



THE ILL-NATURED BOY



CAUGHT BY THE FARMER'S DOG.

THE
ILL-NATURED
LITTLE BOY.



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There was once a little boy, who was so unfortunate as to have a very bad man for his father, who was always surly and ill-natured, and never gave his children either good instructions or good example; in consequence of which, this little boy, who might otherwise have been happier and better, became ill-natured, quarrelsome, and disagreeable to every body. He very often was severely beaten by boys that were bigger than himself, for his impertinence, and often by boys that were smaller; for, though he was very abusive and quarrelsome, he did not much like fighting, and generally trusted more to his heels than his courage, when he had engaged himself in a

quarrel. This little boy had a cur dog that was the exact image of himself: he was the most troublesome, surly creature, imaginable, always barking at the heels of every one he came near, and worrying every sheep he could meet with; for which reason, both the dog and the boy were disliked by all the neighbourhood.

One morning his father got up early to go to the ale-house, where he intended to stay till night, as it was a holiday; but before he went out, he gave his son some bread and cold meat, and a six-pence, and told him that he might go and divert himself, as he would, the whole day. The little boy was very much pleased with this liberty; and as it was a very fine morning, he called his dog Tiger to follow him, and began his walk. He had not proceeded far before he met a little boy, who was driving a flock of sheep towards a gate he wanted



them to enter. "Pray master," said the little boy, "stand still and keep your dog close to you, for fear you may frighten my sheep."

"Oh! yes, to be sure," answered the ill-natured little boy; "I am to wait here all the morning till you and your sheep have passed, I suppose! Here Tiger, seize them boy!"

Tiger at this, sprang forth into the middle of the flock, barking and biting on every side, and the sheep, in a general consternation, hurried each a separate way. Tiger seemed to enjoy this sport equally with his master; but in the midst of his triumph, he happened unguardedly to attack the old ram, that had more courage than the rest of the flock: he, instead of running away, faced about, and aimed a blow at his enemy, with so much force and dexterity, that he knocked Tiger over and over, and butting him several times while he was down, obliged him to limp howling away. The ill-natured little boy, who was not capable of loving any thing, had been very much diverted with the trepidation of the sheep, but now he laughed heartily at the misfortune of his dog; and he would have laughed much longer, had not the other little boy, provoked beyond his patience at

this treatment, thrown a stone at him, which hit him full upon the temples, and almost knocked him down. He immediately began to cry, in concert with his dog, and perceiving a man coming towards them, who he fancied might be the owner of the sheep, he thought it most prudent to escape as speedily as possible. But he had scarcely recovered from the smart which the blow had occasioned, before his former disposition returned, which he determined to gratify to the utmost. He had not gone far, before he saw a little girl standing by a stile with a large pot of milk at her feet.

“Pray,” said the little girl, “help me up with this pot of milk; my mother sent me out to fetch it this morning, and I have brought it above a mile upon my head; but I am so tired that I have been obliged to stop at this stile to rest me; and if I don’t

return home presently, we shall have no pudding to day, and, besides, my mother will be angry with me."

"What," said the boy, "you are to have a pudding to day, are you miss?"

"Yes," said the girl, "and a fine piece of roast beef; for there's uncle Will, and uncle John, and grandfather, and all my cousins to dine with us; and we shall be very merry in the evening, I can assure you; so pray help me as speedily as possible."

"That I will, miss," said the boy, and taking up the jug, he pretended to fix it upon her head; but just as she had hold of it, he gave it a little push, as if he had stumbled, and overturned it upon her. The little girl began to cry violently; but the mischievous boy ran away, laughing heartily, and saying, "good by, little miss; give my humble service to uncle Will, and



grandfather, and the dear little cousins." This prank encouraged him very much ; for he thought that now he had certainly escaped without any bad consequences : he went on applauding his own ingenuity, and came to a green, where several little boys were at play. He desired leave to play with them, which they allowed him to do. But



he could not be contented long without exerting his vile disposition ; so taking an opportunity when it was his turn to fling the ball, instead of flinging it the way he ought to have done, he threw it into a deep muddy ditch : the little boys ran in a great hurry to see what was become of it, and as they were standing all together upon the brink,

he gave the outermost boy a violent push against his neighbour; he, not being able to resist the violence, tumbled against the next, the next against another, by which means they all soused into the ditch together. They soon scrambled out, although in a dirty plight, and were going to punish him for his ill behaviour; but he patted Tiger upon the back, who began a snarling and growling in such a manner as made them desist. Thus this little mischievous boy escaped a second time with impunity.

The next thing he met with, was a poor jack-ass feeding very quietly in a ditch. The little boy, seeing that nobody was within sight, thought it was an opportunity of plaguing the animal, that was not to be lost; so he cut a large bunch of thorns, which he contrived to fix in the poor beast's tail, and then setting Tiger at him, he was extremely diverted to see the fright and

agony the creature was in. But it did not fare so well with Tiger, who, while he was baying and biting the animal's heels, received so severe a kick upon his head, as laid him dead upon the spot. The boy, who had no affection for his dog, left him with the greatest unconcern, when he saw what had happened, and, finding himself hungry, sat down by the way side to eat his dinner. He had not been long there, before a poor blind man came groping his way out with a couple of sticks.

“Good morning to you, Gaffer,” said the boy; “pray did you see a little girl come this road, with a basket of eggs upon her head, dressed in a green gown, with a straw hat upon her head?”

“God bless you, master,” said the begger, “I am so blind that I can see nothing in heaven, or in the earth below: I have been blind these twenty years, and they

call me poor old blind Richard." Though this poor old man was such an object of charity and compassion, yet the little boy determined, as usual, to play him some trick; and as he was a great liar and deceiver, he spoke to him thus:

"Poor old Richard! I am heartily sorry for you, with all my heart: I am just eating my breakfast, and if you will sit down by me, I will give you part, and feed you myself."

"Thank you, with all my heart," said the poor man, "and if you will give me your hand, I will sit by you with great pleasure, my dear good little master."

The little boy then gave him his hand, and, pretending to direct him, guided him to sit down in a large heap of wet dung, that lay by the road side.

"There," said he, "now you are nicely seated, and I will feed you;" so taking a



little in his fingers, he was going to put it in the blind man's mouth. But the man, who now perceived the trick that had been played upon him, made a sudden snap at his fingers, and getting them between his teeth, bit them so severely, that the wicked boy roared out for mercy, and promised never more to be guilty of such wickedness.

At last, the blind man, after he had put him to very severe pain, consented to let him go, saying as he went, "Are you not ashamed, you little scoundrel, to attempt to do hurt to those who have never injured you, and to want to add to the sufferings of those who are already sufficiently miserable? Although you escape now, be assured, that if you do not repent and mend your manners, you will meet with a severe punishment for your bad behaviour."

One would think, that this punishment should have cured him entirely of his mischievous disposition, but, unfortunately, nothing is so difficult to overcome as bad habits that have been long indulged. He had not gone far, before he saw a lame beggar that just made shift to support himself by means of a couple of sticks. The beggar asked him to give him something, and the little mischievous boy, pulling out



six-pence, threw it down just before him, as if he had intended to make him a present of it : but while the poor man was stooping with difficulty to pick it up, this wicked little boy knocked the stick away, by which means the beggar fell down upon his face, and then snatching up the six-pence, he ran away, laughing very heartily at the accident.

This was the last trick this little ungracious boy had it in his power to play ; for seeing two men come up to the beggar, and enter into discourse with him, he was afraid of being pursued, and therefore ran as fast as he was able over several fields. At last he came to a lane which led to a farmer's orchard, and as he was preparing to clamber over the fence, a large dog seized him by the leg, and held him fast. He cried out in an agony of terror, which brought the farmer out, who called the dog off, but seized him very roughly, saying :

“ So ! sir, you are caught at last, are you ? You thought you might come, day after day, and steal my apples without detection ; but it seems you are mistaken, and now you shall receive that punishment you have so long deserved.”

The farmer then began to chastise him very severely with a whip which he had in

his hand, and the boy protested he was innocent, and begged for mercy. At last the farmer asked him who he was, and where he lived ; but when he heard his name, he cried out :

“ What, are you the little rascal that frightened my sheep this morning, by which means several of them are lost ? And do you think to escape ? ”

Saying this he lashed him more severely than before, in spite of all his cries and protestations. At length, thinking he had punished him enough, he turned him out of the orchard, and bade him go home and frighten sheep again, if he liked the consequences. The little boy slunk away, crying very bitterly, for he had been severely beaten, and now, finding that no one can long hurt others with impunity, he determined to go quietly home and behave better in future. But his sufferings were not yet

at an end ; for as he jumped down from the stile, he felt himself very roughly seized, and looking up, found that he was in the power of the lame beggar whom he had thrown down upon his face. It was in vain that he now cried, and entreated and begged pardon ; the man, who had been much hurt by the fall, threshed him very severely with his stick, before he would part with him. He now again went on, crying and roaring with pain, but at least expected to escape without further damage. But here he was mistaken ; for as he was walking through a lane, just as he turned the corner, he found himself in the middle of the very troop of boys that he had used so ill in the morning. They all set up a shout, as they saw their enemy in their power without his dog, and began persecuting him in a thousand various ways. Some pulled him by the hair, others pinched him ; some

whipped his legs with their handkerchiefs, while others covered him with handfuls of dirt. In vain did he attempt to escape, they were still at his heels, and surrounding him on every side, continued their persecutions.

At length, while he was in this disagreeable situation, he happened to come up to the same jack-ass, he had seen in the morning, and making a sudden spring, jumped on his back, hoping by this means to escape. The boys immediately renewed their shouts, and the ass, which was frightened at the noise, began galloping with all his might, and presently bore him from the reach of his enemies. But he had little reason to rejoice at this escape; for he found it impossible to stop the animal, and was every instant afraid of being thrown off, and dashed upon the ground. After he had been thus hurried along a considerable

time, the ass on a sudden stopped short at the door of a cottage, and began kicking and prancing with so much fury, that the little boy was presently thrown to the ground, and broke his leg in the fall. His cries immediately brought the family out, among whom was the little girl he had used so ill in the morning. But she, with the greatest good-nature, seeing him in such a pitiable situation, assisted in bringing him in, and laying him upon the bed.

There this unfortunate boy had leisure to reflect; and he determined with great sincerity, that, if ever he recovered from his present accident, he would be as careful to take every opportunity of doing good, as he had before been to commit every species of mischief.

