

# THE CHILDREN

IN

# THE WOOD.

*Embellished with numerous coloured Engravings.*



LONDON:

DEAN & MUNDAY, THREADNEEDLE-STREET; AND  
A. K. NEWMAN & Co. LEADENHALL-STREET.

*Price Six-pence.*





THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.



With hand in hand, these children dear  
Went wandering up and down;  
But never more they saw the man  
Approaching from the town.



No burial these pretty babes  
Of any man receives;  
But Robin Red-breasts, painfully,  
Did cover them with leaves.

THE  
AFFECTING HISTORY  
OF  
**THE CHILDREN**  
IN THE  
**WOOD.**

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EMBELLISHED WITH NEAT ENGRAVINGS.



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c. 1815

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THE

## CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.

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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.

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 blessings 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 three years old; and the youngest, a girl, not quite two years of age. The name of the boy was Edgar, and that of the girl Jane.

The one a fine and pretty boy,  
Not passing three years old;  
The other a girl, more young than he,  
And framed in beauty's mould.

Things were in a prosperous state, when it pleased God to afflict the gentleman with a dangerous 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.

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.

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 unto him commit the care and education of his two dear little children.

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 marriage-day,  
Which might not be controlled.

But if the children chanced to die,  
Ere they to age should come,  
Their uncle should possess their wealth,  
For so the will did run.

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.

“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 do commend  
My children dear, this day;  
For little while, indeed, we have  
Within this world to stay.”

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 both left the parlour, alike glad to go to their excellent parents. On entering, the pretty innocents ran to the bedside with out-stretched 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 Almighty God that I should shortly leave you. He is the giver of 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 their father paused, and they

burst into tears; for they now perceived that their parents were both of them very pale, and scarcely able to speak.

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.

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 corruption of the world. Look then, dear brother,

with compassion on our poor children.  
Train them up in the paths of religion  
and virtue for us.

“ You must be father and mother, both,  
And uncle, all in one;  
God knows what will become of them,  
When I am dead and gone!”

With that bespake their mother dear:

“ O brother kind,” quoth she,  
“ You are the man must bring our babes  
To wealth or misery.

“ And if you keep them carefully,  
Then God will you reward;  
But if you otherwise should deal,  
God will your deeds regard.”

“ My dearest brother and sister,”  
replied the uncle, seemingly affected,  
“ let not your last moments be per-  
plexed 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.”

These speeches then their brother spake,  
To the sick couple there:

“The keeping of your children small,  
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 the grave!”

“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.”

His feeble voice was now nearly

exhausted; but, after another pause, he added, turning toward 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 the 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 should be twenty-one years old; 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 then 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.



Their parents being dead and gone,  
The children home he takes,  
And brings them both unto his house,  
And much of them he makes.

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 train-

ed 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, at length, 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!”

“So it is, Edgar,” observed Jane, “but I liked home better; because poor papa and mamma were along with us then!”

Edgar still thought that his richer uncle must be happy; but he was a covetous and unfeeling man, and a stranger to real joy. When, therefore, he had kept his promise respecting the orphans some months, he forgot how piteously their parents looked when they gave their children to his care, and the solemn promise he made to protect their offspring.

He had not kept these pretty babes  
A twelvemonth and a day,  
When, for their wealth, he did devise  
To take their lives away.

After some further time had elapsed he at last wished that the little boy and girl would die, for then he should have all their money. Having once begun to wish this, he was not long in finding means to bring it about.



He bargain'd with two ruffians strong,  
Which were of furious mood,  
That they should take these children young,  
And slay them in a wood.

He accordingly hired two ruffians, named Ned and Dick, who had killed and robbed many travellers in a wood some way off. These ruffians agreed with the uncle, for a large sum of money, to do the most cruel deed that ever yet was heard of.

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 bought to take you there.”

To all this Edgar and Jane readily consented; and their hard-hearted uncle prepared for their journey.

He told his wife and all he had,  
He did the children send  
To be brought up in famed London,  
With one that was his friend.

The harmless little creatures 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.

They prate and prattle pleasantly,  
As they rode on the way,  
To those that should their butchers be,  
And work their lives' decay.

When they had reached the dark thick wood, the two ruffians took them out of the coach, telling them they might now walk a little way and gather some flowers; and while the children were skipping about like lambs, the ruffians began to talk of what they had to do.

“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 fling away our swords, and 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 would do," replied Dick.

So that the pretty speech they had,  
Made murderers' hearts relent;  
And they that undertook the deed  
Full sore did they repent.

Yet one of them, more hard of heart,  
Did vow to do his charge,  
Because the wretch, that hired him,  
Had paid him very large.



The other would not agree thereto,  
So here they fell to strife;  
And with each other they did fight  
About the children's life.

At length, the ruffians fell into such a passion, that they drew their swords, and began fighting, which greatly terrified the children.

At last, after fighting for some time, Ned made such a desperate thrust at Dick, as laid him dead at his feet; and he afterwards buried his body in

a deep pit, which he found in the wood, near the place where he had committed the horrid deed.

And he that was of mildest mood  
Did slay the other there,  
Within an unfrequented wood,  
While babes did quake for fear.

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

“Come here, my pretty ones,” said he; “you must take hold of my hands, and go a little way along with me.” The poor children, each taking a hand, went mournfully on; while the tears

burst from their eyes, and their little limbs shook with fear all the while.

He took the children by the hand,  
When tears stood in their eyes;  
And bade them come and go with him,  
And look they did not cry:

And two long miles he led them on,  
While they for food complain;  
Stay here, quoth he, I'll fetch you bread,  
When I do come again.

In this manner he led them on farther into the wood; and then told them to wait there till he came back from the next town, where he would go and get them some food.

Edgar now took his sister by the hand, and they walked in fear up and down the wood.—“Will the strange man come with some cakes, Edgar?” said little Jane. “By-and-by, Jane,” said he.

They then turned their eyes to every part of the wood; and it would almost have melted a heart as hard as a stone to have seen how sad they looked, and how they listened to every sound of wind among the trees.

They had waited a long time, hoping for his return, when they endeavoured to appease their hunger with some blackberries, and other wild fruits; but they soon eat all within reach.

These pretty babes, with 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.

Arising from their mossy seat, they

walked again, with tearful cheeks, in search of the inhuman Ned; but, alas! he was not to be seen. In vain did they still call upon him to return to them with some food. Cruel ruffian! he left them to perish.

Night was fast coming on, and Edgar, having tried his utmost to comfort his dear sister, now wanted comfort himself; so when Jane said once more, "How hungry I am! I cannot help crying," Edgar burst out a-crying too; then lying down upon the cold ground, and putting their arms round each other's neck, they died!

Thus wandered these two pretty babes,  
Till death did end their grief;  
In one another's arms they died,  
As babes wanting relief.



Thus fell these sweet babes, unknown and unnoticed by the world, through the base, cruel, and horrid treachery of their unnatural uncle.

Their little bodies lay exposed to the wide element: and the only mourners in that lonely spot where some little Robin Red-breasts, who, by their soft plaintive notes, seemed to bemoan the cruel death of these dear infants, and covered them with leaves, as the only funeral in their power to give them.

No burial these pretty babes  
Of any man receives,  
Till Robin-red-breasts painfully  
Did cover them with leaves.

In the mean time, the wicked uncle thought they had been killed as he had ordered, and told all the people, who enquired about them, an artful tale of their having died in London of the small pox. He then took all their fortune to himself.

But all this did him very little service; for the vengeance of heaven soon overtook him. His wife was seized with a disorder which soon carried her off, and he became extremely unhappy at her loss. The murder of the innocent babes was also continually recurring to his mind. At times, he was almost raving; and at others, quite melancholy.

And now the heavy wrath of God  
Upon their uncle fell;  
Yea, 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 staid.

Through very great neglect, his estates went to ruin; his lands became barren; his fruit trees were blighted and withered; his cattle were seized with a distemper, of which most of them died; and, to add to his distress, fire was discovered in his house, which soon consumed it; and the flames spread to his barns, that were filled with grain, and destroyed them also.

Being thus deprived of so much of his property, he was obliged to suffer his own sons to go abroad; but

scarcely had they left their native shore, when the vessel struck upon a rock, and the two ill-fated youths perished.

And in a voyage to Portugal,  
Two of his sons did die;  
And, to conclude, himself was brought  
To want and misery.

Instead of resigning himself to the will of Omnipotence, and exerting himself to retrieve his fortunes, their wicked uncle gave himself to despair, and became extravagant.

He pawned and mortgaged all his land,  
Ere seven years came about;  
And now at length this wicked act  
Did by this means come out—

Just at this time the ruffian, Ned, who took pity on the two poor helpless orphans, so far as not to murder them

at once, robbed some person in the same wood, and being pursued, he was taken, and soon after tried for the offence, and condemned to die.



The fellow that did take in hand  
These children, dear, to kill,  
Was for a robbery judg'd to die,  
As was God's blessed will:

Who did confess the very truth,  
As here hath been displayed:  
Their uncle having died in gaol,  
Where he for debt was laid.

Seeing no prospect of pardon, he sent for the keeper of the prison, and confessed to him all the crimes he had ever committed; and among other things the whole story of the two children left in the wood.

This news soon reached the wicked uncle's ears, who was already quite broken-hearted, and could not bear the shame that must have come upon him.

This so afflicted him, that he immediately took to his bed, in the prison in which he had been confined for debt, and died, raving mad; an awful warning of the inevitable consequences which must ever, sooner or later, await such deeds of cruelty and injustice.

All 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.



FINIS.

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DEAN AND MUNDAY, THREADNEEDLE-STREET.

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