

marbles he had made, — black, round, and glossy. The sight inspired me with ardent desire to possess an unlimited quantity.

My brother told me just where the covered treasure was to be found, and in the afternoon I started off, without confiding to any one my intention, to find the spot and lay in a supply of the raw material, which I could convert into marbles when I had leisure. It was a very hot July afternoon, and I was in a violent heat; but the sight of the heaps of coal-tar put all thoughts of anything unpleasant quite out of my head; it caused me to forget also that I had on a suit of new clothes, of which I had been cautioned by my mother to be extremely careful.

I need hardly remark that I was not very well acquainted with the substance I was handling, and my only idea of its qualities was, that it could be moulded into any shape I pleased. I was not aware that it has all the qualities of ordinary tar—melts with heat, and becomes the toughest, stickiest, most unmanageable of substances with which a small boy can come in contact.

I fell to work to collect what I wanted to carry home. I filled the pockets of my pantaloons, and of my jacket, and lastly, when these were stuffed to their utmost capacity, I filled the crown of my hat so full that it would hardly go on my head. The place was at some distance from my home, and I did not wish to have to return immediately for more.

With a heart filled with triumph, I started off toward home. By this time I began to realize that the weather was not cool. It had been a long walk, and I was pretty tired, but I was also in a great hurry to begin making marbles, so I walked as fast as I could. After a time I began to be sensible of a disagreeable feeling of stickiness about my waist, and a slight tickling sensation in the region of the knees.

A cloud, not bigger than a man's hand, flitted across my horizon—perhaps coal-tar might melt?

A very slight inspection of my two pockets satisfied me that coal-tar was capable of becoming liquid, and, if I needed further evidence, the sable rivulets that began to meander down the sides of my face gave ample corroboration of the fact. I tried to take off my hat, but it would not come.

I looked down at my new trousers with feelings of dismay. Omniscient spots of a dismal hue were certainly growing larger. I tried to get the tar out of my pockets, but only succeeded in covering my hands with the black, unmanageable stuff.

That I should get a whipping for spoiling my new suit, if I could not manage to get the tar off, I was quite certain, and I had had no permission to go from home, and on the whole the outlook was not cheerful in that direction. Quite driven to desperation, I seated myself on the ground and tried to escape off the black spots which had now extended to formidable dimensions; while I could feel small streams coming down inside of the collar of my shirt, and causing rather singular suggestions of a rope around my neck. My labor was all in vain. I got a good deal off, but there seemed to be an inexhaustible quantity on. I gave it up in despair, and burst into uncontrollable sobs. The flow of tears thinned the lava-like fluid, and it now resembled ink, which covered my face like a veil; but in the extremity of my anguish a hope dawned upon me. I found that I could wipe off with my hand this thinner solution, and if water would do it, water was plenty, and I would wash it off. A cousin of mine lived not very far off, and I knew that in the yard of his house there was a pump. Inspired by this idea, I set off at a run, and did not slack my pace until I reached the spot. Here another difficulty met me. I could not reach the handle of the pump so as to get the benefit of the stream from its mouth, and it was only a complete shower-bath that would restore me to respectability. I set to work to find a rope, and fastened together quite a complicated piece of machinery, as I thought, by which I managed to pump the ice-cold water upon my devoted head. The effect was not as immediate as I had hoped. But I had faith if a little was good, more must be better. Creak—creak—creak—went the pump handle, which did more work that afternoon than in half a dozen days' washing.

Creak—creak—creak! But the

tar only became harder and harder, until I was encased in sheet-armor, like the famous Black Knight. Presently, my cousin Jenny, an especial friend of mine, hearing such continual pumping, and becoming anxious for the family supply of water, came out to see what was the matter. Seeing a small figure curled up under the spout of the pump, drenched to the skin and black as Othello, she stooped down to investigate the phenomenon. Oh, what was my despair when she discovered who it was, and in what plight.

To say she laughed would be to give a feeble idea of the peals of laughter that succeeded each other as she stood and looked at me. She would try to control her merriment for a moment, only to break forth afresh, until she was obliged to sit down from sheer exhaustion. Every time she glanced at my woe-begone countenance, and drenched condition, she would go into fresh convulsions of fun. At last she recovered breath enough to inquire into my case, and to assure me she would do what she could for me; but she soon found, to my despair, that what she could do was not much to my relief. The clothes could not be got off, and certainly they could never be got clean. She did manage, with a strong pair of shears, to cut off the pockets in my breeches, and then, fearing my mother would be alarmed, she bade me go home, and she would promise to secure me against a whipping.

I fancy she thought this last promise would be easily kept.

Somewhat comforted, I took up my line of march toward the paternal roof, but, as I went along, my heart began to sink again; visions of a rod, with which my not too saintly character had made me somewhat familiar, loomed up before me; but worse than all, the thought of my brother's ridicule made my sensitive spirit quail. I thought I would evade all for that night, however, by going quietly up the back stairs, going to bed and "playing sick." Fortune favored me. I reached the bedroom without being seen, and, just as I was, with my hat on, for it could only have come off with my scalp, I got into bed, and covered myself entirely up with the bed-clothes. It was now dusk, and I felt for a moment quite safe. Presently my aunt came into the room to get something for which she was looking, and I could hear her give several inquiring sniffs, and as she went out I heard her say: "I certainly do smell tar; where can it come from? An interval of peace followed, and then in came my mother. 'Tar? Smell tar? Of course you do; its strong enough in this room. Bring a light.' It was the sound of doom!

My mother soon came close up to the bed, and held the light so that it fell full upon me as she tried to turn down the bed clothing. Probably, if it had not been for several previous scrapes in which I had been involved, she would have been much frightened; but as it was, the sight of her young blackamoor had much the same effect upon her as upon my cousin. Her exclamations and shrieks of laughter brought every member of the household successively to the room, and as one after another came in, fresh zest seemed to be given to the merriment of which I was the unfortunate victim.

But every renewal of the fun was an added agony to me, for I clearly saw that it would be rehearsed by Jack and Tom to all the boys in the neighborhood. Besides this, I was not in a condition to be hilarious. Plastered with tar from head to foot, streaming perspiration at every pore, my clothes drenched, my hair matted together, and my straw hat soaked with water, fastened upon it, and falling limp and wet about my eyes, I was not rendered more comfortable by the fact that I could not move without taking pillow and bedclothes with me, as, in my desperate desire to conceal myself from view, I had become enwrapped in my bed-clothing like a caterpillar in its chrysalis; and I was conscious that if I sat up, with the pillow stuck fast on the top of my hat, the sight of me might produce fatal result upon the already exhausted family.

At last the point was reached where I thought patience ceased to be a virtue, and I rebelled against being any longer made a spectacle. I declared if they would all go away but mother, I would tell her all about it. The crowd retired, commissioned to send up a crock of butter, a tub of hot water, and a

pair of shears. Maternal love is strong, but I doubt if it was often put to a severer test of its long-suffering than was that of my mother that night.

Suffice it to say that, after my clothes had been cut to ribbons, the sheets torn up, my head well-nigh shaved, and my whole person subjected to an African bath of melted butter, and afterwards to one of hot soap suds, I had my fill of bathing for one day, and was, shortly before midnight, pronounced to be tolerably clean.

P. S.—I never made any marbles of coal tar.—*St. Nicholas, for July.*

CURIOUS CASE OF PETRIFICATION.—More than twenty years ago Judge Almy sunk a well at Bolinas. Happening to have three or four large oak oil casks at the time, he knocked in the heads, burned out the oil, and set them in the well, one above another, and, strange to say, they all turned to solid stone, and are as perfect today as when put in the well. The top cask is about two feet below the surface, and a curb of common boards is set over the well, running down to meet the casks. Several of these curbs have rotted away, and been replaced; but the oak casks appear likely to stand forever. Is there here a hint for well builders, or are the causes of petrification local?—*San Rafael Journal.*

CATARRH

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