

THE  
TURNIP FIELD.

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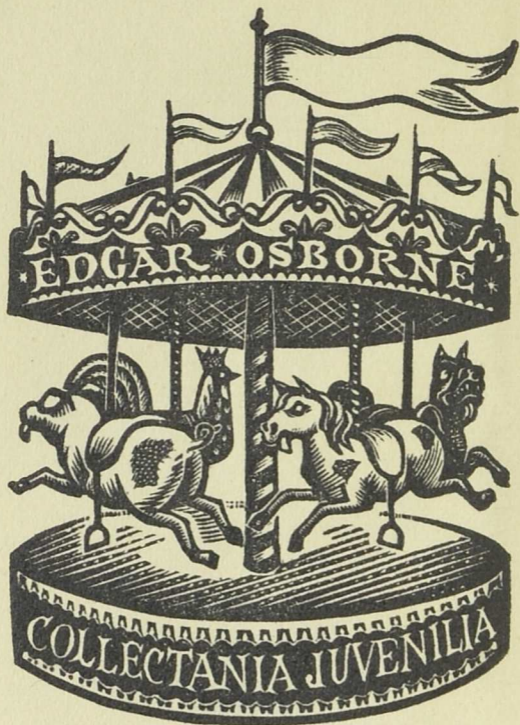
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1852.



## THE TURNIP FIELD.

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ONE fine summer's morning, Mr. Davis, and his little daughter Kate, were going to Church, through some pleasant fields. Mr. Davis had been ill for a long time, but thought he could manage to get as far as the Church, though he was still weak; but his cough was so troublesome, that he was obliged to sit down on the stile, and rest there, until it was too late to go on.

While they were resting there, two or three boys came running along the path, each with a large turnip in his hand, stolen from the next field. As they got near the stile, Mr. Davis asked them if they knew it was Sunday?

“Oh, to be sure we do,” said one of them; “we should be at school if it were not.”

“Indeed,” said Davis, “I think it would be better for you to be at school now, than employed as you are. Do you know that you have been stealing?”

Tom Hunt, the biggest boy, laughed: “I don’t call it stealing, just to take one turnip. Old Collins can spare a turnip very well: why, his is the biggest field in the parish!”

“And suppose,” said Davis,—“even if it is so large,—that every body who passes through were to take a turnip, how many would Mr. Collins have left for his sheep and cows in the winter? He told me, last week, that the path in his field was always strewed with turnip skins and leaves, and that he had made up his mind to put a stop, if it was possible, to such thieving. I would advise you, therefore, even if you will not think taking one turnip is stealing, to leave off taking *Mr. Collins’s* turnips.”



Tom Hunt looked surprised : poor boy, he had never known the blessing of a *good* father ; and, though his mother made him go to school in the week, yet, unknown to her, he played truant, and got into all kinds of mischief. When he was found out, his father beat him cruelly ; and this made his mother take his part, so that the beating did not make him wish to do better. On this Sunday morning his father was drunk in bed, as he had often been before on this holy day ; he had given no money to his wife the evening before, though he earned good wages by working on the railway. She, poor woman, had divided the little bread in the house between her children ; but it was so small a quantity, that Tom was really hungry ; and, when Davis saw how eagerly he was eating the turnip, he felt quite concerned. Tom was a good-natured fellow : and, if he had been a son of Davis's, would have turned out a different boy.

“ I am very hungry,” said he ; “ but

if I am hungry again next Sunday, I will not take another turnip; I did not know it was stealing, though I knew Collins would give me a thrashing, if he caught us in his field. Father beat me once, for taking some apples from old Dame Tucker's garden; but mother said he beat me because I eat them, and did not bring any home; she told me never to steal, because I might come to be hung."

Little Kate looked up, and said, "And God will be angry if you steal."

Tom had not heard anything of this sort for a long time.

"I wish," said Davis, "you would go to the Sunday-school with my boy James."

"Why," said Tom, "my mother would like me to go; but, you see, I have got no hat or cap, and my clothes are so old that the boys call me 'Ragged Tom;' and they would all laugh at me, I know, if I went to the Sunday-school."

"I wish," said Davis, "we could patch you up a little: and then, if you got tickets for good conduct at the school, you

would have, at Christmas, a new leather cap, or a pair of strong shoes. If you will promise to try and behave well, I will ask my wife if she can give you an old garment or two."

The other boys had run off, not liking Davis's remarks; they were much better off than Tom, and had not the excuse to say that they took turnips because they were hungry, or to stay away from the Sunday-school because they were ragged; for they had good clothes, and plenty to eat and drink.

Tom stood by Mr. Davis some time; he was not used to have people speak so kindly to him; and, if Davis had knocked him down with his stick, because he stole turnips, he would not have felt as sorry and ashamed as he did now. He looked at little rosy Kate, in her clean frock and bonnet; she did not look cross at him because he was dirty and ragged.

"I wish," said Tom, "*you would*, sir, ask my mother to let me go to the Sunday-school, and tell her about the leather

cap and shoes I should have at Christmas; perhaps then, when father is in a good temper, he would give her some money to buy a jacket and trousers."

"I will see your mother, Tom, if I am well enough; but then, you know, it is *you* that must earn the cap or the shoes; if *you* do not behave well in the school, you will not get them at all: they are prizes for behaving well."

"I shall try and be as good as I can," said Tom, "you may depend upon it; and *there*, I will throw away, over the hedge, this half of the turnip, though I *am* hungry; and I hope I never shall steal one again."

"Now," said Davis, "you have done quite right; and, if you will come to my house at dinner time, I will give you a piece of bread and cheese instead."

Mr. Davis was glad to get home again; and, though the days were warm, he still found the fire-side comfortable to him. His wife was busy cooking the dinner; but she pulled the arm-chair close to the

fire, for she saw how pale and tired her husband looked.

Presently a knock was heard at the door; and, when Mrs. Davis opened it, she saw Tom. "Why, Tom Hunt, what can *you* want?" said she; "you are not to come here after my James, you ragged little fellow; and on a Sunday too!"

Tom looked much ashamed, and was going away, when little Kate told her mother that Tom was to have a piece of bread and cheese! and then Davis begged his wife to give him some, and told her why. She then cut him a large slice; and, when Davis told her of Tom's wish to go to school, she said she thought she could give him not only an old suit of James's clothes, but a cap that would fit Tom very well, and was too small for James, and that she would see about them next week.

Tom was sitting under the great tree, eating his bread and cheese, when James came from Church. James stopped to

speaking to him; and Tom said, "You will have a better dinner than this, James; how nice it did smell when your mother opened the door!"

"Shall I?" said James; "well, I am very hungry; but how came *you* here, eating your dinner?"

Tom told him all the story.

"If you will stay here, Tom, I will try and bring you some of my dinner, if mother will let me."

Tom said, that he did not care about any more dinner then; that he had stayed there to eat his bread and cheese, because his father would beat him if he found that he had been taking things like a common beggar: "But I cannot starve—can I?"

Poor Tom wiped his eyes with his ragged cuff, and would have gone on talking, but Mrs. Davis called James to his dinner, and Tom walked slowly away, wishing that he was James's brother; for, though Mrs. Davis *was* rather cross, the broth smelt very good.

“Now, James,” said Mrs. Davis, “I shall not let you go with that idle ragged Tom Hunt.”

“But, mother,” said Kate, “if you give him James’s old clothes, he won’t be ragged; and he says he is going to be very good now, and go to the Sunday-school.”

“If he goes to the Sunday-school, of course James must be with him; but he need not play with him.”

“I will not,” said James, “unless he leaves off his idle ways; and I may then, mother, I suppose.”

Tom was not forgotten by Mrs. Davis, and was desired to call, on Thursday evening, for his clothes; he was pleased with James’s well-worn corduroy trousers. Mrs. Davis had patched them, and mended the pockets.

“I hope, Tom,” said James, “that, in the winter, you may have a cap like mine, black leather, with such nice warm fur ears; you can tie them under your chin so nicely in the cold weather.”

After he was gone, James told his father that Tom Hunt said he did not like to be dirty and ragged; and "Tom," said he, "is very kind to the baby, and tries to keep it quiet for his mother; and he told me that his grandmother taught him to say his prayers, and to read a little; and his mother likes him to go to school, and pays twopence a week, when she has got it. But Tom often runs about the lanes, picking nuts; and then, father! he robs the poor birds' nests. He said a young gentleman once gave him sixpence for a nest full of pretty green eggs, and so he was always thinking he might get sixpence again; but he says that *now* he shall not go birds'-nesting any more. I told him that you had said it was cruel to take away the nests it had given the birds so much trouble to build."

When Sunday came, James called for Tom Hunt, and they went over the fields together. Tom often looked at his clothes; they were poor enough, but then they were not ragged, and Tom scarcely knew



himself when he found that he had no holes in his knees and elbows.

The master of the school looked surprised when he saw Tom. "Well, I am glad to see, Tom, that you mean to leave off running about the lanes on a Sunday : take James for a pattern, and you may do well yet."

Tom got through the morning better than could have been expected ; and, though he had no prayer-book, he behaved quietly and well during service. James never forgot to call for him on the Sunday morning, and his mother was so pleased to see him clean and tidy, that she managed never to let him get ragged again.

Mr. Morton, the clergyman, took an interest in Tom, from seeing him so anxious to learn, and promised Tom that, if he went on steadily for six months, he would try and find something for him to do. Mr. Morton kindly exerted himself in Tom's behalf, and got him a place as stable-boy. He still attends his Sunday-

school, and has never ceased to be thankful to his kind friends, James Davis and his father, for leading him into the right way, and giving him the means of learning his duty towards God and his neighbour.





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