

LITTLE GOODY TWO-SHOES.

THERE was once a little girl whose name was Margery, though she was always called Goody Two-Shoes. You mustn't ask why just yet, but wait till we get further into the story.

This little girl had a brother named Robin. Their father was a farmer, and he was at first very rich, with large wheat-fields, great flocks of sheep, and many cows and horses.

But while the children were still very young great misfortunes came to the farmer. He became so poor that he had to sell the farm and all the live stock in order to pay his debts. This so preyed on his mind that he fell ill and died, and shortly afterwards his wife died also.

So Margery and Robin were left alone in the world, without either father or mother to take care of them. Sad as their story was, it would have done you good to see how loving

were these two little ones, with only each other to care for in all the wide world. Hand in hand they wandered about, and the more ragged and forlorn they became the more they cherished each other. Robin was fortunate enough to have two shoes, but poor Margery had only one. The children wandered homeless and hungry, with nothing to eat but berries and herbs, or the scraps they could beg from door to door. When night came, they crept into a barn or under a hedge to sleep.

Their relatives, some of whom were quite rich, took not the slightest notice of them, being ashamed to own such a ragged, shoe-less girl as Margery, or such a dirty, curly-pated boy as Robin.

During the summer the children, though they suffered a great deal, managed on the whole fairly well. But when the dark, cold, snowy days of winter set in, they would pass down the winding village street and look with longing eyes into the cosy cottage homes, with their bright fires and well-laid tables.

At last they were seen by a kind old clergyman and his wife who had known their father. These good people were very poor and had scarcely enough for themselves, but the

LITTLE GOODY TWO-SHOES. 303

clergyman set his wits to work to devise some means by which the two poor orphans could in time earn their own living. This was easier to do for Robin than for Margery.

The rector had staying with him an old friend, to whom he told the story of Robin and Margery. This good man, after seeing the children, took compassion on them. He ordered little Margery a new pair of shoes, and also gave the clergyman's wife some money to buy clothes for the little girl, which, indeed, she needed sadly. As for Robin, he said he would have him sent to sea to become a sailor-boy; and to begin with he had a jacket and trousers made for him.

Very proud was Robin when dressed for the first time in his new clothes; they were of fine blue cloth, with gilt buttons, and he had a straw hat with a broad black ribbon, so that he looked a splendid little sailor.

After some days, their kind friend said he must go to London, and would take Robin with him, so he and Margery must say good-bye.

The parting between the two was very sad, for they had never before been separated. Robin cried and Margery cried, and they

kissed each other over and over again. At last Robin wiped away his tears and bade Margery cry no more, for he would come back to her when he returned from sea.

The next day Margery was crying through the village as if in search of her brother when the shoemaker came with the new shoes that had been ordered for her. Nothing could have better supported little Margery under her sorrow than the pleasure she took in her new shoes. The shoemaker had done his best and turned out the daintiest pair that any girl could wish for, of red leather, and as supple as gloves. Margery ran to the rector's wife as soon as they were put on, and, smoothing down her frock, cried, "Two-shoes! Two-shoes!" Her joy was so great that she danced and capered all down the village street, crying to every one she passed, "*Two-shoes! Two-shoes!*" And if you had ever experienced the discomfort of going about with only one shoe, and a leaky one at that, you would understand her delight.

Thus it was that Margery got the name of Goody Two-Shoes, or more often Little Goody Two-Shoes.

Margery was a wise little girl, and as she

grew up wanted 'above all things to learn to read. In those days that was not so easy as you would imagine. A great many people, even among the fairly well-to-do, never learned to read at all, or even to write their own names. It was also difficult for a poor child to get a spelling-book from which to learn, and there were neither Council Schools nor Sunday Schools. Margery was sorely at a loss, but at last she made up her mind to ask the rector to teach her whenever he had a few moments to spare. This he readily agreed to do, and his little pupil made the very best use of her time every evening.

She would also stop such children as went to school as they came home, and borrow their books to learn from while they played.

By this means she soon got more learning than most of the village children; and as she wished others to benefit by her knowledge, she invented a clever plan for making the alphabet simpler to the very little ones.

Finding that only twenty-six letters were required to spell all the words she could think of, though some of these letters were large and some small, she cut out with a knife, from thin pieces of wood, ten sets of each.

She next obtained an old spelling-book, and made her little friends pick out the letters of words they wanted to spell. After that she taught them to put sentences together, such as "Come to me," "I see you," "You are a good boy," and so on.

The usual manner of spelling, or of carrying on the game, was this:—Suppose the word to be spelt was "Plum Pudding," the children were placed in a circle round Goody Two-Shoes, and the first brought the first letter, namely, P, the next L, the next U, the next M, and so on until the whole word was spelt; and if any one brought a wrong letter he or she had to pay a forfeit or play no more. This was learning something useful, even at play; and every morning little Goody used to go round to the various cottages, with her letters in a basket, to teach the children.

To us all this seems very simple, but in those days it meant a great advance, and it was soon found that where Goody Two-Shoes used to call the little ones learned to read much more quickly than did those who went to the village school-dame. No grown-up schoolmistress could have pursued her calling



LITTLE GOODY TWO-SHOES. 309

Her joy was so great that she danced and capered all down the village street, crying to every one as she passed, "*Two-shoes ! Two-shoes !*"

with more gravity than did little Goody Two-Shoes.

It happened one evening that Goody Two-Shoes was going home very late. She had made a longer round than usual, and almost every one of her pupils had kept her waiting. These delays made her so late that night had come on before she had done her day's work. She walked across one field after another, while the sun slowly sank behind the hills. There was a close stifling feeling in the air; the cattle tossed their heads and appeared to gasp for breath. Little Goody Two-Shoes thought a storm must be coming, and she was right. For a few moments there was a rustling among the trees, as if they were whispering to each other; then it grew darker and darker, and all was quiet. Goody knew that if she did not make haste she would get wet through. So, gathering her skirts closer about her, she took to her heels and ran, presently reaching an old barn by the wayside. It belonged to a farm that stood empty, for the farmer who owned it had died a few weeks before; but a few trusses of straw had been left in the barn, and on one of these Goody sat down, tired and out of breath with

her run. Just then the first peal of thunder rattled overhead, and the first big drops came splashing down.

She had not been there long before she heard footsteps, and three men came into the barn, as she had done, for shelter. The trusses of straw were piled between Goody and the men, so that they could not see her, although she caught a glimpse of them by peeping through a little opening between two trusses. The men, fancying they were alone, began to talk, and Goody soon found out that they were thieves. They were plotting to rob the mansion of Squire Trueman that very night.

When Goody heard and understood, her mind was at once made up. Without waiting for the storm to cease, she crept quietly from the barn and ran as fast as she could, through rain and mud, to the Squire's house. It would have been rather difficult for other persons to get to the Squire so late in the evening; but the servants all knew Margery and loved her. The butler went at once to the Squire, as he sat at dinner with his friends, and told him that little Two-Shoes wanted to see him on a matter of importance. The Squire asked his friends to excuse him and came out.

"Why, little Goody Two-Shoes, what brings you here at such a time?" he asked kindly.

"Oh, sir," she replied, in a rather frightened voice, for in her eyes the Squire seemed the greatest man in all the world, "Oh, sir, if you do not take care you will be robbed and murdered to-night."

She then told him all she had heard as she sat in the barn.

The Squire, seeing there was not a moment to lose, went and told his friends, and they all determined to stay and help him. The lights were put out at the usual hour, so that the robbers might suppose that the people of the house were all in bed; then several of the servants hid themselves behind the trees, ready to pounce on the thieves when they came. Surely enough, about one o'clock in the morning, three men came creeping—creeping—up to the house with a dark lantern and a basket of tools with which to break open the doors. But before they were aware, six men sprang upon them and held them fast. The thieves struggled vainly to get away: they were tightly bound and lodged in an outhouse till the next morning, when a cart came to take them to prison.



The cat, the lamb, the raven, and the children themselves were just part of a big family, with "Goody Two-Shoes" as the "mother" of everybody.

The Squire, you may be sure, was very pleased with Goody Two-Shoes and her share in the capture of the thieves, and later was able to render her a great service, as you will shortly hear.

Another day, as Margery was walking through the village, she met some boys with a raven whose wing was hurt. To save the poor creature from their clutches, she gave a penny for him, and brought him home, where he quickly got well. She called him Ralph, and a fine bird he proved to be. A clever fellow is the raven, with his bright eyes and sharp, hard beak, and very quick to learn. And Margery's raven was more clever than most. She taught him to spell, to read, and even to speak. He was fond of playing with the wooden letters, and never happier than when he could carry away a few secretly and hide them.

Some days after Goody had bought the raven she saw some boys who had taken a pigeon and tied a string to its legs, in order to let it fly and draw it back again when they pleased; by this means they tortured the poor bird with hopes of liberty.

The pigeon she also bought, and then

taught it, by means of her wooden letters, to spell and to read, though he could not talk like the raven. He was a pretty fellow, and she called him Tom.

Not very long afterwards, the old school-dame died, and as every one said that Goody Two-Shoes was the best person to take her place, and Squire Trueman spoke very highly of her, she was appointed. Thus in a few years the penniless orphan girl became a person of consequence in the village, and had a dear little cottage all to herself, with a garden in which she was able to grow all sorts of fruit and vegetables. Everything about the place was as clean as a new pin, and Margery's face was as bright as her new home.

We are told that the children loved her so much that they preferred school-days to holidays, and were often quite sorry when lessons were over. So she must certainly have been a very clever and wonderful schoolmistress.

Soon afterwards Goody's stock of pets was increased by some new arrivals.

A poor lamb had lost its dam, and Goody, seeing the farmer about to kill it, bought it from him, and brought it home to play with the children.

A little while afterwards one of the neighbours presented her with a little dog. He was always in good humour, as puppies ought to be, and frisked about so much that the children called him Jumper. It was Jumper's duty to keep the door; he would let nobody go out or in without leave from his mistress.

The baa-lamb was a cheerful fellow, and the children were very fond of him; so Miss Two-Shoes contrived that he should, in his way, help to maintain order; for she made him a kind of reward among her scholars, the child who behaved best being allowed to take the lamb home, to carry satchel or basket, and bring it back to school in the morning.

Another great favourite was her white pussy cat that purred by the fire during the winter. The dog, the lamb, the raven, and pussy were all the best of friends, and the children themselves were just part of a big family, with Goody Two-Shoes as the "mother" of everybody. No wonder the days at school passed so quickly and pleasantly.

One day Miss Two-Shoes was diverting the children after school-time with games and stories, when a man came to say that Sally

Jones's father had been thrown from his horse, and was thought past hope; indeed, the man said he had seemed to be dying when he came away. When the man had gone back to the farm, which was some distance away, Miss Two-Shoes, unknown to the children, sent Tom Pigeon after him, that the bird might bring back a note.

When the children missed the pigeon, they were much concerned, for he was a great favourite with them. To keep them quiet, Goody told a very nice story, and as she came near the end she began to watch and listen secretly for the pigeon's return. The children meanwhile had forgotten the loss in their eagerness to hear the story. While they were listening to the last words something was heard to flap at the window.

"Bow-wow-wow!" barked Jumper, and tried to leap up and open the door, at which the children wondered; but Miss Margery, knowing who it was, opened the casement, and in flew clever Tom Pigeon.

When he was on the table, they untied the note that was fastened round one of his feet, and the pigeon kept saying, "Coo, coo, coo," as if he meant "Read it! Read it!"

The note contained the good news that Farmer Jones was much better, and, in fact, out of danger. After that, the children thought more of Tom Pigeon than ever, but some of their parents were much puzzled and began to whisper strange stories about Goody, who was really too clever for them to understand.

Miss Margery was always doing good, and this very fact was the means of bringing her into great trouble and danger. You must remember that in those days people were very ignorant, and things that to you are quite ordinary seemed to them very marvellous. Most of the people round about were farmers, who depended much on their hay, which had for several years been greatly damaged by wet weather. Margery, anxious to save them from such loss, made with her own hands a kind of barometer, or weather-glass, by means of which they could tell when to mow their grass with safety, and prevent the hay from being spoilt. By this means they got in their hay without damage, whilst most of the crop in the next villages was spoilt.

This made a great noise in the county; and so angry were the people in the parishes

LITTLE GOODY TWO-SHOES. 321

where the hay was spoilt that they accused Goody of being a witch, and sent Gaffer Goosecap, a fellow always busy in other people's concerns, to find evidence that would enable them to summon her before the justices; for in those days people were foolish enough to believe that women whom they called witches had power to work harm to their neighbours.

Gaffer Goosecap happened to come to the school when Goody was walking about with her raven on one shoulder, her pigeon on the other, a lark on her hand, and the lamb and dog by her side. So surprised was he that he cried out, "A witch! a witch!"

You see, it was foolishly believed then that the spirits whose services the witches were supposed to command took the form of various animals; and many a poor old woman's favourite black cat was looked upon as a familiar spirit that helped the witch to work evil.

Miss Two-Shoes only laughed at Gaffer Goosecap, but this was not the end, for a warrant was issued against her, and she was brought before the justices. Really, though it seems so absurd to us, she was in danger,

for many of the justices at that time were almost as ignorant as the people themselves, and many and many a helpless woman who had been declared a witch was burned alive at the stake.

One of these gentlemen, who knew little of life and less of law, behaved very foolishly, and, after speaking severely to Goody, wanted to know whom she could bring to speak as to her character.

She replied, "Whom can you bring to speak *against* my character? I never supposed any one here could be so silly as to believe there was such a thing as a witch. If I am a witch, this is my charm, and" (placing the barometer on the table) "it is with this that I have taught my neighbours to know the state of the weather."

All the company laughed; and her old friend, Squire Trueman, who was on the bench and had been quietly waiting to see what would happen, then turned to her accusers and told them a tale of a harmless woman who was accused of witchcraft only because she was poor and defenceless. When she had the good fortune to have some money left her, all the people changed suddenly.

“It is plain,” he added angrily, “that a woman must be very poor, and live in a neighbourhood where the people are very stupid, before she can possibly pass for a witch !”

So Gaffer Goosecap and his friends only got well laughed at for their pains.

Then the Squire turned to the Court, and gave such an account of Miss Margery, her virtues and sense, and of the good she had done, that the gentlemen present returned her public thanks for the service rendered to the county.

One of the justices, Sir Charles Jones, who was a widower, formed such a high opinion of her that he offered her a good salary to take charge of his household and educate his little daughter. At first she declined, but shortly afterwards, Sir Charles falling dangerously ill, she considered it her duty to go.

She behaved so wisely and prudently in the family, and proved such an excellent nurse, that when her employer got well he would not permit her to leave the house, and soon afterwards asked her to marry him. Margery felt what an honour this was, but would not consent until the little daughter herself begged her to

do so, saying that neither she nor her father would ever be happy if Goody left them.

When the neighbours heard, they were all glad that one who had been such a lovable girl, and so good a woman, was now to be a Squire's wife and to ride in her own carriage. It was indeed a change from the time when little Goody had been overjoyed by the gift of a pair of shoes, but no one now envied her, for every one whose opinion mattered considered she well deserved the good fortune that had come to her.

On the evening before the wedding, Goody was sitting alone in her little cottage, with her various birds and animals around her, when there came a loud knock at the door. She ran to open it, and there stood a tall, manly fellow whom at first she did not know.

"Margery?" he cried, as if he, too, were doubtful.

"Robin!" she answered, and ran to his arms. For indeed it was her dearly loved brother, who had just come back from sea, with heaps of treasures from far-off lands.

So at the wedding Robin gave away his sister, and the kind old rector, who had been the first to befriend the orphans, conducted the

LITTLE GOODY TWO-SHOES. 325

service. The village children came and strewed rose leaves on the churchyard path, the bells rang merrily, and everyone rejoiced.

Goody Two-Shoes lived for many years, but though she had now become a great lady she was just as dear a friend to the children, and saw that all learned to read and write and had enough to eat. And if she ever came across a child with worn and leaky shoes, and knew that the parents were unable to buy others, she would pay an early visit to the village shoemaker, and soon the matter would be righted. And you may be *quite* sure that no child in any village near was ever allowed to go about with only *one* shoe!