

Richard Harris Barham (1788-1845)

4 *Misadventures at Margate*

A Legend of Jarvis's Jetty

Mr. Simpkinson (*loquitur*)

'Twas in Margate last July, I walk'd upon the pier,
I saw a little vulgar Boy — I said, "What makes you here?
The gloom upon your youthful cheek speaks anything but joy";
Again I said, "What make you here, you little vulgar Boy?"

He frown'd, that little vulgar Boy — he deem'd I meant to scoff — 5
And when the little heart is big, a little "sets it off".
He put his finger in his mouth, his little bosom rose, —
He had no little handkerchief to wipe his little nose! —

"Hark! don't you hear, my little man? — it's striking Nine," I said,
"An hour when all good little boys and girls should be in bed. 10
Run home and get your supper, else your Ma will scold — Oh! fie!
It's very wrong indeed for little boys to stand and cry!"

The tear-drop in his little eye again began to spring,
His bosom throbb'd with agony, — he cried like any thing!
I stooped, and thus amidst his sobs I heard him murmur — "Ah! 15
I haven't got no supper! and I haven't got no Ma!! —

"My father, he is on the seas — my mother's dead and gone!
And I am here, on this here pier, to roam the world alone;
I have not had, this live-long day, one drop to cheer my heart,
Nor 'brown' to buy a bit of bread with, — let alone a tart. 20

"If there's a soul will give me food, or find me in employ,
By day or night, then blow me tight!" (he was a vulgar Boy);
"And now I'm here, from this here pier it is my fixed intent
To jump, as Mister Levi did from off the Monu-ment!"

"Cheer up! Cheer up! my little man — cheer up," I kindly said, 25
"You are a naughty boy to take such things into your head:

If you should jump from off the pier, you'd surely break your legs,
Perhaps your neck — then Bogey'd have you, sure as eggs are eggs!

“Come home with me, my little man, come home with me and sup;
My landlady is Mrs. Jones — we must not keep her up — 30
There's roast potatoes at the fire, — enough for me and you —
Come home, you little vulgar Boy — I lodge at Number 2.”

I took him home to Number 2, the house beside “The Foy”;
I bade him wipe his dirty shoes, — that little vulgar Boy, —
And then I said to Mistress Jones, the kindest of her sex, 35
‘Pray be so good as go and fetch a pint of double X.”

But Mrs. Jones was rather cross, she made a little noise,
She said she “did not like to wait on little vulgar Boys.”
She with her apron wiped the plates, and as she rubbed the delf,
Said I might “go to Jericho, and fetch my beer myself!” 40

I did not go to Jericho — I went to Mr Cobb —
I changed a shilling — (which in town the people call “a Bob”) —
It was not so much for myself as for that vulgar child —
And I said, “A pint of double X, and please to draw it mild!” —

When I came back I gazed about — I gazed on stool and chair — 45
I could not see my little friend — because he was not there!
I peep'd beneath the table-cloth — beneath the sofa too —
I said, “You little vulgar Boy! why what's become of you?”

I could not see my table-spoons — I look'd, but could not see
The little fiddle-pattern'd ones I use when I'm at tea; 50
— I could not see my sugar-tongs — my silver watch — oh, dear!
I know 'twas on the mantelpiece when I went out for beer.

I could not see my Macintosh — it was not to be seen: —
Nor yet my best white beaver hat, broad-brimm'd and lined with green;
My carpet-bag — my cruet-stand, that holds my sauce and soy, — 55
My roast potatoes! — all are gone! and so's that vulgar Boy!

I rang the bell for Mrs. Jones, for she was down below,
“Oh, Mrs. Jones! what *do* you think? — ain't this a pretty go? —

— That horrid little vulgar Boy whom I brought here to-night,
— He's stolen my things and run away!!" Says she, "And sarve you right!!" 60

Next morning I was up betimes — I sent the Crier round,
All with his bell and gold-laced hat, to say I'd give a pound
To find that little vulgar Boy, who'd gone and used me so;
But when the Crier cried, "O yes!" the people cried, "O no!"

I went to "Jarvis' Landing-place", the glory of the town, 65
There was a common Sailor-man a-walking up and down,
I told my tale — he seem'd to think I'd not been treated well,
And called me "Poor old Buffer!" — what that means I cannot tell.

That Sailor-man he said he'd seen that morning on the shore, 70
A son of — something — 'twas a name I'd never heard before,
A little "gallows-looking chap" — dear me; what could he mean?
With a "carpet-swab" and "muckingtogs," and a hat turned up with green.

He spoke about his "precious eyes", and said he'd seen him "sheer",
— It's very odd that Sailor-men should talk so very queer —
And then he hitch'd his trousers up, as is, I'm told, their use, 75
— It's very odd that Sailor-men should wear those things so loose.

I did not understand him well, but think he meant to say
He'd seen that little vulgar Boy, that morning swim away
In Captain Large's *Royal George*, about an hour before,
And they were now, as he supposed, "somewheres" about the Nore. 80

A landsman said, "I *twig* the chap — he's been upon the Mill —
And 'cause he *gammons* so the *flats*, ve calls him Veeping Bill!"
He said, "he'd done me wery brown," and nicely "*stow'd* the *swag*",
— That's French, I fancy, for a hat — or else a carpet-bag.

I went and told the constable my property to track; 85
He ask'd me if "I did not wish that I might get it back?"
I answered, "To be sure I do — it's what I'm come about;"
He smiled and said, "Sir, does your mother know that you are out?"

Not knowing what to do, I thought I'd hasten back to town,
And beg our own Lord Mayor to catch the Boy who'd "done me brown". 90

His Lordship very kindly said he'd try and find him out,
But he rather thought that there were several vulgar boys about.

He sent for Mr. Whithair then, and I describ'd "the swag",
My Macintosh, my sugar-tongs, my spoons and carpet-bag;
He promised that the New Police should all their powers employ! 95
But never to this hour have I beheld that vulgar Boy!

MORAL

Remember, then, what when a boy I've heard my Grandma tell,
"BE WARN'D IN TIME BY OTHERS' HARM, AND YOU SHALL DO FULL WELL!"
Don't link yourself with vulgar folks, who've got no fixed abode,
Tell lies, use naughty words, and say "they wish they may be blow'd!" 100

Don't take too much of double X! — and don't at night go out
To fetch your beer yourself, but make the pot-boy bring your stout!
And when you go to Margate next, just stop, and ring the bell,
Give my respects to Mrs. Jones, and say I'm pretty well!

1842

(From *An English Book of Light Verse*. Chosen by Guy Boas. London: Macmillan, 1944)