

The Salamanca Corpus: "Our Little Ted: A Lincolnshire Tale" (1866)

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OUR LITTLE TED—A LINCOLNSHIRE TALE.

I'LL tell ye of a hoamly tåle,
An' it's a tåle 'at's true,

For thowts on't oftymes mäke mé quäil,
An' my wifé shuther 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 the'r feèt, 'twer a-bit-on-a-pill—
When méát an' méál wer dear!—

Bud still the childer' throve an' gréw,—
Wer allus teight an' cleän,—
For Mary hed some mettle too,—
Shed hed—or I'm mistëan!

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Ta see 'em cuddled in a row
O' threes, wi' roasy fâces

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

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 rēad out ony text
'At boggled th' rest wi' shāme.

It mādē 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!—

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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 mädē,
His strength seemd in his head,
An' that I thowt on Mary präyd
But why, she nivver sed.—

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

Now I remember, then ther' cāme
A queerish feel about mē,

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As if to goa, I wer to bläme,
Though they could do wi'out mé

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

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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 comê, whether or noa—

She browt a candle in her hand,

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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 héad,
—They wer' not fleckt wi' gold tints now—
Bud clam an' cold instéad!—

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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 tráce!

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

"O Thomas tell me—éase 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?—"

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!—

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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!

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But now dear Thomas, I can kneel
With thee down by my side—
That *méáns wer good*, 'at *mākes 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.

