

Little Folks.

The Buttermilk Boy.

'Milk, milk, butter-milk!'

The shrill cry, repeated several times, at last penetrated old Miss Martha's brain, and awoke her from her afternoon doze by the parlor fire. She started up, thereby dropping her glasses, which fell with a clatter on to the rug, and stared about her in the bewildered way which a person has when suddenly aroused from a sound sleep.

'Milk, milk, butter-milk!'

The sound was just outside the window, where her canary was hopping about in his cage, and the snowdrops in the big flower-pot beneath were turning their white buds to the strong afternoon sunshine.

'To be sure,' exclaimed the old lady, jumping up in a tremendous hurry. 'I knew I had heard something. It's the butter-milk man.'

So, as Miss Martha's little maid was gone out for the afternoon, and there was nobody else to do the business, she trotted off herself along the passage to the kitchen behind for a jug, armed with which she trotted back again to the front door and opened it.

A boy about ten years of age, very ragged and dirty, stood there. Seizing her jug he inquired: 'Pennyworth, mem?' 'I'll fetch it for you directly,' and off he ran before the old lady could find a word to say in answer.

'Dear, dear,' she observed plaintively to herself. 'The butter-milk man should not have such dirty boys to take the milk about. I don't believe I shall ever be able to enjoy a scone with my tea made out of butter-milk that creature has carried. He looks as if he hadn't been washed for a week,' she continued to herself, as she watched her unwelcome messenger slowly returning, holding the brimming jug very carefully in both hands. 'There, that will do,' she said, hastily taking it out of his grimy paws. 'Child, do you never wash yourself?'

The boy stared at her in much surprise, and made no reply, so Miss Martha handed him the penny and shut the door. Presently, however, when she had deposited the butter-milk jug on the kitchen dresser, and was returning once more to her parlor, she was much startled by hearing a door upstairs suddenly bang to, and looking up, in much alarm, she beheld a very dirty little face, surmounted by a tangled shock of brown curls, staring at her over the banisters. Miss Martha was greatly alarmed at first, but the next moment her fright gave way to perplexity, when the shrill voice which had awakened her from her slumbers rung out over her head: 'Milk,

milk, butter-milk!' and she recognized the small boy she had a few moments before closed her door upon.

'Come down, boy,' she commanded promptly. 'What in the world do you want up there?'

'Are there no more folk live in this house,' he demanded, as he obeyed her orders. 'The maister said I was to go to all the folk.'

'Oh, I see,' said the old lady, with an amused smile stealing over her puzzled face. 'You thought there was somebody living in every room, did you?'

'Aye, and I was to go to everyone,' he repeated sturdily. 'Willie said I was to do just what Dick Steedman tell't me, and he said I was to go to all the folk.'

'Who is Will?' asked Miss Mar-

ment 'I'll give you a piece of my plum-cake. I like to see people trying to do their duty.'

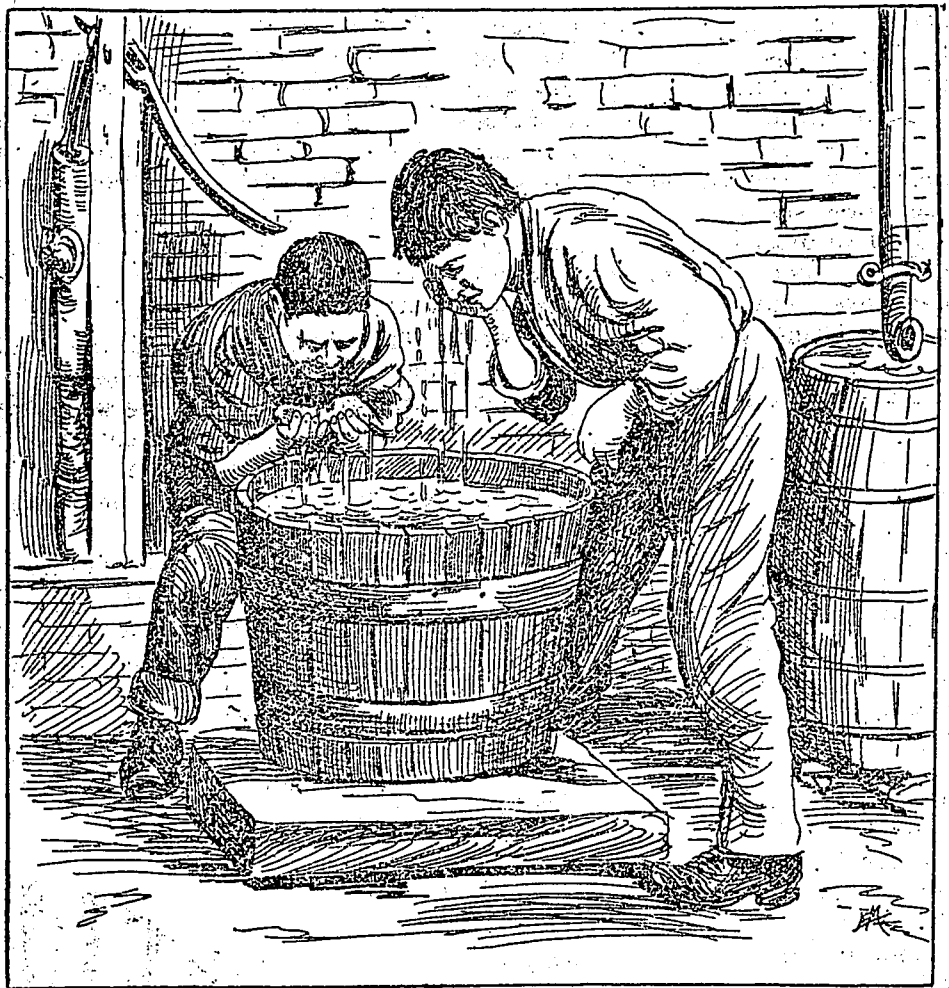
'That's what Will says,' remarked Tommy, as he modestly stood on the parlor mat, and watched with eager eyes Miss Martha cutting a generous slice off the big cake on the sideboard. 'And what does Will do?' asked the old lady.

'He's in a beer-shop, mem.'

'Oh, dear, that's bad,' said Miss Martha, shaking her head.

'That's what he says himself, mem,' quickly returned Tommy, who seemed very proud of the absent Will. 'That's why he got me into the butter-milk trade. He says the beer-shop's no' a place for laddies.'

'Why does he stay in it himself, then?' inquired the old lady, as she



tha; Dick Steedman, she knew, was the owner of the butter-milk cart.

'Will's my brother, and he got me the job. I just started this morning.'

'And what's your name?'

'Tom—Tommy Heriot,' answered the child, with a glance past her at the parlor door, as if he were still suspicious there might be someone dwelling behind it he had not yet visited. 'Is there nobody here but yersel', mem?'

'Nobody,' replied Miss Martha, amused at the intent desire of this small boy to do his duty. 'This is not a land of houses, my dear, but one house all to itself. But you are a good boy to be so anxious to do your work, and if you wait a mo-

gave the cake into her small visitor's hand.

'Faither drinks, an' ma mither needs all we can earn,' responded Tommy; 'but he's lookin' out, mem. He'll no' stay there longer than he can help. Good-bye, mem, an' thank ye.'

Miss Martha was much interested. The next day she sought out Dick Steedman, the butter-milk man, and made inquiries about Tommy and the brave brother Will; and when she found that the tale the little milk-boy had told her was true in every respect, she invited him then and there to bring Will to see her the very next evening.

'Only mind you have clean faces, boy,' she observed. 'Water's cheap,