

float about, they can't be birds, for they've no legs, and yet they seem to have feathers and wings! What a life of ignorance I've led! Huddled up in this dull little place visited by only a few mean humdrum creatures, and never suspecting the world contained grander things and finer company!"

Till this discovery the little Brook had been well enough satisfied with her condition, contented with the society of the beautiful and gentle creatures, who frequented her retreat, and with the tender adoration of her own "bright unchanging Star." But now there was an end to all content, and no end to garrulous complaint and restless curiosity. The latter she soon found means to gratify, for the sky-lark brought her flaming accounts of the Sun, and the Water-Wag-Tail, a fowl of diplomatic genius, was dispatched to ascertain the precise nature of those other mysterious objects so bewildering to the comprehensive faculties of the curious little Brook. Back came the charge d'affairs, moving and wagging his tail with the most fantastic airs of conceited importance. "Well, what is it?" quoth my lady Brook. "Water, upon veracity," quoth Master Wagtail, "a monstrous piece of water, a hundred thousand million times as big as your ladyship." "And what makes it so bright and glowing, instead of my dull colour," quoth my lady. "The sun that shines full upon it," rejoins the envoy. "Oh! that great and glorious globe the sky-lark talks of. How delightful to enjoy his notice! But what are those fine creatures with legs, and those with wings but no legs?" "Oh! those are cows, and oxen, and geese. But you can't comprehend their natures, never having seen anything bigger than a hare or a wood pigeon." "How now, Master Malapert!" quoth my lady, nettled to the quick at this impertinent jack in office, but her curiosity was not half satiated. So she went on questioning, till she was ready to bubble over with spite and envy at Master Wagtail's marvellous relations. Thenceforward the little Brook loathed her own peaceful and unobtrusive lot; she would have shrank away from the poor innocent creatures who had so long enlivened her pleasant solitude. And most of all, most unpardonable of all, she sickened at the sight of her own benignant star, which continued to look down upon her as fondly and adoringly as ever, still happily unconscious of her heartless estrangement. Well, she went fretting and repining on from day to day, till dame Nature, fairly tired out with her wayward humour, resolved to punish her as she deserved, by granting her heart's desires.

One summer morning came two sturdy woodmen, armed with saws, axes, and bill-hooks. To work they went, lopping, hewing, and cleaving, and before nightfall, there lay the little Brook exposed to the broad canopy of Heaven, revealed in all its littleness, and effectually relieved from the intrusion of those despised, insignificant creatures, which had been scared from their old familiar haunt, by that day's ruthless execution. "Well," quoth the little Brook, "this is something like life! What a fine world this is! A little chilly, though, and I feel, I don't know how, quite dazzled and confounded. But to-morrow when that great orb comes over head again, I shall be warm and comfortable enough no doubt,

and then I dare say some of those fine creatures will come and visit me. And who knows but I may grow as big as that great pond in time, now that I enjoy the same advantages." Down went the sun, up rose the moon, out shone an innumerable host of sparkling orbs, and among them, that "bright particular Star" looked out pre-eminent in stationary lustre. Doubtless its pure and radiant eye dwelt with tender sorrow on the altered condition of its beloved little Brook. But that volatile and inconstant creature, quite intoxicated with her change of fortune, and with the fancied admiration of the twinkling myriads she beheld, danced and dimpled in the true spirit of flirtation with every glittering spark, till she was quite bewildered among the multitude of her adorers, and welcomed the grey hour of dawn, without having vouchsafed so much as one glance of recognition at her old unalienated friend. Down went the moon and stars, up rose the sun, and higher and higher he mounted in the cloudless heaven, and keener waxed the impatience of the ambitious little Brook. Never did court beauty so eagerly anticipate her first representation to the eye of majesty! And at last arrived the hour so much longed for. Right over her head coursed the radiant orb! Down darted his fervid fire beams, down vertically upon the centre of the little Brook—penetrating through its shallow waters, to the very pebbles beneath. At first it was so agitated and extasied by the condescending notice of majesty, fancying it had attracted peculiar observation, that it was hardly sensible of the unusual degree of warmth, which began to pervade its elementary system. But presently when the fermentation of its wits had abated, it began to wonder how much hotter it should grow, still assuring itself, that the sensation, though very oppressive still was exceedingly delightful. But at length such an accession of fervor came on that the self delusion was no longer practicable, it began to hiss and hiss as if it sat on a great furnace; indeed its pebbly basin was pretty near red-hot. Oh! what would the little brook have given now for only one bough of the holly or the hawthorn to intercept those intolerable rays, or for the gentle winnowing of the black bud pines, or even the poor robins to fan its glowing bosom. But those protecting boughs lay scattered around, those sweet sky songsters had sought out a distant refuge, and my lady Brook had nothing left for it but to endure what she could not alter, "and after all," quoth she, "it's only for a little while; and by and by when his majesty looks a little sideways at me, I shall be less overcome with his royal favour, and in time no doubt be able to sustain his full gaze, without any of these unbecoming flutters, all owing to my rustic education, and the confined life I have hitherto led."

Well, his majesty withdrew as usual, and my lady began to subside into a comfortable degree of temperature, and to gaze about her again with restored complacency. What was her exultation when she beheld the whole train of geese, waddling towards her from the great pond, taking that pathway homewards out of sheer curiosity I suppose. As the goodly company approached, our Brook admired the stateliness of their carriage and thought it eminently graceful "for undoubt-