

Lascars: The Children's Treasury



THE POOR LASCAR

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History

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The Children's Treasury

Read the children's story 'The Poor Lascar' that was published in Father William's Stories in 1873

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As the good rector read the oft-repeated, but ever fresh story of the birth of Christ; and as he told his hearers what lessons they should learn from His life, how they should be meek and lowly, and strive to be like Him in all things; everyone in that congregation seemed to be a real worshipper.



And none paid more attention to the “old, old story” or joined more heartily in singing the grand old Christmas hymn, “Hark! The herald angels sing, Glory to our new-born King” – then did Ada Somers and her young friends from the Hall, as the principal house in the village was called. And all went home with light and happy hearts to spend the rest of that joyous anniversary day in peace and comfort with their friends and families.

Snow! Snow! Snow! Everywhere lying deep upon the ground, clinging heavily to the hedge-rows and the branches of the trees, gathering on every mite of lodgement, and falling thick and fast from the dull and leaden sky. The village streets were deserted, left entirely to the wind and snow: while the ruddy glow of bright fires shone on many windows, and pleasant sounds of laughter and music came from many happy fireside circles.

At the Hall, the bright glow of the fires and the hum of childish voices told of joy and happiness within. As was their custom, Mr and Mrs Somers, and their friends, were spending that afternoon with the children, joining in their innocent sports, and not failing to remind them of the goodness of God in giving them such a happy home, while others were exposed to the wind and snow without.

The day was rapidly drawing to a close, when little Ada, running to one of the windows to gaze upon the snow that was clothing all nature with a pure and spotless garment, saw an object that almost caused her heart to burst with pity. A poor Lascar, almost barefoot, and wretchedly clad, with his hand folded in his loose garment, and a heavy pack fastened to his back, was hurrying past, casting a piteous and longing glance toward the window which betokened with such warmth and comfort within. Ada instantly remembered the morning's sermon, and hastily calling her papa to the window, implored him to take pity on the poor fellow, and shelter him from the inclement weather. Mr Somers was always ready to assist the poor and needy, and quickly sent one of his servants to call back the poor man.



Half-starved, and almost frozen to death, he needed little pressing, and was soon comfortably seated before the huge kitchen fire, enjoying the good things that were bountifully set before him. Meanwhile the children in the drawing-room were full of speculation as to how the poor fellow came in so pitiable a condition.

In order that they might be interested, and that all might ascertain the history of the poor man, Mr. Somers had him made a little clean and tidy, and, bringing him to the drawing-room, put some kindly questions to him. The poor fellow was at first rather nervous – as well he might be; but seeing that all were so kind and sympathetic, he gained confidence, and as well as he could, in his broken English, related his story. Tempted to leave his native country by the liberal offers of the captain of an English vessel, he had been discharged on reaching England with only a few shillings in his pocket. Hardly knowing what to do, he bought a few trifles, intending to go from town to town and sell them.

Being able to speak English but imperfectly, he could not sell his wares, and thus hungry, weary, and footsore, suffering immensely from the cold, wintry weather, he wandered from village to village, subsisting as best he could on the chance kindness of the charitable.

The history of his life was so affecting that his young hearers were full of sorrow that any Englishman could be so cruel to a poor unoffending foreigner. Mr. Somers, believing his tale to be true, and having great influence with businessmen in London, procured for the poor man a situation.

He may occasionally be met in the streets of London, a happy and contented man, cheerfully doing his work; and if questioned as to his past history, will not forget to speak of the happy and smiling face that he saw in the window of the Hall at Langley Dell, on that happy and (for him) eventful Christmas day.

May I ask my young readers, at this, the happiest season of the year, to be kind and loving to those who need such kindness. While you have everything that your heart can wish for, there are many children hungry, sick and cold. Out of your abundance spare a little for these. Send a few of your play-things and pretty picture books to the poor little ones in our children's hospitals and homes; and whenever you can, speak a kind word and do a kind action to the poor and needy, and you, too, like Ada Somers, will be following in the footsteps of the meek and lowly Jesus, and will find that His approval, will be your great reward.

F.T.G.

Lascars:

Questions on The Poor Lascar

What does this story tell you about how the poor Lascar came to be in Britain?

What does it tell you about his circumstance once he was here?

What does it tell you about how different people may have treated Lascar sailors in Britain?
