

TOMMY TUCKER'S TRUTHLESS TALE.

TOLD BY THE FIRST FLOOR LOBBY.



TOMMY TUCKER was very fond of animals. To his youthful mind—he was only nine years old—the finest fun in the world was that of driving sheep and cattle through the public streets on market days, and as he lived in the neighbourhood of the Caledonia Road he had plenty of indulgence.

Now I dare say you think that Tommy Tucker was one of those nasty dirty little street-boys, all rags and red eyes, who are so often seen soliciting the donors. Nothing of the kind. Tommy how ever he may have quarried, was always neat and clean and decent. His parents and were extremely respectable. Mrs. Tucker being a housewife, and Mr. T. having an engagement at an adjacent lard-and-slaughterer's. Guess then their dreadful desolation when they discovered the low tastes of their only son, the hope and joy of the family of Tucker!

It is always sad to see a strong man weep, and I can assure you it has often wrung my very heartstrings when I have watched the unbidden tear course the cheek of Tucker senior, as he thought of the low and vulgar tastes of the son whom he had hoped to bring up a pattern of respectability and eventually to apprentice to his own profession. At last I could put up with it no longer, and so one day I propounded a plan which I thought would have the desired effect of turning the boy's thoughts in the right direction, and making him see that deceiving was after all only fit for the low and vulgar.

"Tall Tommy," said I, after weighing the matter over in my mind thoroughly, "that if he'll only keep out of the market for a week, and do as you tell him, I'll take him to the Zoological Gardens, and give him a ride on the elephants."

Well, the week passed away, and Tommy made an effort which carried him successfully over the time; so when the appointed day arrived, we started off early in the morning, taking a good basket of provisions, and intending to stay the whole of the day, and see all that was to be seen. It was Monday, and the gardens were very full, and after having some trouble with Master Tommy I eventually lost him altogether. I looked about everywhere, but failed to find him, and after a long search was obliged to return home alone.

Night fell, and his mother began to feel uneasy. So did I, for his father told me he'd punch my head if any accident happened to the boy. We sat listening for the expected football far into the night, but it was not until morning dawned that Master Tommy made his

appearance. I will pass over the remaining of the fond family and get into the story told by Tommy as to how he had spent his time.

He said that he had wandered about the gardens until nightfall, and then, failing to find his way out, had thrown himself down to rest near the refreshment room, where he thought I should most likely be found, and soon fell fast asleep. He was not sure how long he slept, but on awaking he was astonished to find the dining-room brilliantly illuminated, and feeling very hungry, he crept up and peeped in, thinking that where there was so much rattling of knives and forks and plates there was sure to be something to give away. But much to his astonishment he found that instead of human beings who were sitting at table, they were all animals, beautifully dressed, and the cloth having just been cleared by four griffins dressed in tail-coats and white chokers, the company were proceeding to be very merry. They were of all sorts and sizes. The lion was in the chair, supported on either side by the rhinoceros and the hyena. There was the crocodile who shed tears when his health was proposed; and next him was the dove—so Tommy said, though how she got there I won't presume to say. The minor and smaller animals were also represented, the deer, the frog, the sparrow, and the lap-dog being all there. The latter however was not allowed at table, but took his refreshment in the ordinary manner. Perhaps from his being so intimately connected with humanity, the committee thought he had better be kept "in his place." What struck Tommy most was a lamb in a pair of plaid-trowsers, who seemed to represent the Scotch wrennet family, and who was not at all sheepish. The hyena laughed loud and constantly, and the entertainment was most eminently successful.

I should have told a good deal more of what Tommy Tucker saw at the Zoological Gardens, and have given you some of the speeches reported verbatim, for the boy's story went into great length. I have, however, just discovered that he never saw anything of the kind, and had only been rivaling Little Johnny, who writes for your paper, and had been out all night driving a herd of Irish fighting pigs from the docks with a driver of his acquaintance.

And I think it is very wrong of him to decide me whatever he may have done to his father and mother.