

# LITTLE TOM,

THE

HUNTSMAN'S BOY.



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[*Entered at Stationers' Hall.*]

# FRONTISPIECE.



See Page 7.



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A LITTLE boy, whose name was George, one day asked his mamma to let him play in the garden. She told him he might do so if he pleased, but he must play by himself if he did, for his brother Edward was learning his Latin Grammar.

George went alone into the garden, and, as he walked along, he saw a boy about his own age standing near

the pales at the bottom of the grass walk; and when George came in sight, he saw him run away. "This is very odd," said George to himself. Presently, he heard a noise among some bushes close by, and a plunge, as if some one had fallen into a ditch, and then a cry came from among the bushes. George was frightened, but he did not run away. "Who is there?" said he.

"I, Master George," said a dismal voice.

"You! and who are you?" asked George.

"Little Tom, the huntsman's son,

Sir; and I have tumbled into this ditch, and cannot get out."

"Well," said George, "I will come and help you."

So he opened the garden-gate, and ran to the ditch. But he soon found that he could do little towards helping Tom: for the ditch was deep, and George but a little fellow. As he was trying, however, to stretch out *his* hand to meet Tom's hand, a labouring man came near. He saw the two boys' distress, and soon lifted Tom out of the ditch. "But, hold," said he: "what have we here?" and he put his hand upon a handkerchief tied very tight at the corners.



Tom was in a sad plight when he got up, and his face was daubed with mud; but, through the dirt, you might see that he grew as red as scarlet when the labourer said this.

“Let us see what’s here, Master Tom,” said the man.

“No, no,” said George; “if that handkerchief is his own, you have no business to untie it.”

“But YOU have, Master George,” said the man. “For do but see here: here’s a little branch off the plum tree in your papa’s garden, with two plums upon it, and I’ll lay any money these are of the same sort. And

here's the thief, too"—seizing hold of Tom.

Tom now grew very pale, and, falling on his knees, begged George to forgive him, and he would tell him all.

"What! *did* you steal our plums then, Tom?" said George.





“Yes,” stammered Tom.

“I am very sorry. How could you do such a wicked thing? You know that papa has been always a kind friend to you, and you know he has often told you that those who steal are breaking God’s commandment.”

“I know it, I know it,” sobbed little Tom.

“O, you young rascal!” said the man, “you’ll surely come to a bad end!”

“Stay a little,” said George; “I should like to talk with him, though I am but a little boy. Did you ever steal before, Tom?”



“ Yes, once, Master George.”

“ I am sorry to hear that. And what did you steal ?”

*Tom.* Apples, Sir.

*George.* If any body had asked you to steal a horse, or a bag of money, would you have done so?

*Tom.* O no, Sir, I hope not.

*George.* Then I suppose you think it but a little matter to steal an apple?

Tom paused; hung down his head: at last, to be sure, he did'n't think

there could be much harm in that, when other people had such a plenty too.

“ Ah, Tom !” said George, “ but you know the commandment says— ‘ Thou shalt not covet *any thing* that is thy neighbour’s. I remember, when I was only four years old, I once took an apple out of mamma’s basket, and thought there could be no harm done. But she missed it, and found me out; and she made it so clear to me that I had made myself a thief that day, that I never have forgotten it since.”

So, when George had talked a little more to Tom about the wickedness of stealing, he said, “ And now, Tom,

what must I do? Will you be willing to come with me to papa, and tell him all you have done?"

"O no, Master George, I dare not; I dare not for my life," said this cowardly boy.

"But," said George, "if you are not willing to make amends for your fault, it shews you are not really sorry for it. Even if papa were to punish you severely, you ought to bear it. But I do not think he will: I know he always makes a great difference between those who confess their faults and those who are so afraid of being punished that they dare not be honest. Come with me



now, and I will beg him to forgive you."



But while George was thus kindly trying to persuade Tom, this foolish boy watched his opportunity, and while the labouring man turned his head on one side, ran off as fast as ever his legs could carry him.

“Now what is to be done?” said George. “He has left all the plums behind him, and papa must not be robbed of those, to be sure. But what must I do about Tom?”

“Do, Master George!” said the man. “I’ll tell you what I should do—go directly to your papa, and get Tom flogged as soon as possible.”

George shook his head. “No,” said he, “I know he deserves it, and I fear he will be punished in a much worse manner one time or other. But I know poor Tom has a very passionate, violent father; and I dare say he is flogged so often, that he does not so much mind *that*. I



wish I could think of some better plan. Will you promise me that you will say nothing at all about what has happened till I see you again?"

"To be sure, Master George, if you wish it; only, I hope, Sir, you don't mean to beg Tom off: 'tis clean encouraging wickedness."

"I hope I shall not do that. But I cannot tell you any more now," said little George: "only promise me."

"Well, I promise," answered the man, and walked off.

George had now been absent a long





time, and his papa just then came out to look for him. The plums were in George's hand. "What have you there, George?" asked his father.

"They are plums, papa,—your plums. But, papa, though I did not gather them, I shall be very much obliged to you if you will not ask me

how I came by them. I am sure you will not think *I* took them when I tell you I did not."

"No, *that* I shall not, George," said his father. "I believe you speak truth. But this is very odd. However, I shall not ask any questions; only, my little boy, you are very young to have secrets to keep, and I hope you will not get into any mischief by it. Whose advice will you ask, if you do not ask *mine*? and surely you do not think yourself wise enough to do any thing without advice?"

George looked at his father, and felt it a great struggle to be silent; but he thought he would wait a little



while, and think over the matter by himself: and when he went to bed that night, and knelt down to say his prayers, he did not forget to pray that he might judge and do what was best in this matter.

He thought about it a good deal before he went to sleep, and felt very uncomfortable. "I see," said he to himself, "that papa thinks it very strange that I, who am but a little boy, should not choose to tell him how I got his fruit; and as it is his own, he has a right to know. But then, if I tell him, and Tom knows it, I am afraid he will run away, and I shall not be able to say any thing to him again."



So, the next morning, George resolved to go to the huntsman's house, and find Tom; and he asked his father's leave to go out a little way.

George's papa saw there was something passing in his son's mind, and gave him leave to go, being curious to know what would follow. So George went.



When he came up to the cottage, Tom was at work in the little garden, and he came to meet George, looking very silly. "Well, Tom," said George, "so you would not go with me to papa yesterday?"

"No, Master George, I was afraid," said Tom.

"Come with me, Tom, to that seat under the tree yonder."

Tom came, and they sat down.

"Tom, do you ever think of death?" said George.

"Sometimes," said Tom.



“Were you ever ill, Tom?”

“Yes, Master George, once; and I took a power of bad physic. If I had'n't done so, the doctor said I must have died.”

“You did not like the physic, did you?” asked George.

“No, not at all.”

“But yet you took it to save your life. Now what I want you to do, is like that. You have committed a great fault, Tom, and you have not resolution to confess it to a *man*, not even to a good man, like my father: you won't take the physic, and so you must die.”



“Die, Master George! Who talks of dying?” said Tom.

“I am not talking of the death of your body, Tom, but of a worse thing. Don't you know that you are destroying your own soul, and hardening your conscience, by this way of behaving?”



Tom hung down his head.

“Tom,” said George, “I shall say no more to you to-day; but I found two verses in the Bible, which I wish you would read over to-night before you go to bed, and promise me you will pray earnestly to God before you sleep to-night. I will try and come again to-morrow.”

The verses George found for Tom were these—*Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear HIM.* (Luke xii. 4, 5.)



The next day, after breakfast, George asked his papa's leave to go out again. He had been very careful, the day before, to do all his lessons well; and his father saw that, whatever it was that he had upon his mind, he was in such a gentle, humble temper, that he thought he might be trusted. So George went.

That day he found Tom watching eagerly for him. "O, Master George!" said he, "I am glad you are come; I wanted to see you. May I go and speak to your papa now, and tell him the whole?"

"O yes," said George, greatly de-



lighted. "But how is this, Tom? What has made such a change?"

"That verse, Master George, has never been out of my thoughts since: and all the night long, whenever I closed my eyes, it came before me, and I thought what a wicked boy I was. I shall be miserable till I have told all."

"Well then, come directly, come directly," said George. And he walked with Tom homewards, quite happy to think that this poor little boy saw his error.

As they drew near the house, they saw George's papa in the garden,

looking up at the plum tree which Tom had robbed. "O, Master George, how sorry I am, to think I did such a wicked thing!" said little Tom.

"Papa," exclaimed George to his father, "this is the person who took the plums: but he is sorry for it now; so sorry, that I do hope you will forgive him. He wished himself to come and tell you about it; though, now he is come, he can hardly speak."

Tom indeed could scarcely speak, he felt so sorry and ashamed to think that George's father should consider him a thief; especially as he well knew how kind and good a friend



this excellent man was to the poor and every one round him. But at last he stammered out a confession of his guilt.

George's papa said not much to him then, but bade him remain where he was while *he* talked with his little boy. When he heard from George



the whole story, he said, " Well, George, I think you have made a good beginning with poor Tom ; and as he really seems sorry for his fault, I will forgive him on condition that he will promise to attend you every Sunday as your Sunday-scholar. I do not mean you to suppose that you are able to teach him all he wants to learn, by yourself, but I will try to help you : and I think Tom will, perhaps, learn better from you, as you have been his friend in this instance."

George was overjoyed at what his father said : and I am happy to say that Tom, by constantly improving his Sunday opportunities of instruction, became a very different boy ; so



much so, that his father, perceiving it, not only treated him better, but became himself more serious and attentive to his duties.

George had the pleasure, as he grew up, of witnessing this; and though, in the course of his life, he was an instrument of good to many a poor and ignorant person, he never had more pleasure in knowing he was so to any one than to Little Tom, the Huntsman's Boy.

FINIS.

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