

S T O R I E S
FOR
CHILDREN,
FROM
"PARENT'S ASSISTANT."

BY
MARIA EDGEWORTH.

THE ORANGE MAN,
THE CHERRY ORCHARD,
AND
THE LITTLE DOG TRUSTY.

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THE ORANGE MAN;

OR THE

HONEST BOY AND THE THIEF.

CHARLES was the name of the honest boy; and Ned was the name of the thief.

Charles never touched what was not his own : *this* is being an honest boy.

Ned often took what was not his own : *this* is being a thief.

Charles's father and mother, when he was a very little boy, had taught him to be honest, by always punishing him when he meddled with what was not his own : but when Ned took what was not his own, his father and mother

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did not punish him ; so he grew up to be a thief.

Early one summer's morning, as Charles was going along the road to school, he met a man leading a horse, which was laden with panniers.

The man stopped at the door of a public-house, which was by the road-side ; and he said to the landlord, who came to the door, " I won't have my horse unloaded ; I shall only stop with you whilst I eat my breakfast. Give my horse to some one to hold here on the road, and let the horse have a little hay to eat."

The landlord called ; but there was no one in the way ; so he beckoned to Charles, who was going by, and begged him to hold the horse.

" Oh," said the man, " but can you engage him to be an honest boy ? fo-

these are oranges in my baskets ; and it is not every little boy one can leave with oranges."

"Yes," said the landlord ; "I have known Charles from the cradle upwards, and I never caught him in a lie or a theft ; all the parish knows him to be an honest boy ; I'll engage your oranges will be as safe with him as with yourself."

"Can you so?" said the orange man ; "then I'll engage, my lad, to give you the finest orange in my basket, when I come from breakfast, if you'll watch the rest while I am away."

"Yes," said Charles, "I *will* take care of your oranges."

So the man put the bridle into his hand, and he went into the house to eat his breakfast.

Charles had watched the horse and

the oranges about five minutes, when he saw one of his schoolfellows coming towards him. As he came nearer, Charles saw that it was Ned.

Ned stopped as he passed, and said, " Good-morrow to you, Charles ; what are you doing there ? whose horse is that ? and what have you got in the baskets ? "

" There are oranges in the baskets," said Charles ; " and a man, who has just gone into the inn here, to eat his breakfast, bid me take care of them, and so I did ; because he said he would give me an orange, when he came back again. "

" An orange ! " cried Ned ; " are you to have a whole orange ? I wish I was to have one ! However, let me look how large they are. " Saying this, Ned went towards the pannier, and

lifted up the cloth that covered it. "La! what fine oranges!" he exclaimed, the moment he saw them. "Let me touch them, to feel if they are ripe?"

"No," said Charles, "you had better not; what signifies it to you whether they are ripe, you know, since you are not to eat them? You should not meddle with them; they are not yours—You must not touch them."

"Not touch them. Surely," said Ned, "there is no harm in *touching* them? You don't think I mean to steal them, I suppose?" So Ned put his hand into the orange man's basket, and he took up an orange, and he felt it; and when he had felt it, he smelled it. "It smells very sweet," said he, "and it feels very ripe; I long to taste it; I will only just suck one drop of juice at

the top.'” Saying these words, he put the orange to his mouth.

Little boys, who wish to be honest, beware of temptation. People are led on, by little and little, to do wrong.

The *sight* of the oranges tempted Ned to touch them ; the touch tempted him to *smell* them ; and the smell tempted him to *taste* them.

“ What are you about, Ned ?” cried Charles, taking hold of his arm. “ You said you only wanted to smell the orange ; do put it down, for shame !”

“ Don’t say *for shame* to me,” cried Ned, in a surly tone ; “ the oranges are not yours, Charles !”

“ No, they are not mine ; but I promised to take care of them, and so I will ; so put down that orange.”

“ Oh, if it comes to that, I won’t,” said Ned, “ and let us see who can

make me, if I don't choose it; I'm stronger than you."

"I am not afraid of you, for all that," replied Charles; "for I am in the right." Then he snatched the orange out of Ned's hand, and he pushed him with all his force from the basket.

Ned immediately returned, and hit him a violent blow, which almost stunned him.

Still, however, this good boy, without minding the pain, persevered in defending what was left in his care: he still held the bridle with one hand, and covered the basket with his other arm, as well as he could.

Ned struggled in vain to get his hands into the pannier again; he could not; and, finding that he could not win by strength, he had recourse to cunning. So he pretended to be out of

breath and to desist; but he meant, as soon as Charles looked away, to creep softly round to the basket on the other side.

Cunning people, though they think themselves very wise, are almost always very silly.

Ned, intent upon one thing—the getting round to steal oranges—forgot, that, if he went too close to the horse's heels, he should startle him. The horse indeed, disturbed by the bustle near him, had already left off eating his hay, and began to put down his ears; but, when he felt something touch his hind legs, he gave a sudden kick, and Ned fell backwards, just as he had seized the orange.

Ned screamed with the pain; and at the scream all the people came out of the public-house to see what was

the matter ; and amongst them came the orange man.

Ned was now so much ashamed, that he almost forgot the pain, and wished to run away ; but he was so much hurt, that he was obliged to sit down again.

The truth of the matter was soon told by Charles, and as soon believed by all the people present, who knew him : for he had the character of being an honest boy ; and Ned was known to be a thief and a liar.

So nobody pitied Ned for the pain he felt. " He deserves it," said one ; " why did he meddle with what was not his own ?" " Pooh ; he is not much hurt, I'll answer for it," said another. " And, if he were, it's a lucky kick for him, if it keeps him from the gallows," said a third. Charles was the only

person who said nothing; he helped Ned away to the bank: for boys that are brave are always good-natured.

"Oh, come here," said the orange man, calling him: "come here, my honest lad! What! you got that black eye in keeping my oranges, did you? That's a stout little fellow," said he, taking him by the hand and leading him into the midst of the people.

Men, women, and children had gathered around, and all the children fixed their eyes upon Charles, and wished to be in his place.

In the mean time the orange man took Charles's hat off his head, and filled it with fine China oranges. "There, my little friend," said he, "take them, and God bless you with them! If I could but afford it, you should have all that are in my baskets."

Then the people, and especially the children, shouted for joy ; but, as soon as there was silence, Charles said to the orange man, " Thank'ee, master, with all my heart ; but I can't take your oranges, only that one I earned ; take the rest back again ; as for a black eye, that's nothing ! but I won't be paid for it : no more than for doing what's honest. So I can't take your oranges, master : but I thank you as much as if I had them." Saying these words, Charles offered to pour the oranges back into the basket ; but the man would not let him.

"Then," said Charles, " if they are honestly mine, I may give them away ;" so he emptied the hat amongst the children, his companions. " Divide them amongst you," said he ; and without waiting for their thanks, he pressed

through the crowd and ran towards home. The children all followed him, clapping their hands and thanking him.

'The little thief came limping after. Nobody praised him, nobody thanked him; he had no oranges to eat, nor had he any to give away. *People must be honest before they can be generous.* Ned sighed as he went towards home; 'And all this,' said he to himself, "was for one orange; it was not worth while."

No: it is never worth while to do wrong.

Little boys who read this story, consider which would you rather have been—*the honest boy* or *the thief*.

THE END.

C. BALDWIN, PRINTER, NEW BRIDGE-STREET, LONDON.