**bobby barnacles wanderings.**

**From The suns babies by Edith Howes.  
Age Rating 2 to 4.**

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**The Barnacles lived on the rocks with the Mussels and Limpets and red Anemones. There were hundreds and thousands and millions of little shell-houses, set so closely together that scarcely any room was left for pathways. Twice a day the friendly waves, like busy white-capped waiters, hurried up the shore with a feast of tiny sea creatures in their soft, wet hands. Then, one by one, doors were carefully opened while the waiting shell-people took in their food, but were soon shut again, for fear of lurking enemies. It was a quiet life, but so safe that the rocks became overcrowded. When Bobby Barnacle and his brothers and sisters and cousins were hatched out of their little egg-cases and swam from their mother's acorn-shell houses, the old Barnacles were alarmed. "Dear me!" said the very oldest. "What a swarm of you! For goodness sake don't come back here to settle after your swim. We are crowded already." "Plenty of room in the sea!" laughed Bobby. "Come on everybody. We are not thinking of settling down yet. We are going to have a grand time first. I am sure I shall never wish to spend all my time in one place. A roving life for me!"**

**Headed by Bobby, the shoal of Barnacle babies set off on their travels. They certainly did not look in the least like settling down. They swam and dived and frolicked and tumbled and whisked about in the dancing waves as if possessed by the very spirit of movement. To such atoms of energy, sitting still on a rock was plainly an impossibility. They were queer, tiny, soft-bodied creatures. Thin, delicate shields on their backs were their only shells. They each had three pairs of legs, one eye, and a funny, spiky tail. As they went they ate hungrily, swallowing sea animals so tiny that scores of them would go into a small girl's thimble. "Look out!" Bobby shouted suddenly. As he spoke he turned to the right and swam for dear life, hiding at last under a tangle of ferny seaweed. The others were too late to save themselves. A great fish had swallowed them all in three snaps of its cruel jaws, and Bobby was left alone in the wide sea. He was badly frightened, but presently he swam out from his hiding-place and continued his travels. It was somewhat lonely, but he soon grew accustomed to that. Indeed, he began to like it. He swam and ate and whisked about in the water as cheerfully as ever, keeping his one eye well opened for possible enemies. A shoal of cousins from a sea rock met him. "Come and play with us," they said. "No," said Bobby; "I'm going to travel."**

**Out to sea he went, amongst all the wonders of the white-crested water. Below him lay great colonies of bright corals and sponges and sea-anemones, living their simple quiet lives. Around him rushed and darted eager, busy fishes, keeping him ever on the move to evade their hungry jaws. Many a narrow escape he had, but he was so nimble that he never was caught. As he grew, his skin and shield became too small for him. "This is most uncomfortable," he thought. Split! Skin and shield dropped off. New ones had been growing underneath, but these at first were soft, and he had to shelter under seaweed till they hardened. To his great comfort they were soon firmer than the old ones. Several times he moulted in this way, and each time the new skin and shield came harder and stronger, making him safer from his enemies. One day a strange thing happened. He lost his appetite. "Whatever is the matter with me?" he wondered. He soon discovered. He was changing his shape. Another eye grew, and three more pairs of legs, and a shield on the front as well as the back. "Well, I am a fine, strong fellow now," he thought. "I feel as if I could do wonders." He swam on faster than ever. Indeed, his activity was marvellous. He seemed to shoot through the water. But, strangely enough, he still could not eat, so it is no wonder that at last he grew tired.**

**"I think I must settle down on something," he said. "This life is really most exhausting. And yet I don't want to sit down on a rock and stay in one place all my life. I wish I could find something moving." Something moving came through the water, something so huge that to the tiny Barnacle its side was like the side of a world. It was a whale, but Bobby was not afraid. As it slowly lifted its great body through the waves he made his way to it and clung on with all his strength. The whale plunged on his mighty way to colder seas, bearing his little unfelt rider with him. "Hurrah!" said Bobby. "Now I shall still travel on, without being obliged to do my own swimming." A more wonderful change than ever before came over him. A tiny bag of cement opened from his head and glued him to the whale's skin. Six strong shells grew round him in an acorn ring, exactly like those of his mother's shell-house on the rock. Four more grew into a door. When he opened the door he could shoot out his twelve curled legs and kick his food down into his mouth in the shell-house. So there he was, living head down and toes up on the whale, and glued so tightly that he could never fall off. He was grown-up now. All his changes were over. His appetite came back, and he went travelling easily and comfortably with the whale. For all you or I know to the contrary, his roving life may be still going on.**