

the beautiful stories he has told them. These stories are so different that there is something to suit everyone. Some of them, like "The Mermaid," tell us stories of the sea; others like "The Snow Queen" and "What the Moon Saw," carry us away to distant lands; sometimes they are stories of toys, as "The Constant Tin Soldier," and "The Top and the Ball;" or of the droll doings of elves and goblins in woods and caves, as in "The Elf-Hill;" sometimes they tell of cunning tricks that men played on each other, as in "Great Claus and Little Claus;" and again of the everyday life of children, their games and lessons and dreams. Some are sad and some are merry; some are very simple, and others have serious and beautiful meanings. The best known to English speaking children are probably "The Ugly Duckling" and "The Little Match Girl."

Andersen had a very interesting and happy life. It is true that he was very poor when he was young, and had some hard struggles and heavy disappointments; but he had a hopeful, happy temper and many kind friends; he travelled about a great deal and saw many countries and people; and he was full of pride and pleasure in his work and the fame it brought him.

We will read a little about his life in his own words:

"My life is a lovely story, happy and full of incident. If, when I was a boy, and went forth into the world poor and friendless, a good fairy had met me and said, 'Choose now thy own course through life, and the object for which thou wilt strive, and then, according to the development of thy mind, and as reason requires, I will guide and defend thee to its attainment,' my fate could not even then have been directed more happily, more prudently, or better. The history of my life will say to the world what it says to me,—There is a loving God, who directs all things for the best."

Andersen's father was a poor shoemaker, who had been saddened by poverty and disappointment. He was very clever and fond of books, and read a great deal to his little boy from plays and stories and from the Bible. He died when Hans Christian was still quite young, and the child was left much alone, for his mother went out washing. A kind neighbor lent him books; he read Shakespeare, and wrote some tragedies of his own. One of these was about a king and queen, and because he thought it not right that such great persons should talk like ordinary people, he made a new language for them by taking words from German, French and English and putting them into their Danish speeches. He also wrote and recited short poems. His mother

wanted him to be a tailor, but his wish was to be an actor, and when he was fourteen he determined to go to Copenhagen to seek his fortune.

"I wept and I prayed, and at last my mother consented, after having sent for a so-called wise woman out of the hospital, that she might read my future fortune by coffee-grounds and cards. 'Your son will become a great man,' said the old woman, 'and in honor of him Odense will one day be illuminated.' My mother wept when she heard that, and I obtained permission to travel."

He passed two years in Copenhagen, studying singing and hoping to become an actor. He went on writing, trying to imitate Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott.

"The fictitious name which I took seems at first sight a great piece of vanity, and yet it was not so, but really an impression of love,—a childish love, such as the child has when it calls its doll by the name it likes best. I loved William Shakespeare and Walter Scott, and, of course, I loved myself also, and so I assumed the name 'William Christian Walter.'"

Some kind friends now sent him to a grammar school at Slagelse, near Copenhagen. Though he was seventeen, he knew, he says, nothing at all, and his place was in the lowest class among the little boys. He studied hard, his teachers were kind, and he made good progress. He afterwards studied in Copenhagen, and passed well in examinations in classics and mathematics. At twenty-three he began to publish some of his writings.

"At Christmas I brought out the first collected edition of my poems, which met with great praise. I liked to listen to the sounding bell of praise, I had such an overflow of youth and happiness. Life lay bright with sunshine before me."

In 1830, Andersen entered upon one of the greatest delights of his life—travelling. Later on, he says,—"Travelling-life is like a refreshing bath to my spirit and body." His first travels were around the coast of Denmark in a steamboat, which was then a very wonderful thing. The next year he went to Germany and saw mountains for the first time. He tells us that from 1829 he supported himself by his writings, but it was very hard work. He wrote poems, operas, travels, and one novel, "The Improvisatore," and it was not until 1835 that the first part of the "Wonder Stories" was published. In this volume Andersen told in his own words old stories which he had heard as a child. He was afraid that learned people would think the style too simple, so he called them "Wonder Stories told for Children," though he intended them to be for both old and young. There was one story in this volume, "Little Ida's Flowers," that he had invented himself, and as that one seemed to be the