

funny words by which they expressed their friendliness: *your* mamma, for instance, if she was very pleased with papa, would scarcely show it by dabbing a wet mop into his mouth, and your papa, I suppose, if he wanted to show how much he admired mamma, would not call her "a rummy old gal," and drain a dirty bucket over her head);—but I am very sorry to say that Mr. Black Bill and Mrs. Carroty Sal sometimes took more beer than was good for them, and gave one another black eyes. Except on Saturday nights, when *Betsy* was stopping at a town, these fights did not often happen, and when they were over, husband and wife did not bear any malice against each other. Lime'us and Paddy did not like to see these fights, but they got used to them, poor little things. "Come away, Paddy," Lime'us used to say; "feyther's goin' to pitch into mammy;" and then sister and brother would scramble to the bow of the barge, and wait patiently there, playing with Towzer, and flinging straws, and little bits of coal, and so on, into the water, until the row in the smoky little cabin was over. When father and mother were sober (which was generally the case), they were very kind to the children in their way, and when "feyther and mammy" were drunk, they didn't hurt the children, because the children took care to crawl out of their reach; so that Lime'us and Paddy loved Black Bill and Carroty Sal, but still considered Towzer a superior being. When *he* was in a rage they hadn't to run away from him. If the barge had always had the same horse, perhaps that might have rivalled Towzer in their favour; but *Betsy* frequently changed horses in her long journeys. Sometimes she had two horses trotting or straining along the towing-path; sometimes she had no horse, but was poled along by Black Bill; sometimes she set a little bit of a sail on a little bit of a mast, and crept along about as fast as a snail, whilst Black Bill snored on his back on the tarpaulin, and Carroty Sal peeled potatoes as she leaned, without her bonnet, against the tiller, playfully pitching the parings at her slumbering husband's nose. Towzer, Black Bill, and Carroty Sal were Lime'us and Paddy's inner circle of acquaintances; the bargees, lock-keepers, and other canal people with whom their parents interchanged remarks, amicable and otherwise, formed the outer; but all persons beyond that they ignored, or looked at much as you might look at magic-lantern figures.

I think I have said before that even better than Towzer Lime'us loved Paddy, and that

Paddy was as fond of Lime'us; he was even inclined to think sometimes that his sister was very nearly as clever as the dog. Poor little Lime'us had never been taught to read, no one had ever read to her, or told her stories; and yet she could make up stories that plump little Paddy, at any rate, thought most wonderful. "There was a snail, and the snail said, 'I want my breakfast.' So the snail went along the towing-path to find it, and he met a bee, and the bee said, 'I'll give you a buttercup;' but the snail wouldn't have it: so the bee got angry, and pushed him into the canal, and a fish ate him up." It was brilliant inventions of this kind that little Paddy listened to with ears and eyes and mouth all wide open: And Lime'us was so clever at make-believe, too. The children played at barge *in* the barge, and public-house, and feyther pitching into mammy. Poor little souls, they meant no harm, and were very happy over it all. They slept together in the little smoky cabin, and went to sleep cuddling each other. They got up in the morning for another day of love and play. Whenever the weather was at all fine they were almost as happy as the day was long. Sometimes Black Bill would give them a ride on the horse's back, or if the barge stopped near a shallow place, the mother would tell them to take off their clothes and have a splash; but for the most part they were left to amuse themselves as they pleased. They and Towzer used to have nice scampers on the towing-path, and in the meadows beyond, too; chasing butterflies and bees and birds, and rabbits when they got the chance; and coming back laden with buttercups and daisies, wild hyacinths, primroses, and cowslips, big branches of white may, and great bundles of white nettles, red sorrel, and trembling quaker-grass. If Towzer had ever managed to catch a rabbit, Black Bill would not have scolded his children for letting him. Black Bill had an old gun hung up in the smoky little cabin, and if a gamekeeper had smelt the savoury fumes that sometimes came out of Carroty Sal's black pot when the lid was taken off for dinner, I think he would have been anxious to learn whether barge-owners made a point of victualling their craft with partridges and hares. If the children could not catch rabbits, they sometimes caught minnows and gudgeons, and now and then a perch that had not arrived at years of discretion, with crooked pins tied on bits of string; and when Carroty Sal was in a very good temper, she would let them grill their fish, just as they came out of the water, on her stove, and they had a glorious feast *all to themselves*—