

Anna Fox

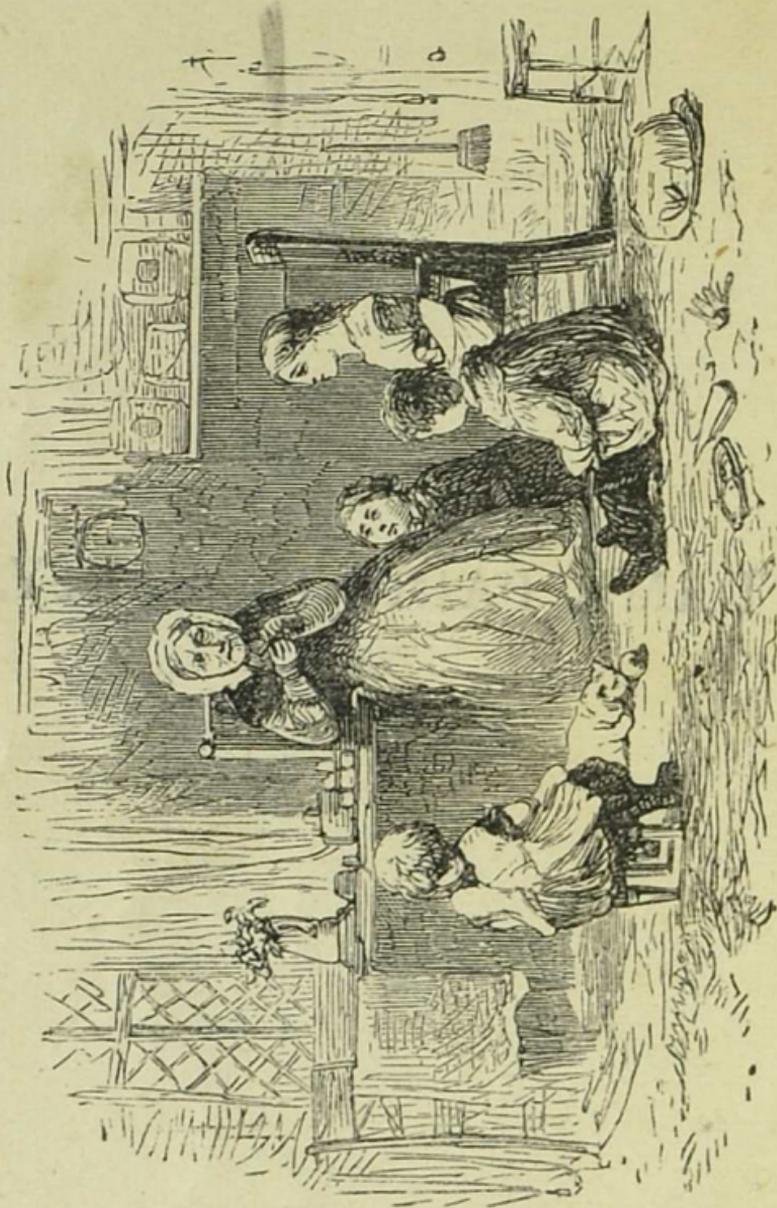
DAME BARTON'S PARTY,

— — —
*Published under the direction of the
Committee of General Literature and Education,
appointed by the Society for Promoting
Christian Knowledge.*
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LONDON:
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN
KNOWLEDGE;

SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORYES:
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DAME BARTON'S PARTY.

DAME BARTON was an old lady who lived in a retired, but very pretty situation, in one of the southern counties of England. Her house was far removed from the bustle and smoke of a manufacturing town; but yet she lived near enough to one, to be able to walk over occasionally to purchase all that was requisite for her humble house-keeping. Her husband died many years before the time of which I am speaking; but, as Mrs. Barton, or, as she was called by all her neighbours, "Dame Barton," was possessed of a small property, she lived very comfortably on what she received every year from it; and her little grand-

daughter Mary, who lived with her, was so handy, that she had no occasion to keep a servant.

Dame Barton had many sons and daughters, but they were all grown up, and had families of their own to attend to; but I am glad to say they were very attentive to their widowed mother, and came over very often to see her.

Dame Barton was very fond of children; and thinking it must be very dull for a little girl like Mary to be always alone with such an old woman as herself (though Mary herself did not think so), she used to invite her other grandchildren to come over to drink tea with her, and have a good game of play with Mary. Of course Mary was always very glad to see her brothers and sisters, and to have her cousins with her; and when her grandmother proposed that they should all come on Thursday, which was Mary's birthday, she clapped her hands with delight, and skipped about right merrily.

“Oh, grandmother!” said she, “that is kind of you; and I hope it will be a fine day, that we may play in the wood at hide-and-seek, as we did once before when my cousins came to see us.”

Her grandmother heartily acquiesced in this wish, for she was well aware that it would be far more conducive to *her* comfort for the children to play out of doors, and also much more agreeable to themselves.

Thursday came, and the morning was as fine and bright as could be desired, but soon after the children had all assembled, a heavy shower came on, which made the grass so wet, that Dame Barton said they had much better play in the house till it got quite fine, and the grass and walks were become drier.

This was not very pleasant; but Mary brought out some balls she had made of cork, and covered with worsted, and a battledore and shuttlecock, and with these an hour was passed in great merriment.

When these were thrown aside Dame Barton said, "Now I will show you a new game: it is called 'Hunt the slipper.'" Upon this all the children gathered round her, and asked what they were to do. She bade them all sit down on the ground in a circle, so that all their feet were in the middle, while she sent Mary up-stairs for one of her slippers. Charles and James Barton kept a place for Mary between them: they need not have done this, for Mary was not going to sit down among them; but when she had slyly given the slipper to her cousin Ellen, and told her to pass it on quickly under her frock to her next neighbour, she ran round the circle, guessing where the slipper had gone to, and in whose hands it was then. Mary caught a glimpse of it the next time she passed Charles, and tapping him gently on the shoulder, she said, "You have it, Charles, so now get up, and do as I have been doing, and I will take your place."

Charles liked this very much, but he found it a long time before he could see the slipper, as they all managed to conceal it so well, and passed it round so quickly. At last he detected Ellen with it in her hand, and then *she* got up, and ran round the circle. I need not tell you how every one in turn had to "hunt the slipper," for that would take me a long time. Many a hearty laugh the children had over their game, and they played at it a long time.

When they were weary of it, Mary said, "Now let us ask grandmother to tell us a story, I am sure she will tell us something amusing."

This all agreed to, and the good grandmother also; and when they were all seated around her, she began thus:—

"You want me to tell you a story, and so I will; but it shall be about shoes, as you have been playing at 'hunt the slipper.' Who can tell me what our shoes are made of?"

"Leather," they all answered.

“And where does the leather come from, do you think?”

This they could not answer, for they were only little children, and had never heard how leather is prepared for use. Dame Barton then told them that leather is prepared from the skins or hides of cattle, sheep, dogs, etc.; that when the hair is all scraped off, they are tanned, that is, put into pits, and soaked in *ooze*, which is made by infusing the bark of trees, until they are very strong and firm. This process is a slow one, but when the leather is well tanned, it lasts a long time. “You have,” said she, “I dare say, seen a shoemaker at work: can you tell me what he uses to shape the shoes on?”

“Yes,” said James, “I can, grandmother, for I have often seen William Turner at work. He sits on a low bench, and has a last, or wooden thing the shape of a shoe, and on this he places the leather. He makes the holes, to put the thread through to sew it,

with a pointed thing called an awl, and the thread he uses is all waxed, to make it very strong, and not wear out soon."

"Thank you, James," said his grandmother, "you have told us very nicely about shoemaking. Now what kind of shoes do you think people wore before they found out how to make them as we do now? I will tell you, but we must first think of very early times: the Jews wore sandals, or shoes with only a sole to them, bound on to the foot with thongs of leather. These, not being covered, did not preserve their feet from the dust or dirt; but, as it was customary in the East to wash the feet very often, these sandals were, no doubt, very convenient, being easily unloosed. We read of these sandals several times in the Bible. Our Saviour bade the Apostles, when He sent them forth to teach, be 'shod with sandals;' and St. Peter, when he was delivered from prison by the Angel, was told to 'bind on his sandals.'

“In England in the 9th and 10th centuries, the great people wore what you now call clogs, or shoes with only the upper part of leather, and the sole of wood. They afterwards used to have their shoes made with very long points, which were turned up. The clergy did not at all like to see these long-pointed shoes, and begged the people to leave off wearing them, but it was of no use, *they* liked them very much, and had the points made even longer, so that in the reign of Richard II. they were of such an enormous length, that they were tied to the knees with chains of silver, and sometimes of gold. Could anything have been more foolish to look at, and uncomfortable to wear? At last, by an Act of Parliament, these pointed shoes were forbidden, and the shoemakers were not allowed to make the pikes more than two inches long.

“After this the much more graceful-looking buckle came into fashion; these are worn at the present day by bishops

and others. In France, and other parts of the Continent, the poor people wear nothing but wooden shoes, without any lining, and very frequently they have no stockings on; the tops of these are pointed, and a *little* turned up.

“In Japan the people wear very thin, slight shoes. They are made of rice-straw, and are very like slippers. Of course shoes of this description are soon worn out, and there are a great many pairs of old shoes to be seen left on the road, or near the brooks, where travellers have put on a new pair, after washing their feet; for they generally take two or three new pairs with them when they go on a journey. The climate of Japan is very hot, and the people are, no doubt, very glad to wear light shoes, or else we should think they would find the wooden clogs they have to put on in wet weather more serviceable at all times. How different is the ‘buskin,’ or covering the Norwegian and Laplander wear over both leg and

foot! This is made of the untanned hide of some animal, with the hair left on; and they no doubt find it very warm and comfortable when walking about amid snow and ice.

“Now, my children,” continued Mrs. Barton, “which of all these different kinds of shoes would you choose to wear, if they were put before you: the sandal of the East, the pointed shoe and long chains of our ancestors, the wooden shoe of the French peasant, the straw slipper of the Japanese, the ‘buskin’ of the Laplander, or, lastly, the strong English boot of English manufacture, such as William Turner makes?”

“Oh, leathern boots for us, grandmother!” said they all; “you know none of the others would be suitable for us in England, excepting the wooden shoes, and these cannot be very comfortable to wear, for they would not bend at all.”

“You are quite right,” said Dame Barton, “each nation has adopted what

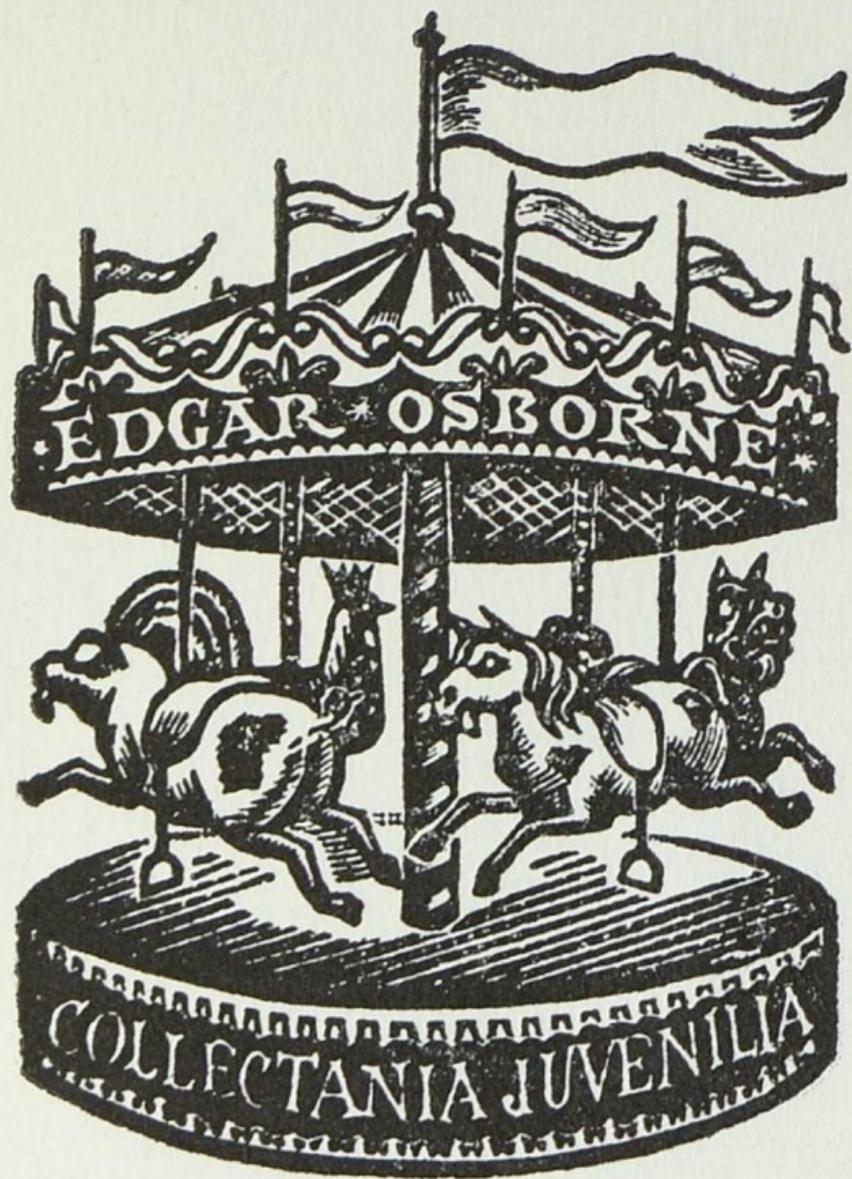
is best suited to the climate of their country; you, by the care of your good parents, are well protected from the damp and cold, therefore you may now go and play at hide-and-seek in the garden; you had better not go into the wood, for the drops still fall from the trees. The sun is so bright now, and the birds are singing so sweetly, we cannot regret that the earth has been refreshed by a shower, though you have been confined to the house part of this afternoon."

When the children returned home they had so much to tell their parents about "grandmother's story," that they all agreed that it had been one of the happiest days they had ever passed with her.

THE END.

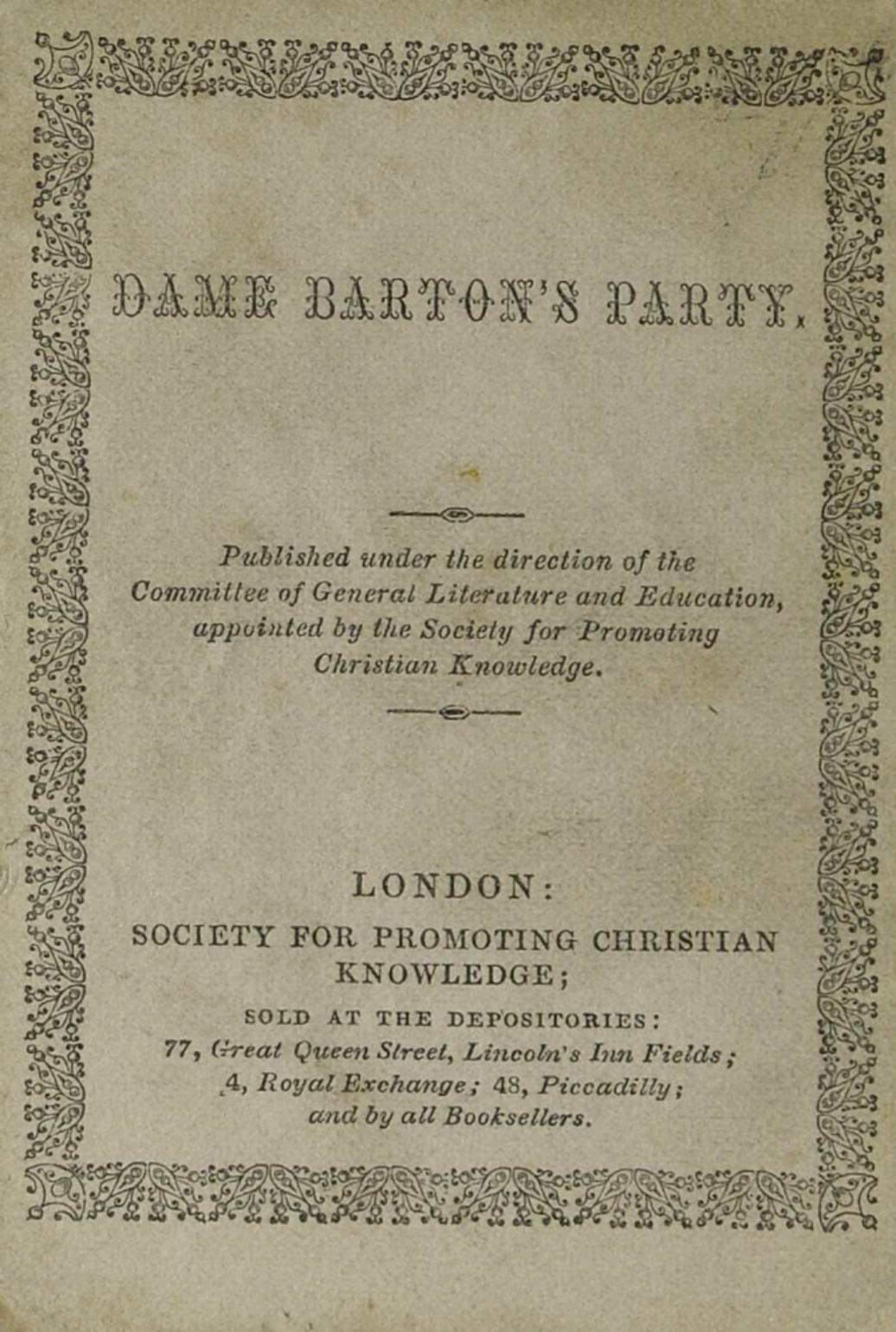
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