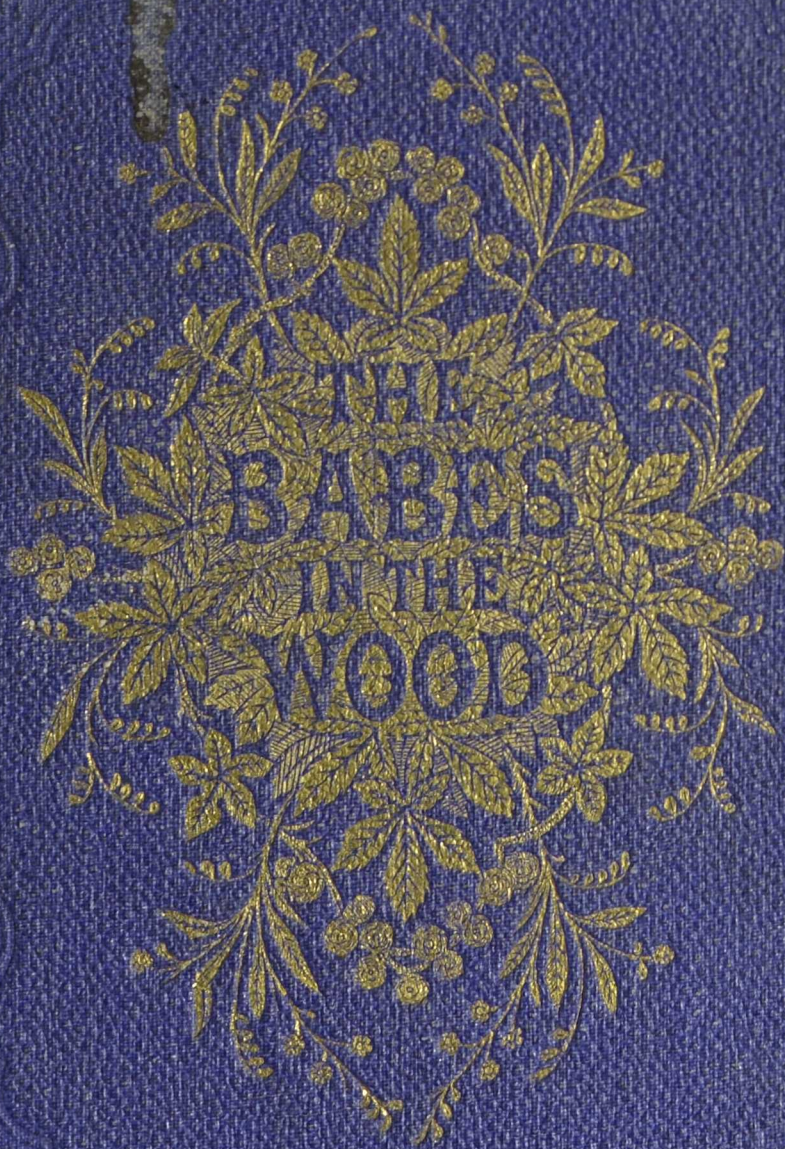
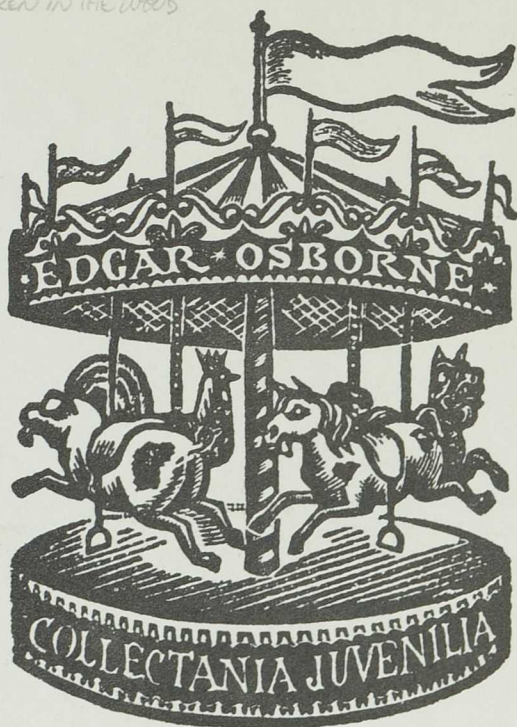




FT.
CHILDREN IN THE WOODS
1863



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London : Sampson Low, Son & Co.

MDCCLXI.

THE
BABES IN THE WOOD.

IN PROSE AND VERSE.

ILLUSTRATED
WITH TEN COLOURED PLATES.



NEW EDITION.

LONDON :
BICKERS AND SON, LEICESTER SQUARE.
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THE
BABES IN THE WOOD.

A GREAT many years ago there lived in the county of Norfolk a gentleman and his lady. The gentleman was brave, kind, and of a noble spirit ; and the lady was gentle, beautiful, and virtuous. They were very much loved by all who knew them ; for they were always trying to do service to everybody who came near them, or who had anything at all to do with them. This lady and gentleman lived together very happily for many years, for they loved each other most tenderly. They had two children, who were as yet

very young ; for the elder, who was a boy, was about three years old, and the younger, who was a girl, not quite two years old. The boy was very much like his father, and the girl was like her mother. By the end of this time the gentleman fell sick, and day after day he grew worse. His lady, as I have just said, loved him with the greatest fondness ; and she was so much grieved by his illness that she fell sick too. No physic, nor anything else was of the least use to them, for their illness got worse and worse ; and they saw that they would be soon taken away from their two little babes, and be forced to leave them in the world without a father or mother. They bore this cruel thought as well as they could ; and trusted that, after they were dead, their children would find some kind friend or another to bring them up. They talked to one another tenderly about them, and at last agreed to send for the gentleman's brother, and give their darlings into his care.

As soon as ever the gentleman's brother heard this news, he made all the haste he could to the bedside where the father and mother were lying sick. "Ah! brother," said the dying man, "you see how short a time I can expect to live; yet neither death nor pain can give me half so much grief as I feel at the thought of what these dear babes will do without a parent's care. Brother, brother," continued the gentleman, putting out his hand as well as he could, and pointing to the children, "they will have none but you to be kind to them; none but you to see them clothed and fed, and teach them to be good and happy."—"Dear, dear brother," said the dying lady, "you must be father, mother, and uncle too, to these lovely little lambs. First let William be taught to read, and then he should be told how good his father was. And little Jane,—Oh! brother, it wrings my heart to talk of her. Think of the gentle usage she will stand in need of, and take her fondly on your knee, brother, and she and William too will repay your care with love."

The uncle then answered, "Oh ! how it grieves my heart to see you, my dearest brother and sister, in this sad state ! but take comfort, there may still be hope of your getting well ; yet, if we should lose you, I will do all you can desire for your darling children. In me they shall find a father, mother, and uncle. William shall learn to read ; and shall be often told how good his father was, that he may turn out as good himself when he grows up to be a man. Jane shall be used with the most tender care, and shall be kindly fondled on my knee. But, dear brother, you have said nothing of the riches you must leave behind. I am sure you know my heart too well to think that I speak of this for any other reason than your dear children's good, and that I may be able to make use of all your money only for their sake."—"Pray, brother," said the dying man, "do not grieve me with talking of any such thing ; for how could you, who would be their father, mother, and uncle too, once think of wronging them ? Here, here, brother,

is my will. You will see that I have done the best thing I could for my babes." A few moments after the gentleman had said these words, he pressed his cold lips to his children ; the lady did the same, and in a short time they both died. 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, William, 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 to her the day of her being married. But if the children should happen to die before coming of age, then all the money was to belong to their uncle. The will of the gentleman next ordered that he and his dear wife should be buried side by side in the same grave.

The two little children were now taken home to the house of their uncle ; who, for some time, did just as their parents had so lately told him upon their death-bed : and

so he used them with great kindness; but when he had kept them about a year, he forgot by degrees to think how their father and mother looked when they gave their children to his care, and how he himself had made a promise to be their father, mother, and uncle, all in one. After a little more time had passed, the uncle could not help thinking that he wished the little boy and girl would die, for then he should have all their money for himself; and when he had once begun to think this, he went on till he could hardly think of anything else. At last he said to himself, "It would not be very hard for me to kill them, so as for nobody to know anything about the matter, and then the money will be mine at once."—When the cruel uncle had once brought his mind to kill the helpless little creatures, he was not long in finding a way to bring it about. He hired two sturdy ruffians, who had already killed many travellers in a dark thick wood, some way off, for the sake of robbing them of their money. These two wicked crea-

tures now agreed with the uncle, for a large sum of money, to do the most cruel deed that ever yet was heard of ; and so the uncle began to get everything ready for them. He told an artful story to his wife, of what good it would do to the children to put them forward in their learning ; and how he had a friend in London who would take care of them. He then said to the poor little things, "Should you not like, my pretty ones, to see the famous city of London : where you, William, can buy a fine wooden horse to ride upon all day long, and a whip to make him gallop, and a fine sword to wear by your side ? And you, Jane, shall have pretty frocks, and dolls, and many other pretty play-things ; and a nice gilded coach shall be got to take you there."—"Oh, yes, I will go uncle," said William : "Oh, yes, I will go, uncle," said Jane : and the uncle, with a heart as hard as stone, soon got them ready for the journey. The harmless little creatures were put in a fine coach a few days after ; and along with them the two cruel wretches,

who were soon to put an end to their merry prattle and turn their smiles into tears. One of them drove the coach, and the other sat inside, between little William and little Jane.

When they had reached the entrance to 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 turned their backs to them, and began to talk about what they had to do.

“In good truth,” said the one who had been sitting between the children all the way, “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 the ugly knife, and send the children back to their uncle.”—“But indeed I will not,” said the other; “what is their pretty talk to us?”—

“Think of your own children at home,” answered the first. —“Yes, but I shall get nothing to take back to them, if I turn coward, as you would have me do,” replied the other. At last the two ruffians fell into such a great passion about killing the poor babes, that the one who wished to spare their lives took out the great knife he had brought to murder them, and stabbed the other to the heart, so that he fell down dead at his feet. The one who had killed him was quite at a loss what to do with the children ; for he wanted to get away as fast as he could, for fear of being found in the wood. At last he thought the only thing he could do was to leave them in the woods by themselves, and trust them to the kindness of anybody 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 took a hand, and went on ; but the tears burst from their eyes, and their little limbs shook with fear all the while. In this way he

led them for about two miles further on in 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. William took his sister Jane by the hand, and they walked in fear up and down the wood. "Will the strange man come with some cakes, Billy?" said little Jane. "By and by, dear Jane," said William ; and soon after, "I wish I had some cakes, Billy," said she. They then looked about with their little eyes to every part of the wood ; and it would have melted a heart as hard as a stone, to see how sad they looked, and how they listened to every sound of wind in the trees. After they had waited a very long time, they tried to fill their bellies with blackberries ; but they soon ate all that were within their reach. Night was now coming on ; and William, who had tried all he could to comfort his little sister, at last wanted comfort himself. So when Jane said once more, "How hungry I am, Billy, I b-e-lieve—I cannot help crying ;" William burst out

a-crying too ; and down they lay upon the cold earth ; and putting their arms round each other's necks, there they starved, and there they died.

Thus were these two pretty harmless babes murdered ; and as no one knew of their death, so there was no one to dig a grave and bury them. In the meantime the wicked uncle thought they had been killed as he ordered ; so he told all the folks who asked about them an artful tale of their having died in London of the small-pox ; and he then took all their fortune to himself, and lived upon it as if it had been his own by good right. But all this did him very little service ; for soon after his wife died ; and as he could not help being very unhappy, and was always thinking, too, that he saw the bleeding children before his eyes, he did not attend at all to his affairs ; so that instead of growing richer, he grew poorer every day. Besides this, his two sons had gone on board a ship to try their fortune abroad,

but they were both drowned at sea, and he became quite wretched, so that his life was a burden to him. When things had gone on in this manner for some years, the ruffian who took pity on the children, and would not kill them, robbed some person in that very wood ; and being pursued, he was laid hold of and brought to prison, and soon after was tried before a judge, and was found guilty : so that he was condemned to be hanged for the crime. As soon as he found what his death must be, he sent for the keeper of the prison, and owned to him all the crimes he had been guilty of in his whole life.

Thus he made known the story of the two children ; and, at the same time, told what part of the wood he had left them to starve in. The news of this matter soon reached the uncle's ears, who was already broken-hearted for the many ills that had happened to himself, and could not bear the load of public shame that he knew must now fall upon

him, so he lay down upon his bed, and died that very day. As soon as the tidings of the death of the two children were made public, proper persons were sent to search the wood for them ; and after a great deal of trouble, the pretty babes were at last found stretched in each other's arms ; with William's arm round the neck of Jane, his face turned close to hers, and his frock pulled over her body. They were quite covered with leaves, which in all that time had never withered ; and on a bush near this cold grave there sat a robin redbreast, watching and chirping ; so that many gentle hearts still think it was this kind bird that did bring the leaves and cover the little babes over with them.



THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

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.

Sore sick he was, and like to die,
No help his life could save ;
His wife by him as sick did lie,
And both possest one grave.

No love between these two was lost,
Each was to other kind,
In love they liv'd, in love they died,
And left two babes behind :





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

*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 controll'd :*

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

*Now, brother, said the dying man,
Look to my children dear,
Be good unto my boy and girl,
No friends else have they here :*



*To God and you I recommend
My children dear this day ;
But little while be sure we have
Within this world to stay.*

*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.*

*With lips as cold as any stone,
They kist their children small :
God bless you both, my children
dear ;
With that the tears did fall.*



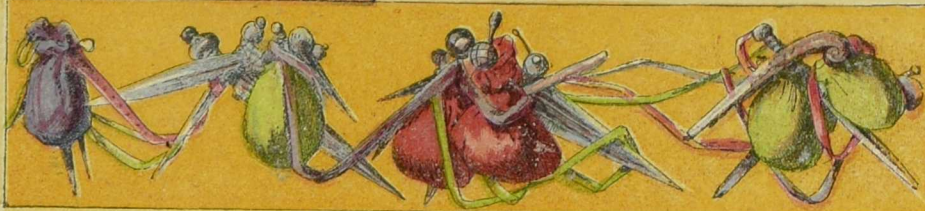


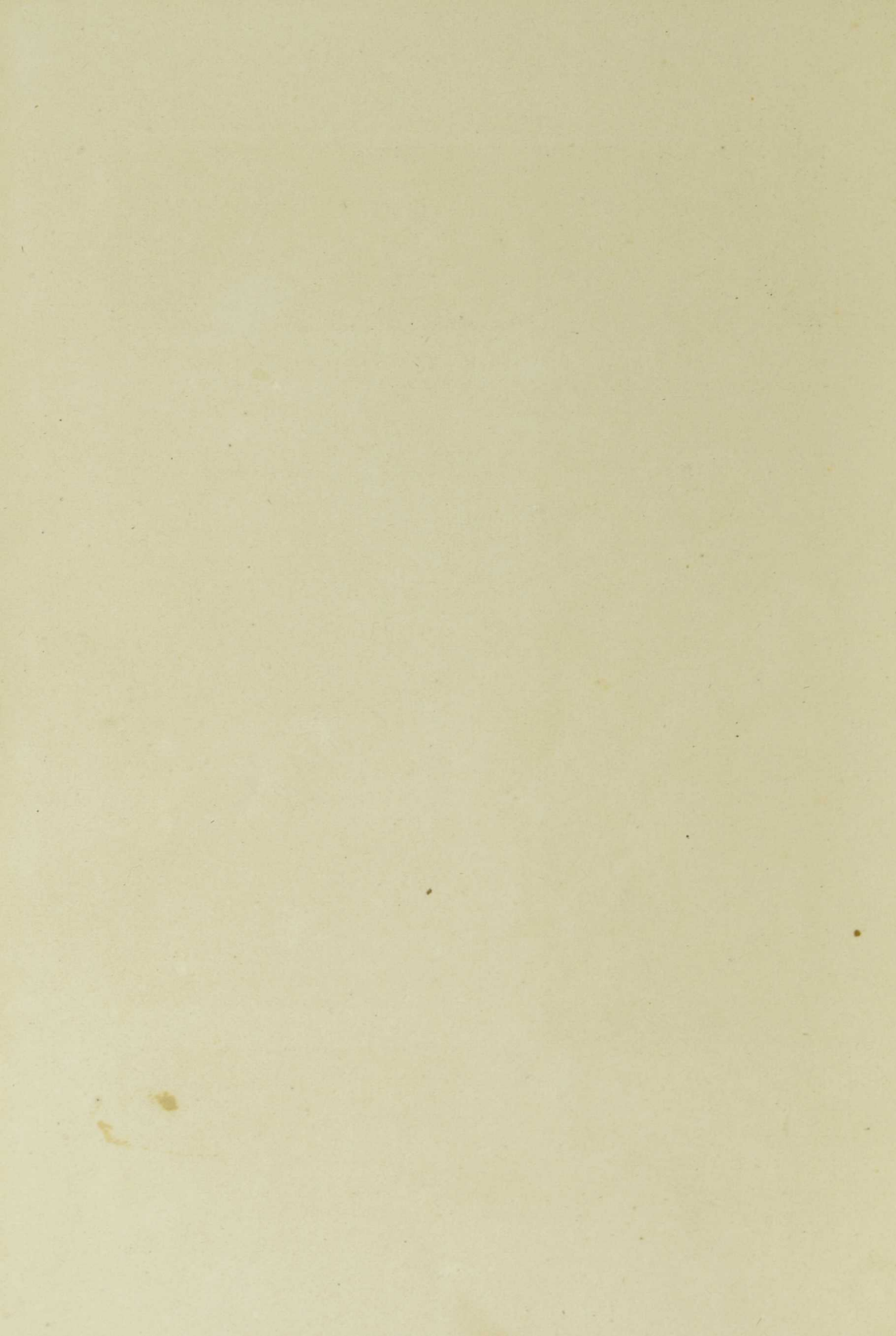
*These speeches then their brother spake
To this sick couple there,
The keeping of your little ones
Sweet sister, do not fear.*

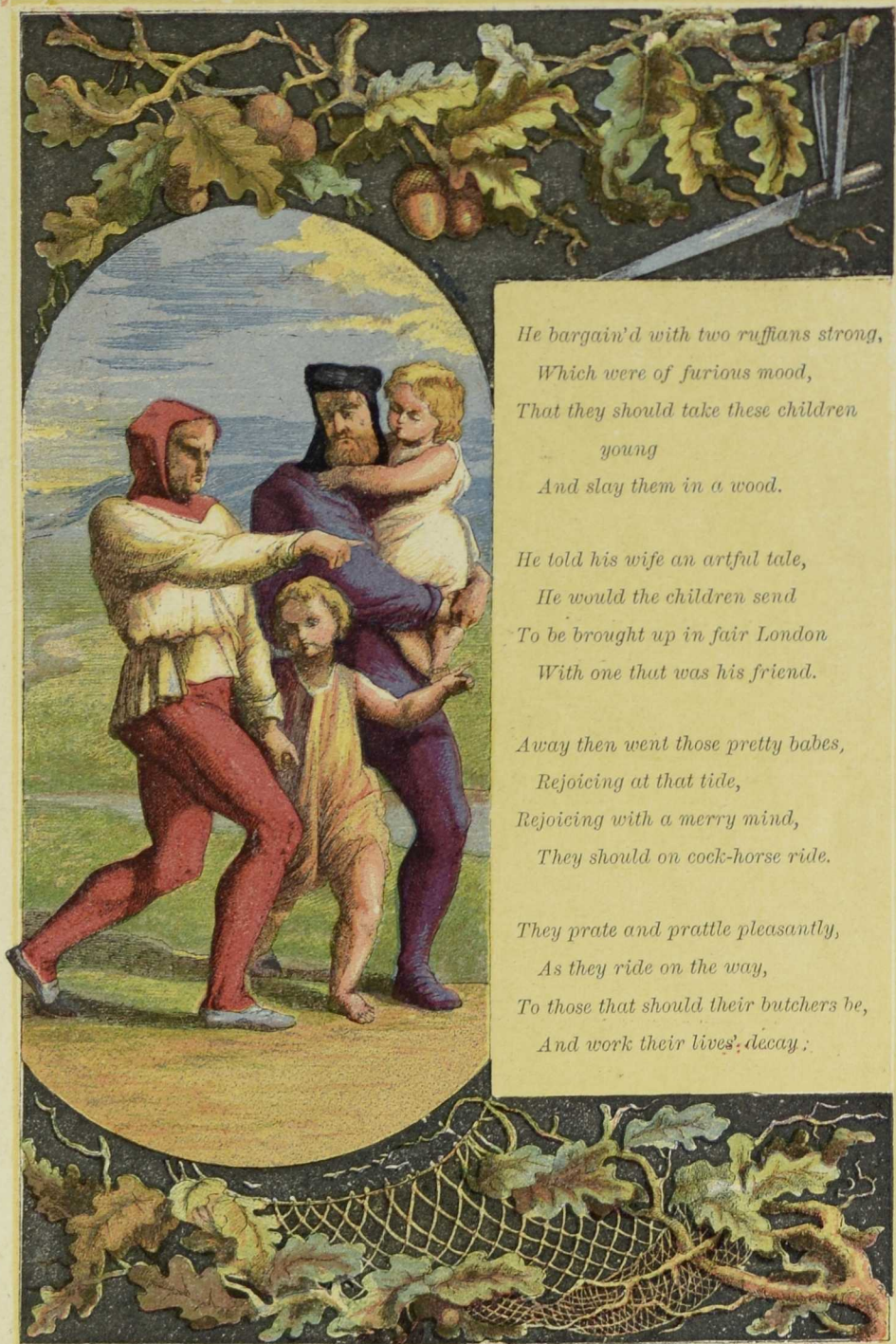
*God never prosper me nor mine,
Nor ought else that I have,
If I do wrong your children dear,
When you are laid in grave.*

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

*He had not kept these pretty babes
A twelvemonth and a day,
But, for their wealth, he did devise
To make them both away.*





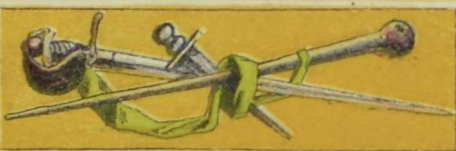


*He bargain'd with two ruffians strong,
Which were of furious mood,
That they should take these children
young
And slay them in a wood.*

*He told his wife an artful tale,
He would the children send
To be brought up in fair London
With one that was his friend.*

*Away then went those pretty babes,
Rejoicing at that tide,
Rejoicing with a merry mind,
They should on cock-horse ride.*

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



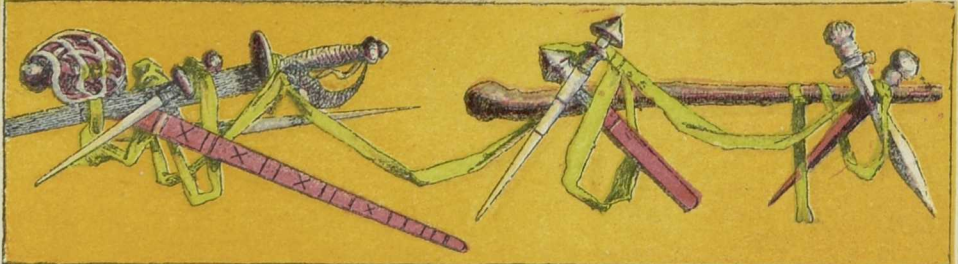
*So that the pretty speech they had,
Made Murder's heart relent ;
And they that undertook the deed,
Full sore did now repent.*

*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 won't agree thereto,
So here they fall to strife :
With one another they did fight,
About the children's life :*

*And he that was of mildest mood,
Did slay the other there,
Within an unfrequented wood :
The babes did quake for fear !*

*He took the children by the hand,
Tears standing in their eye,
And bad them straitway follow him,
And lo! they did not cry :*







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

These pretty babes, with hand in
hand,
Went wandering up and down :
But never more could see the man
Approaching from the town :

Their pretty lips with black-berries,
Were all besmeared and dyed,
And when they saw the darksome
night,
They sat them down and cried.

Thus wandered these poor innocents,
Till death did end their grief,
In one another's arms they died,
As wanting due relief ;



*No burial this pretty pair
Of any man receives,
Till Robin-red-breast piously
Did cover them with leaves.*

*And now the heavy wrath of God
Upon their uncle fell ;
Yea, fearful fiends did haunt his
house,
His conscience felt an hell ;*

*His barns were fir'd, his goods
consum'd,
His lands were barren made,
His cattle died within the field,
And nothing with him stayd.*



And in a voyage to Portugal

Two of his sons did die :

And to conclude, himself was brought

To want and misery :

He pawn'd and mortgaged all his land

Ere seven years came about,

And now at length this wicked act

Did by this means come out :

The fellow, that did take in hand

These children for to kill,

Was for a robbery judg'd to die,

Such was God's blessed will :

Who did confess the very truth,

As here hath been display'd .

Their uncle having died in gaol,

Where he for debt was laid

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.

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