

THE  
CHILDREN  
IN THE WOOD.



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THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.



A GENTLEMAN and a lady had two children ; the eldest, a boy, was but three years old ; and the youngest, a girl, not quite two, when the gentleman was seized with a fever ; his lady, from the attention she paid him, also took the fever, and they were sensible that they should soon die. They spoke frequently of their children, whom they agreed to place under the care of their uncle.



The gentleman's brother on hearing the news, made all speed to the chamber of these amiable parents.—“ Ah, brother !” said the dying man, “ you see how short our time is on this side the grave ; yet neither pain nor death can pierce my heart with half such anguish as that I feel at the thought of what these dear babes will do without us ; they will have none but you to see them clothed and fed.”

“ Dear brother,” said the lady, “ you must be father, mother, and uncle too.— Oh, it wrings my heart to speak of them !”





“It grieves me to see you in this condition,” replied the uncle; “but there may yet be hope of your doing well;—yet, should we lose you, in me your dear children shall find a father, mother, and uncle. But you have said nothing of the wealth you must leave behind.”

“Here—here—brother, is my will, you will see how I have provided for my dear babes.”



The gentleman and lady then affection-



ately embraced their children, and soon after expired. The uncle was for a short time affected at this sad sight ; but he soon opened the will, and found that to William was left three hundred a year, when he came of age ; and to Jane, the sum of five hundred pounds in gold ; but if the children should die in infancy, then all the wealth was to be enjoyed by their uncle.



The two little innocents were now taken to the house of their uncle, who for some time treated them with the greatest kind-



ness; but before twelve months had elapsed, he had forgotten the promises made to their parents, and he could not help wishing for their death, as he should then have the wealth for himself; at length he said—"It will not be very difficult for me to kill them, so as for nobody to know any thing of the matter."



When he had once brought his mind to murder them, he had no difficulty in finding a way to execute his purpose: he hired two ruffians, who agreed, for a large reward, to commit the cruel deed.



He told his wife it was his intention to send them to London for their education, and said to the children—"Should you not like to see London; where you can buy a fine wooden horse, and pretty dolls, and a nice gilded coach shall be got ready to take you there?"

They said—"O yes, uncle, we will go!"—And in a few days they were put into a coach, attended by two butchers.



When they had arrived at a dark thick wood, the ruffians took them out of the



coach, desiring them to walk a little way and gather flowers; and then began to consult about what they had to do.

“In good truth,” said one of them, “I have no heart to do the bloody deed, since I have heard them prattle, let us send them back to their uncle.”

“That I will not consent to,” said the other. “Who will pay us for being so chicken-hearted?”

At length the two ruffians fell into a passion about murdering the little creatures, and he who wished to spare their lives suddenly stabbed the other to the heart!





The man who had killed the other, was at a loss what to do with the children: he, however, at length determined to leave them in the wood.

“My pretty creatures,” said he, “you must each take hold, and come along with me.”—The ruffian led them further into the wood and told them to wait till he should return to them.



William took his sister by the hand, and they wandered up and down; but after waiting a long time for the man, their



hunger became very great, which they attempted to satisfy with blackberries; but they soon devoured all that were within their reach; and it would have melted a heart of stone to see how sorrowful they looked. As night came on, William, who had tried all he could to comfort his sister, now wanted comfort himself; and when Jane said once more—"How hungry I am, Billy;—I b-e-lieve—I can-



not help crying."—William burst into tears. Soon after they laid themselves down upon the cold earth; and putting



their arms round each other's neck, there they starved, and there they died!



The wicked uncle said they had died in London of the small-pox; and took possession of their fortune. But he every day became poorer, and unhappy; he always thought the bleeding innocents were before his eyes; he neglected his business; his wife died; his two sons were drowned at sea; his house and barns were burnt down; and in a short time after he died of a broken heart.





How do you do, pretty bird?  
What makes you so late?  
I see you are feeding  
Your young ones and mate;  
O when they can fly,  
Do teach them the way,  
To come to the window  
For crumbs every day.

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