

DEAN'S  
Illustrated Farthing Books.

**THE OLD MAN'S STORY.**



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hearted old man, who was generally called "Uncle John." The children loved to hear his stories, and, many a Wednesday afternoon, sat upon the grass at his feet, while he told about what he used to do when he was a boy. One of these stories of his I will tell to you.

"When I was about as high as you are now," said Uncle John, "I was very fond of playing with gunpowder. All my odd half-pence were carefully saved, to buy the materials for making such fire-works as boys are able to do. I did this secretly, for my mother would never allow me to do so. It happened one day that a gentleman came to visit my father, and among other things, he asked me if I had ever read a little book which he named. When I replied I had not, he gave me some money, saying, 'I should like to have you buy and read it.'

" 'I wish he had given it to me to buy gunpowder,' said I to myself as soon as he had gone; for I well knew that no one was aware that I had the money in my possession.

“It then occurred to me that I could still do with it as I pleased; and I bought a quantity of gunpowder. As I was returning home with it, I met a boy of about my own age, with whom I often played.

“‘Come, Harry,’ said I, ‘I’ve got a fine lot of powder, and I want you to come with me this afternoon, and we’ll have real sport.’

“‘Oh! I cannot,’ said Henry.

“‘Why not? It is Saturday, and there is no school this afternoon.’

“‘Yes, I know that,’ he replied; ‘but the truth is, John, my mother has such fears that I shall get killed or hurt, that I’ve promised never to play with powder again.’

“‘Oh! dear!’ cried I, ‘this is always the way. Now, I do think you might just this afternoon come and help me, for there’s no fun in playing alone. Come, you shall have half the powder for your own.’

“‘Let me see it,’ said Henry.

‘ I opened the brown paper, and showed him the quantity I had bought.

“ ‘ Oh ! this is capital ! ’ cried he ; ‘ yes, I’ll come *just this once*. ’

“ We met in the afternoon, and began to make squibs and crackers. We had



made a few, when Henry proposed that we should get some fire and amuse ourselves by throwing powder into it, a few

grains at a time. Henry went for the fire, while I went on with my work. I did not perceive that in the paper which held the powder, there was a large hole, and that I was losing my treasure, as it run through to the ground. Irritated by this accident, I threw away the paper, and sat down to wait for Henry's return. He came to me in a few moments.

“ ‘ We must make haste, John,’ said he, ‘ for here comes a great troop of girls, and your sister Mary and our Lucy are among them. If they see us, they'll run home as fast as they can, to tell tales of us.’

“ ‘ Well, then,’ I answered, ‘ come, help me scrape up this powder, which is all on the grass here, and we'll hide away the whole of it, till they are gone.’ We knelt down, and began to take the powder in our hands.

“ ‘ John,’ said Henry, ‘ I'll get up the powder, and you go hide away those squibs among the bushes; and make haste; do, for I hear the girls, and they'll be here in a minute.’

“ I caught up the bundle of squibs, and was running with them towards a cluster of bushes, when I heard a loud cry from Henry, and turning quickly, I saw the powder flashing into his eyes; and in a moment, he had fallen forward into the flame.

“ As I darted forward, the party of girls, pale and trembling, appeared among the trees, and I shouted loudly for help. But how can I describe poor Henry, as he lay upon the ground; his beautiful face blackened with the powder, and so shockingly torn and mangled, that it bore no resemblance to that of a human being.

“ “ Is he hurt? Is he dead?” said the little girls, pressing around me.

“ “ Who is he? oh! *who is he?*” cried Lucy, throwing herself by his side, ‘ it is not Henry, *our* Henry!—you will not say so?’ said she, looking in my face. I could only answer by cries and tears. Lucy raised her poor brother in her arms. Her face was perfectly calm, and cold, while the rest of the children were drowned in tears, and seemed not to think of doing anything to obtain help. In a

few minutes several men, who had been alarmed by the noise, came running toward us. Without asking questions, they took up the body gently, and we followed them towards the house of his mother, whose last wishes I had tempted Henry to slight.

“As we approached the door, we saw the poor widow sitting quietly at work in her neat little parlour. I cannot tell you, my children,” said the old man, drawing his hand before his eyes, “how her sweet face changed, as the dreadful sight met her eyes; but the same grave where they laid poor Henry was opened twice in two weeks, and his mother was placed by his side. Little Lucy was left all alone in the world, till I persuaded my mother to take her to our home, and let me be her brother, in place of the one she had lost. And I have spent my life in trying to make poor Lucy happy. And now, my dear children, you know why I so often urge you to obey your parents, and be willing to do as they wish. May none of you learn the importance of this, by so painful a lesson as was mine.”