

For is not water one of the wonders of nature? Familiar, even to neglect, who observes its beauty—beautiful as it is? Where can you find a more fitting emblem of purity? And then, see how it flows in the river, dances in the brook, amidst the little heaps about which it plays; rages in the torrent, and becomes alternately mountains and valleys on the bosom of the ocean! Look at it as a mirror, reflecting all that grow—on the borders of the lake, the passing clouds and the deep blue sky; or think of it as changed into clouds, and even into rock crystal; now a vapour floating in the firmament, and then a solid and transparent mass. It has even a language of its own. Do you doubt it? Listen as it drops from the roof of a cave, murmurs in the tide, dashes in the water-fall, and roars in the ocean-wave.

Notwithstanding all this, however, of which Tom most probably read little and thought less, his hatred to water continued from year to year unabated. Nor was it without effect—it acted practically, and that with no little power. For example, once in the twenty-four hours, perhaps, Tom had what he called “a wash,” but what was more properly “a dry-scrub.” As he had much to do with iron-work, he often bore a strong resemblance to a chimney-sweeper; but he never improved in this process. His face and his hands continued in the same state from year to year; his feet, though I never saw them, were, I have no doubt, far worse; and as for the rest of his body, it was as likely to be dipped in the waters of the moon, as to have any application from the river or the pump.

Tom’s wife could not be called his *better-half*, for they were as much alike as two peas in a pod. Susan could never have known what a washing-day meant. She “dabbled out” a few things, as she said, now and then; but a slop basin might almost have served for her washing-tub, and her “getting up” never put her washing cut of countenance.

Tom’s children were a poor, slim, pale-looking set; ill-clothed, ill-fed, and as dingy and begrimed as such a father’s and mother’s children might be expected to be. And then the face of one was sadly scarred, because it fell into the fire when its mother was out, and another went on a crutch from having tumbled down stairs, when his mother had “taken too much.” The whole family, when together, presented, indeed, a sorry sight; yet, even then, Tom often said, “Well, of all things in the world, I do hate cold water!”

I was but a lad when I first knew Tom, yet I could not help seeing further into his hatred than he ever appears to have done; but since I have reached manhood, and got a wife and children about me, I have often thought I would not do as he did, for as many guineas as I could count in a month leaving out the Sundays.

I do what I can with my shopmates, but I want all working people to look carefully into this matter; and, as I am writing now, I will just state what knowledge I have picked up about it. What a marvel is the human skin! It consists of two thin layers—the outer skin and the true skin; and between them is a very fine layer, which is the seat of colour. Just beneath the true skin are minute bodies, which are scattered over the whole surface of the frame; and by little vessels from them, opening by very small pores on the outer skin, there is a perspiration constantly flowing. It is usually carried off in the form of vapour, and is hence called the *insensible perspiration*. It varies, in the course of twenty-four hours, from 1½ lb. to 5 lbs. in weight, and tends to reduce the body every day to nearly the same standard of weight.

Absorption also takes place through the skin, either from the direct application of fluid to the surface or by means of the air, which holds more or less of watery vapour. Many substances may thus be rapidly received into the system, the skin acting in this case like a sponge when water is poured upon it. But apart from friction, absorption will go on, and sometimes very actively, as for instance when the system has been reduced and drained of fluid. Shipwrecked sailors, when suffering from extreme thirst, have often found it greatly relieved by the falling of a heavy shower of rain, which has thoroughly saturated their clothes.

Other facts lead to the same conclusion. A man who had lost nearly three pounds’ weight by perspiration, from working for an hour and a half in a very hot atmosphere, when placed in a warm bath for half an hour actually regained eight ounces. A lad of Newmarket, almost starved, that he might be reduced to a certain weight, was weighed at 9 a.m., and found to have gained nearly thirty ounces when weighed one hour afterwards, though he had only taken a glass of wine in the interval; the wine