

**INCIDENTS  
OF  
CHILDHOOD**

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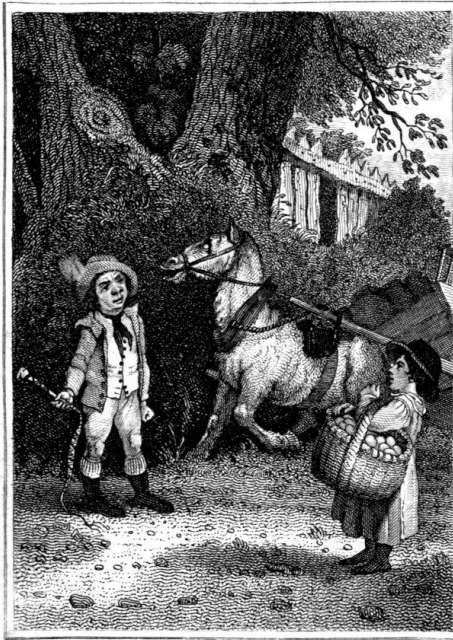
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# INCIDENTS OF CHILDHOOD.

THE TWO TEMPERS.



*"tell them the Cart is in the ditch"*

**THE TWO TEMPERS.**

*"tell them the Cart is in the ditch"*

THE TINNER'S SON.



*He seemed to be studying the title page*

THE TINNER'S SON.

*"he seemed to be studying the title page"*

## PREFACE.

Fictitious narratives, designed for the perusal of children, should (in the opinion of the Writer) be familiar in their *subjects* as well as in their style; and slight in their construction: They should hardly aim to excite more than a very transient or superficial emotion. If they are highly wrought, or laboured with dramatic interest, they will rarely be read without injury by children whose imaginations are lively, or whose feelings are strong. In other cases, they will be harmless only in proportion as they are useless.

It is desirable that children should be tempted to seek a portion—but never a large portion, of their amusement in books, as well as in active sports. That this species of amusement should be *harmless* is, perhaps, its best praise. While it avoids the hazards which must always attend any fictitious excitement of the imagination or the stronger feelings, it may safely aim to illustrate the minor virtues,—to exhibit the less important faults to which children are liable, or, to give a playful exercise to the understanding.

In what way religious principles may be advantageously presented to the minds of children through the medium of fiction, is a question upon which the Writer has no wish to give an opinion: he has only to say that he has not deemed himself qualified for a task of so much difficulty.

# I.

## THE IRON BOX.

Peter Simons was the son of a poor fisherman who lived in a solitary cottage, built of rough stone, on the steep side of a rock which faced the sea. Behind the cottage the dark jagged cliff slanted up to a great height: before it you might look straight down upon the sea, two hundred feet below. Steps were cut in the solid stone, which led winding down to the shore. On one side of the house there was a stack of furze to serve for firing; on the other side was a small level space, with poles, on which the fisherman hung his nets to dry. The front of the cottage was covered with rows of dried fish, of different sorts, cut open, and all shrivelled and yellow: at the door hung the fisherman's great sea boots, and his rough blue coat, lined with red stuff.

Peter was a lazy boy; and his father and mother used no means to correct his idle habits; but suffered him to spend his time as he pleased. Sometimes he would lie half the day on the ground before the door, just looking over the edge, to watch the curling foam of the waves among the broken rocks below; or throw down stones to see them jump from ledge to ledge as they fell. When the weather was perfectly calm, and the sun shone, so that, from the top of the hill, the sea appeared all in a blaze of light; you might perceive a black speck at some distance, like a lark in the clear sky; this was the fisherman's small boat, in which Peter would spend all the hours from one tide till the next. Having anchored the boat on a sand bank, he would dose with his hat slouched over his face; or if he was awake, listen to the tapping of the waves against the side of

the boat; and now and then halloo, to make the gulls that were swimming about, rise into the air. But most often, in fine weather, he would saunter along upon the beach, to a neck of sand about a mile from his home. Here there was the old hulk of a sloop, that had been wrecked at a spring tide; so that it lay high upon the beach; it was now half sunk in the sand, and the sea weed had gathered round it, three or four feet deep. It was Peter's delight to sit upon the deck, lolling against the capstan, while his naked legs dangled down the gangway in the forecastle.

When the weather was too cold to sit still out of doors, and when his mother drove him from the chimney corner, Peter would take a large knife and an old hat; and gather muscles from the rocks: but almost the only thing of any use which he did in the whole course of the year, was to plait a straw hat for himself, and patch his jacket.

Peter seemed always dismal and discontented; he seldom more than half opened his eyes, except when he was searching the crannies of the rocks, and fumbling in the heaps of sea weed, after a storm, in hope of finding something that had been thrown up by the waves. Indeed, he lived in expectation that some great good luck would one day come to him in this way: and so in fact it happened.

One morning after a gale of wind, and a very high spring tide; the sea retired so far that Peter made his way to a reef of rocks which he had never before been able to reach. There were two hours before the tide would oblige him to return: he determined therefore to make the best use of the time in hunting over this new ground. He scrambled up and down, and jumped from rock to rock so nimbly, that, at a little distance, no one would have guessed that it

was Peter Simons. He dived his arm deep into the weedy basins in the rocks; and groped, with his hands under water, among the pebbles, shells, and oily weed with which they were filled. Nothing however was to be found; except, now and then, a whitened bone, a piece of green sheet-copper, or some rusty iron.

Peter staid till the sea had several times run over the sand bank which joined the reef of rocks to the shore. It was now necessary to make speed back; and he took such long strides in returning, that he sunk over his ankles in the loose sand. Just before he reached the solid ground, he set his bare foot upon a staple and ring, to which a small rope was tied: he pulled the rope pretty stoutly, supposing it to be fastened to a piece of timber from a wreck; but, in doing so, he dragged from under the sand an Iron Box, about six inches square. It was very rusty, and he would have thought it a solid block of iron, if it had not been for the appearance of hinges on one side.

“Now,” said Peter, “here’s my fortune to be sure in this box: what should an Iron Box be for, but to keep gold and diamonds in. Nobody shall know a word of this till I see what’s in it.” He knocked and banged it about on the rocks for some time, to get it open; but finding his efforts vain, he determined, for the present, to carry it to the old sloop, where he spent so much of his time; and lodge it safely in the sand which filled the hold: by the time he had done this, it was nearly dark.

Although he had been kept awake some part of the night, in making various guesses of what might be in the box, and planning what he should do with his treasure, Peter rose two hours before his usual time the next morning. The rising sun shone upon the highest peak of the rocky headland, just as he climbed upon the



deck of the sloop. He had brought a large knife, and a hammer with him, to force the box open; but he found he could not get the point of the knife in any where; and all his blows with the hammer only made the rusty flakes of iron peel off from the sides of the box: no trace of a key-hole could be found; and when the top of the box was cleaned, it appeared that the lid was screwed down on three sides. Peter buried the box again in the same place; and set himself to think what was to be done. He knew that the blacksmith at the village could open the box easily enough; but he would trust his secret to nobody. The only way therefore was to procure tools, and go to work upon it himself. Lazy folks, when they choose to exert themselves, are often very ingenious, and sometimes, even, very diligent. Peter had not a penny of his own. How was he to get money enough to buy a screw-driver?

Peter Simons, as we have said before, could plait a straw hat pretty neatly. It was a sort of employment that suited him; because he could do it while he sat lolling in the sunshine; thinking about nothing; with his eyes half shut, and his mouth half open. He thought that if he made two or three hats, he might be able to sell them at the town for as much money as would buy the screw-driver, or what other tools he might want. He procured the straw therefore, and taking it to the cabin of the old sloop, went to work more heartily than ever he had done in his life before. Peter's father and mother concerned themselves very little with the manner in which he spent his time: and when he took his dinner with him, and was absent the whole day, his mother was glad to get rid of him, and asked him no questions when he came home in the evening.

The first thing that Peter did every morning before he sat down to his straw-hat making, was to take the box out of the sand, and make some violent efforts to force it open without further ado: but

after spending some time in turning it about, looking at it, banging it against the rock, and trying to wheedle in the point of the knife, he quietly buried it in its place; having convinced himself afresh that the only way was to go on steadily with the plan he had determined upon. He often wondered that he could not hear the diamonds or the guineas rattle, when he shook the box; but he concluded that it was stuffed so full, that there was no room for them to wag.

After Peter had been thus diligently employed several days, he began to feel a pleasure in work which was quite new to him; although he now rose two or three hours earlier than he used to do, the days seemed to him shorter instead of longer than they did when he spent all his time in idleness. He almost lost his habit of yawning; and when he went home in the evening, instead of squatting down sulkily in the chimney corner, he would jump about the house, and do little jobs for his mother. "I don't know what's come to our Peter," said his mother, "he's not the same boy that he was."

At length he finished three straw hats; which he reckoned he might sell to the boys on the quay, at the neighbouring sea-port town, for a shilling at least. Off he set, therefore, early the next morning; going a roundabout way, to avoid being seen by any one who knew him: the distance was ten miles. He sold his hats in the course of the day—bought a screw-driver and an iron wedge; and got back time enough to go and deposit his tools along with the box before he returned home.

Although he was very tired with his walk, he rose the next morning before day-break; and he felt no doubt that by the time his mother had made the kettle boil for breakfast, he should be a rich man: but

Peter reckoned rather too hastily. He soon found that he could do nothing with the screw-driver: all his efforts only made the heads of the screws smooth and bright: he perceived that he must cut off the heads of the screws, by filing deep notches in the edge of the lid; for this purpose he must get two files; to procure which he must sell at least, two more hats; this was a sad trial of Peter's patience. It was a whole week before he made his second journey to the town, and bought the two files. But he had now a long job before him. Not being used to hard work, it was late in the evening before he had made a notch so deep as completely to cut away the head of the first screw, and there were nine screws in the lid.

His arms ached so much, when he went to bed, that he could hardly sleep; and his wrists were so stiff the next morning, that he made very little progress in his work during the whole day; but kept filing faintly,—a little at one screw, and then a little at another. The third and fourth day, however, he seemed to have gained strength by labour; and after a week's toil, he filed away the head of the last screw: but, even now, the screws were so completely rusted into their holes, that he began to think all the force he could use would never make the lid move: at length a lucky blow drove the iron wedge a full inch under the lid: and, after a great deal of twisting and hammering, the box came open. And what was in it? Nothing at all!—empty—empty—quite empty!

With the hammer in one hand, and the wedge in the other, Peter stood staring into the box a long while, scarcely knowing where he was. At last he scrambled up out of the hold of the vessel; laid himself down upon the deck, and cried and sobbed for an hour or two. But he resolved that he would not be laughed at for his disappointment, so he dried up his tears; slunk home when it grew

dark; went to bed without taking his supper; and fretted till he fell asleep.

But Peter Simons had now learned to exert himself,—his thoughts had been actively engaged for several weeks; he had felt the satisfaction of earning money by his own labour; he had broke the habit of lying in bed till breakfast time; he had become really stronger by hard work; in short, he could not bear the thought of living for the future as he had done, in wretched idleness. “Father,” said he, “I should like to earn my living like other folks: I wish you’d put me to the blacksmith’s to work.”

Peter’s wish was accomplished before he had time to repent of it: he was put to work at the blacksmith’s: in due time he learned the business well; and got the character of being a clever and industrious workman. When he was in business for himself, he used to say, “I found all my good fortune in an empty box.”

## II. PHEBE'S VISIT.

“My love, I think I have something to say that will please you;” said Phebe’s Mamma to her, one day.

“O dear, have you, Mamma,—pray tell me directly,” said Phebe; “I cannot think what it is.”

“Why, my love, Mrs. Mason has been here this morning, and she was so kind as to ask me to let you spend a few days with her; so I told her, that if you were a good girl you should go on Tuesday.— Shall you like it, Phebe?”

“O dear, yes, Mamma; how very much delighted I am;—what a good girl I will be;—but what a while it is to wait,—Friday— Saturday—Sunday—Monday—Tuesday: I wish it had been sooner;—I shall be so happy.—I suppose Mrs. Mason’s house is not at all like ours, is it, Mamma?”

“No, my dear; I believe that you will find many things at Mrs. Mason’s quite different from what you see here.”

“Dear, how glad I am of that,” said Phebe; “and then, besides all the fine things I shall see there, I shall not have my lessons to learn, nor be called to do a great many tiresome jobs that hinder me so when I am at play; and I shall not have William to tease me; and that will be a great comfort.”

“So you really think that you shall be happier without poor William, do you Phebe? I am sorry for that;” said her Mother.

“O, I like to have him with me sometimes, Mamma; and so I should always if he would not tease me so much; but it was only the other day that he came into the nursery, when I had drest my doll in a clean white frock, and it was looking so pretty; and instead of praising it, as I expected, he held it up by one foot and laughed at it, and said he wondered what pleasure I could take in making clothes for a log of wood.—And he did what was worse still, last night, Mamma; for he took up my wax doll, and really held one of its hands to the candle, because he said he wanted to seal a letter to cousin Thomas; only Papa was in the room and reprov'd him for it, (which I was very glad of,) and said he wondered how he could tease the poor child so; and then William said he did not *really* intend to do it, because it was not the right sort of wax; but I dare say he would if Papa had not been there. Now was not it very wrong of him, Mamma?”

“I know he often teases you, my love; for boys are very fond of teasing their little sisters; but yet I think you should not be very glad when he is reprov'd, because he is really good natured, and willing to do any thing for you that you want.”

“So he is, poor fellow,” said Phebe; “and I did not particularly wish him to be reprov'd, only I was afraid that he would spoil my doll. But let us say something more about going to Mrs. Mason’s, Mamma.—I dare say I shall sit up to supper every night; and I shall most likely sleep in a room all by myself, instead of in the nursery: and every thing will be a great deal more pleasant than it is here.”

“Why, really Phebe,” said her Mamma, “if a little girl who lives in a comfortable house, with a kind Papa and Mamma, and several good brothers and sisters, and a great many playthings, finds so

much to be discontented with, I cannot promise that she will find every thing just as she would wish it, even at Mrs. Mason's."

"I am not *very* discontented, Mamma," said Phebe; "only I think there are a few things that I would alter if I were a woman and could do exactly as I liked."

"I never yet heard of a woman who *could* do exactly as she liked, Phebe; and I am afraid that, when you are a woman, you will always find somebody to tease you, even though William should live a great many miles away; and though you should then have no Papa and Mamma, "to make you do a great many tiresome jobs when you want to play"; or rather I mean, Phebe, that those who are apt to be fretful and discontented about very little things, will always have a great many little things to fret about."

Phebe could never think of the time when she should have no Papa and Mamma, without feeling the tears come into her eyes, for she loved her parents dearly, and if ever she felt unwilling to leave off playing when her Mother called her, she had only to think, how *very—very* sorry she should be when *that* time came, to recollect that her Mamma had ever found her in the *least* disobedient or unkind; and then she left off and went cheerfully, even though she were at play ever so prettily.

"However, Mamma," said Phebe, who wished to continue the conversation; "I cannot think of any thing that is likely to make me at all uncomfortable while I am at Mrs. Mason's."

"Then I hope you will be quite happy all the time, my love; and remember, when you return, I shall ask you whether you have or not."

“O do, Mamma; pray do not forget it;” said Phebe, “who thought that, for once, her Mamma would certainly be mistaken.”

Phebe’s Mamma was quite right in telling her that she would find many things at Mrs. Mason’s different from what she had been used to at home; for Phebe’s parents lived in a handsome red brick house, in the middle of a large town: there was a garden behind the house, but it was not very large, and there were high brick walls all round it; and then they had to walk through several smoky streets before they could get into the pretty green fields, and feel the sweet fresh air blowing on them.—But Mr. Mason’s was a cheerful looking white house, standing in the midst of the fields; with a great many tall trees about it, and a farm yard in sight of one of the windows, where there were cows, and pigs, and ducks, and geese, and a number of things that were all quite new to Phebe.—Mr. and Mrs. Mason, too, were plain elderly people, not at all like Phebe’s Papa and Mamma; but they were very pleasant people, and Phebe had often heard her parents say that they had a great respect for them. They had no family of their own; but they were very fond of children; Mrs. Mason, particularly, was extremely good-natured to them, and was sure to laugh at every thing they said.

Phebe asked a great many questions every day about her visit, and thought that Tuesday was a long while coming; however it came at last, and when dinner was over the chaise was brought to the door, and as soon as she was comfortably seated between her Papa and Mamma they set off, and Phebe began to be very happy.

“Well, Phebe, are you quite happy?” said her Papa, after they had gone a little way.



“Yes, thank you, Papa;—that is to say, I should be, if the sun did not shine exactly in my eyes;—and I am obliged to keep holding my bonnet too, or else I am afraid the wind would blow it off; and that makes my arm ache rather.”

“So you see, my love, there is always something to keep us from being *quite* happy,” said her Papa.

“Yes, till we get to Mrs. Mason’s, Papa,” replied Phebe.

“What a pretty house,” exclaimed she, as the chaise stopped at Mr. Mason’s gate; “and what a nice garden before it!”

They were shown into a very pretty cheerful parlour, with a window almost down to the ground, overlooking the garden, which was filled with all sorts of flowers, and just beyond the garden was a large meadow, where there were a number of lambs skipping about, and looking as frolicsome as could be. Mr. and Mrs. Mason took a great deal of notice of Phebe, and promised that she should have whatever she liked, all the while she was there.

“O how I will run about in the fields to-morrow,” thought Phebe; “and then when I come in, how delightful it will be to sit in this pretty parlour and look at the lambs!”

Soon after tea her Papa and Mamma left her, with many injunctions to be a good girl. She had never visited any where alone, before, and she could scarcely help crying when she saw them drive out of sight, and leave her all alone, five miles from home. It soon grew dark, and Phebe began to feel very tired. Mr. Mason was reading the newspaper, and Mrs. Mason had got out her knitting; but Phebe had nothing at all to do, and very much wished it was bed-time.

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