OUR LITTLE TED—a LINCOLNSHIRE TALE.

I'll tell ye of a homely tāle,
    An' it's a tāle 'at's true,
    For thowts on't oftimes māke mé quāil,
    An' my wifé shuthe too!—

Th' first eight year, 'at we wer wed—
    We livd daan i' the Fen,—
    We'd stiffish wo'k ta arn wer bread;
    Though boath wer' young folk then.

    For we'd six little mouths ta fill—
        Six little backs to gear—
        An' shoe th'e r feèt, 'twer a-bit-on-a-pill—
        When méât an' méál wer dear!—

    Bud still the childer' throve an' grēw,—
        Wer allus teight an' cleân,—
        For Mary hed some mettle too,—
        Shed hed—or I'm mistēan!

Ta see 'em cuddled in a row
O' threes, wi' roasy fāces
The Salamanca Corpus: “Our Little Ted: A Lincolnshire Tale” (1866)

So plump an' dimpled,—ye mun know,
My Mary call'd 'em "Gràces!"

Sometimes she couldn't ho'd her soft,
When we got up ta béd;
She'd hug 'em round,—bud one most oft,
An' that wer little Ted.

He wer’n't the o'dest, nor the next,
Bud next ta Nancy came,
Yet he could rëad out ony text
'At boggled th' rest wi' shàme.

It mäde no odds which way wé dropt,
Fro' church or Sunday walk,—
The parson, ni-bors, allus stopt
Oür Ted—to hév a talk.

Ye see he hed such shiney locks
Fell glisterin' down his neck,
Like wävin' go'den barley-shocks,
When sunbéams on 'em fleck!—

For days he'd wander down the läne,
An' sittin' on a stoane,
Up i' th' sky he'd speer an' sträin,
A some'at, I dóánt know on.

I dóánt méán to say as we
Lov'd him more than the rest,
Bud Mary felt the säme as mé—
A diff'rence in wer breast—

For the lad wer' only wanklish mäde,
His strength seemd in his head,
An' that I thowt on Mary prëyd
But why, she nivver sed.—

Well!—I went dyke-in',—down Low Lands,
It wer a threshin' däy.—
The Mester said he'd plenty hands,
Soa I'd noa call to stay—

Now I remember, then ther' câme
A queerish feel about më,
As if to goa, I wer to bläme,
Though they could do wi'out mé

Hows'iver, down I goas, an' wo'kt,—
I'd drawn a chéán o' spits—
When comes 'ur biggest lad,—
He lookt hawf freighten'd inta fits!

O Feyther—feyther—come—mäke häste!
Our Teddy's gotten crusht!—
I heard no moré, laid hoame I räc't,
An' intó th' cottage rusht—

And there upon his little béd
I see 'ur pratty child
All scruncht—an' bloody, like he hed,
Been torn by tigers wild—

An' not a limb of Mary's shook—
An' not a wo'd she sed—
Bud I nivver shall forget her look,—
I thowt she wer struck dead!—

Dead as 'ur Bairn,—bud our'n no more,
Whose silken curly hair
Wer dabbled in red clotty gore
Right down his face so fair.

Her sister helpt to lig him out,
But Mary would be there,
Though all the time she mov'd about,
She nivver shed a tear.

At night some ni-bours kindly took
The childer hoame to sleep;
I set aloane, wi' that Great Book
'At all men ought to keep.

I wonder'd how my Mary could
Keep up her mettle soa—
While in my daz'd eyelids would
Hot tears comé, whether or noa—

She browt a candle in her hand,
The Salamanca Corpus: “Our Little Ted: A Lincolnshire Tale” (1866)

An’ led me up the stair—
An’ then she browt me to a stand
Afore our Teddy there;—

Afore his waxy cheeks an’ brow
Wi’ curls smooth’d round his héád,
—They wer’ not fleckt wi’ gold tints now—
   Bud clam an’ cold instéád!—

She läid the candle down, to shew
   It's leight full on his fáce
It lookt soa peaceful, none would know
   Of sufferin' thére a tràce!

She turnd to me her blue eyes, bright
   As I nivvér seed afore,
Her cheeks wer päle as moon at night,
   Her lips wer’ trem’lin' sore;—

" O Thomas tell me—éáse my mind—
   Hev I sin' we wer' wed,
Neglected thee, or been unkind—
   By wilful passions led?

"Or hev I to our childer been
   A heedless mother? say,
O Thomas say, if thou hast seen
   My Love, my Duty stray?—"n

God bless her heart?—what could I do,
   But grip her to my breast?—
An' tell her she wer’ kind and true
   As ivver man caress’d!—

Up Heavenward then she räis'd her head,
   (Laid on my shoulder broad,) And in a calm low voice she sed,
"I thank Thee—Mighty Lord!"

   An' turnin' to the little cot
She dropt her fáce ta Ted,
An' on the cheeks 'at felt 'em not,
   Her tears down-pourin' sped—
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"My bairn—my darling, now I know
Thy mother's tears may fall,
Upon thy ängel cheeks may flow
Not to come back as gall!

I couldn't speak, I couldn't weep—
My Evil heart I fear'd,
Hed browt this trouble at a léáp—
—It made me daft and skeard.—

I durs'n't touch his yallar hair,
Nor kiss his lips, so thin,
Nor bless him with a mother's prayer,
For fear of the mother's sin!

But now dear Thomas, I can kneel
With thee down by my side—
That méáns wer good, 'at mäkes us feel,
Our Faith, our Patience bide!—"

And dearer, tenderer if ought,
Hes my wife Mary been,
Sin' the day that Teddy's corpse was brought
Hoame, from the Threshing Machine!

Gayton-le Marsh.

J. B. Smedley.