what the song of the river is telling me. Even I can be merry and cheerful--and that will help some. And so I will--when--I--wake--up--again." And he went off sound asleep.

It was not very long after this that Diamond and his mother could go home again. His father had now found something to do and this is how it came about. He one day met a cabman who was a friend of his and this friend said to him, "Why don't you set up as a cabman yourself--and buy a cab?"

"I haven't enough money to buy a horse with--and a cab," said Diamond's father.

"Look here," answered his friend. "I just bought an old horse the other day, cheap. He is no good for the hansom I drive, for when folks take a hansom, they want to drive like the wind. But for a four-wheeler that takes families and their luggage, he's the very horse. I bought him cheap and I'll sell him cheap."

"Oh, I don't want him," said Diamond's father.

"Well, come and see him anyway," said his friend. So he went.

What was his delight on going into the stable to find that the horse was no other than his own old Diamond! Diamond, grown very thin and bony and long-legged. The horse hearing his master's voice, turned his long neck. And when his old friend went up to him and laid his hand on his side, he whinnied for joy and laid his big head on his master's breast. This settled the matter. Diamond's father put his arms around old Diamond's neck and fairly cried.

The end of it was that Diamond's father bought old Diamond again, together with a four-wheeled cab. As there were some rooms to be had over the stable, he took them, wrote to his wife to come home, and set up as a cabman.

It was late in the afternoon when Diamond and his mother and the baby reached London. His father was waiting for them with his own cab but they had not told Diamond who the horse was. For his father wanted to enjoy the pleasure of his surprise when he found it out. He got in with his mother without looking at the horse and was quite proud of riding home in his father's cab.

When he got to the stables where their rooms were he could not help being a little dismayed at first. But he thought of the song of the river at the back of the north wind and just looked about for things that were pleasant. He said to himself that it was a fine thing that all their old furniture was there. Then he began to search out the advantages of the place.

A thick, dull rain was falling and that was depressing. But the weather would change and there was a good fire burning in the room, which a neighbor had made for them. The tea things were put out and the kettle was boiling on the fire. And with a good fire and tea and bread and butter, things cannot be so *very* bad.

But Diamond's father and mother were rather miserable and Diamond began to feel a kind of darkness spreading over him. At the same moment, he said, "This will never do! I can't give in to this. I've been at the back of the north wind. Things go right there and they must be made to go right here!"

So he said out loud, "What nice bread and butter this is!" And when he had eaten it, he began to amuse the baby who was soon shrieking with laughter. His father and mother had to laugh too and things began to look better.

It was indeed a change for them all, not only from Sandwich but from their old place. Instead of the great river where the huge barges with their brown and yellow sails went up and down, their windows now looked out upon a dirty paved yard. There was no garden more for Diamond to run into when he pleased, with gay flowers about his feet, and lofty trees over his head.

Neither was there a wooden wall at the back of his bed with a hole in it for North Wind to come in at when she liked. Indeed, there was such a high wall that North Wind seldom got into the place. And the wall at the head of Diamond's new bed only divided it from the room where a cabman lived who drank too much beer and came home to quarrel with and abuse his wife. It was dreadful for Diamond to hear the scolding and the crying. But he was determined it should not make him miserable for he had been at the back of the north wind.

CHAPTER VI

DIAMOND LEARNS TO DRIVE A HORSE

The wind blew loudly all night long, the first night Diamond slept in his new home, but he did not hear it. My own belief is that when Diamond slept too soundly to remember anything about it in the morning, he had been

all night at the back of the north wind. Sometimes something did seem to remain in his mind like the low far-off murmur of the river singing its song. He sometimes tried to hold on to the words it sung. But ever as he came *awaker*--as he would say--one line faded away and then another. At last there was nothing left but the sense that everything went right there and could--and must--be made to go right here.

That was how he awoke that first morning and he jumped up at once saying, "I've been ill a long time and given a great deal of trouble. Now let's see how I can help my mother."

When he went into her room, he found her lighting the fire and his father just getting up. So he took up the baby who was awake too and cared for him till his mother had the breakfast ready. She was looking gloomy and his father too was silent. Diamond felt that in a few minutes, he would be just as miserable. But he tried with all his might to be jolly with the baby and presently his mother just had to smile.

"Why, Diamond, child!" she said at last. "You are as good to your mother as if you were a girl--nursing the baby and toasting the bread, and sweeping up the hearth. I declare a body would think you had been among the fairies."

"I've been at the back of the north wind," said Diamond to himself happily.

And now his father was more cheerful too. "Won't you come out and see the cab, Diamond?" he asked.

"Yes, father, in just a minute after I put the baby down."

So his father went on ahead. When Diamond got out into the yard, the horse was between the shafts. Diamond went around to look at him. The sight of him made him feel very queer. He could not make it out. What horse was it that looked so familiar? When he came around in front and the old horse put out his long neck and began rubbing against him, Diamond saw it could be no other than old Diamond and he just put his arms around his neck and cried.

"Isn't it jolly, father!" he said. "Was there ever anybody so lucky as we! Dear old Diamond!" He hugged the horse again and kissed both his big, hairy cheeks. He could only manage one at a time, however--the other cheek was so far off on the other side of old Diamond's big head. And now his father took up the reins to drive off.

"Oh, father, do let me drive a bit!" cried Diamond jumping up on the box beside him. His father put the reins into his hands and began to show him how to drive. He let Diamond drive quite a little way and then the boy jumped down and ran gaily back to his mother.

Now it happened that the man who sold old Diamond back to his father, saw how delighted little Diamond was to learn to drive. And that evening, shortly before Diamond's father came home, the man asked Diamond's mother if the boy might not go a little way with him.

"He cannot go far," said his mother, "for he is not very strong yet."

"I will take him only as far as the square," said the man.

Diamond's mother said he might go as far as that. Dancing with delight, Diamond ran to get his cap and in a few minutes was jumping into the cab. The man gave him the reins and showed him how to drive safely through the gate and Diamond got along famously. Just as they were turning into the square, they had an adventure. It was getting quite dusky. A cab was coming rapidly from the other direction, and Diamond pulling aside and the other driver pulling up, they just escaped a collision. And there was his father!

"Why, Diamond, it is a bad beginning to run into your own father," he said.

"But, father, wouldn't it have been a bad ending for you to run into your own son!" answered the boy. And both men laughed heartily.

"He is a good little driver, though," said the man. "He would be fit to drive on his own hook in a week or two. But he had better go back with you now."

"Come along then, Diamond," said his father. Diamond jumped across into the other cab and they drove away home.

It was not long before Diamond was a great favorite with all the men about the stables--he was so jolly! It was not the best place in the world for him to be brought up in and at first he did hear a good many rough and bad words. But as he did not like them, he never learned to say them and they did him little harm. Before long, the men grew rather ashamed to use them. One would nudge the other to remind him that the boy was within hearing and the words choked themselves before they got any further.

One day, they gave him a curry comb and brush to try his hand on old Diamond's coat. He used them deftly and thoroughly as far as he could reach.

"You must make haste and grow," the men told him. "It won't do to clean a horse half way up and leave his back dirty, you know."

"Put me up," said Diamond. In a moment he was on the old horse's back with the comb and brush. There he combed and brushed and combed and brushed. Every now and then, old Diamond would whisk his tail and once he sent the comb flying out of the stable door to the great amusement of the men. But they brought it back to him and Diamond finished his task.

"Oh, dear!" said Diamond, when he had done. "I'm so tired!" And he laid himself down at full length on old Diamond's back. The men were much amused and from that time were always ready to teach him to drive.

So in one way and another, he did learn to drive all sorts of horses, and through the most crowded streets in London city. One day his father took him on his own cab and as they were standing waiting for a passenger, his father left him alone for a few minutes. Hearing a noise, Diamond looked around to see what it was. There was a crossing near the cab-stand where a girl was sweeping. Some young roughs had picked a quarrel with her and were now trying to pull her broom away from her. Diamond was off his box in a moment and running to the help of the girl. The roughs began to act worse than ever. Just then Diamond's father came back and sent them flying. The girl thanked Diamond and began sweeping again as if nothing had happened.

She did not forget her friends, however. A moment after, she came running up with her broom over her shoulder, calling "Cab, there! Cab!" And when Diamond's father reached the curbstone, who should it be but Mrs. Coleman and Miss Coleman! Diamond and his father were very happy to see them again and gladly drove them home. When they wanted to pay for it, Diamond's father would not hear of it, but jumped on his box and drove away.

It was a long time since Diamond had seen North Wind or even thought much about her. Now, as his father drove along, he was thinking not about her but about the crossing sweeper. He was wondering what made him feel as if he knew her quite well when he could not remember anything of her. But a picture arose in his mind of a little girl running before the wind, and dragging her broom after her. From that, he recalled the whole adventure of the night when he had gone out with North Wind and made her put him down in a London street.

A few nights after this, Diamond woke up suddenly, believing he heard the north wind thundering along. But

it was something quite different. South Wind was moaning around the chimneys, to be sure, for she was not very happy that night. But it was not her voice that had wakened Diamond. It was a loud angry voice, now growling like that of a beast, now raving like that of a madman. It was the voice of the drunken cabman whose room was just through the wall at the back of Diamond's bed.

At length, there came a cry from the woman and a scream from the baby. Diamond thought it was time somebody did something. He jumped up and went to see. The voice of the crying baby guided him to the right door and he peeped in. The drunken cabman had dropped into a chair, his wife lay sobbing on the bed, and the baby was wailing in its cradle.

Diamond's first thought was to run away from the misery of it. But he remembered at once that he had been at the back of the north wind. People who had been there must always try to destroy misery wherever they saw it. But what could he do? Well, there was the baby. He stole in and lifted it into his arms and soon had it on his knee, smiling at the light that came in from the street lamp. He began to sing to it in a low voice--the song of the river as it ran over the soft grass and among the flowers in the country at the back of the north wind. He sang on till the baby went sound asleep. He himself got sleepier and sleepier, though the cabman and his wife only got wider awake all the time. At length, Diamond found himself nodding. He got up and laid the baby gently in its cradle and stole quietly out and home again to his own bed.

"Wife," said the cabman, "did you see that angel?"

"Yes," answered his wife, "it is little Diamond who lives in the next yard."

She knew him well enough. She was the neighbor who had the fire lighted and the tea ready for them when Diamond and his mother came home from Sandwich on that rainy, gloomy night. Her husband was somehow very sorry now and ashamed of the misery he had caused--was it the song of the river which Diamond had sung that caused it? He tried hard to forget where the drink shop stood and for a good many weeks managed to keep away from it.

One day when their cab was waiting for a fare, Diamond jumped down to run a little and stretch his legs. He strolled up to the crossing where Nanny and her broom were to be found in all weathers. Just as he was going to speak to her a tall gentleman stepped upon the crossing. He was glad to find it clean and he gave the girl a penny. When she made him a courtesy, he looked at her again and said, "Where do you live, my child?"

"Paradise Row," she answered. "Next door to the Adam and Eve--down the area."

"Whom do you live with?" he asked.

"My wicked old granny," she replied.

"You should not call your granny wicked," said the gentleman.

"But she is!" said Nanny. "If you don't believe me, you can come and take a look at her."

The gentleman looked very grave at hearing her. It was not a nice way for a little girl to talk. He was turning away, when he saw the face of Diamond looking up into his own.

"Please," said Diamond, "her granny is very cruel to her sometimes--and shuts her out in the streets at night if she happens to be late."

"So, my little man. And what can you do?" asked the gentleman turning towards him.

"Drive a cab," said Diamond proudly.

"Anything else?" asked the gentleman smiling.

"Take care of the baby," said Diamond; "clean father's boots and make him a bit of toast for his tea."

"You are a useful little man," said the gentleman. "Can you read?"

"No, but father and mother can and they are going to teach me soon."

"Well, here is a penny for you, and when you learn to read, come to me and I will give you six-pence and a book with fine pictures in it."

He gave Diamond a card with his address on it. "Thank you," said Diamond and put the card into his pocket. The gentleman walked away but he saw Diamond give the penny to Nanny and say, "I have a father and mother and little brother and you have nothing but a wicked old granny. You may have my penny."

The girl put the penny in her pocket and Diamond asked, "Is she as cruel as ever?"

"Just the same. But I get more coppers, so I can buy myself some food. She is so blind that she doesn't see that I do not eat her old scraps. I hide them in my pocket."

"What do you want them for?"

"To give to cripple Jim. His leg was broken when he was young, so he isn't good for much. But I love Jim. I always keep something for him."

"Diamond! Diamond!" called his father, just then.

So Diamond ran back and told him about the gentleman and showed him the card he had given him.

"Why, it is not many doors from our stables!" cried his father looking at the address. "Take care of it, Diamond. One needs all the friends he can get in this world."

"We've got many friends," said Diamond. "Haven't we? There's mother and the baby and old Diamond--and the man next door who drinks--and his wife and baby--and Mrs. Coleman and Miss Coleman--and--and a many!"

His father just laughed and drove off.

[Illustration: WITHIN A MONTH HE WAS ABLE TO SPELL OUT MOST OF THE VERSES FOR HIMSELF]

CHAPTER VII

DIAMOND DRIVES THE CAB

The question of the tall gentleman as to whether Diamond could read or not, set his father to thinking it was high time he could. As soon as old Diamond was fed and bedded, he began the task of teaching him that very night. It was not much of a task to Diamond for his father took for the lesson book the same one which North Wind had waved the leaves of on the sands at Sandwich. Within a month, he was able to spell out most of the verses for himself. But he never found in it the river song which he thought his mother had read from it. Could

it have been North Wind doing the reading in his mother's voice?

It was not long before Diamond managed with many blunders to read all the rhymes in his book to his mother. Then he said, "In a week or so, I shall be able to go to the tall gentleman and tell him I can read." But before the week was out he had another reason for going to the gentleman, whose name he found out was Mr. Raymond. For three days, Nanny had not been at her crossing. Diamond was quite anxious about her, fearing she must be ill. On the fourth day not seeing her yet, he said to his father, "I want to go and look after Nanny. She can't be well."

"All right," said his father. "Only take care of yourself, Diamond."

So Diamond set off to find his way to Nanny's home. It was a long distance and he had to ask his way over and over again. But he kept on without getting discouraged and at last he came to it.

Happily for Diamond, the ugly old granny had gone out. He laid his ear to the door and thought he heard a moaning within. He tried the door and found it was not locked. It was a dreary place indeed--and very dark, for the window was below the level of the street and was covered with mud. And the smell in the room was dreadful!

He could see next to nothing at first but he heard the moaning plainly enough now. Soon he found his friend lying with closed eyes and a white suffering face on a heap of rags in a corner. He went up to her and spoke but she made him no answer. She did not even hear him. Taking out a lump of barley sugar candy he had brought for her he laid it down beside her and hurried away. He was going to find Mr. Raymond and see if he could not do something for Nanny.

It was a long walk to Mr. Raymond's door but he got there at last. Yet after all, the servant was not going to let him in, only Mr. Raymond came out into the hall just then and saw him and recognized him at once.

"Come in, my little man," he said. "I suppose you have come to claim your six-pence."

"No, sir, not that."

"What! Can't you read yet?"

"Yes," said Diamond. "I can now a little. But I've come to tell you about Nanny--the little girl at the crossing."

"Oh, yes, I remember her," said Mr. Raymond. "What is it about Nanny?"

Diamond told him all about her--how she was sick, and how dark it was where she lived and with bad smells. Now, Mr. Raymond was one of the kindest men in London and was well known at the children's hospital. He hurried there now, and some one went from there at once to find Nanny. Before night, they sent a litter for her and soon the little girl was lying in a nice clean bed, though she was too sick to know anything about it.

Diamond overheard a doctor say to Mr. Raymond, "How do you suppose the little chap knew what to do about Nanny?"

"He doesn't know that I have been at the back of the north wind," he said to himself. "If you have once been there, it just comes to you how to do a little to help."

After Nanny had been well seen to, Mr. Raymond took the boy home with him and they soon settled the matter of the six-pence between them.

"And now, what will you do with it?" the gentleman asked him.

"Take it home to my mother," answered Diamond. "She has a tea-pot with a broken spout and she keeps all her money in it. It isn't much but she saves it up to buy shoes for me. And there's the baby--he'll want shoes soon. And every six-pence is something, isn't it?"

"To be sure, my little man. And here is the book for you, full of pictures and stories."

There were poems in it too, and Diamond at once began to puzzle out one of them which ran like this:

I have only one foot, but thousands of toes; My one foot stands but never goes. I have many arms and they are mighty, all; And hundreds of fingers large and small. From the ends of my fingers my beauty grows, I breathe with my hair and I drink with my toes. In the summer, with song I shake and quiver, But in winter, I fast and groan and shiver.

When Diamond ran home with his new book in his hand, he found his father at home already. He was sitting by the fire and looking rather miserable for his head ached and he looked sick. The next day, he had to stay in bed while his wife nursed him, and Diamond took care of the baby. By the next day, he was very ill indeed. And it was not long before their money was all gone.

Diamond's mother could not help crying over it but she came into Diamond's room so that the poor sick father should not hear it. Diamond was frightened when he heard her sobbing and said, "Is father worse?"

"No, no," said his mother, "he is better. But the money is all gone and what are we to do?"

"Don't cry," said Diamond. "We'll get along some how. Let me read to you out of North Wind's book."

So he read a little story about the early bird that caught the nice fat worm.

"I wish you were like that little bird, dear," said his mother, "and could catch something to eat!"

After she was gone away, Diamond lay thinking and somehow he seemed to hear the murmur of North Wind's river blowing through his thoughts and telling him about something he could do. The next morning he got up as soon as he heard the men moving in the yard. When he went down, the stable was just opened. "I'm the early bird, I think," he said to himself, "and I hope I'll catch the worm."

[Illustration: HE FASTENED THE CHEEK-STRAP VERY CAREFULLY]

He would not ask any one to help him because he was afraid he would be kept from doing what he wanted. With the aid of an old chair, he got the harness on old Diamond. The dear old horse opened his mouth for the bit just as if Diamond was giving him an apple. He fastened the cheek-strap very carefully, and got all the pieces of harness on and buckled. By this time some of the men were watching him to see if he would get it all done by himself. And when he put old Diamond between the shafts, got his whip, and jumped up on the box, the men broke into a cheer.

The cheer brought his mother to the window and when she saw her little boy setting out all alone in the cab, she called "Diamond! Diamond!" But Diamond did not hear her for the rattle of the cab and so he drove away. He was very much afraid no one would hire him because he was such a little driver. But before he got to his regular stand, he was hailed by a man who wanted to catch a train and was in too great a hurry to think about the driver. He got a good fare for that and reached the cab-stand the first one after all. As the other cabmen came, he told them about his father and said that he was going to drive the cab in his place.

"Well, you are a plucky one!" they all said. "And you shall have a fair chance with the rest."

And he did, for another gentleman came up very soon for him. When he saw the boy, he was much astonished. "Are you the driver of this cab?" he asked. "Yes, sir," answered Diamond, showing his father's badge of which he was proud.

"You are the youngest cabman I ever saw!" said the gentleman greatly amused. "But I believe I'll risk you!"

He jumped in and soon found that Diamond got him over the ground very well. The trip was one of several miles and the gentleman paid him three shillings for the drive. When Diamond got back, he stopped at a stand where he had never been before and got down to put on old Diamond's nose-bag of oats. The men there did not treat him very nicely and a group of rough boys came up and began to torment him. But who do you think came to his rescue? Why, the drunken cabman whose room was next to Diamond's and whose baby Diamond had once rocked and put to sleep.

"What is up here?" the cabman asked.

"Do you see this young snip?" the boys cried, "He pretends to drive a cab!"

"Yes, I do see him," said the cabman. "I see you, too. You'd better take yourselves away from here or you won't find me very agreeable!"

And they went in a hurry!

When Diamond went home that night, he carried one pound, one shilling and six-pence. His mother had grown very anxious and was almost afraid to look when she heard his cab coming at last. But there was the old horse, and there was the cab, all right! And there was Diamond on the box his face as triumphant as a full moon! One of the men took the horse to put him up and Diamond ran into the house and into the arms of his mother!

"See! See!" he cried. "Here is the worm I caught!" He poured out the six-pences and shillings into her lap. His mother burst out crying again, but with joy this time and ran to show his father. Then how pleased *he* was! And Diamond snatched up the baby and began to sing and dance, he was so happy!

The next morning, Diamond was up almost as early as before. But the men would not let him do the harnessing any more. They got the cab all ready for him and sent him in to eat all the breakfast he could and get well bundled up. His first passenger was a young woman to be taken to the docks. When he started back some roughs came along and tried to steal his fare. But a pale-faced man came up and beat them off with his stick, and told Diamond to drive away. Diamond begged him to get into the cab and ride. The man said he could not spare the money to ride--he was too poor.

"Oh, do come!" said Diamond. "I don't want the money. You helped me. Let me help you."

"Well," said the man, "if you will take me to Chiswick, I can pay for that. Drive to the Wilderness--Mr. Coleman's place. I'll show you when we get there."

Now Diamond had been thinking he had seen the gentleman before and when he said this, it flashed upon him that it was Mr. Evans who had been going to marry Miss Coleman. North Wind had sunk his and Mr. Coleman's ship because their business was not honest and was making bad men of them. She had carried Mr. Evans away to a desert island. He had just got back again and was poor now and humble and willing to begin to work again in an honest way.

It was plain he did not know that Mr. Coleman had been ruined too and had been forced to sell the Wilderness and move into a poor house in the city. But Diamond knew, and as he drove along he was thinking what he ought to do. The gentleman would not find Miss Coleman at the Wilderness. And if he told him where she lived now, perhaps he would not go to see her because he would be so ashamed of having brought all this trouble on her by trying so hard to be rich.

Still he must want to see her very much and she must want to see him. So Diamond made up his mind to drive straight to where Miss Coleman lived now, and then they could explain to each other. So on he went.

Now the wind was blowing furiously and when old Diamond finally got to Miss Coleman's house and held back to stop, one of the straps of the harness broke. Diamond jumped down and opened the cab door and asked the gentleman if he would not step into this house where friends of his lived and wait while he mended the strap. Then he ran and rang the bell and whispered to the maid who came to call Miss Coleman. A few minutes later, he was not at all sure he had done the right thing. For suddenly there came the sound of a great cry and then a running to and fro in the house. But after a little while, they came and called him in and Miss Coleman put her arms around him and hugged him tight!

The rest of the day, he did very well. And what a story he had to tell his father and mother that night about Mr. Evans and the Colemans. They were sure he had done right and he was so glad!

CHAPTER VIII

DIAMOND VISITS NANNY

For a fortnight, Diamond went on driving his cab and helping his family. Some people began to know him and to look for him to drive them where they wanted to go. One old gentleman who lived near the stables hired him to carry him into the city every morning at a certain hour. And Diamond was as regular as clock work. After that fortnight, his father was able to go out again. Then Diamond began to think about little Nanny and went off to inquire about her.

The first day his father took up his work again, Diamond went with him as usual. In the afternoon, however, his father went home and left Diamond to drive the cab for the rest of the day. It was hard for old Diamond to do all the work but they could not afford to have another horse. They saved him as much as they could and fed him well and he did bravely.

The next morning, his father was so much stronger that Diamond thought he might go and ask Mr. Raymond to take him to see Nanny. Mr. Raymond was quite willing to go and so they walked over to the hospital which was close at hand.

When Diamond followed Mr. Raymond into the room where those children lay who had got over the worst of their illness, and were growing better, he saw a number of little iron beds. Each one of them stood with its head to the wall and in each one was a child whose face showed just how far it had left the pain behind and was getting well. Diamond looked all around but he could see no Nanny. He turned to Mr. Raymond with a question in his eyes.

"Well?" said Mr. Raymond.

"Nanny's not here," said Diamond.

"Oh, yes, she is."

"I don't see her!"

"I do, though. There she is."

He pointed to a bed right in front of where Diamond was standing.

"That's not Nanny!" cried Diamond.

"Yes, it *is* Nanny. I have seen her a great many times since you have, and that is she."

So Diamond looked again and looked hard. "If that is Nanny," said Diamond to himself, "then she must have been at the back of the north wind. That is why she looks so different." He said nothing aloud, only stared. And as he stared, something of the face of the old Nanny began to come out in the face of the new Nanny. The old Nanny had been somewhat rough in her speech, her face rather hard, and she had not kept herself clean--how could she! Now, in her fresh white bed, she looked sweet and gentle and refined.

"Surely North Wind has had something to do with it," thought Diamond. In her weeks of sickness, had North Wind carried Nanny to the country at her back--as she once had carried him--and changed her from a rough girl to a gentle maiden? As he gazed, the best of the old face, the good and true part of the old Nanny, dawned upon him like the moon coming out of a cloud. He saw that it was Nanny, indeed--but very worn and grown almost beautiful.

He went up to her and she smiled. He had heard her laugh, but he had never seen her smile before. "Nanny, do you know me?" asked Diamond. She only smiled again. She was not likely to forget him. To be sure, she did not know that it was he who had got her there. But he was the only boy except cripple Jim who had ever been kind to her.

Mr. Raymond walked about talking to the other children, while Diamond visited with Nanny. Then after a time, he stood in the middle of the room and told them a nice fairy story. He often did that and the children watched for his visits. After he finished the story, he had to go. Diamond took leave of Nanny and promised to go and see her again soon and went away with Mr. Raymond.

Now Mr. Raymond had been turning over in his mind what he could do for Diamond and for Nanny. He knew Diamond's father somewhat. But he wanted to find out better what sort of a man he was and whether he was worth doing anything for. He decided to see if he would do anything for any body else. For that would be the very best way to find out if it were worth while to do anything for *him*. So as they walked away together, he said to little Diamond, "Nanny must leave the hospital soon, Diamond. They cannot keep her as long as they would like. They cannot keep her till she is quite strong. There are always so many sick children they want to take in and make better. The question is what will she do when they send her out again?"

"That is just what I can't tell," said Diamond, "though I've been thinking it over and over. Her crossing was taken long ago. I couldn't bear to see Nanny fighting for it, especially with the poor lame boy who has taken it. Besides she has no better right to it than he has. Nobody gave it to her. She just took it and now he has taken it."

"She would get sick again, anyway," said Mr. Raymond, "if she went to sweeping again right away in the wet. If somebody could only teach her something to do it would be better. Perhaps if she could be taught to be nice and clean and to speak only gentle words----"

"Mother could teach her that!" interrupted Diamond.

"And to dress babies and feed them and take care of them," Mr. Raymond went on, "she might get a place as nurse maid somewhere. People would give her money for that."

"Why, I'll ask mother!" cried Diamond. "She could learn to dress our baby, you know, with me to show her how!"

"But you will have to give her food then. And your father, not being strong, has enough to do already without that."

"Still there am I!" said Diamond. "I'll help him out with it. When he gets tired of driving, up I get. And I could drive more if Nanny was at home to help mother."

"Now I wonder," said Mr. Raymond, "if you couldn't do better with two horses. I am going away for a few months and I am willing to let your father have my horse while I am gone. He is nearly as old as your Diamond. I don't want to part with him and yet I don't want him to be idle. Nobody ought to be idle, not even a horse. Still I do not want him to be worked hard. Will you tell your father what I say and see if he wants to take charge of him?"

"Yes, I will," said Diamond. "And he will come and see you about it."

So when Diamond went home, he told his father all about it. But when his father went to see about it, he found that he must agree to work the horse only six hours a day. Then too he must take Nanny from the hospital and feed her, and teach her to be useful and keep her as long as he had Mr. Raymond's horse. Diamond's father could not help thinking that it was a pretty close bargain and so it was. Mr. Raymond wanted to find out if Diamond's father was the kind of man who was willing to help some one else without getting any advantage out of it for himself. Then it would be worth while to help *him*. Diamond's father was that kind of a man. So when he heard all about Nanny, he decided to accept Mr. Raymond's offer and do the best he could.

Nanny was not fit to be moved for some time yet and Diamond went to see her as often as he could. But he went out to drive old Diamond every day now for a few hours at least. Then he had to help mind his baby brother for part of the time. So he did not go to the hospital as often as he would have liked. When he did go, he sat by Nanny's bed and told her all that had happened to him since he had been there before. In her turn Nanny would tell him of what went on in the hospital--what visitors they had and things like that.

"Day before yesterday," said Nanny one day, "a lady came to see us. She was a very beautiful lady. She sat down beside my bed and let me stroke her hand. She had on a most beautiful ring with a rich red stone in it. When she saw me looking at it, she slipped it off her finger and put it on mine. She said I might wear her lovely ruby for a little while if it would make me happy."

"Her ruby!" cried Diamond. "How funny that is! Our new horse's name is Ruby. And we took him so that we could take you to live with us, while you are getting strong again. I do believe a ruby is for good luck!"

"It did me good right then," said Nanny. "For that night I had such a lovely dream. It began with a red sunset like my darling ruby ring. Then somehow a wind came out of it and blew me along out of the dirty streets into a yard with a lovely lawn of soft grass."

"That was North Wind, I know!" cried Diamond. "That is what she does to me."

"I do not know what you mean," said Nanny. "I do not know anything about North Wind. But all at once there was no more ruby sunset but a great golden moon hanging very low and seeming to be shining just to be good to me. It was easy, I suppose, for me to dream about the moon. I've always been used to watching her. She was the only thing worth looking at in our street, at night."

"Don't call it your street," said Diamond. "You are not going back to it. You are coming to us, you know."

"That is too good to be true!" said Nanny.

"No, no!" cried Diamond. "How could anything be too good to be true? To be true is to be the very best thing of all. It sounds like your wicked old granny to say that!"

"Do you know, Diamond," said Nanny, "I do not think my old granny is my real old granny at all. I don't think she was ever any one's granny or mother. That was why she was not good to me. Perhaps she never had any mother when she was little to be good to her. And somebody must first be good to you, don't you think, before you can learn how to be good to any body else? Isn't that so? But where was I in my dream? Oh yes, the big yellow moon came down closer and closer to the grass in front of me. Then somehow, it seemed to be my ruby lady. She reached out soft warm arms of golden light and took me up. I sank against her breast into very downy, golden clouds and went to sleep and left off having pain. And yet I didn't sleep but knew it all the time, and just swung softly there all night long."

"Wasn't it really North Wind?" said Diamond to himself. "Perhaps it *was* North Wind though she doesn't know it. Maybe the moon does just the same. What if it should some day carry her to that same country--at the back of *my* North Wind! Who knows?"

The nurse now came and told him it was time to go. Nanny had closed her eyes as if she were tired or asleep. So Diamond arose quietly and tip-toed away.

CHAPTER IX

THINGS GO HARD WITH DIAMOND'S FAMILY

It was a great delight to Diamond, when at length Nanny was well enough to leave the hospital and go to their house. She was not strong yet but Diamond's mother was very careful of her. She took care she should have nothing to do that she was not fit for. If Nanny had been taken straight from the street, it is pretty sure she would not have been so pleasant in a nice house nor so easy to teach. But the kindness they had shown her in the hospital while she was ill so long had changed her quite a little.

As she got better, the colour came back to her cheeks, her step grew lighter and quicker, her smile shone out more readily, and it was clear she would soon be a treasure of help. It was great fun to see Diamond teaching her how to hold the baby and wash and dress him. Nanny had never had a little brother or sister to care for and she and Diamond often had to laugh over her awkwardness. But she was soon able to do it all as well as Diamond himself.

Things, however, did not go very well with Diamond's father from the first coming of the horse, Ruby. It almost seemed as if the red beast brought bad luck with him. The fares were fewer and the pay less. Ruby's work did indeed make the week's income at first a little more than it used to be. But then there were two more to feed. After the first month, however, he fell lame, and for the whole of the next month, Diamond's father did not dare work him at all. It cost just as much to feed him and all he did was to stand in the stable and grow fat.

And after he got well again, it was not much better. Times had then become hard and fewer and fewer people felt that they could afford to ride in cabs. The cabmen got fewer and fewer shillings to live on. Diamond's household had less and less to buy food and clothing with. Then too, Diamond's mother was poorly for a new baby was coming.

Diamond's father began to feel gloomier and gloomier and if Diamond had not made himself remember that he had been at the back of the north wind, he would have been gloomy himself. But when his father came home, Diamond would get out his book and show him how well he could read. Besides he taught Nanny how

to read and as she was a very clever little girl, she picked it up very fast. Nanny was such a comfort about the house that Diamond's father just had to cheer up a little when he came home at night and the dull day's work was over.

After the new baby came, Diamond sang to her and of course he had to make up new songs to sing to her because she was a little sister baby. It would never do, he said, to sing the little brother songs to her. While he sang, his father and mother could not help listening and forgetting for the time how bad things were getting to be.

The three months Mr. Raymond had spoken of were now gone and Diamond's father was very anxious for him to come back and take Ruby off his hands, for he did not seem to work enough to pay for his keep. Then he was so lazy and fat, while poor old Diamond had got so thin he was just skin and bones! For Diamond's father was an honest man and felt that he must stick to his promise to feed Ruby while he kept him, whether old Diamond got enough to eat or not. But he *did* wish Mr. Raymond would come, though when he looked at Nanny he felt that he would be sorry to lose her. For it was understood that a place as a nurse girl would be found for her when Ruby was taken away.

Mr. Raymond did not come, however, and things got worse and worse. Diamond could do little but drive old Diamond in the cab whenever he could be of help that way, and sing to the two babies at home. At last, one week was worse than anything they had yet had. They were almost without bread before it was over.

It was Friday night, and Diamond like the rest of the household had had very little to eat that day. His mother would always pay the week's rent before she spent anything even for food. His father had been very gloomy--so gloomy that he was very cross. It had been a stormy winter and even now that spring had come, the north wind often blew. When Diamond went to his bed, which was in a tiny room in the roof, he heard it like the sea, moaning. As he fell asleep, he still heard the moaning, and presently, he heard the voice of North Wind calling him. His heart beat very fast, it was such a long time since he had heard that voice! He jumped out of bed, but did not see her. Yet she kept on calling.

"Diamond, come here! Diamond, come here!" the voice repeated again and again.

"Dear North Wind," said Diamond, "I want so much to come to you but I can't tell where to find you."

"Come here, Diamond!" was all her answer.

So he opened his door and trotted down the long stair and out into the yard. A great puff of wind at once came against him. He turned and went with it, and it blew him up to the stable door and kept on blowing.

"She wants me to go into the stable," said Diamond. "But the door is locked."

Just then, a great blast of wind brought down the key upon the stones at his feet from where it was kept hanging high above his head. He picked it up, opened the door, and went in without much noise. And what did he hear? He heard the two horses, Diamond and Ruby, talking to each other. They talked in a strange language, yet somehow he could understand it.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," old Diamond was saying, "sleek and fat as *you* are, and so lazy you get along no faster than a big dray-horse that is pulling tons!"

"Oh, I like to be fat and lazy!" said Ruby.

"And you like to hear master abused on account of you, too, I dare say," replied old Diamond angrily. "Why don't you get up a little speed, while you are drawing a fare, at least! The abuse master gets for your sake is

quite shameful! No wonder he doesn't get many fares when he has you!"

"Well, if I worked as hard as I could, I'd be a bag of bones like you!"

"I'm proud to work!" said old Diamond. "I wouldn't be as fat as you, not for all you're worth. You are a disgrace! Look at the horse next you. *He* is something *like* a horse--all skin and bones. He knows he has got his master's wife and children to support and he works *like* a horse!"

"I might get lamed again, if I didn't go slowly and carefully," said Ruby.

"Lame again!" snorted old Diamond. "It's my belief you lamed yourself on purpose so you could stay in the stable and stuff yourself and grow fat! You selfish beast!"

"I might get angry at you," said Ruby, "if I didn't know a little better than you do how things are coming out. What do you think my master would say if he were to come back--and he may come any day now--and find me all worn down to a rack of bones and lamed into the bargain? Do you think anything would make him believe that your master had used me right and as he promised he would? And isn't it better he should live a little hard himself and prove himself to be an honest man who does what he says he'll do? You don't know everything, old Diamond. You would not probably believe me if I told you that enduring bad things is often just a way for bringing good things about. But you'll see!"

Old Diamond just snorted sleepily in reply and gave all his attention to doubling up his knees and getting down upon the floor to go to sleep. The racket he made gave young Diamond a start. With a shiver, he seemed to come awake and see the stable door standing open. He trotted out of it, back up the long stairs, and tumbled into bed. But Ruby's words kept sounding in his head.

"Is it like what's in my book?" he said to himself sleepily,--"that about a blessing in disguise, when things look bad but are working out all right--like things at the back of the north wind?" He got sleepier, however, as he tried to think and was fast asleep before he knew it. The next morning, he sang to the baby more cheerily than ever and here is part of the song he sung:

Where did you come from, Baby dear? Out of everywhere into here.

Where did you get your eyes so blue? Out of the sky as I came through.

Where did you get this pearly ear? God spoke and it came out to hear.

But how did you come to us, you dear? God thought of you and so I am here.

"You never made that song, Diamond," said his mother.

"No, mother. But it's mine just the same, for I love it."

"Does loving a thing make it yours?"

"I think so, mother. Baby's mine because I love her, and so are you. Love makes the only *my-ness*, doesn't it, mother?"

"Perhaps so, Diamond. Yes, I think it does," said his mother.

When his father came home for his dinner he looked very sad. He had not got a single fare the whole morning.

"We shall just have to go to the work-house," he said and dropped into a chair in despair. Just then, came a knock at the door and in walked Mr. Raymond! Of course, he wanted to see the horses at once. And when he saw how fat Ruby was and how poor was faithful old Diamond--and when, moreover, he remembered how poor and starved the family looked though Nanny was still there and kindly treated--he knew that Diamond's father had been stanch and true to his bargain, though it had turned out to be a hard one. He was a man worth helping--that was clear! And Mr. Raymond was now ready to help him as much as he needed.

He first pointed out that old Diamond needed only to be fattened up and Ruby thinned down to make of them a fine pair of horses for his country home to which he was now going. And Diamond's father should go along as coachman. There would be regular wages again and a much more comfortable home in the country.

"And now, will you sell me old Diamond?" asked Mr. Raymond. "If you will, here are twenty pounds for him, if you think that is enough."

"I will sell him to you, sir," answered Diamond's father, "if you promise to let me buy him back if I can, if you ever wish to sell him. I could *not* part with him without that. Though as to who calls him his, that is nothing. For I believe it's true what my little Diamond says--that it's loving a thing that makes it yours."

"You shall have that chance," said Mr. Raymond. So the bargain was made. How Diamond capered about at the thought of going to the beautiful country to live and having a yard and grass to play on! It would be like the old home at Mr. Coleman's--perhaps even nicer than that. How he danced the baby and sang to it!

"And North Wind told me, Baby dear! She sang in my ears how bad things are just a chance to make good things come!"

CHAPTER X

DIAMOND IN HIS NEW HOME

Before the end of the month, Ruby had got a great deal thinner and old Diamond a good deal fatter. They really began to look fit to go in double harness. Diamond's father and mother got their things all packed up and were ready to go into the country at the shortest notice. They were now so peaceful, and so happy over the prospect that they believed it worth all the trouble and worry they had gone through.

Nanny had been so happy since she left the hospital and had been living with Diamond's family that she did not think the country would make her any happier. Besides she would have to leave cripple Jim behind and maybe never see him again. She had known cripple Jim much longer than she had known Diamond and he had no one else to care about him.

Diamond had taken a great deal of time and trouble to find Jim. For Jim had moved his home and had not heard of Nanny's illness till long after she was taken to the hospital. He was much too shy to go and inquire about her there. But when at length she went to live with Diamond's family, Jim was willing enough to go and see her. It was after one of his visits during which he and Nanny had talked things over that Diamond found out that Nanny thought it would not be so very pleasant to go to the country. The sun and the moon and the trees and the flowers did not seem much to Nanny without Jim.

Diamond thought it over and that same night he went to see Mr. Raymond. He wanted to tell him about Jim and Nanny and ask him what they could do about it. "Jim can shine shoes very well indeed, sir," said Diamond. "If you could take Jim into the country too, to clean your shoes and do other odd jobs, then Nanny would like it better. She is so fond of Jim."

Mr. Raymond thought it all over and finally decided that there would be something for Jim to do.

So on a certain day, Diamond's father took his mother and Diamond himself and his little brother and sister and Nanny and Jim down by train to a place called "The Mound," where Mr. Raymond was to live. He went back to London that same night. The next day, he drove Ruby and Diamond down with the carriage behind them, and Mr. Raymond and a lady in the carriage. For Mr. Raymond was now married. And the moment Nanny saw Mrs. Raymond, she recognized her as the lady who had let her wear the beautiful ruby ring when she was ill in the hospital.

The weather was very hot at first, and the woods very shadowy, and the wild flowers mainly gone. But there were plenty of the loveliest grass and daisies about the house. Diamond's chief pleasure seemed to be to lie among them and breathe the pure air. As he lay there, he dreamed often of the country at the back of the north wind and tried to remember the songs the river used to sing. For this was more like being at the back of the north wind than anything he had known since he left it. But though he did lie happily in the grass and dream of her, of North Wind herself, he neither saw nor heard anything for some months.

Mr. Raymond's house was called "The Mound" because it stood upon a steep little knoll that had been made on purpose. It was built for Queen Elizabeth as a hunting tower--a place, that is, from the top of which you could see the country for miles on all sides. From a window the Queen was able to follow with her eyes the flying deer, and the hunters in the chase. The mound had been cast up so as to give the house an outlook over the neighboring heights and woods.

Diamond's father and mother lived in a little cottage a short distance from the house. It was a real cottage with a roof of thick thatch which, in June and July, the wind sprinkled with the red and white petals of the rose tree climbing up the walls. But Mr. and Mrs. Raymond wanted Diamond to be a page in their own house. So he was dressed in the little blue suit of a page and lived at "The Mound" itself.

"Would you be afraid to sleep alone, Diamond?" asked his mistress. "There is a little room at the top of the house--all alone. Perhaps you would not mind sleeping there."

"I can sleep anywhere," said Diamond. "And I like best to be high up. Should I be able to see out?"

"I will show you the place," she answered, and taking him by the hand, she led him up and up the oval winding stair into one of the two towers that were on the house. Near the top, they entered a tiny room with two windows from which you could see all over the country. Diamond clapped his hands with delight!

"You would like this room, then, Diamond?" asked his mistress.

"It is the grandest room in the house!" he answered. "I shall be near the stars and yet not far from the tops of the trees. That is just what I like!"

I daresay he thought also that it would be a nice place for North Wind to call at, in passing. Below him spread a lake of green leaves with glimpses of grass here and there at the bottom. As he looked down, he saw a squirrel appear suddenly and as suddenly vanish among the top-most branches.

"Aha! Mr. Squirrel!" he cried. "My nest is built higher than yours!"

"I will have a bell hung at your door which I can ring when I want you," said his mistress. And so Diamond became a little page in the house.

But after all, his master and mistress seemed to want to keep him out of doors as much as possible. And his father and mother sometimes looked at him very anxiously. Diamond thought that no one seemed to ask him to do much. Often they gave him a story book and sent him out to sit in the sweet air and sunshine at the foot of a big beech tree.

He did not see much of Nanny and Jim. Somehow they liked to slip off together when their work was over. They did not understand the many fancies that Diamond talked about, but they could understand each other very well. They were never unkind to him but they liked better to go off by themselves. Diamond did not mind much. He was never lonely. And then he had a beautiful place where he went and where he saw lovely things that no one else saw.

He called this place his nest. He went to it by going up a little rope ladder that hung from a branch of the big beech tree. When he reached the limb the rope hung from, he went on climbing higher and higher. Up among the leafy branches and away at the top, out of sight, he found a safe and comfortable seat which he called his nest.

"What do you see up there, Diamond," some one asked him once.

"I can see the first star peeping out of the sky. I don't see anything more except a few leaves and the big sky over me. It goes swinging about. The earth is all behind my back. There comes another star! The wind with its kisses makes me feel as if I were in North Wind's arms."

He thought he would be quite happy if only he could remember some of the songs the river sang to him when he was in the country at the back of the north wind. They seemed to be murmuring in his ear most of the time. Yet somehow they were just far enough off so that he could not catch the words.

His little brother and baby sister often played about on the grass with him and often he made up songs to sing to the baby. But these never seemed to be just like the river's songs after all. One of them was about his nest up in the beech tree and it ran like this:

What would you see if I took you up
To my little nest in the air? You would see the sky like a clean blue cup
Turned upside downwards there.

What would you do if I took you there,
To my little nest in the tree? My child with cries would trouble the air
To get what she could but see.

What would you get in the top of the tree,
For all your crying and grief? Not a star would you clutch of all you
see-- You could only gather a leaf.

But when you had lost your greedy grief
Content to see from afar, You would find in your hand a withering
leaf, In your heart a shining star!

CHAPTER XI

ANOTHER VISIT FROM NORTH WIND

One night when he reached his own room, he opened both his windows, one of which looked to the north and the other to the east, to find how the wind blew. It blew right in at the north window. Diamond was glad for he thought perhaps North Wind herself would come now. But as she always came of herself and never when he was looking for her, and, indeed, almost never when he was thinking of her, he shut the east window and went to bed.

He awoke in the dim blue night. The moon had vanished from that side of the house. He thought he heard a knocking at his door.

"Somebody wants me!" he said, and jumping out of bed ran to open the door.

But there was no one there. He closed it again, and the noise still going on, found that another door in the room was rattling. It belonged to a closet he thought, but he had never been able to open it. The wind blowing in at the window must be shaking it. He would go and see if that was it.

The door now opened quite easily. To his surprise, instead of a closet he found a long narrow room. The moon, which was sinking in the west, shone in at an open window at the other end. This room had a low ceiling and spread the whole length of the house close under the roof. It was quite empty. The yellow light of the half moon streamed over the dark floor.

He was so delighted to find this strange moonlit place close to his own snug little room that he began to dance and skip about the floor. The wind came in through the door he had left open. It blew about him as he danced and he kept turning toward it that it might blow in his face.

He kept picturing to himself the many places, lovely and desolate, the hill sides and farm yards and tree-tops and meadows, over which it had blown on its way to "The Mound." As he danced he grew more and more delighted with the motion and the wind. His feet grew stronger and his body lighter. At length, it seemed as if he were borne up on the air and could almost fly.

So strong did this feeling become that at last he began to doubt whether he was not in one of those precious dreams he so often had, in which he floated about on the wind at will. Then something made him look up. To his unspeakable delight, he found his uplifted hands lying in those of North Wind! Yes, North Wind was dancing with him round and round the long bare room, her hair now falling to the floor, now floating to the ceiling. The sweetest of smiles was playing about her beautiful mouth. She did not stoop in order to dance with him but held his hands high in hers.

When he saw her, he gave one spring and his arms were about her neck and her arms holding him to her breast. The same moment, she swept with him out of the open window through which the moon was shining. Making a wide and sweeping circuit, she settled with him in his own little nest at the top of the big beech tree. Diamond was so entirely happy that he did not care to speak a word. But presently, he felt as if he were going to sleep and that would be to lose so much that he was not willing to do it.

"Please, dear North Wind," said he, "I am so happy that I am afraid it is a dream. How am I to know that it is not a dream?"

"What does it matter?" returned North Wind. "The dream--if it *is* a dream--is a pleasant one, is it not?"

"That is just why I want it to be true! It is not for the dream itself--I mean it is not for the pleasure of it," answered Diamond, "for I have that whether it is a dream or not. It is for *you*, North Wind! I cannot bear to find it a dream because then I should lose *you*! You would be nobody then and I could not bear that. You are not just a dream, dear North Wind, are you? Do say *no*, for I shall not dare dream of you again if you are nobody at all."

"Either I am not a dream, or there is something better which is not a dream, Diamond," said North Wind in a rather sorrowful tone.

"But it is not something better, it is *you* I want, North Wind," he persisted.

She made no answer but rose with him in her arms and sailed away over the tree-tops till they came to a meadow where a flock of sheep was feeding.

"Do you remember the song you made up here in this meadow to sing to the baby?" asked North Wind, "about Bo-peep's sheep that ran away from her to follow after the sun? And when she went after them, she could not

find the old sheep at all--only some lambs--twice as many new lambs?"

"Oh, yes," said Diamond. "But I do not like that song. It seems to say that one is just as good as another--or that two new ones are better than the one old one you had before. But somehow when once you have looked into anybody's eyes--deep down into them, I mean--no one else will do for you any more. Nobody ever so beautiful or so good will make up to you for that one going out of sight. So you see, North Wind, I cannot help being frightened to think that perhaps I am only dreaming and that you are nowhere at all! Do tell me that you are my own real beautiful North Wind!"

Again she rose and shot high up into the air. Diamond lay quiet in her arms waiting for her to speak. He tried to see up into her face, for he was dreadfully afraid she did not answer him because she could not tell him she was not a dream. But her hair fell all over her face so that he could not see it. This frightened him still more.

"Do speak, North Wind!" he said at last.

"I am thinking what I can say," said North Wind slowly. "And say it so that a little boy like you can understand."

As she spoke, she was settling quietly down on a grassy hill side in the midst of a wild, furzy common. There was a rabbit warren underneath. Some of the rabbits came out of their holes in the moonlight. They looked very sober and wise, like patriarchs standing in their tent doors and looking about them before going to bed. When they saw North Wind, instead of turning around and vanishing again with a thump of their heels, they cantered slowly up to her. They snuffed all about her with their long upper lips which moved every way at once. That was their way of kissing her. Every now and then, she stroked down their long furry backs or lifted and played with their long ears.

"I think," she said to Diamond after they had been sitting silent for a long time, "that if I were only a dream, you would not have been able to love me so. You love me when you are not with me, don't you?"

"Indeed I do!" answered Diamond stroking her hand. "I see! I see! How could I be able to love you as I do if you were not there at all, you know? Besides I would not be able to dream anything half so beautiful all out of my own head. Or if I did, I could not love a fancy of my own like that, could I?"

"I think not. Besides, would you not have forgotten me wholly when you woke again? People almost always forget their dreams. But you have seen me in many shapes, Diamond. You remember I was a wolf once--don't you?"

"Yes, a good wolf that frightened a bad, wicked nurse!"

"Well, if I were to turn to an ugly shape again, would you still wish I were not a dream?"

"Yes, for I should know you were still beautiful inside, and that you loved me still. I should not like you to look ugly, you know. And I shouldn't believe it was really you a bit!"

"That's my own Diamond! Then I will try to tell you all I know about it. I don't think I am just what you fancy me to be. I have to shape myself in various ways to various people. But the heart of me is true. People call me by dreadful names and think they know all about me. But they don't. Sometimes they call me Bad Fortune or Evil Chance or Ruin--as Mr. Evans did when I sank his ship. Then people have another name for me which they think the most dreadful of all."

"What is that?" asked Diamond smiling up in her face. "And does it only mean another way in which you do them good though they think you are doing them ill?"

"Yes," answered North Wind, "it is just like that. But I will not tell you that name--not just now. Only will you always remember, if you should hear it, not to be the least afraid of it--or of me? Will you promise, Diamond?"

"Yes, North Wind, I promise," said Diamond. "I will never be afraid of you."

"Do you remember having to go through me to get into the country at my back?" asked North Wind, "after the long, long, long ride in the ship and the journey on the iceberg?"

"Yes, yes, I do! How tired you were, North Wind, when we got at last on to the iceberg and South Wind began to blow! And how thin and weak you grew in the beautiful blue cave in the side of the ice. Afterward when I landed and found you in the cleft in the ice ridge, sitting on your own door-step, how cold you were, North Wind! And so white, all but your lovely eyes! When I went up close to you, my own heart grew like a lump of ice. And when I tried to clasp you, the white grew so thick all about me, and then I forgot for a while."

"You were very near then, Diamond, to knowing what my other name is. But did I hurt you at all, dear boy? Would you be afraid of me if you had to go through me again?"

"No. Why should I? It was delicious to forget like that! It was like going into the softest and sweetest sleep! I should be glad enough to do it again, if it was only to get another peep at the country at your back."

"But you did not then see the real country at the back of the north wind, Diamond," said North Wind.

"Didn't I, North Wind? Oh, I'm so sorry! I thought I did. What did I see?"

"Only a picture of it--a sort of vision of it--and only while you seemed to be asleep. The real country at my real back is ever so much more beautiful than that. You shall see it one day--perhaps before very long."

"Do they sing songs there?" asked Diamond.

"Yes," replied North Wind. "You have not forgotten the lovely river as clear as glass that ran over and through the grass and flowers, have you? Nor the soft sweet songs it was always singing?"

"No," said Diamond. "I remember that best of all. But I could not keep the words of any one of its songs in mind, do what I would. And I did try."

"That was my fault," said North Wind.

"How was that?" asked the little boy.

"Because I could not hear it plainly enough myself to teach it to you. But you will hear the very song itself when you get to the back of----"

"My own dear North Wind," said Diamond, finishing the sentence for her, and stroking the arm that held him leaning against her.

"And now, I will take you home again," said North Wind. "It won't do to tire you too much."

"Oh, no, no!" pleaded Diamond. "I am not in the least tired."

"It is better, though," said North Wind.

"Very well; if you wish it," yielded Diamond, but with a sigh.

"You are a dear boy," said North Wind. "I will come for you again to-morrow night and take you out for a longer time. We shall make a little journey together, in fact. We shall start earlier, and as the moon will be somewhat later, we shall have clear moonlight all the way."

She rose in air and swept over the meadow and the trees. In a few minutes, "The Mound" appeared below them. She sank down to the house and floated in at the window of Diamond's room. There she laid him on his bed and covered him over. In a moment, he had sunk into a dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER XII

NORTH WIND CARRIES DIAMOND AWAY

The next night, Diamond was tired, but was waiting eagerly for the promised visit of North Wind. He was seated by his open window, with his head on his hand and rather afraid he could not sleep. Suddenly, he started and found he had already been asleep. He looked out of the window and saw something white against his beech tree. It was North Wind. Her hair and her garments went floating away behind her over the tree whose top was swaying about while the other trees were quite still.

"Are you ready, Diamond?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Diamond, "quite ready."

In a moment, she was at the window and her arms came in and took him. She sailed away so swiftly that he could at first mark nothing but the speed with which the clouds above and the dim earth below went rushing past. Soon he began to see that the sky was very lovely with mottled clouds all about the moon on which she threw faint colours like those of an opal.

The night was warm and in North Wind's arms he did not feel the wind which down below was making waves in the ripe grain and ripples on the rivers and lakes. At length, they came down just where a little spring bubbled out of a hill side.

"I am going to take you along this little brook," said North Wind. "I am not needed for anything else to-night and we will just have a lovely little time."

She stooped over the stream and holding Diamond down close to the surface of it glided along, level with its flow, as it ran down the hill. The song of the brook came up into Diamond's ears and grew and grew and changed with every turn. It seemed to Diamond to be singing the story of its life to him. And so it was. It began with a musical tinkle which changed to a babble and then to a gentle rushing.

Sometimes its song would almost cease. Then it broke out again, tinkle, babble, and rush, all at once. At the bottom of the hill, they came to a small river into which the brook flowed with a muffled but merry sound. Along the surface of the river, darkly clear in the moonlight below them, they floated. Now, where it widened out into a little lake, they would hover for a moment over a bed of water-lilies. They watched them swing about, folded in sleep, as the water on which they leaned swayed in the presence of North Wind. Now they would watch the fishes asleep among their roots below.

Sometimes, North Wind held Diamond over a deep hollow curving into the bank and let him look far into its cool stillness. Sometimes she would leave the river and sweep across a clover field. The bees were all at home and the clover was asleep. Then she would return and follow the river. Now the armies of wheat and of oats would hang over its rush from the opposite bank. Now the willows would dip low branches into its still

waters. Now it would lead them through stately trees and grassy banks into a lovely garden where the roses and lilies were asleep and the flowers folded up, or only a few awake sending out strong, sweet odours.

Wider and wider grew the stream until they came upon boats lying along its banks which rocked a little in the flutter of North Wind's garments. Then came houses on the banks, each standing in a lovely lawn with grand trees. In parts, the river was so high that some of the grass and some of the roots of the trees were under water. As they glided through the stems, Diamond could see the grass at the bottom of the water. How like it was to the river which ran through the country at the back of the north wind! And now he seemed to hear more and more clearly its murmured song till at last the words came out plainly.

The sun is gone down, And the moon's in the sky. But the sun will come up And the moon be laid by.

The flower is asleep But it is not dead. When the morning shines It will lift its head.

When winter comes Will it die? Oh, no! It will only hide From the frost and snow.

Sure is the summer, Sure is the sun. The night and the winter Are shadows that run!

They left the river and began to float about and over the houses one after another--beautiful rich houses which like fine trees had taken hundreds of years to grow. Scarcely a light was to be seen, and not a movement to be heard. All the people lay fast asleep in dreams.

But a little later they came floating past a window in which a light was burning. Diamond heard a moan coming from it and looked up anxiously into North Wind's face. By a shaded lamp, a lady in a soft white wrapper sat trying to read and forget the pain which made her moan softly while she read. North Wind seemed to read Diamond's thought and floated silently in at the window. Diamond began singing softly the song of the river with its soothing murmuring strain. When he finished, out of the window they slipped away and floated on.

"Did she hear, North Wind?" said Diamond. "Did she know we were trying to help her--and will it help her?"

"She heard you," answered North Wind. "She heard with her heart, though, and not with her ears. She will not forget, but she will never understand till----"

"Till she gets to the back of the north wind," said Diamond.

North Wind smiled. Then she turned so that he could look down at the place over which they were passing.

"Oh!" he cried out suddenly. "I know where we are now. This is my old home before we moved into the city. Do let me get down and go into the old garden, North Wind, and run into mother's room, and into old Diamond's stall. I wonder if the hole is at the back of my bed still--your window, you know. Oh, I should like to stay here all the rest of the night! It won't take you long to get home from here, will it, North Wind?"

"No," she answered; "you shall stay as long as you like."

"Oh, how jolly!" cried Diamond.

North Wind sailed over the house with him and set him down on the lawn at the back. Diamond ran about the lawn for a little while in the moonlight. He found part of it cut up into flower beds and the small summer house and great elm tree were gone. It was so changed! He didn't like it and ran into the stable. There were no horses there at all. He ran upstairs but the rooms were all empty. The only thing left that he cared about was the hole in the wall where his little bed had stood. All besides was desolate. He turned and ran down the stairs

again and out upon the lawn. There he threw himself down and began to cry. It was all so dreary and lost!

"I liked the place so much!" he thought to himself. "But now--there is nothing left to like. I suppose it is only the people in a place that make you like it and when they are gone there is nothing left to like. It's as if it were dead! North Wind told me I might stop as long as I wanted to, but I have stopped too long already! Oh, North Wind!" he cried aloud turning his face up toward the sky.

The moon was under a cloud and all was looking dull and dismal. A star shot from the sky. It fell in the grass beside him. The moment it lighted, there stood North Wind!

"Oh!" cried Diamond joyfully. "Were you the shooting star?"

"Yes," said North Wind.

"And did you hear me call?"

"Yes."

"As high up as that?"

"Yes, I heard you quite well."

"Take me home, North Wind. Take me home!"

"Have you had enough of your old home already?"

"Yes. It is not home here any more."

"Why is that, do you think?" asked North Wind.

"Is it because its soul is gone? Yes, that must be it, is it not, North Wind?"

"Yes, Diamond, that is it. Its soul is gone," said North Wind.

She lifted him into her arms to bear him away. How long they floated about he did not know. But presently all was changed. He was in his own room again. And there was North Wind in the doorway of the long narrow room that opened out of his room, and in which the night before he was dancing when he looked up to find his lifted hands clasped in hers and saw her lovely face smiling down upon him.

Now she was a different North Wind. She was just as he had seen her sitting on her own door-step in the far, far north. She was as white as snow and her eyes as blue as the heart of an iceberg.

"That's how she would look when she thought I might be afraid of her," he said to himself. Then he spoke aloud. "I am not afraid of you, dear North Wind," he cried. "See! I am not a bit afraid of you!" Stretching out both his hands to clasp her he pressed up close against her and laid his head upon her breast. And then he fell asleep.

In the morning, they found little Diamond lying on the floor of the big attic room--fast asleep, as they thought, and with such a happy smile on his face. But when they took him up, they found he was not asleep. He had gone to that lovely country at the back of the north wind--to stay.

Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Page 25, "litle" changed to "little." (made a little place)

One instance each of "no-where" and "nowhere" were retained.

The frontispiece original says that the text is found on page 334. It is actually located on page 111 and has been edited to reflect this.

END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AT THE BACK OF THE NORTH WIND

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