BAD-TEMPERED BESSIE

There was once a little girl called Bessie who had a very bad temper. She was an only child, and she liked having her own way. If she didn’t get what she wanted she would scream and bite and kick.

Her mother and father loved her very much, and they paid a lot of money to a nurse, who looked after her, made her beautiful frocks and coats, and took her out for walks.

Bessie had lovely toys, and so many dolls that she had forgotten some of their names. “You ought to be a very happy little girl,” said Nurse to her. “You ought not to fly into rages like this, and bite and kick and pinch.”

Nobody was allowed to smack Bessie. Even
her mother didn’t smack her when she bit or kicked. So she got worse and worse, and nobody liked letting their children go to tea with Bessie, because so often they came home crying. The naughty little girl had pinched them or bitten them hard!

“Bessie, why did you bite poor Jane?” her Mother would say.

“Because she wanted to play with my toys,” Bessie would answer. She had never shared her toys with anyone, and she always flew into a rage if any other child wanted to play with them.

One day Bessie was playing out in the garden alone. She had a train that went round and round on its lines, and a signal that she could put up or down. She had three lovely dolls, a pink teddy bear and a long-tailed toy monkey to play with—so, you see, she really was a very lucky girl indeed.

“Now you play alone for a little while, because I want to wash and iron out your pink silk frock,” said Nurse, and she went off to the house.

Bessie wound up the toy engine, set it on the lines, fastened the trucks to it and set it going. Round and round it went, and the signal
Bad-Tempered Bessie

worked up and down. It was really very exciting.

Somebody in the next garden heard the noise of the train going round and round and round. It was the big boy who lived next door. Bessie had often seen him and she liked the look of him. He was so big, at least eleven years old, he went to a boys’ school, he had a bicycle of his own, and he had a dog as well.

His name was Tom. He looked over the wall, when he heard the noise of the clockwork train. He thought it looked fine. It was a much better one than his. He called to Bessie.

“Hi! Shall I come over and play with you? I could bring my railway station and my tunnel if you like.”

Bessie looked up and saw the big boy. She felt rather grand that he should ask to play with her. “All right,” she said. “Bring your station and your tunnel.”

The boy disappeared. Then, after a while, he came back, carrying a green tunnel, that just fitted over the lines, and a fine wooden station, complete with porters, barrows, little trunks and passengers. It was really very exciting.

Tom was fine to play with, because he pretended so well. He pretended to be the signalman.
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He pretended to be the guard. He pretended to be the engine-driver, and the things he said made Bessie laugh.

"Now we'll have an accident," he said. "The engine must run off the lines and I'll be a doctor and you be a nurse, and look after the poor hurt people."

"I don't want there to be an accident," said Bessie. "It's my train. I don't want it to run off the lines."

"Don't be silly," said Tom. "I'm playing with you, and you've got to do what I want sometimes. I keep doing what you say."

Bessie banged her fist on the ground. "There isn't to be an accident!" she said.

But there was! Tom arranged the lines so that the engine and carriages ran right off it and tumbled over. Then, dear me, Bessie lost her temper!

She kicked Tom hard on the ankle. He looked at her in surprise. Then she pinched his arm as hard as she could.

"Here, what are you doing?" said Tom. "You can't behave like this!"

But Bessie had behaved like that dozens of times before, and nothing was going to stop her
Bad-Tempered Bessie

now. She went close to Tom, and dug her sharp little teeth into his shoulder.

The boy looked at her. "Oh," he said, "Is this a kind of game, or what? Well, I can play it, too, Bessie. It's only good fun if we both play it, you know. Now, keep still while I kick you!"

But Bessie didn't. Instead she kicked out at Tom again and caught him on the knee. Tom grinned and rubbed it. "My turn now!" he said. "Look out!"

He kicked out and caught Bessie on the ankle. She gave a yell of surprise and pain.

"Fine game, isn't it!" said Tom. "I hope you are enjoying it. Now, do you want to pinch me or bite me again? Come on, we'll have some fun!"

Bessie quite lost her temper, and she flew at Tom, pinching hard and biting with her sharp little teeth. Tom shook her off like a big dog shaking off a puppy.

"Now my turn!" he said. "Here we go! Fine game this, isn't it?"

He pinched Bessie hard on the back. Then he pinched her on both arms. She squealed loudly. Then Tom bit her on the hand, and she began to cry and sob.
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"Oh, you hurt me; oh, you wicked boy; oh, you hurt me! I'll tell Nurse. I'll tell Mummy. I'll tell Daddy."

"But we are only having a game," said Tom, pretending to be very puzzled. "Bessie, you did all those things to me, and I didn't cry and howl. I just did them to you in my turn. Why should you cry and howl?"

"Because you hurt me!" sobbed Bessie, who had never in her life been hurt by anyone before.

"Well, but you hurt me" said Tom. "Didn't you know that biting, and kicking and pinching hurt people? Perhaps you didn't. Well, shall we start all over again, so that you can really be certain that things like that hurt? I don't mind playing that game with you, so long as we both play it. • Come on, a pinch for a pinch, a bite for a bite, a kick for a kick. And this time try not to yell."

"I don't want to pinch you or bite you," said Bessie, knowing quite well what would happen if she did. She wiped her eyes. "I've often pinched and bitten people, but I didn't really know how much it hurt till you did it to me. I don't like it."

"Well, don't do it then, silly," said Tom. "I
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quite liked you till you lost your temper and changed into a nasty spiteful little tiger. Why did you spoil it all? We were having such fun. Now I shan’t want to come and play with you any more. I can see you’re only a silly baby who wants to bite and kick, instead of a big girl who can play like a boy, and keep her temper.”

Tom got up, and went to the wall, taking his station and his tunnel with him. Bessie suddenly felt very lonely and sad.

“Don’t go,” she said. “I’m not really a baby. I suppose I’ve got a bad temper.”

“I should jolly well think you have,” said Tom. “Well—I’ll come and play with you again—and perhaps bring my dog Tinker, too—if you’ll promise something?”

“What?” asked Bessie.

“Promise me that if you want to play that biting, kicking game again, you’ll not cry if I play it too, and bite and kick in my turn,” said Tom solemnly. “That’s only fair, you know. Isn’t it?”

“Yes. That’s quite fair,” said Bessie. “All right, I promise. But I jolly well won’t bite you or kick you. Your fingers are too hard
your feet are too quick and your teeth are too sharp to play that game!"

"Same to you," said Tom, with a grin. "Well—shall we play trains again before I go?"

"Yes," said Bessie. "And we'll have another accident. And I'll be the nurse and you the doctor."

After a while Nurse came down the garden. She had a look at Bessie. "I thought I heard you crying, just now," she said. "Tom wasn't being unkind to you, was he?"

"He was just playing a game I was playing," said Bessie. "That's all. He wasn't being unkind. I like playing with him."

Nurse went, and Tom grinned at Bessie.

"What a nice little girl you can be!" he said. "You remind me of the little girl in the nursery rhyme—you know—when she was good, she was very, very good, and when she was bad, she was horrid!"

Bessie thought of all the times she had been unkind to other children. She certainly had been a horrid little girl!

"Come to-morrow and bring Tinker," she begged Tom, when he went. "I promise not to bite or kick."
Bad-Tempered Bessie

“Well, for goodness' sake don’t try any bad-tempered tricks on Tinker!” said Tom, climbing back over the wall. “I warn you, if you bite him, he’ll bite you much harder than I did!”

But Bessie never bit, pinched or kicked anyone again. As soon as she had found someone who played that horrid game just as well as she did, she stopped. Her mother was most astonished.

“I wonder what has cured you,” she said. “I’m very glad, whatever it was.”
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"It was Tom who stopped me," said Bessie. "He bit me back, and he kicked me hard and pinched me too."

"The cruel, bad boy!" said her mother.

"He wasn’t, he wasn’t!" said Bessie. "He’s my best friend. I was the cruel bad person, not Tom. He showed me how much it hurt—and now I never, never do it!"

Bessie was right. Tom wasn’t cruel or bad—but just as sensible as could be! What do you think?
JIMMY'S CRICKET BAT

When he was eight years old Jimmy suddenly found that he loved playing cricket. He had never liked it before, because it seemed to him that he spent most of the time trying to stop balls that other boys hit far off with their cricket bats.

He was smaller than the others, and they hardly ever let him bowl or bat. But one day, when two of the bigger boys were away, Harry, who was the leader, called to Jimmy.

"Here, you!" he shouted. "Go in and bat. See what you can do."

"I haven't got a bat," said Jimmy. All the other boys had a bat of their own. Jimmy felt ashamed to say he hadn't one.
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"I'll lend you mine," said Harry. "The only thing is—it's much too big for you. Never mind. Hit out with it, little boy, and see what you can do!"

Jimmy felt proud to use Harry's big bat. It was very heavy. He took it out on to the pitch, put himself in the right position, and waited for the ball to come to him. He hit out at it.

"Smack!" The ball rolled right across the field, jumping a little as it ran.

"Well hit, sir!" yelled Harry, and Jimmy felt terribly proud. He smacked at the ball again when it came. This time he hit it right to the very edge of the field, and he and the other batsman got four runs. It was fun, great fun.

"I like cricket after all!" thought Jimmy to himself. "I believe I'd be good at it!"

That afternoon Harry put him on to bowl, too, and he sent the ball whizzing away to the batsman in fine style. And he actually bowled two boys right out, hitting the stumps right in the middle.

"Good work, young one," said big Harry, afterwards. "Now, look here—you get a bat of your own, see? You can't play with big bats
Jimmy’s Cricket Bat

like this. You get one just right for your size. You’re just a shrimp!"

Jimmy ran home happily. He told his mother all about it. “Can you buy me a bat, Mummy?” he asked.

“Well, they cost a lot of money,” said his mother. “You must try and save up yourself, Jimmy.”

So Jimmy did. How hard he saved! He didn’t spend even a penny on himself for days and days. He ran errands for people, he worked hard in all sorts of ways to earn a penny or a ha’penny for his money-box. He had seen a beautiful little bat in the toy-shop, just his size. He meant to buy it as soon as ever he could.

But just as he was about to buy it, a dreadful thing happened. He was practising bowling with an old cricket ball, and it slipped out of his hand as he threw it, flew behind him instead of in front of him, shot over the wall, and fell crash! into Mr. Johnson’s cucumber frame.

Mr. Johnson was in his garden. He heard the crash and he saw Jimmy’s scared face peeping over the wall.

“I’m so sorry, Mr. Johnson,” said Jimmy. “It was an accident.”
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"I shan't be angry, but you must pay for the broken glass," said Mr. Johnson.

So all poor Jimmy's savings went to pay for another pane of glass for Mr. Johnson's cucumber frame. It was very sad and Jimmy couldn't help tears rolling on to his pillow that night, as he thought of how hard he would have to save again, before he got enough money for his bat.

He played a bit of cricket, and Harry was pleased with him.

"You'll make a good bowler, and a fine batsman," he said, one day. "In fact, I shouldn't be surprised if I don't put you into the cricket team, to play against the boys of the next village, in the summer holidays!"

"Oooh!" said Jimmy, thrilled. "No boy under ten has ever played in your team before, Harry. I'm only eight."

"Yes, but you're very keen, and you've got a good eye for both batting and bowling," said Harry. "But for goodness' sake get a bat of your own! You'll spoil your style by always playing with bats too heavy for you! Get a bat somehow or other, if you want to play in the match."

Poor Jimmy! It was easy to say "get a bat"
Jimmy’s Cricket Bat

but it wasn’t easy to do it. His mother really hadn’t any money to spare for things like cricket bats. His father was dead. So he had only his own money to use, and it was very difficult to save enough.

“If only I hadn’t broken that glass!” thought Jimmy. “The match will come before I’ve been able to save up any money again.”

He got sixpence for picking gooseberries in old Mrs. James’s garden. Then one day Mrs. Williams gave him a whole shilling for weeding her kitchen garden. It was hard work and took him five evenings! But still—a shilling! That was a lot to put into his money-box at once.

After that he couldn’t seem to get any sixpences or shillings at all—only ha’pennies or pennies. It took a lot of those to make even a shilling.

“Got your bat yet?” asked Harry, one day. Jimmy shook his head. “I’m still saving up,” he said.

“Well, get one before the match, youngster,” said Harry. “And by the way—there’s a special cricket practice next Saturday morning. Come to it if you can.”

“Right, I will,” said Jimmy. But when
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Saturday morning came his mother called him. Jimmy did hope she didn’t want him to do anything. But she did.

“Jimmy,” she said. “I want you to go to your Aunt Jane’s. You know she is moving next week, don’t you? She wants someone to give her a hand in sorting out all kinds of old things in her loft. I can’t go. But you can. You can easily do the running up and down the stairs for her.”

“Oh, Mummy—but there’s a very special cricket practice on this morning,” said Jimmy in dismay. “I really must go.”

“Well, you are playing cricket this afternoon, aren’t you?” said his mother. “Once in a day is quite enough. You run off to your aunt’s now, like a good boy.”

Well, Jimmy had to go. His aunt had a bad foot which made her limp. He really couldn’t let her go up and down the stairs, if he could help her. So he went off looking rather sad.

“Hello,” said Aunt Jane. “Have you come to help me? You are a kind boy. I hope you weren’t going to do anything else—play a game, or something.”

“Well, I was, really,” said Jimmy. “But it’s
not important. You’ve got a bad foot, so I’ll do the running up and down for you.”

Well, Jimmy did work hard that morning. It was really rather fun, too, because up in the loft were all kinds of mysterious old boxes that had to be opened and looked through.

There were boxes of old clothes, funny old dresses and coats that smelt musty. There were boxes of china, that had once belonged to Aunt Jane’s mother. There were trunks of old papers and books.

“Take these to the rubbish-heap,” Aunt Jane would say. “Take these out into the yard. A good brush will put them right. Now, carry that china very carefully. I think I can sell it. Take those papers to the bonfire.”

Jimmy ran up and down the stairs, in and out the garden all morning. He was a strong little boy, but by the end of the morning he was quite tired! He looked at the boxes in the loft. Only one more left. Good!

“Open the lid and see what’s in it, Jimmy,” said his aunt. “It belonged to my brother. He went away to Canada, you know, and he hasn’t been home since. I expect it’s old clothes of his.”

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It was. Dusty old jerseys and stockings and shirts. But right at the bottom was something else. Jimmy lifted it out.

It was a beautiful cricket bat, wrapped carefully in brown paper. Jimmy pulled it out.

"Oh," he said, "look here, Aunt Jane! What a lovely bat! And what are all these names scribbled on it?"

Aunt Jane looked. "Oh, they are the names of very famous cricketers," she said. "Look, that's Jack Hobbs's signature. He signed his name there. Your uncle was a good cricketer, you know, ever since he was a boy as small as you. This was his very first bat, and he always kept it because he got famous cricketers to write their names on it for him. He was very proud of it."

"What are you going to do with it?" said Jimmy, looking at the bat with great delight. "Fancy all the great cricketers putting their names on it like that! Golly, what ever would Harry say if he saw it?"

"Well, I suppose a keen little cricketer like you has already got a bat?" said Aunt Jane. "You don't want it, do you? I shall have to give it away to someone."

"Aunt Jane!" yelled Jimmy, giving his sur-
Jimmy’s Cricket Bat

prised aunt such a fierce hug that she almost fell over. “Aunt Jane, I haven’t got a bat—and I badly want one. And this is the very finest one I ever saw, the very finest. And if I have it I can play in the match. Harry said I could.”

“Good gracious, whatever’s all this excitement?” said Aunt Jane, with a laugh. “Of course you can have it. I was wondering what to give you as a reward for working so hard for me this morning. You take the bat, dear. And I shall give you a fine new cricket ball as well.”

Jimmy looked as if he was going to give his aunt a very fierce hug again, and she moved away hastily.

“Now don’t choke me again,” she said. “Look—it’s near your dinner-time. Thank you, my dear, for being such a help. Go home now and take your bat with you. Order yourself a fine new ball from the toy-shop and have it put down on my bill. And just see that you hit the ball well and make lots of runs with that cricket bat!”

“I will, oh, I will!” promised Jimmy, happily. You should have seen Harry’s face when Jimmy showed him the bat.

“Ooh, it’s wonderful,” he said. “What a
lucky fellow you are, Jimmy! That will be a lucky bat, I’ll bet! Let’s see what you can do with it this afternoon—and maybe I’ll put you in the match two weeks ahead.”

Well, you should have seen how that bat worked! Smack, smack, smack—it never missed a single ball, and Jimmy got almost as many runs as Harry that afternoon. Harry was pleased with him.

“You can be in the match,” he said. “And mind you do as well as you did this afternoon, see? I don’t know where you got that bat from—but it’s a thumping good one!”
**Jimmy’s Cricket Bat**

Nobody but Mother knew that Jimmy had got the bat through giving up cricket practice and going to help his aunt one morning. Mother was pleased, of course. "It was a splendid reward for you, Jimmy," she said. "I shall come to the match and clap like anything when you get the runs!"

The match is this afternoon and I have a feeling that Jimmy will get as many runs as anyone. He is so proud of that bat—and I’m not surprised, are you?
OLD MISTER MEANIE

There was once a rich old man who was very mean. He lived in a big house, had fourteen servants to look after him, and he always wore a very tall and shiny top-hat.

His name was Mister Meanie, and it was a very good name for him indeed. He owned all the little cottages around, and he made the gnomes and pixies who lived in them pay him a lot of money for rent.

One day little Silver-wings was ill. The doctor came, and she had to stay in bed. So she couldn’t do any work, and didn’t earn any money. Her medicines cost a lot, and poor Silver-wings was sad.

“I shan’t be able to pay my rent,” she said.
Old Mister Meanie

"I must go to Mister Meanie and ask him to wait for a week or two. Then I can get the money if I work very hard. He is so rich that I am sure he won’t mind waiting a week or two."

So she went to Mister Meanie and told him that she had been ill, and couldn’t pay the rent just yet.

"But I will as soon as I can," she promised.

"I never heard of such a thing!" cried old Mister Meanie. "Asking me to let you off your rent! It’s my house, isn’t it, that you are living in? Well, you must pay the rent at once!"

"Mister Meanie, I’m not asking you to let me off the rent," said poor Silver-wings. "Only to let me have a little time to pay."

"Well, you can have till to-morrow, and that’s all," said old Meanie. "If you don’t pay me to-morrow, out you go!"

"But I can’t leave the dear little garden I’ve made, and what about all my pigeons, and, oh dear, I do love my cherry tree so, and it’s going to have so many cherries this year," said Silver-wings, beginning to sob.

"You can leave your garden and your pigeons, and your cherries for somebody else," said
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Mister Meanie. "Now I'm going out for a walk. Good-bye."

He put his tall top-hat on his big round head and set off. Silver-wings went home crying.

On the way she met her friend, Light-foot.

"What's the matter?" said the pixie in surprise. "Why are you so upset?"

Silver-wings told him. He was very angry indeed. "I shall go at once and tell Mister Meanie what I think of him!" he said. "I shall, I shall!"

"But, Light-foot, that won't do any good," said poor Silver-wings. "He will only turn you out of your dear little cottage, too. Oh dear, I
Old Mister Meanie

don’t want to leave my nice little garden, and my white pigeons, and my beautiful cherry tree. I planted it myself from a cherry-stone, Light-foot."

"I know you did," said Light-foot, and he put his arms round Silver-wings to comfort her. "I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll go after old Meanie, and beg him to give you a whole week more to pay your rent, and somehow or other I will get the money for you! I’ll do some of my pictures and sell them!"

Light-foot was very clever with his pencil and brush. He could draw any of the pixies and fairies and gnomes in the village. He sold his pictures, and that was how he made his money.

Silver-wings felt grateful to him. "All right," she said. "You go and ask old Meanie. He’s gone for a walk up the hill."

Light-foot sped after him. But old Meanie would not alter his mind at all. No—Silver-wings must pay him the very next day, or go away.

Light-foot turned away sadly. The wind was strong on the hill and fluttered his wings as he went down the hill-side. He heard a sudden
cry from Mister Meanie and turned to see what had happened.

Meanie’s big top-hat had blown off. It flew down the hill, bumping up and down as it went.

“Get it for me, get it!” cried Meanie. But Light-foot wasn’t going to bother to do anything for such a mean old man. He just laughed loudly and went on his way.

But there, caught in a bush at the bottom of the hill, was old Mister Meanie’s big top-hat. Light-foot stared at it. Then he took it and put it on his own head. It came right down over his nose! He looked very funny.

He danced into the village with the top-hat over his nose. Everyone laughed to see him.

Then Light-foot had a simply marvellous idea. It made him chuckle loudly. He ran indoors, took off the top-hat, got out his paints, pencil and brushes, and set to work on a picture.

It was Mister Meanie’s picture! Light-foot drew the old man’s face—his big nose, his small eyes, his shaggy eyebrows, his long whiskers! Silver-wings came in to see it and she cried out in surprise.

“It’s exactly like old Meanie! What are you going to do with the picture, Light-foot?”
“You’ll see!” said Light-foot, painting in Meanie’s rather big ears. “There—it’s finished!”

Light-foot cut out his picture neatly—round the ears, round the chin—and there was old Mister Meanie’s head, as large as life, exactly like him!

Light-foot pasted it on some wood. He stuck the piece of wood on to a post, and then put the top-hat on top, so that it really seemed as if Mister Meanie’s head was there, crowned with his big top-hat.

“Now then—we’ll take it to the fair on the common,” said Light-foot. “I know the man who runs it. He will let me put up this picture
of old Meanie, and charge people a penny a throw. There are a lot of people who would like to throw something very, very hard at old Meanie."

"Yes, old Mother Hubbard would," said Silver-wings. "Mister Meanie took so much money from her that for a whole week the cupboard was bare, and she and her dog had nothing to eat."

"And when Dame Tiptoc's baby was ill, Mister Meanie wouldn't let her off her rent for a week or two, and she couldn't have the doctor," said Light-foot. "So the baby nearly died. She would like to throw something at Meanie, too."

The two of them carried the funny picture and hat together up to the common, where the fair was to be held that day. Mr. Run-Around, who owned the fair, laughed to see it.

"Yes—you stick it where you like!" he said. "I'll have a good few throws at it, you may be sure. Mister Meanie always charges me ten times as much as he should for using this bit of common for my fair—and really he shouldn't charge anything at all."

Well, Meanie's picture and top-hat were soon stuck up at one side of the fair. When the fair opened, all the little folk of the village came to
Old Mister Meanie

it. There were roundabouts and swings, coconut shies and all kinds of fun.

It wasn’t long before everyone found Mister Meanie’s picture and top-hat.

"Penny a throw!" cried Light-foot. "Have a wooden ball and throw it hard! Knock off his hat! Come on, a penny a throw!"

"Perhaps I shan’t hate old Meanie so much if I knock off his hat," said Dame Tiptoe, and she bought six pennyworth of balls from Light-foot.

Crack! The very first one hit the picture on the nose. How the crowd laughed.

The second ball missed, and so did the third. The fourth ball hit the hat and made a dent in it.

"It’s his own hat!" yelled Light-foot. "Hit it again, Dame Tiptoe."

Dame Tiptoe missed with her fifth ball, but the sixth one sent the hat right off into the grass. How the crowd clapped and cheered!

"Now, who’s next?" said Light-foot. "Who hates old Meanie? Put your hate into a wooden ball and get rid of it. Don’t keep it inside you. You’ll feel better when it’s outside and gone! Put your hate into a ball and throw it hard!"

It was surprising how many people disliked, hated or feared the mean old man. Quite a long
line of them came to buy the balls and throw them. Time after time the picture was hit with a smack, and soon Mister Meanie’s nose, eyes and mouth began to disappear as the balls wore the paint away.

The top-hat was sent to the ground many times. It was soon full of dents and holes. The money poured into the bag that Silver-wings held, and her eyes grew bright and happy. Now she would be able to pay her rent easily!

The crowd enjoyed itself thoroughly. But soon there came a warning cry.

“Here comes old Meanie himself!”

Light-foot hadn’t time to take away the picture and the top hat. Mister Meanie came striding up to look at it. But the picture was now so smudged and blurred that he could not see it was himself.

“What’s this?” he said.

“It’s—it’s the picture of a nasty old man,” said Light-foot. “I am selling balls to throw at it.”

“A very mean old man,” said Dame Tiptoe, who was nearby. “We’ve all had a throw at him! We don’t like him a bit.”

“Really? Well—I’ll have some balls,” said
Old Mister Meanie

Mister Meanie. "I'll throw a few at him and knock his top-hat off!"

So, to Light-foot's great delight, old Meanie himself threw the wooden balls at his own picture and hat. He was a very good shot, too. He hit his own picture several times and sent his top-hat spinning to the ground. The crowd clapped heartily, and Mister Meanie felt clever. He bought some more balls. He enjoyed showing how well he could throw.

"Oh, he's paying for his own rent now!" giggled Silver-wings, as she threw Meanie's money into the bag. "Oh dear, what would he say if he knew he was throwing balls at himself?"
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At the end of the day there was a great deal of money in the bag. Light-foot counted it up. "Here's the money for your rent," he said to Silver-wings. "And here's some to buy a new top-hat for Meanie. I'll have to do that because I took his and it's all spoilt. And look at all this money left over. What about giving a grand party to all the children in the village, Silver-wings?"

"Of course!" said the pixie, pleased. "The best party that ever was!"

Light-foot bought a new top-hat and he took it to Meanie. Meanie looked at it in surprise. "I found your old one and used it," said Light-foot. "So I have bought you another."

"How did you use it?" said Meanie, in astonishment. "It would be far too big for you."

"Well—you saw how I used it," said Light-foot, grinning suddenly. "Up at the fair. There was the picture of a mean old man—don't you remember?—who wore a top-hat, and everyone threw wooden balls at him."

Mister Meanie stared at Light-foot, and went a very bright red. "Was the picture me?" he asked, in a very small voice.

Light-foot nodded. "Yes. What a lot of
Old Mister Meanie

enemies you must have, Mister Meanie, to make so many people pay money to throw something at your top-hat! Well—that money will pay Silver-wings' rent for her—and it paid for a new top-hat—and it is going to pay for a fine party for the village children! So, for once in a way, you have done something good—though you didn't know it! Good-bye!"

Light-foot went—and left a very much ashamed and unhappy Mister Meanie. It is a dreadful thing to be hated, a dreadful thing to have so many enemies. It made Mister Meanie think very hard indeed.

And do you know what he is going to do? He is going to that children's party—with a balloon, a bag of sweets and a present for every child! Well, it's never too late to mend, is it? 

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TOO-LITTLE TOMMY

Tommy was the smallest boy in the road. All the other boys and girls who lived near were older and bigger than he was. It was such a pity.

"Let me play catch with you!" he begged them. But they shook their heads.

"You're too little, Tommy. You could never catch any of us."

"But I can run so fast," said Tommy. So he could, for he had strong little legs that twinkled in and out as he ran.

"Let me play ball with you," he said, another day.

"You're too little, Tommy," said the others. "You would drop the ball. You couldn't catch well enough."
Too-Little Tommy

"I can catch very well," said Tommy. And so he could, because he practised all by himself at home, throwing the ball high, and then catching it as it fell.

"Let me play Red Indians, please let me play Red Indians with you," said Tommy, when he heard the children making loud war-whoops and rearing round catching each other, with feathers stuck in their hair.

"You’re too little, Tommy," they said, "You would be frightened if you were caught and tied to a tree."

"I would not," said Tommy. "I’m brave. Once I ran two big thorns into my hand, and I let the doctor take them out and didn’t cry."

"Well—you’re too little, anyhow," said the children. And soon poor Tommy was called Too-Little Tommy, because he was the smallest, and nobody wanted him to play games with them in case he spoilt the fun.

Tommy was upset and angry. They might give him a chance! He was little, but he could run and catch and he never cried when he fell down, never. All the same, Too-Little Tommy felt like crying when he saw the others riding Jim’s bicycle up and down the road. He would
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have liked a ride, too, but he knew it would be no use asking.

Too-Little Tommy went into the garden-shed, put his fingers into his ears so that he might not

hear the ring-ring-of the bicycle bell, and shut his eyes tight to stop the tears from coming. He didn’t hear his Uncle William calling him. He didn’t hear his uncle walking round the garden looking for him.

He just sat there in the corner of the shed,
Too-Little Tommy

fingers tightly in his ears, and eyes squeezed up to nothing, a very small and sad little boy.

His uncle popped his head into the garden-shed, and saw Too-Little Tommy there, and he was most astonished to see what he was doing.

“What’s the matter, Tommy?” he asked. Tommy didn’t hear, and he didn’t see his uncle either. Uncle William went right up to him and put his hand on his shoulder.

“Tommy! What are you doing?”

Tommy jumped. He took his fingers out of his ears, opened his eyes—and saw his uncle.

“Oh—hallo!” he said, going very red.

“Tommy, what were you doing?” said Uncle William. “Why were you sitting here, deaf and blind? What’s the matter, old chap?”

“I don’t want to tell you,” said Tommy, blinking his eyes very quickly, in case a tear did manage to squeeze out. “It’s nothing.”

“Now look here, old fellow—you and I have always been the best of friends, haven’t we?” said Uncle William. “Well, what’s the good of a friend if you don’t let him know your troubles? I shall feel very hurt and unhappy if you don’t tell me what’s the matter. I might be able to help—and think how pleased I should be then!”

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“Oh,” said Tommy. “Well, you can’t help, I’m afraid. I’m upset because I’m too little. I’m always too little for everything—too little to play catch, to play ball, to play Red Indians, to ride a bicycle—everything! You can’t make me big, can you? I’ll just have to grow. But the worst of it is that the others will grow, too, so I shall always be Too-Little Tommy!”

“Is that all that is the matter?” asked Uncle William. “Well, well, I think I can put that right. Come home with me and we’ll see what we can find to put things right.”

Uncle William lived with Tommy’s grandmother. They went together to her house, and Uncle William called to Granny.

“Mother! Where are all the things I had when I was a little boy like Tommy here? Down in the cellar?”

“Yes,” said Granny, coming out of the sitting-room, and giving Tommy a kiss. “Whatever do you want them for? To give to Tommy? He doesn’t want old things like that!”

It all sounded rather exciting. Tommy and Uncle William went down into the cellar and rummaged about among old boxes there. “This is the one I want,” said Uncle William. He


Too-Little Tommy

opened a brass-bound trunk, and Tommy looked with delight on what was inside.

There was a fine Red Indian suit, trousers, tunic and all. The head-dress was marvellous, with bright feathers standing up all round and hanging down the back, too. There was even a small wooden chopper to go with the dress.

There was a big sailing-ship, half as big as Tommy! My word, it was a beauty. Its sails were as good as new. Its name was Mary Ann.

There was a box of conjuring tricks, and Uncle William at once showed Tommy how to do some of them. The little boy was very quick indeed, and he soon learnt how to make an egg disappear from a bag and come back into it. He learnt how to tie a hanky into knots, rap it with a wand, and lo and behold, there it was all untied again!

Then there was a football. What a fine big one it was—almost a grown-up one. Uncle William blew it up, and the two kicked it round the cellar, making such a noise that Granny shouted down to know what was going on.

“Now, you can have all these,” said Uncle William. “I meant to wait till you were a bit bigger, but I can see you don’t like being Too-
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Little Tommy at all, so you can be Much-Bigger Tommy, and have these things for your own. Now listen, you play with them where the others can see you, and if they come to ask you if they can play too, simply say: ‘I’d like you to, but you are too big!’"

“Oh, that will be rather funny,” said Tommy, laughing. “I’ve been too little, now they’ll be too big! But, Uncle, I would like the others to play with me, really.”

“Well, you can let them when they beg and beg you,” said Uncle William. “It won’t do them any harm to have to wait awhile. You’ve had to wait a long time!”

Well, Too-Little Tommy had a fine time after that! In the afternoon he put on his Red Indian suit, and, he did look grand. It was a bit big for him, so he had to turn up the trousers and turn up the sleeves, and Mother had to make the head-band a little smaller. He took the chopper, and, with the gay feathers all round his head and down his back, he went into his front garden to play.

You should have heard him howl and yell, and do war-whoops! You should have seen him do a war-dance round and round the lawn! You
Too-Little Tommy

should have seen him lashing out at pretend-enemies with his wooden chopper!

The other children came to watch. They thought Tommy looked fine. “Come out and play!” they said. “Do lend us your chopper! Do let us try on your head-dress. Come out and play!”

“You’re too big,” said Tommy. “Much too big for me to play with.”

Then he got out his football and began to kick it round the lawn. Harry and Lennie, the two biggest boys, looked at it with amazement.

“I say! What a wonderful football! It’s almost as big as a man’s. Come out and let’s have a game, Tommy.”

“You’re too big to play with my football,” said Tommy, and he gave a little giggle all to himself. “Much too big. Too big to play with me.”

After tea he took his big sailing-ship under his arm and went to the pond at the end of the road. The other children saw him and came running after him.

“Tommy! Where did you get that wonderful ship? Have you had a birthday, or something? Do let’s all play ships.”
"Oh, you’re too big to play with a little boy like me," said Tommy. "You know you are. You’ve often said I was too little, and now I feel that you are too big for me. I should spoil your games. You’re much too big!"

The other children stood and watched Tommy sailing the big ship. It was beautiful. It sailed across the pond like a white swan, its sails billowing in the wind. All the boys wanted to sail the Mary Ann, but Tommy kept saying they were too big. It was most annoying.

The next day Tommy got out his conjuring set and did a few tricks to show the big boys and girls. They simply could not imagine how he made the egg disappear and come back into his bag, or how the hanky untied its knots without being touched. It was most mysterious.

"Show us how you do it, so that we can do the tricks, too," begged Harry. "Let us share."

Tommy shook his head. "You’re too big to bother about silly tricks like this," he said. "Much too big."

The other children talked together that day. "Tommy may be little, but he’s jolly clever," said Harry.
Too-Little Tommy

"I saw him running yesterday and he runs as fast as any of us," said Queenie.

"And he could really play Red Indians better than anybody, because he's got such a lovely suit and feathers and a chopper, too," said Lennie. "I think we were silly to leave him out and say he was too little. It isn't how he looks that matters; it's what he can do. And he seems to be able to do a lot."

"Well—we're all going to play cricket tomorrow," said Kenneth. "Let's ask him to come. He's a good little sport really. And it's quite true that he never cries when he falls down."

So they asked Tommy the next day. "Tommy,
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will you come and play cricket with us? You ought to get a lot of runs because you run fast."

"Oh—I'd simply love to!" said Tommy, his eyes shining. "I love cricket. Thank you very much. And would you like to come with me to the pond afterwards and sail my ship? Or we might have a game with my football."

"That would be fine," said Harry. "Thanks very much. And Tommy—you'll find you won't be too little for us if we're not too big for you!"

"Oh, that was really a sort of joke I played," said Tommy, with a sudden grin. "I didn't mean to keep it up. I meant to let you share my new things—and so you shall. I'll teach you the conjuring tricks, let you sail my ship, and play with my football, and wear my Red Indian suit. Of course I will."

And so he did, and the other children soon found out what a good sort Too-Little Tommy was! They found out that he could run very fast for his age, was as good as they were at catching, bowling and batting, didn't mind how often he fell off the bicycle, and never cried, whatever happened.

"Well?" said Uncle William, with a smile, when next he saw Tommy, "did my little plan
Too-Little Tommy

work? You look quite a different little boy now!"

“So I am,” said Tommy. “I’m not Too-Little Tommy any more—I’m Much-Bigger Tommy. It was a good idea of yours, Uncle!”

I think it was too, don’t you?