

BEAUTIFUL OLD

BALLAD,

OF THE

BABES

IN THE

WOOD.



Stirling—Printed by M. Randall.

*The Children in the Wood.*

Now ponder well, ye parents dear,  
the words which I shall write,  
A dismal story you shall hear,  
brought forth in time to light.

A merchant of no small account,  
In England dwelt of late,  
Who did in riches far surmount  
most men of his estate.

Yet sickness came and he must die,  
no help his life could save,  
In anguish too his wife did lie,  
death sent them to the grave.

No love between this pair was lost,  
They both were mild and kind,  
Together they gave up the ghost,  
and left two babes behind.

The one a fine and pretty boy,  
not passing six years old  
A girl the next, the mother's joy,  
and cast in beauty's mould.

The father left this little boy  
as it doth plain appear,

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When that his childish days were gone,  
nine hundred pounds a-year.

And to his daughter we are told,  
six thousand pounds to pay  
in value full of British gold,  
upon her marriage-day,

But if these childrne chanc'd to die,  
as death might soon come on,  
The uncle then, none can deny,  
made all the wealth his own.

Pisarius call'd his brother then,  
as on his bed he lay:  
Remember, O my brother dear,  
remember what I say!

This life I quit, and to your care,  
my little babes commend:  
Their youth in hopeful virtue rear,  
their guardian, uncle, friend

Their parents both you must supply,  
they do not know their loss,  
And when you see the tear-swoln eye,  
for pity be not cross.

'Tis in your power now alone,  
their greatest friend to be  
And when that we are dead and gone,  
give bliss, or misery.

If you direct their steps aright,  
 from God expect reward,  
 All actions are within his sight,  
 of which he takes regard.

With clay-cold lips the babes they kiss'd,  
 and gave their last adieu!  
 A heart of stone would melt, I wist,  
 to see a scene so view.

With tears, Androgus made reply,  
 dear brather do not fear;  
 Their every wish I will supply,  
 and be their uncle dear.

God never prosper me nor mine,  
 in whatso'er I have,  
 If e'er I hurt them with design,  
 when you are in the grave.

The parents being dead and gone,  
 the children home he takes,  
 And seems to soften all their moan,  
 and much of them he makes:

But had not kept the little souls,  
 a twelvemonth and a day,  
 But in his breast a scheme there rolls,  
 to take their lives away.

He bargain'd with two ruffians strong,  
 who were of furious mood,

To take away these children young,  
and slay them in the wood ;

Then gave it out, both far and near,  
that he them both did send  
To town, for education there,  
to one who was their friend.

Away the little babes were sent,  
rejoicing at the tide ;  
Which gave them both no small content,  
on horseback for to ride :

They prate and prattle pleasantly,  
as they ride on the way,  
To those who should their butchers be,  
and work their lives decay.

The pretty speeches which they said,  
made one rogue's heart relent,  
For though he undertook the deed,  
he sorely did repent.

The other still more hard of heart,  
was not at all griev'd,  
And vow'd that he would do his part,  
for what he had receiv'd.

The other won't agree thereo,  
which caus'd no little strife ;  
To fight they go right suddenly,  
about the children's life.

And he that was in mildest mood,  
 did slay the other there,  
 Within an unfrequented wood,  
 the babes did quake with fear.

He took the children by the hand,  
 while tears were in their eyes;  
 And for a scheme which he had plan'd,  
 he bid them make no noise.

Then two long miles he did them lead,  
 or hunger they complain,  
 Stay here says he, I'll bring you bread,  
 and soon be here again.

Then hand in hand they took their way,  
 and wander'd up and down;  
 But never more did they survey  
 the man come from the town.

Their pretty lips with blackberries  
 were all besmear'd and dy'd,  
 And when the shades of night arise,  
 they sat them down and cry'd.

These pretty babes thus wander'd long,  
 without the least relief,  
 The woods, the briars, and thorns among,  
 till death ended their grief.

These pretty babes from any man,  
 no funeral rite receive,

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But Robin Redbreast and the Wren,  
did cover them with leaves.

But now the heavy wrath of God  
upon the uncle fell,  
The furies haunt his curs'd abode,  
his conscience felt an hell,

His barns consum'd, his house was frid,  
his lands were barren made,  
His cattle in the fields expir'd,  
and nothing with him staid.

His ships, with both his sons on board,  
were on their voyage left,  
And fate did order him to be,  
with wants and sorrows cross.

His lands all sold and pawned were,  
ere seven years were out:  
Attend, and you shall quickly hear,  
how all things came about.

The fellow who did take in hand  
the children for to kill,  
To die was judged by the land,  
for murder, — by God's will,

The guilty secret in his breast,  
he could no more contain,  
So all the truth he did confess;  
to ease him of his pain.

The uncle did in prison die :  
unpity'd was his fate,  
Ye guardians warning take hereby,  
and never more ingrate.

To helpless infants still be kind,  
and give to each his right.  
For if you do not, soon you'll find,  
God will your deeds requite.

FINIS.