

# **VILLAGE TALES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS**

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Village Tales for Boys and Girls by Mrs. Massey

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**MRS. MASSEY**

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BOYS AND GIRLS**



*VILLAGE TALES*  
*FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.*

# Village Tales

FOR

## Boys and Girls.

BY

MRS. MASSEY,

AUTHOR OF "MRS. BARKER'S CHRISTMAS," "THE COTTAGE ON THE SHORE,"  
"CHILDREN OF HOLY SCRIPTURE," "LIGHT AT EVENTIDE," ETC.

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## He never gave it a Thought.

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**J**OHN ENGLISH, the carrier, was driving his covered wagon slowly down the Marford Road one June evening. Every Wednesday and Saturday at about five o'clock he was sure to be seen coming that way, either walking beside his old white horse, or seated in front of the cart.

He was so scared this evening, but his son, a boy of about fourteen years old, walked behind, as if keeping watch over the large barrel which hung at the back of the wagon, in company with two new pails, some hay racks, and a bundle of mats.

Rover, the carrier's dog, was still further behind, toiling along the dusty road, his tongue hanging from the side of his mouth.

No one but the carrier was in the cart. Home was close by now, and all the passengers had been set down; but there were several boxes and parcels beside the things which hung behind, and these must all be either delivered, or taken care of till they were sent for.

Something was the matter with John English that evening—he had not his usual smile and pleasant word for his neighbours as he passed; yet no one wondered, for the people who lived in Marford knew quite well why the

carrier looked so grave and troubled. But whatever it was that made his father's face so sad, Tom there, lounging along on the dusty road, his hands in his pockets, and a straw in his mouth, did not seem to share it. His careless, good-humoured smile was as ready as ever; and he whistled to Rover, and snapped his fingers, so that the great black dog came lumbering up and jumped on Tom, making him more dusty than ever.

Presently the cart stopped at a little gate, and English got down. They were at home now, as the old horse knew well enough. How glad he always was to see the cottage roof, and the door of his stable, and to know that his supper was ready for him there.

Someone in the cottage was looking out for the cart; for the door was opened almost before old Jack had done shaking his slow head, when the reins were laid on his neck. A young woman came quickly down the path, a girl who might perhaps have been about nineteen, John English's daughter, though she was not at all like either her father or Tom. They had round faces, with good-tempered grey eyes, and sandy hair, that was turning white now on the father's head; but the girl was dark and thin, with lines about her face which told that she often had pain to bear.

As she opened the gate she held out her hand to take one of the parcels which her father was lifting down from within the wagon.

"Father," she said, speaking low, but in a pleasant clear voice, "Tom and I will see to the things, mother wants you; she has been worse all day."

The shadow on the carrier's face grew a little deeper ; he well knew that his wife was dying, had known it for months, but yet he went on hoping ; and when he heard that she was worse, it was as hard to bear as if this had been the first time that the thought of losing her had crossed his mind.

"Tis the hot weather, Essie," he said ; "she feels tired like, I do myself ; however, you look to the parcels, and let Tom put the horse up. Where is Tom ?"

He was not there. "I daresay he is gone to the stable," said Esther ; but she hardly thought so, for this was not the first evening by many when she had been obliged herself to unharness the horse, and to give him his feed of oats, because her brother had run off to amuse himself among the village lads. No great harm perhaps, only a boy's selfishness and thoughtlessness ; but then to-night his mother was so ill. "Tom doesn't know," Esther said to herself presently, "or I'm sure he wouldn't have gone, he never gave it a thought."

That was what Tom himself would have said had you asked him why he did not stay to help his sister, and he would have been quite satisfied with the excuse.

It took Esther a long time to carry the parcels to the house, and to put Jack in the stable ; some of the weights she had to lift were far too heavy for the girl's arms. She felt very tired when at last she went indoors and found her father in his dusty clothes sitting by the bed, and holding her mother's hand. It seemed to her that even in the half-hour since she was there, the white face had grown yet