

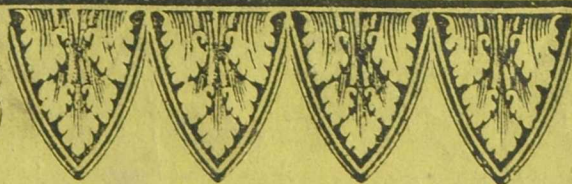


THE
CHILDREN
IN THE
WOOD.

IN PROSE AND VERSE.



Catnach, Printer,
Monmouth-court, 7 Dials,
LONDON.



THE
CHILDREN
OF
THE
IN PROSE AND POETRY

Campbell, Printer.
London.

THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.



Many years since, there lived, in the county of Norfolk, a gentleman of family and fortune, who had married a lady of equal rank and property. Having a particular regard for each other, they enjoyed that true happiness which is the result of a mutual attachment. But they were not satisfied with merely being happy themselves; it was their wish that others should share in the ble

THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.

sings which had been so liberally bestowed upon them. Hence they were charitably disposed to all around them, and were constantly engaged in relieving the necessitous, or consoling the heart-broken and the afflicted.

Providence had also blessed them with two lovely children, who were the pride and boast of their affectionate parents, though they were at present very young, the eldest, a boy, being but five years old; and the youngest, a girl, not quite three years of age. The name of the boy was Edgar, and that of the girl Jane.

Things were in a prosperous state, when it pleased God to afflict the gentleman with a disorder, which confined him to his bed; and notwithstanding the best advice that could be procured, he became so much worse as to render his lady very uneasy; who constantly attended his sick-bed by day and by night, and could never be prevailed on by him or any one else to leave it, so tenderly did she love him.

But this confinement and anxiety had soon a very serious effect upon her own health; for she was seized with a fever, which rendered her as much an object of compassion as her afflicted husband.

In this melancholy state they both continued for some time. Every effort to restore them seemed ineffectual.—They daily grew worse and worse, and at length became so dangerously ill, that the gentleman expressed a wish to have his only brother sent for, that he might commit unto him the care and education of his two dear little children.

It was not long before his brother came; who, on his arrival, appeared overwhelmed with grief at seeing the dangerous condition to which the gentleman and his lady were now reduced. Having expressed their thanks for his kind attention, the children were requested to be brought into the sick-room.

Edgar was reading to his little sister the affecting story of the "Eagle and Lamb," when one of their father's servants, with tears in her eyes, came to inform them that their father and mother, being now dying, had sent for them up stairs. They did not as yet know what dying meant, so they left the parlour, glad to go to their excellent parents. On entering, the pretty innocents ran to the bedside with outstretched arms, where their parents most tenderly embraced them, weeping over the dear pledges of their mutual affection.

"My dear children," said the father, with a faltering voice, "I sent for you to receive my last blessing, as it is the will of the Almighty that I should shortly leave you. He is the giver of all good; pray to him, therefore, night and morning. Such, my dears, I have often before told you to do, but I now tell you for the last time."

Here the father paused, and they burst into tears, for they now perceived that their parents were both of them very pale, and scarce able to speak.

THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.



Then turning to their uncle, who stood by, their father thus resumed what he wished to impart,—“My dear brother,” said he, “death will soon separate me from every thing precious on earth; and all hope of the recovery of my beloved wife is at an end. Our peace is made with Heaven; but what still afflicts us, is the idea of leaving our helpless offspring to their fate, exposed to the snares and corruptions of the world. Look then, dear brother, with compassion on our poor children. Train them up in the paths of religion and virtue.”

“My dearest brother and sister,” replied the uncle, seemingly affected, “let not your last moments be perplexed on account of your dear little ones; I will take charge of them. I will consider them as my own, and will be their father and friend. But be comforted; you may yet recover.”

“Never,” rejoined the dying man; I have no hopes of recovery: but your promises have comforted me beyond expression, and never can I repay your affection and tenderness. Here, brother is my will. You will see, I have done the best for my dear babes and made you their guardian.”

THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.



His feeble voice was now nearly exhausted ; but, after another pause, he added, turning to his infants, " When I am in my grave, your uncle will take you to his own house, you must then obey him as you obeyed me ; and I hope you will always be good and happy." Scarcely had their father uttered these words and embraced them, when he closed his eyes on this world.

Shedding an abundance of tears, it was now that the dying mother tried to bid Edgar and Jane farewell. Claspings them in her arms, she reclined her head on her pillow, repeatedly exclaiming at times, " God bless you, my dear children!" After this she was never heard to speak again.

The uncle shed a few tears at this sad sight, and then broke open the will ; in which he found that his brother had left the little boy, Edgar, the sum of three hundred pounds a-year, when he was twenty-one years of age ; and to Jane, the girl, the sum of five hundred pounds in gold, to be paid her on the day of her marriage. But if the children should die before they came of age, then all the money was to belong to their uncle.

Having buried the gentleman in the same grave with his dear wife, according to his own directions, the two children were the

THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.



taken home to their uncle's house. They remembered their father's dying admonition to them, which charged them to obey their uncle in his place; so they endeavoured to cease from crying, though they remained very sad for a long time afterwards, and they often thought of home.

The coach drove fast; yet it was quite evening when they reached an elegant and spacious mansion, situated in an extensive park. Wearied with travelling, the two orphans, Edgar and Jane, soon asked permission of their uncle to go to bed. Like good children who had been properly trained up, and did not forget their dying father's words, they both knelt down to pray before they got into bed. Many a tear did they shed, when in bed, at the recollected tenderness of their parents; but sleep overpowered them, and the next morning they rose with the accustomed hilarity of childhood. They descended hand in hand, walked about, and looked with astonishment at the spacious halls, lofty rooms, and extensive gardens around them.

"How different is all this," exclaimed Edgar, "from our father's little house, his nice orchard, and pretty corn-fields

THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.



"So it is, Edgar," observed Jane, "but I liked home better because poor papa and mamma were along with us then."

After some time elapsed he wished that the children would die, for then he should have all their money.

He accordingly hired two ruffians, named Ned and Dick, who had killed and robbed many travellers. He told an artful story to his wife, of what good it would do the children to put them forward in their learning; and how he had a friend in London who would take great care of them. He then said to the poor little things, "Should not you like, my pretty dears, to see the famous City of London; where you, Edgar, can buy a fine horse to ride upon all day long, and a whip to make him gallop? And you, Jane, shall have fine frocks and pretty dolls, and a nice gilded coach shall be brought to take you there."

The children eagerly consented, and they were prepared for their journey. The harmless little children were put into a fine coach a few days after, and along with them the two cruel wretches who were soon to put an end to their innocent prattle, and turn their smiles into tears. When they had reached the wood, the two ruffians took them out of the coach, telling them

THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.

they might walk a little way and gather flowers; and while the children were at play, the ruffians began to consult.

"In good truth," said Ned, "now I have seen their sweet faces, and heard their pretty talk, I have no heart to do the cruel deed; let us send the children back to their uncle."

"Indeed I will not," replied Dick, "What is their pretty talk to us? and who will pay us for being so tender-hearted."

"Think of your own children at home," said Ned.

"Yes, but I shall get nothing to take back to them, if I turn coward as you do," replied Dick.

At length the ruffians fell into a passion and began fighting, which greatly terrified the children. After fighting some time, Ned made a desperate thrust at Dick that laid him dead at his feet; and he buried his body in a deep pit in the wood.

Ned was now quite at a loss what to do with the children, since he wished to escape, for fear of being discovered. He at length resolved to leave them in the wood, trusting to the kindness of any traveller that might pass by.

"Come here, pretty ones," said he, "you must take hold of my hands, and go a little way with me." In this manner he led them further into the wood; and told them to wait there till he came back from the next town, where he would go for food.

Edgar now took his sister by the hand, and they walked about in fear. "Will the strange man come with some cakes, Edgar?" said little Jane. "By-and-by, Jane," said he.

They waited till they were hungry, when they began to eat the blackberries and other wild fruits that grew in the wood.

They wandered about from one thick copse to another, crying bitterly, till their tender limbs became weary, and the two innocent lambs lay down and slept to wake no more, for God, in pity, took them to himself.

The wicked uncle, supposing the children had been killed as he desired, gave out that they had died, and took possession of their fortune. But the vengeance of God fell upon him, for in a short time his wife died; day and night his conscience was so haunted, that the two murdered innocents were ever before his eyes; he neglected his business, and every day grew poorer. His corn was blighted, his cattle died in the fields, and his two sons, who had embarked for a foreign land, were both drowned at sea. Soon after, the ruffian who would not kill the children, committed a robbery, and was condemned to be hung. While in prison he made a full confession, which so terrified the wicked uncle, that he took to his bed and died raving mad.

The two poor babes were found enclosed in each other's arms, covered with leaves; for the Robin Red-breasts had brought the leaves that covered them.



THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD IN VERSE.

Now ponder well, you parents dear,
 These words which I shall write;
 A doleful story you shall hear,
 In time brought forth to light.
 A gentleman of good account,
 In Norfolk dwelt of late,
 Who did in honour far surmount
 Most men of his estate.

Sore sick he was, and like to die,
 No help his life could save;
 His wife by him as sick did lie,
 And both possessed one grave.
 No love between these two was lost,
 Each was to other kind,
 In love they lived, in love they died,
 And left two babes behind.

The one a fine and pretty boy,
 Not passing five years old;
 The other a girl more young than he,
 And made in beauty's mould.
 The father left his little son,
 As plainly doth appear,
 When he to perfect age should come,
 Three hundred pounds a-year.

And to his little daughter Jane,
 Five hundred pounds in gold,
 To be paid down on her marriage-day,
 Which might not be controlled.
 And if the children chanced to die,
 Ere they to age should come,
 The uncle should possess their wealth,
 For so the will did run.

'Now, brother,' said the dying man,
 'Look to my children dear,
 Be good unto my boy and girl,
 No friend else have they here;
 To God and you I recommend
 My children dear this day;
 But little while be sure have we
 Within this world to stay.

'You must be father and mother both,
 And uncle all in one;
 But God will for my orphans care,
 When I am dead and gone.'
 With that bespoke their mother dear,
 'O, brother kind,' said she,
 'You are the man must bring our babes
 To wealth or poverty.'

THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.

And if you keep them carefully,
Then God will you reward ;
But if you otherwise should do,
God will your deeds regard.
With lips as cold as any stone,
They kissed their children small ;
'God bless you both, my children dear,'
With that the tears did fall.

These speeches then their brother spake,
To this sick couple there ;
'The keeping of your little ones
Sweet sister do not fear ;
God never prosper me nor mine,
Nor aught else that I have,
If I do wrong your children dear,
When you're laid in your grave.'

The parents being dead and gone,
The children home he takes,
And brings him straight into his house,
Where much of them he makes.
He had not kept these pretty babes
A twelvemonth and a day,
When for their wealth he did devise
To take their lives away.

He bargained with two ruffians strong,
Which were of furious mood,
That they should take these children young
And slay them in the wood.
He told his wife an artful tale,
He would the children send,
To be brought up in London town,
With one that was his friend,

Away then went these pretty babes,
Rejoicing side by side,
Rejoicing with a merry mind
They should on horseback ride ;
They prate and prattle pleasantly,
As they ride on the way,
To those that should their murderers be,
And take their lives away.

So that the pretty speech they had,
Made the ruffians' hearts relent ;
And they that undertook the deed,
Full sore did now repent ;
Yet one of them, more hard of heart,
Did vow to do his charge ;
Because the wretch who hired him,
Had paid him very large.

The other won't agree thereto,
So then they fall to strife,
With one another they did fight
About the children's life ;
And he that was of mildest mood
Did slay the other there,
Within an unfrequented wood ;
The babes did quake for fear.

He took the children by the hand,
Tears standing in their eyes,
And bade them straightway follow him,
And look they did not cry ;
And two long miles he led them on,
While they for food complain ;
'Stay here,' said he, 'I'll bring you bread
When I come back again.

These pretty babes then hand in hand
Went wandering up and down ;
But never more they saw the man
Approaching from the town ;
Their pretty lips with blackberries,
Were all besmeared and dyed ;
And when they saw the darksome night,
They sat them down and cried.

Thus wandered the poor innocents
Till death did end their grief,
In one another's arms they died
For want of due relief ;
No burial this pretty pair
Of any man receives,
Till Robin Red-breast painfully
Did cover them with leaves.

And now the heavy wrath of God
Upon the uncle fell ;
Yes, fearful fiends did haunt his house,
His conscience felt a hell ;
His barns were fired, his goods consumed,
His lands were barren made ;
His cattle died within the field,
And nothing with him stayed.

And in a voyage to Portugal,
Two of his sons did die ;
And, to conclude, himself was brought
To want and misery :
He pawned and mortgaged all his land,
Ere seven years came about ;
And then at length this wicked act,
Did, by these means, come out.

The fellow that did take in hand
These children for to kill,
Was, for a robbery, judged to die,
Such was God's blessed will ;
And did confess the very truth,
As here hath been displayed ;
Their uncle, he had died in gaol,
Where he for debt was laid.

You that executors be made,
And overseers eke,
Of children that be fatherless,
And infants mild and meek ;
Take you example by this thing,
And yield to each his right,
Lest God, with such like misery,
Your wicked minds requite.

London : Published by Paul and Co., 2 & 3, Monmouth-Court, Seven Dials.