

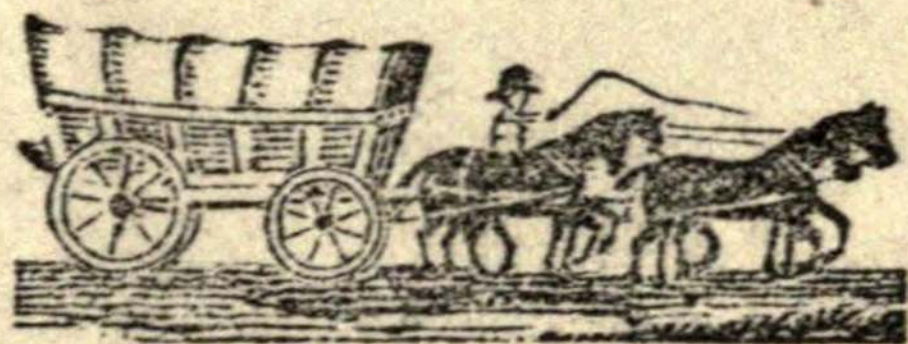


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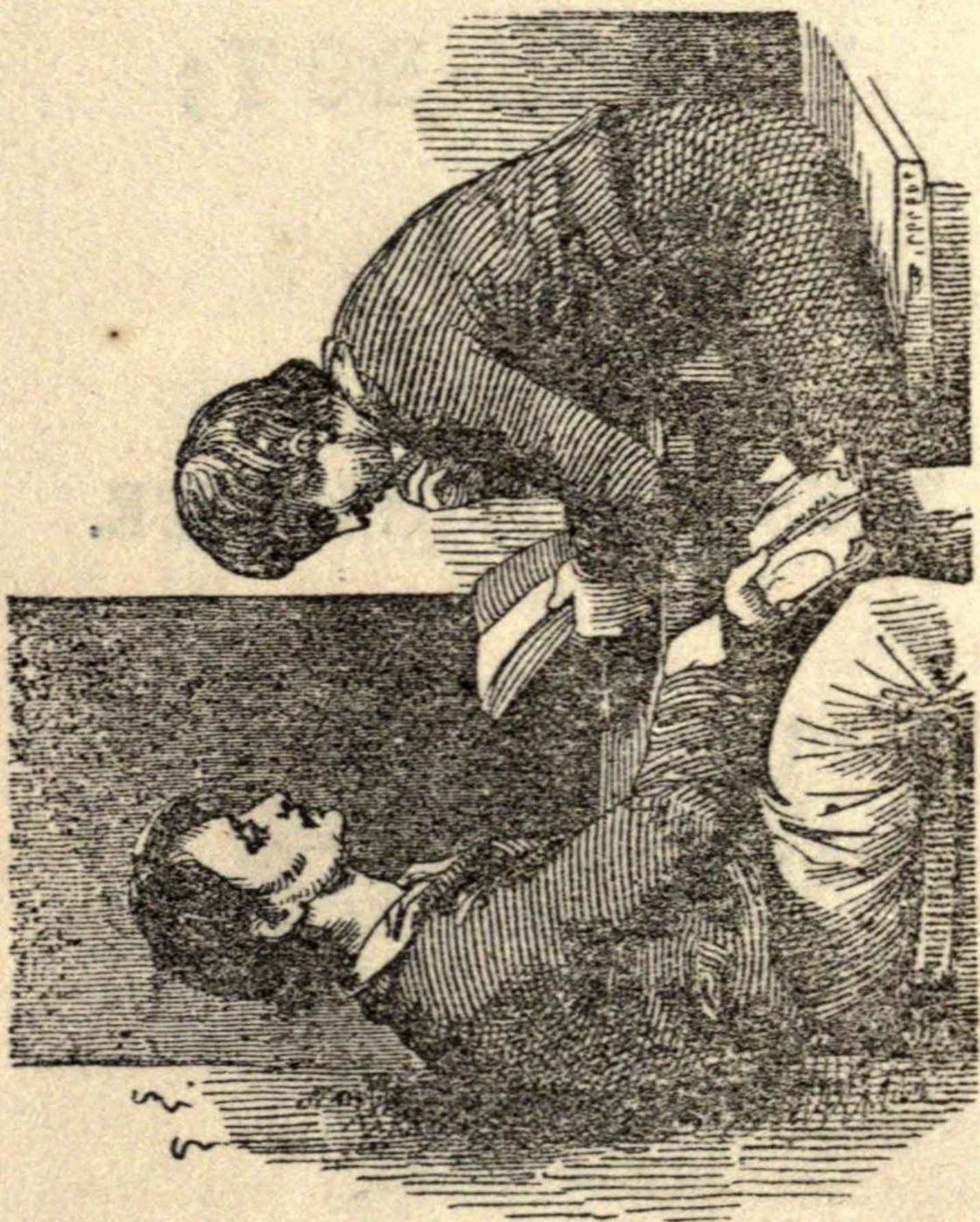
THE
WAGON-BOY;

OR

TRUST IN PROVIDENCE.



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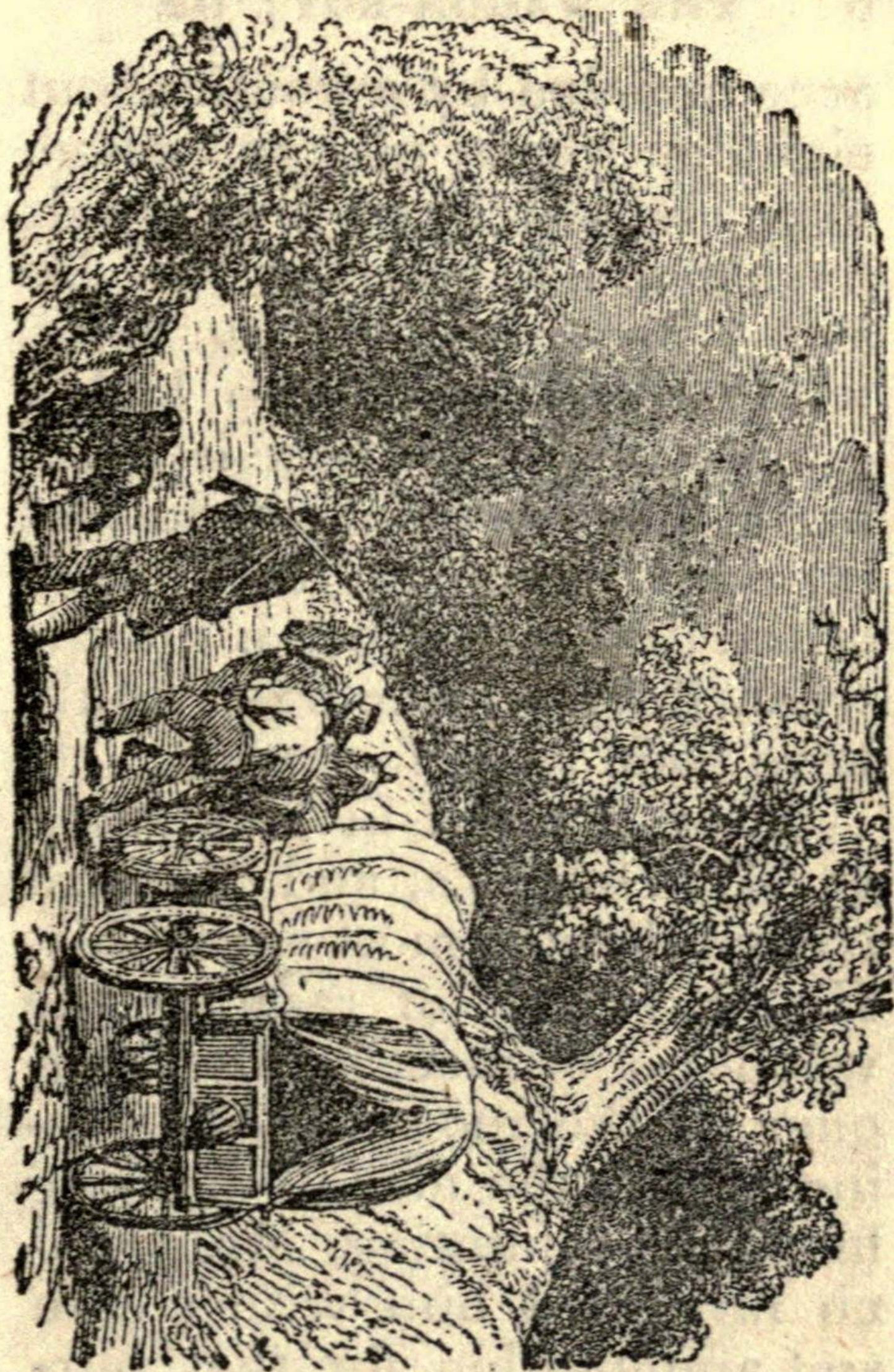
THE
WAGON-BOY.



RICHARD EDWARDS was a studious boy; and while at school, he attended closely to his books, never suffering his attention to be diverted for a moment. The desk he occupied was shared with Thomas Johnson, an idle indolent youth, who hated his books, and if the teacher's eye was not on him, he would often be in a state of complete slumber. The consequence was, that while Rich-

ard, as often as the end of the week came round, carried home to his parents the teacher's testimonial of the continued and rapid progress which he made in his studies, Thomas received a weekly reprimand for his inattention to his books, and often punishment for bad behavior.

One clear wintry Saturday, Richard received the reward of attentive study and amiable deportment, by being permitted to accompany his father on a visit to Mr. Delano's, an intimate friend of his, who resided in an adjoining town. Richard was up betimes, and after breakfast two horses were saddled, and Richard and his father started off. On their route, they passed a wagoner



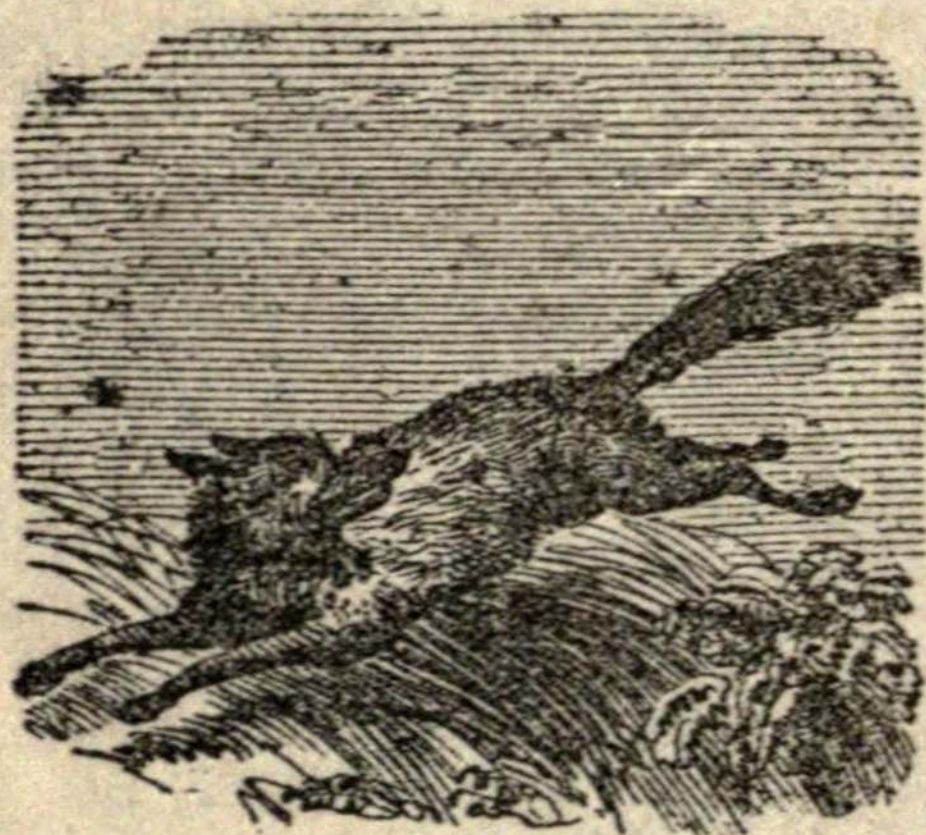
accompanied by a youth about eighteen years of age, whom they learned by a few words exchanged in passing, was his son. The boy drove the team, while the father, who had a gun, occupied his time in hunting. The incident made but little impression on their minds at the time, and were it not for what afterward occurred would have soon been forgotten.

They arrived in good time at Mr. Delano's, and Richard passed the day most agreeably. He was fond of ranging the woods; and meeting the wagoner in the morning, suggesting to him the idea of amusing himself by hunting, Mr. Delano furnished him with a gun and ammunition for that pur-



W. J. H. L. A. N. U.

pose. And when, attired in his hunting-gear and accompanied by Mr. Delano's dog, he started for the woods, he looked like a western-hunter. However, although he enjoyed his jaunt through the woods and pastures, he returned empty-handed. With the exception of a fox that crossed his path,



and which he did not succeed in capturing, he did not meet with anything worth shooting

at. Richard had to bear the good-natured jokes of his father and friend, on his want of success; but he did not care; he had enjoyed himself, and that satisfied him.

They were on their return home in the evening, and were about two miles from their residence. They had urged their horses forward through the adjoining woods, and were just fording a shallow tributary of the river they had to cross before reaching home, in order to shorten their route, for fear the ferry-boat should have made its last trip before they reached there, when Richard called, "Stop, father, I hear the sound of distress!" Mr. Edwards reined in his horse, and lis-



tened. "I perceive nothing," said he, "but these wild forest birds, that gather at night-fall. But hark! Whoa! Pete, be quiet," continued he to his horse, which was impatient to go on. A wild, childlike sob of agony burst distinctly on their ears. "We must look into this, Richard," said his father; and reaching the opposite shore, they started in the direction of the sound.

As they rode over the uncleared space, they heard, at intervals, the same cry, and they were soon near enough to perceive the object of their search. In one of the *turn-outs*, as they are sometimes called, made through the woods by wagoners, when the main

road is cut up by heavy wheels, they perceived the team of the wagoner they passed in the morning; but by it a sad scene met their view. Extended on the ground, with the cold stern countenance of death, lay the wagoner. His son was kneeling on one side of him, with his head resting on his silent breast sobbing as if his heart would break, while his dog stood looking wistfully at both, as if he knew the sufferings of one and the helplessness of the other.

At the sound of footsteps the youth sprang up. The sad tale was soon told. In leaping a fence in chase of a fox, his gun accidentally went off and lodged the contents in his body.

“Sir,” he cried, “can you save my father? Can anything save him?” Mr. Edwards alighted from his horse, and approached the body. It had all the marks of death; the cold and shrunk countenance, the appalling repose of mortality, bereft of soul. The eyes of the youth brightened with intense hope as Mr. Edwards felt the breast and pulse of the deceased. There was no answering sympathy in his look. He shook his head mournfully, and said, “My poor fellow.”

The wagon-boy threw himself again on the body of his father, and gave that cry of deep and wailing sorrow, that God allows to the crowded heart to keep it from breaking

The cold wind swept by with a wintry gust, and seemed faintly to echo his subsiding moan.

Richard took his hand. "We will try to comfort you, my poor lad," said he. "Father, shall he go home with us?"

"What! leave *him*?" said the wagon-boy, clinging to his father, while a deep shuddering shook his frame.

"No," said Mr. Edwards gently, "you shall not leave him, but would it not relieve your mind to see him laid in a decent grave?"

Mr. Edwards had touched the string that finds an answering chord in every heart. The wagon-boy silently rose, passed his arm across his eyes, from which the large tears still rolled,

and assisted by Mr. Edwards, placed the body on the wagon.

The sad procession moved along, and reached the ferry-boat, in time to pass to town.

Mr. Edwards was affluent and generous. He clothed the wagon-boy in appropriate garments the following day, and walked with Richard, to see the sad youth deposit his only relation in the tomb. His faithful dog mutely followed, and when the wagon-boy returned from that mournful scene, he laid himself down by the side of the poor brute, and throwing his arms around the animal hid his swollen eyes upon him, as if he only could understand his feelings.

For many days they tried to

comfort him in vain, for religious emotions were new to him. But when Mr. Edwards explained to him "the resurrection and the life," and Richard read to him those sublime and touching portions of Scripture which tell us that "afflictions are not of the dust," and that "the Lord loveth whom he chasteneth," the wagon-boy was comforted. He returned to his native scenes, sad but peaceful, and Richard was taught a reliance on Providence, that was often renewed when he rode by the spot, where the cry of the wagon-boy first pierced his ears.



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