

CHILDREN'S WISHES.



LONDON:

RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,

Instituted 1799.

SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW,
AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

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LAST new year's day, when Dame Turner came into school in the morning, her little scholars all courtesied, and wished her a happy new year. "The same to you, my dear children," the good woman replied, "and I wish it with earnestness and affection: may it be a happy new year indeed to each of you! And pray, let me ask, has the past year been as happy as you could wish?"

"Not quite, mistress," answered several little voices, "but it is to be hoped the next year will be more so."

"And what was it you wanted last year which you hope to enjoy this, and which you think will make you happy?"

"Oh, different things, mistress; we cannot exactly say what."

"But if you would say what, and that your expressions were the sincere language of your heart, I think, by consulting my books, I should be able to form a pretty good judgment, whether you would be likely to obtain your wishes; and, if obtained, how far they would be likely to make you happy."

"What books find out such things as these? fortune-telling books?"

"O no! those books are very foolish, and very wicked! the writers pretend to tell what nobody in the world knows any thing about; and what, if it could be known, would most likely keep us from doing our duty, or enjoying any real comfort. The books I speak of tell us what we shall be wiser and happier for knowing."

"Then will you tell us something out of them, mistress?"

"Well, then, I will endeavour to tell you a story that I recollect. A certain young man

had this offer from God himself—‘Ask what I shall give thee.’ Young people, in general, are apt to decide too hastily, and afterwards to wish they had done otherwise. But in case of so great a proposal as this, so many things would come into the minds of most young people; one, as quite necessary, another, as very desirable; a third, as what they have a particular wish for; a fourth, as what they should like above all things; and a fifth, that it is impossible to do without: their minds would be quite in a perplexity, and they would perhaps be almost tempted to let the offer go by before they could resolve. This young man, however, made his choice without hesitation; and yet with no imprudent haste. He obtained his wish.”

The old lady then reached down her large bible, and read in the 3d chapter of the 1st book of Kings, from the 5th to the 15th verse. “And now children, supposing such an offer was made to you by a person on whom you might depend to fulfil it, what do you think you would choose? what say you, Jenny?”

Jenny. “I should like to be a rich young lady, like squire Arnold’s daughter, and have a grand house to live in, and plenty of fine clothes to wear, and servants to wait upon me, and a carriage to ride in.”

Charlotte. “I do not wish for so much as

that; I should be quite content if I was only as well off as the Miss Careys, that my mother washes for; they have plenty of good clothes, and every thing else to make them comfortable, and money to give to the poor, besides sixpence a week, or more, to spend upon their own pleasure."

Fanny. "I do not care much about riches, but I should like my liberty. I wish mother was not so very strict; she will not let me go to the wake nor the dance, nor keep company with Kitty Shaw and Betsey Rose, nor take a walk of a Sunday, nor wear a feather in my bonnet, nor even curl my hair, and fasten it up with a comb, like young ladies do. If I could but dress as I please, and go out as I like, I should be quite happy."

Lydia. "And I only wish that mother was just rich enough to keep a girl to nurse the little ones, and clean the house, or else that she would give up going out to washing, and stay at home and do it herself: it is so tiresome to be carrying the baby about all day long, and mother is so angry if I let the little ones get into any mischief."

Dame T. "What should you like, Sally?"

Sally. "I wish I could read, mistress; I have been a long time in spelling, and I should like to be able to read all the pretty story books, and to read the bible to

my father and mother on Sunday evenings like Betsey Edwards."



Nancy. "Well, my wish is that I may always have good health, and live a great great many years ; and when I must die, that I may go to heaven."

Poor Martha burst into tears, and said, "Mine would be a happy new year indeed, if my dear father was but well. He cannot eat his food, nor go to his work, nor play with us as he used to do ; nor hear us read nor repeat hymns, except a very little at a time : his head aches, and he is very weak : and mother cries, and says she is afraid we

shall lose him. Oh, if father was better, I should not want any thing else !”

Dame T. “ Now, Mary, what do you wish ?”

Mary blushed, and hung down her head, as if she was almost afraid to speak. “ How is this ?” continued Mrs. Turner, “ I hope Mary does not wish for any thing wrong : I cannot think she does, for she is in general so obedient and so good a child. Come, little girl, whisper in my ear.——Oh, she wishes that ‘ God may make her a better child.’ A very good wish indeed ! so much like that of the young man we have been reading about, that I cannot but hope it will turn out as well. Now, going back a few pages in another of my books, I find some wishes entered there very much like those you have all been expressing ; and comparing it all together, I will tell you how far I think them likely to succeed. As to you, Jane, who wish to be rich and great, I must tell you that you are not at all likely to obtain your wishes ; and should such a very unlikely thing happen, as that you should be placed exactly in the situation you have wished for, I am quite sure you would not be contented or happy.

“ Charlotte it seems would be contented or thinks she would, with a humbler lot ; she does not wish to be more than a master-tradesman’s daughter. Well. I cannot by any

means promise that this wish will be fulfilled ; though, certainly, the more moderate the wish, the more likelihood of its being realized ; but, as I told Jenny, if it were so, I very much doubt your being one bit the happier, or more contented ; you would still be wishing to get a little and a little higher, and never think you had quite enough. But though, perhaps, you may never be exactly so rich as you may wish, yet I can put you in a way of becoming richer than you are at present ; as much so, I dare say, as will be for your real good. Let industry make you a purse, and frugality find strings for it ; never spend an idle moment nor an idle penny, and you will soon find yourself able to purchase some useful article of clothing, or some instructive book, or to spare a trifle for a fellow-creature : pleasures which a whole life spent in idle wishing will never put in your power.

“ Yours, Fanny, I am sorry to say, is a very foolish wish indeed ; and, if God were to grant it you, it would be in anger and to your great injury. What ! wish that you were at liberty to run into mischief ! wish you could shake off the guidance of a kind and good parent, who has your welfare at heart, and who certainly knows better than yourself how to promote it ! If you had your

wish, I can venture to say, that in one month you would have behaved so foolishly and badly, as to be reprov'd and disgrac'd at school, if not turn'd away from it. And in less than a twelvemonth, you would be considered as unworthy to be admitt'd as a servant or apprentice in any respectable family. So, as your own wish would be your ruin, my kindest wish for you is, that, instead of its being fulfilled, you may become wiser than to entertain it any longer.

“ I do not at all like your wish, Lydia ; it seems as though you grudg'd any little services required of you in the family, which it ought to be your greatest pleasure to perform. What, I should be glad to know, would have become of an idle, discontented, little girl herself, a very few years ago, if nobody had had patience to take care of a fretful, tiresome, little baby ? and such, I know, you were a few years ago, Lydia. Think better of it, Lydia, and, instead of complaining, rejoice that you can render some little assistance ; endeavour to be as active, kind, attentive, and useful as possible ; and rather wish that you were stronger and more clever : not only able to mind the baby, and clean the house, but to help to wash and iron, and do needlework, and many other things towards the support and comfort of the family. This

you have only to wish and try, and you will



soon obtain: besides, as you become more active and useful, you will become also so much more contented and happy, as to make you forget your present foolish childish wishes.

“Sally’s is a good wish, she need only wish sincerely and strive heartily, and she will be sure to obtain it. No child, who has learnt to spell, need despair of learning to read; but remember you will not obtain that, or any thing else worth having, without taking pains.

“Your mind, Nancy, seems inclined to put away all thoughts of death as far as possible ; and when it must come at last, you have a sort of faint lazy wish that you may escape misery, which you have taken no care to prevent, and be admitted to happiness, which you have taken no pains to seek or to prepare for. No—no—no ! this cannot be : death must and will come, how much soever you may dislike and dread the thoughts of it ; it may come while you are young, and it may come very suddenly. My advice to you is, that, instead of vainly wishing that death would never come, you should strive and pray that you may be ready, come whenever it may. Whatever you think you shall wish you had not done when you come to die, that break off directly ; and begin such a course as you think you shall then be able to look back upon with pleasure. Especially pray to the Lord Jesus ; beg of him to forgive your sins ; to change your thoughtless, worldly, naughty heart, and to form you anew by his grace : then you need not be very anxious about a short or a long life ; for to you to live will be Christ, and to die will be gain.

“I deeply feel for Martha under her anxiety for her father’s recovery ; but I dare not promise that the event will be according to her

desire ; if it please God, I sincerely wish it may. And I am happy to inform her that she may express her wishes in earnest prayer to that great God, who, if he sees fit to speak the word, can in a moment restore her father to health and activity ; and who has kindly said, ‘ Call upon me in the day of trouble ; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.’ You may pray, dear child, that your father’s life may be spared, and his health restored ; you may pray that his mind may be supported and comforted by the consolations of the all-precious gospel ; that your dear parents and yourself may be prepared for whatever awaits you. Especially pray that you may be made a child of God, by faith in his dear Son ; that however it may be with your earthly father, you may ever have access to ‘ your Father which is in heaven.’ And while you thus pray, do every thing in your power to assist and comfort both your parents ; that if they should be taken from you, you may never have to reproach yourself with unkind or undutiful conduct ; and if they should be spared, you may have the happiness of being reckoned among their choicest comforts.

“And now my dear little Mary, whose wish seems to be expressed in the little verse you sometimes repeat,

I ask not, wish not to appear
More beauteous, rich, or gay ;
Lord, make me wiser every year,
And better every day ;—

persevere, my dear child, in your wish, and strive as well as pray. Mind all the good things you are taught, avoid every thing that is displeasing to your parents and teachers ; and endeavour to improve in all they require of you. When you rise in the morning, beg of God to give you grace to serve him through the day better than you have ever done before ; and when you retire to rest at night, repent, and ask pardon that you have served him no better. And though I am sure your wish will never be quite fulfilled in this world ; the time will never come in which you will say, I am as good as I wish to be ; yet I am as sure that if you sincerely desire, it will be every day fulfilling, for ‘ He who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ Jesus.’

“ Now to your work, children. Begin the year by endeavouring to do the duty of every day in its day ; and I venture to say you will find every day’s happiness come of course. And if we should live to meet this day twelvemonth, not one of you, who has steadily pursued this plan, will be inclined to try any other way to happiness ; but those

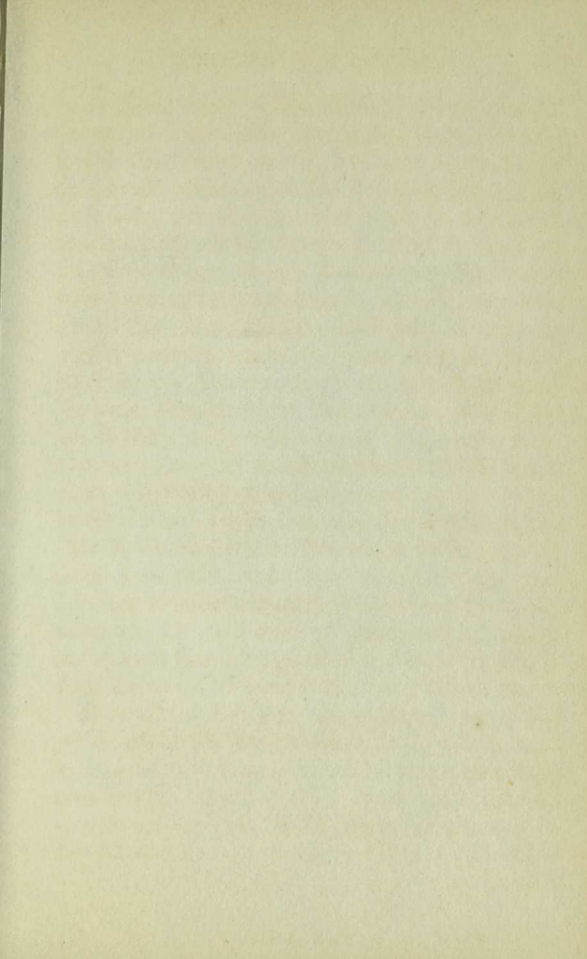
who have spent their time and thoughts in seeking after riches and pleasures above their sphere, will most likely experience continual disappointment; and certainly find that, both in what they seek and what they obtain, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

Thus ended dame Turner's conversation with her scholars, which I have taken the trouble of writing down, because, by consulting the same books, I know that such are the feelings and wishes of many children in the world beside; and any other little girl (or boy either) may put their own name to whichever of the characters best suits themselves, and apply the hints given.

You should endeavour to say, "If it please God to bestow such a blessing, or to remove such an affliction, I shall be thankful; but he knows best: and if he see fit to withhold, or take away, or inflict, may his grace enable me patiently to submit, and say, 'Thy will be done.'"

But if the wish of your heart is for the grace of God to make you a good child, you cannot be too anxious about it, nor ask it too often. There are many sweet promises in the bible, which encourage your hope and ensure you against disappointment. The blessed God has been pleased to say, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.—If any man lack wisdom

let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.—A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. These words are delightfully encouraging to a child, who desires to seek and serve the Lord. There are also many sweet prayers in the bible which will suit you ; which if you only whisper in your heart, even while you are at your work, the blessed God will condescend to hear and answer. And while you pray, endeavour also to be more dutiful and obedient to your parents and teachers ; more kind and obliging to your brothers and sisters ; and more like your blessed Saviour, who increased in wisdom as in stature, and in favour both with God and man. He lived a sorrowful life, and died a painful death on the cross to save us. O my dear children, believe on him, love and obey him. Trust in his grace, and pray to be meek and lowly in heart, as he was. Children that have most of this spirit, will have the happiest new year, let their outward circumstances be what they may. The writer will conclude with one good wish, May every reader of this book be a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus !





RETURN, O holy Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest ;
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.

So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame ;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb.