

LOST TOMMY.

"Come here, Tommy, you naughty boy! If you go running away like that I'll give you to a policeman."

The speaker was a girl of about fourteen, who broke off her conversation with a friend of her own age, to shout the above threat after her small brother, as he was starting on a voyage of discovery down the next street on his own account.

"Annie you shouldn't say that to Tommy; you'll frighten him for nothing; and you know it isn't true," said her companion reproachfully.

"Nonsense! It's the only way to make Tommy mind. He's terrified of a policeman. There, you see, he's coming back now," answered Annie, laughing.

"Teacher said on Sunday that we ought never to tell children what isn't true," argued Ruth.

"Teacher never had no little brothers to mind, or she'd know better," said Annie, lightly. "I could never do anything with Tommy if I didn't frighten him sometimes."

"I thought you were so fond of him."

"So I am, bless him! He knows I don't mean it," said Annie inconsequently. "We'll walk home with you, if you like. I'll show you a shop where the hats are perfectly sweet."

The two girls walked on slowly, discussing the fashions, while Tommy trotted on ahead, or lagged behind, as the fancy took him. He was a dear little fellow, four years old, with an inquisitive mind of his own; and when they turned presently into a crowded street, he found shop-windows and sights far more sweet to his taste than any number of hats.

Annie took it for granted that he would keep near her; Tommy had a firm faith that his Nan would not let him out of sight; and the result was what might have been expected. When he had watched the entrancing operation of taking blocks of ice from a cart into a fish-monger's, and had secured a nice cold fragment for himself, Tommy looked round, and could not see his sister.

Seized with sudden alarm, he took to his heels, and fled along the street. It was naughty of him to

have stayed behind, he knew; perhaps—dreadful thought!—Annie had really gone to fetch a policeman this time.

He ran till he could run no more, but he could see no sign of Annie. He wandered up and down, getting in every one's way, and being pushed and jostled about by busy people, and at last, in despair, he burst into tears, and went sobbing slowly along, realizing that he was really and truly lost.

"What's the matter, little man? Lost your way?" asked a kind voice some way above him.

Tommy looked up and saw a very tall policeman. He did not stop to see that this same police man had a very kind face, but acting on Annie's teaching, he gave a shriek of terror, and fled across the road. The man's shout and start after him gave wings to poor Tommy's feet; he did not take in that they were meant for warning, as a heavy van came lumbering quickly by. The next minute there was another shriek, a fall, and poor little Tommy lay unconscious in the road with a broken leg.

Of course there was a crowd round him in a moment, which the policeman joined. A young man had picked up Tommy and carried him to the pavement.

"No one's fault. The child ran right under the horse's hoofs," he said; "a case for the hospital."

"I wish you'd call a cab and take him there," said the policeman. "I'm off duty and going home; I feel so dreadfully ill; I'm going to have that awful influenza, I believe."

So the good-natured clerk drove off with Tommy, and the policeman went home to forget all about the poor child as he lay in his own bed with agonies of headache.

Annie forgot him, too, till she had parted company with Ruth, and then she looked for Tommy, and looked in vain. It was her turn to be frightened now, as she hunted up and down calling to Tommy, and wondering how she dared go home without him. At last, as it grew dark, she was obliged to give up the search and make her way back, trusting as a last hope that the child might have got there before her.

Mrs. Green was a widow, who had lost two children already, and Tommy was the very apple of her eye. "How late you are, child. Where's Tommy?" she said, sharply, as Annie came slowly into their little room.

"Isn't he here?" faltered Annie, looking round.

"Here? Do you mean to say you've lost him?" cried Mrs. Green, springing up. "Annie, you bad girl, where's your brother?"

Poor Annie burst into tears and sobbed out that she did not know. Mrs. Green went almost wild with fright; she put on her bonnet and shawl, and hurried out to look for her child. But, of course, her search was fruitless, and she came back wringing her hands and crying. The other lodgers, who were all fond of the little yellow-haired lad, crowded round to give advice, and one sensible man started for the nearest police station to enquire if anything could be heard of him there.

Of course, news there was none. "But they say he may be at any of the other stations, and they'll send a description of him to them all, so don't take on so, Missis, he'll turn up fast enough. Boys is not so easy lost," said the good-natured man, comfortingly.

But Mrs. Green was not to be comforted. She was sure her boy was drowned, or that wicked men had carried him off to make a thief of him, and she wailed and lamented all night long, while poor Annie sought refuge on the floor below, afraid to face her mother.

A kind-faced, bright young lady was walking briskly through a neighbouring square next day, when she came upon her favourite Sunday-scholar, Annie Green. But was this Annie? This dejected, untidy, miserable wreck of a girl—the child who was always first to greet her in class with a happy smile?

"My dear Annie, what is the matter?" she asked, almost thinking she was addressing a stranger.

"Oh, teacher," cried Annie, bursting into tears of relief, "Tommy's lost, and mother won't speak to me!"

Poor Annie, she was indeed being punished for her carelessness.