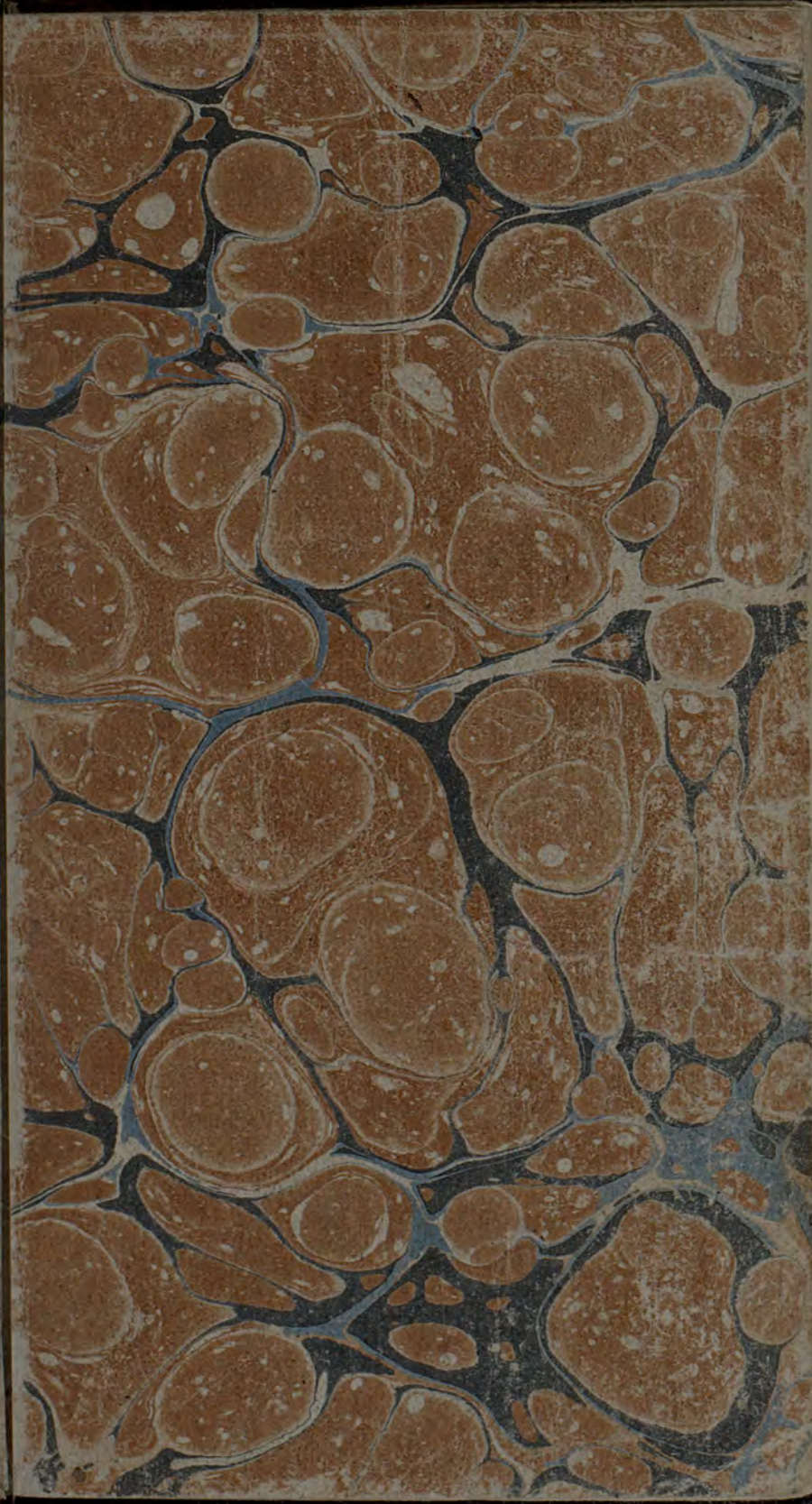
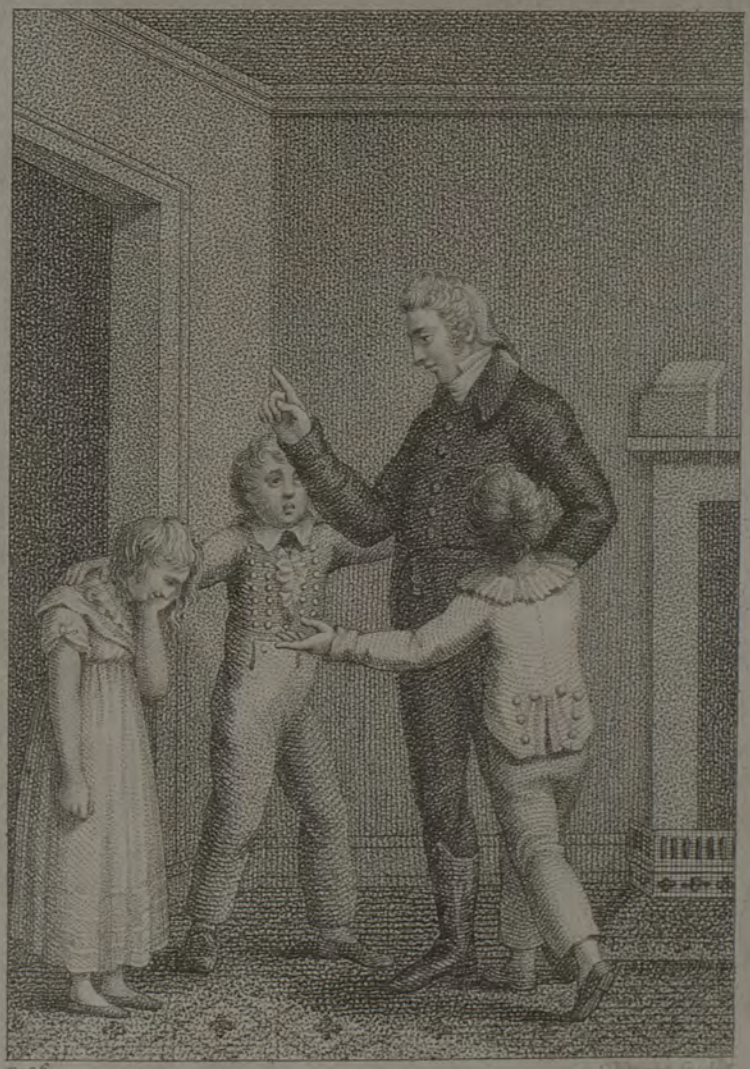


Master Wagner



p. 26.

FRONTISPIECE

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DRAMAS

FOR

CHILDREN.

IMITATED FROM THE FRENCH OF L. F. JAUFFRET,

BY

THE EDITOR OF TABART'S POPULAR STORIES.

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CONTENTS.

THE

CURIOUS GIRL:

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT.

PERSONAGES.

Mr. ALBERT.
HENRY, his Son.
MARGARET, his Daughter.
VICTOR, his Nephew.
Mademoiselle ST. ENOY, Governess.
DAVID, a Footman.

The Scene is in London, at the House of Mr. Albert.

THE

CURIOUS GIRL.

Scene, a Parlour.

Enter Margaret (after listening at the Door of her Papa's Study).

Margaret.

THERE is some secret going on, I am quite sure. How I wish I could find it out! Papa didn't send for Mademoiselle St. Enoy, and Mr. Mac Neil, for nothing. I dare say it was to ask them how we had behaved; so he must intend either to give us some treat, or a good scolding. I wonder what Mademoiselle St. Enoy said of me. I might ask her what Mr. Mac Neil said of Henry, and ask Mr. Mac Neil what

my governess said of me; and then I should know all at once! The door shuts so close I cannot hear a single word. I've a great mind to stand upon this little stool, and look through the key-hole. Oh dear! somebody is coming; if I could but get away! So, I see it is only Mademoiselle St. Enoy.

Enter Mademoiselle.

Mademoiselle. So, so, Miss Albert, you were listening at the door!

Margaret. But my dear Ma'mselle, I didn't hear a single word.

Mademoiselle. How often must I repeat, that your excessive curiosity will certainly bring you into disgrace with every one?

Margaret. Oh! then you have been complaining of me to papa! it is very provoking, that though I do all I can to please you, you are always finding fault. Mr. Mac Neil lets Henry do

what he likes; so I vow I won't love you any more.

Mademoiselle. Listen at the door! Ah Margaret, this one fault is sufficient to tarnish all your good qualities.

Margaret. Well, but my dear Mademoiselle St. Enoy, I promise most sincerely never to do so any more. But do tell me what you said to papa, and what he said to you.

Mademoiselle. Am I to hear of nothing but this curious temper of yours?

Margaret. But—but—I won't ask you what you said of me, if you will only tell me what Mr. Mac Neil said of Henry.

Mademoiselle. Here comes Henry with your papa; you will soon know all you wish. [*Mademoiselle St. Enoy goes.*

Enter Mr. Albert and Henry.

Mr. Albert. I have been waiting for fine weather, my dears, to give you a

day's pleasure. The country must now be quite charming. What say you to a little excursion all together? But it must be on one condition—

Margaret. What is that, papa?

Mr. Albert. It is, that you shall apply with double diligence to your different studies. The more reason you give me to be satisfied with your behaviour, the more you will ever find me inclined to add to your enjoyments.

Henry. Oh papa, I hope you will have no reason to be dissatisfied with me, for I love my studies very much; and I am never so happy at my play, as when I have been assiduous at my lessons all day.

Margaret. And I too, papa. But may I ask you a question?

Mr. Albert. What may it be, Margaret?

Margaret. Is it to Richmond, or to Greenwich, that you mean to take us?

Mr. Albert. To neither the one nor the other.

Margaret. Oh now I guess, papa; it is to Windsor—

Mr. Albert. I wish, my dear, to procure you an agreeable surprise. But we are losing time. I am going out on a little business. In my way home I will engage a coach, and we will set out in an hour. I promised your cousin Victor to take him with us. You, Henry, may go and fetch him.

[*Henry goes.*

Margaret. If I might but ask you one thing more, papa—How many miles from London are we going?

Mr. Albert. So many questions, my child, are new proofs of that excessive curiosity I have so often reproved you for. I am half inclined, by way of punishment, to—but no, we will not talk of punishments to-day.

Margaret. Indeed, papa, I am not so curious as you think.

Mr. Albert. Not curious! Ah, Margaret, how I wish this were true!—But unfortunately, not a day passes, not even an hour, in which you do not prove the contrary, by some new instance of this ridiculous failing. The consequence is, that you are thought meanly of by every body. You are gaining every where the reputation of a Curious Girl; and if you do not resolve upon making the most earnest efforts to correct yourself, believe me, you will never regain the good opinion of your friends.

Margaret. Well, papa, I will do this indeed: now you shall see, if I ever again commit the fault you complain of.

Mr. Albert. What! *quite sure*, Margaret—but if you *should* forget yourself—

Margaret. Then I should deserve the *severest* punishment.

Mr. Albert. Then you think you can answer for to-day; for an *hour* at least, that is, till we get into the coach.

Margaret. Now, papa, you must be laughing at me. But let us agree, that if I forget myself in the next hour, you shall leave me at home.

Mr. Albert. Be it so. I will now leave you. *(To himself, as he goes out)* I have laid a snare for her curious temper; if she falls into it, she certainly must not go. [*Mr. Albert goes.*

Margaret. What delicious weather it is! not a cloud to be seen! how warm and pleasant the sun is! what a charming day's pleasure we shall have! I dare say there will be violets and primroses where we are going. I will bring home large nosegays of them, one for Sophy Pelham and one for my dear Jane Lawless, and they shall each

tell me a secret in return. But I cannot help being sorry that it is not to Greenwich we are going; we should have run down the hills in the park so nicely! and the old pensioners would have taken us quite to the tops of the hills, and shown us such a delightful prospect. But we are not going there, that is certain. Nor are we going to Richmond, nor to Windsor. Where can it be that papa is going to take us? There is a large map in papa's study, of twelve miles round London: if it was but in this room, I could guess at the place in a minute. Oh! how lucky, the study door is open; I will steal in and look at it: I will just peep too at Henry's portrait and my own, set so beautifully in gold; and I dare say I shall have time to play one little tune on papa's hand-organ. *(She pushes the door gently).* Oh dear! I hear somebody coming.

Enter David.

David. Is my master in his study?

Margaret. Papa is gone out. Have you any message for him? Had you not better wait for him? Is that box in your hand for papa?

David. No, Miss Margaret, it is your cousin Victor's; he told me to bring it here. As he is to go with you into the country, I suppose he means to take it with him.

Margaret. Oh David, can you just tell me what place we are going to? Pray, pray tell me, David.

David. I heard my master mention Hampton Court, so no doubt, Miss Margaret, it is there you are all going.

Margaret. Well, I could not think where it could be: pray put the box upon the mantle-piece, and then tell me, David, if Hampton Court is a very pretty place, and which way do we go to it?

David. Hampton Court is one of our fine old palaces; and only think, Miss Margaret, it was built, as I read in a book,—for I loves to read when my work is done—it was built, as I was saying, by order of a gentleman called Cardinal Wolsey; and what d'ye think, Miss Margaret, this Cardinal Wolsey was nothing at first but the son of a butcher; just the same trade that my father followed, Miss Margaret, so who knows—

Margaret. Well, well, David, but do tell me what we shall meet with to amuse us? May we run all about the gardens? Shall we see any pictures, and will they let us look for a *long long* time at those we like the best? Is the palace upon a high hill, David? Shall we look down and see the ships and the water, and a beautiful country, as we did at Greenwich?

David. Bless us, Miss Margaret,

how many questions you do ask all in a breath! Now if you please to wait here a little, I really think I can find the very book, for when I read in it that that great gentleman was only the son of a butcher, you must know I said to myself—

Margaret. Oh dear, David, why do you not answer me quickly? Are there any pictures, any statues, any fine gardens at Hampton Court?

David. There now, there's Miss Margaret all of a fluster again, as I may say, without rhyme or reason, for wasn't I going to tell her as fast as I could, all I know about the matter. Pictures, and statues, and gardens—why how could there be a palace built by such a great man without all these things, and many more, Miss Margaret? Let me see—as I recollect—

Margaret. Ay, do recollect, David, and try to tell me all you can.

David. Why then I—I don't exactly remember what I read in the book about the pictures, but the other day, when your papa sent me to the Juvenile Library in Skinner-street, for that book—with the hard name, you know, Miss Margaret—

Margaret. You mean *Baldwin's Mythology*, I suppose—

David. That was the very name. Well, Miss Margaret, you remember what a charming book you all thought it, and how you quarrelled who should read it first.

Margaret. Well, David, what of *Baldwin's Mythology?*

David. Your cousin Victor at last, Miss Margaret, got you all round him while he read it loud. Well then, he read about the very same gentlemen and ladies that you will see in stone at Hampton Court, and that I suppose must be one large family of relations;

for the book I was telling you of, says the sirname of one and all was *Statue*. I don't remember many of their christian names, but one I know was *Master Apollo*, and another *Mr. Jupiter*.—But the footman's bell rings—I do so hope you will like it, Miss Margaret.

[*David goes.*

Margaret. Poor David, how ignorant he is! I am delighted, though, that I have found out where we are going.—(*She takes the box from the mantle-piece*). Bless me, how very light it is! I wonder what can be in it! Oh I guess; I dare say the box contains pencils and crayons for Victor; so then he means to be sketching windmills and cottages all the time! I had rather it contained nice cakes, and things to eat. I should so like to be *quite* sure what is in the box—nobody will see me if I just lift up the lid—(*She looks cautiously round, and lifts it up*)—Oh mercy! it is a bird,

I declare, and it has got out of the box—what shall I do ?—If papa should come in just now—let me shut the door quickly, that it may not escape—how foolish I was to care any thing about the good-for-nothing box.—This comes of being so curious !—You provoking bird you ;—oh dear, I am sure I shall never be able to catch it.—A lucky thought—I will run to papa's study and get the forceps for catching butterflies ; with these I dare say I can catch it ; if I should but once get it in the box again, no one would know what has happened.—*(Margaret goes to the study, the door of which, having a spring, shuts suddenly upon her. She cries out)*—Oh heavens ! The door is shut—I cannot get out—what will become of me.—*(Margaret hearing her brother and cousin coming near, is silent).*

Enter Henry and Victor.

Henry. Papa is not yet returned; let us have a run in the garden till he comes.

Victor. What pleasant weather it is! How delightful we shall be in the country! But where is Margaret?

Henry. I suppose she is with her governess.

Victor. She goes with us, does she not?

Henry. Oh yes.

Victor. We have time enough, I dare say for a game of swinging in the garden. Go you Henry and fetch Margaret; I will wait here for you; and then we will see for a rope, and tye it to the two pear trees near the grass walk, and then we can give her as good a swing as we did on her last birth-day.

Henry. I will run for her quickly.

[*Henry goes.*

[*Margaret calls in a whisper through the key-hole of the study door.*] Victor! Victor!

Victor. I hear a voice calling my name.

Margaret. Victor! Victor!

Victor. Somebody calls me, and yet I see no one.

Margaret. It is I—Margaret.

Victor (looking round the apartment). You, Margaret, why where are you then?

Margaret. Hush, don't speak so loud. I am in papa's study.

Victor (speaking through the key-hole). What, are you inside, Margaret?

Margaret. Yes,—I am shut in.

Victor. Are you put there as a punishment?

Margaret. No. I want some one to unlock the door.

Victor. But how came you locked in ?

Margaret. Unlock the door quickly, and I will tell you all about it.

Victor. I cannot; there is no key on this side.

Margaret. Do look about, Victor; the key must be there; do pray, pray unlock the door.

Victor. Indeed Margaret the key is not any where here.

Margaret. See if it has not fallen on the floor.

Victor. No, it is not on the floor.

Margaret. Oh! cousin Victor, it is all your fault!

Victor. My fault, dear Margaret! ow can that be ?

Margaret. The cat threw down your box; the bird got out and flew about the parlour; I came in here to get papa's forceps, thinking to catch it with them; the door shut suddenly upon me.

Victor. What box, and what bird are you talking of, Margaret?

Margaret. Very well, cousin Victor, you are only laughing at me now, I know, and see if I don't remember it another time.—Oh! Victor do pray unlock the door!

Victor. Upon my word and honour, Margaret, I don't mean teasing now; only ask Henry if I didn't want to swing you in the garden. Indeed there is no key on this side the door.

Margaret. Try then to catch the bird.

Victor. I see no bird.

Margaret. Oh dear, the window no doubt is open, and the bird flew out —What shall I do?

Victor. Yes, the window is wide open—But what do you mean about the bird and about a box that you say is mine?

Margaret. You must be joking,

surely.—Didn't you send a box by David to take with us into the country?

Victor. I sent no box, nor have I seen David to day.

Margaret. Ah Victor, how can you be so cruel.—Pity me, dear Victor; think how angry papa will be—do unlock the door.

Victor. It is very provoking that you will not believe me Margaret; indeed, indeed, I know nothing of all you have been saying.

Margaret. Oh heavens! A thought has just struck me—it was no doubt papa who sent the box by David—

Victor. Here is Henry; let us tell him—

Re-enter Henry.

Henry to Victor. I have kept you waiting, but it is Margaret's fault. I cannot find her any where.

Victor. I have been talking with her all the time.

Henry. With Margaret! Where is she then?

(Margaret speaking through the key-hole). Unlock the door, dear, dear Henry—

Henry. What voice is that?

Victor. Let me tell you Henry, quickly. Poor Margaret finding the study door open, her curiosity led her to go in. The door shut suddenly and made her a prisoner. Let us try to get her out before my uncle comes.

Henry. How unlucky. Poor Margaret! But how can we get her out without the key?

Margaret. Try the key of the parlour door, or of the other doors.

Henry. Oh heavens! I hear papa's voice—What shall we do?

Victor. How unfortunate! Poor Margaret!—Yes, 'tis papa—

Enter Mr. Albert.

Mr. Albert. Well my dears, I am now quite ready for you, and the carriage is at the door. I never saw a finer day. I already see you all enjoying the pleasures I am endeavouring to procure you. You will I suppose have no objection to good cheer; so I stopped at Birch's, and bought pies and cakes enough to make you merry. I need not ask if you are all in good spirits, I dare say.

Victor to Henry. Poor Margaret!

Mr. Albert. But where is your sister, Henry? I am sure she will be as glad at least as the rest, to hear of my visit to Mr. Birch.—Why is she not here. I hope we shall not have to wait for her—

Henry. I have not seen her since I came in, papa. If you, Sir, and Victor,

will get into the coach, I will run and fetch Margaret.

Mr. Albert. Come along then, Victor. [*They go out.*

Henry (speaking through the key-hole). Well Margaret, what shall we do?

Margaret. Run to papa and say you left your pocket-handkerchief in his study this morning.—Beg him to let you have the key for an instant—I dare say he will not suspect—

Henry. But if he should come himself!

Margaret. I am sure he will not come himself—run, run, dear Henry.

Henry. Now I recollect, he is always afraid some one will touch his papers—wouldn't it be better for you to jump out at the window into the garden, and I will run there and help you.

Margaret. I have put my head out

at the window twice, but it is so high I am sure I could not jump—Dear Henry, go, do go and ask papa for the key—If you wait another moment, papa will come to look for us *(While Henry and Margaret are talking, Mr. Albert comes softly into the parlour, and walks up to Henry without being seen).*

Henry. Suppose papa should refuse to give me the key!

Mr. Albert (in a loud and severe tone, giving the key to Henry). There is the key; unlock the door; let me see her.

Henry (with surprise and apprehension). Oh heavens! it is papa. How you frightened me!

Mr. Albert. Unlock the door.

Henry. I will, papa. But pray, papa, say you will forgive her.

Mr. Albert. She shall be her own judge.

Henry (unlocking the door). You will not be angry, papa—

Mr. Albert. You will see.

(The door is opened, but Margaret does not come forward).

Henry. Do come out, sister, I don't think papa will be angry with you!

Mr. Albert. I beg you will come here, Margaret.

(Margaret, with her eyes on the ground, advances towards Mr. Albert).

Enter Victor.

Victor. Has Margaret displeased you, uncle? How sorry I am. But how very good you would be Sir, if—this once—you would forgive her.—Dear uncle, do not say she shall not go—

Mr. Albert. Pray, Margaret, was there not a box brought into the parlour since I went out?

(Margaret hides her face with her hand, and is silent).

Victor. I see she is in tears.—So there's an end of our happy day in the country.

Henry. Pray, pray, papa, forgive her this once.

Mr. Albert. I grant your request, my children, and I consent to Margaret's accompanying us, provided she herself consents. I had rather see her indebted to her own reflections for the correction of her faults, than to any authority of mine.

Henry. Come then, sister, get yourself ready.

Victor. Don't be unhappy, cousin, my uncle is not angry now. I am sure he will forget it all.

Mr. Albert. We will wait for you at the door, Margaret.

Margaret. Excuse me, dear papa;

I have committed a great fault, and I am resolved to inflict on myself such a punishment as it deserves. I entreat you all to go without me, for I feel that I am unworthy of the pleasure you kindly intended me.

[*Margaret leaves the room.*

Henry. Pray come back, sister.

Victor. Margaret—

Mr. Albert. Margaret feels, my dears, a deep conviction of her faults, and the resolution of which she has just given so striking a proof, gives me great and pleasing hopes of her amendment. To be sensible of our errors, is a considerable step towards this end. What happiness shall I experience, if from the present day, my dear girl should seriously and resolutely apply her good sense to the task of eradicating this ridiculous curiosity (for I perceive you are neither of you ignorant of what has happened), from a character which

in most other respects is so very amiable.

Come boys, get into the carriage, and let us be as happy as we can! Mademoiselle St. Enoy, and Mr. Mac Neil, together with the prattle of the little ones, will help to keep up our spirits, I dare say! And we shall too have procured a day's pleasure to our favourite honest David, and to your smiling Kitty, who is so good-natured in the nursery.

END OF THE CURIOUS GIRL.

HECTOR;

OR,

THE PLOTTER CAUGHT IN HIS OWN TRAP.

PERSONAGES.

Mr. Franklin.

Mrs. Franklin.

Edward,
Hector,
Achilles,
Augustus,
} their Nephews.

La Jeunesse, a Footman.

The Scene is at Mr. Franklin's Country-house, in the Summer Season.

HECTOR.

Scene, an Apartment.

Hector, Achilles, Augustus.

Achilles.

HOW stupid, to think of shutting ourselves into a close room, when we might be walking about the grounds by moon-light!

Augustus. Then we have all come out of the room, and left my aunt and uncle alone, the very first day of our arrival to spend the holidays with them.

Hector. What a piece of work you are making. They won't be angry; besides, Edward is staying with them.

Achilles. Well, I'm not of your mind. I think I'll go back to the drawing-room.

Augustus. But what can you want of us here, with the doors shut in this mysterious manner?

Hector. Why I have something to tell you that is so comical—

Achilles. Indeed?

Hector. I have been contriving a nice trick upon Edward—but you must both join in it.—It requires all your courage.—Do you think you will flinch, Achilles?

Achilles. Would that suit with the name of Achilles?

Hector. What say *you*, Augustus?

Augustus. I must first know what 'tis you are going about.

Hector. I am planning a trick to frighten Edward tonight.

Augustus. I was sure enough you were to teaze *somebody*.—Hector always thinks such things the best amusement.

Hector. Great harm it could do

him, I warrant, to be frightened for a minute! And then we should laugh so heartily, that at last he would not be able to help laughing himself!

Augustus. That is not so certain. Some people are made very ill by fright.

Achilles. Yes, that is true—I have heard of many such instances. I myself, though I don't want courage, yet must needs say I should not care to be frightened in the night.

Hector. What a silly fellow you are!

Augustus. Nor I either, and the proverb says, *do not unto another*—

Hector. Well, any one that likes may frighten me!

Achilles. Are you quite in earnest?

Hector. Upon my word and honour.

Achilles. What! In the night?

Hector. Yes, night or day.

Augustus. Well, th-e-n—

Hector. Th-e-n, you agree that I have a right to frighten who I please.

Achilles. I didn't say so much as that—

Hector. How silly it is to stand talking! Will you, or will you not, join me in the trick?—You may send word to my uncle and aunt, as I have done, that you are gone to bed early, because you are going a-fishing at five o'clock in the morning.

Achilles (after a moment's consideration). No, I will not.

Augustus. Nor will I.

Hector. Cowards! Cowards! Well, I can do just as well without you.—Go a-coaxing aunt and uncle, pretty dears. —The sooner you leave me, the better I shall like it.

Achilles. Come along, Augustus.

[*They go.*

Hector. A-ch-ill-es—Aug-us-t-us, you have no right to tell of me though,

remember.—They shan't come in again, that's poz.—Let me see what I must do next.—How frightened he will be. —Here's the sheet I had ready to shew Augustus and Achilles, if they had not been such fools! I shall wind it all round me.—The gourd is ready scooped out, and cut with eyes, nose, and mouth!—I'll step and see if it is safe where I put it behind the door of that lumber-room—*(He goes into an adjoining room, and comes out again)*. Yes, it is there. So far so good!—If I can but steal into the kitchen and light a candle to put inside the gourd—I shall get myself into the sheet with the lighted gourd upon my head in less than five minutes—I shall look exactly like an apparition.—I will wait till every soul is in bed, and then I will steal to Edward, who fortunately happens to sleep in an outer room that opens into this, where I can stay till bed-time.—

How scared he will be.—I'll lay a wager he will hide under the bed-clothes! Then I will say in a solemn counterfeited voice—*I am come, Edward Franklin, to warn you against false boasting. You call yourself courageous, but I see now how you tremble.* Then if he does not uncover his head, I will go on—*I am the ghost of a dead soldier who fought for you and the rest of his countrymen: I can harm you if you are a coward; therefore I say, uncover yourself and look at me. But I harm not the brave!*—Then he *must* look at me, and I shall burst out a-laughing: Ha, ha, ha *(he laughs)*, it will be the best trick I ever played.—What fools Achilles and Augustus are, not to stay with me.—I'll never believe what they pretended, that it was for fear of making my uncle angry that they went: No, no, they were thinking that aunt would ring the bell, to know if Housey

had not something good for the dear boys' supper.—What noise is that?—Something moved against the wainscot —*(listens)*—No, no, it was nothing at all.—I did hear something *then*.—It must be the scratching of mice.—Ah, likely enough, this is the eating-room —they no doubt feed on the crumbs that are left on the carpet.—It must be supper time—Now I must hide in the lumber-room, till that is over and every one gone to bed. [*He goes.*

Scene, the same Room with the Supper on the Table.

Enter Mr. and Mrs. Franklin, Achilles, Edward, Augustus.

Mr. Franklin. So Hector is gone to bed without his supper, that he may be able to rise early.—There's something like a boy of enterprise in that—An omen I hope of that firmness of

temper I wish to cultivate in you all, my boys. [*The boys remain silent.*

Mrs. Franklin. Pardon me, love, if I observe that an empty stomach may do him harm; he will be up too early to get any thing to eat before he goes. —Suppose I were to send him just this little bit of tart.—

Mr. Franklin. Not for the world, my dear; a boy in good health may with safety be left in this respect to his own inclinations.—This is not the first occasion he has had, I dare say, to find out that a hunch of bread, begged of Housey, and put into his pocket for tomorrow morning's meal, is the best cure in the world for an empty stomach.—But how is it that the rest of you do not go with him, boys?

Achilles. He didn't ask any of us.

[*They all look perplexed.*

Mr. Franklin. Well then, if Mrs. Franklin will not be uneasy about our

empty stomachs, I will do what I can to make up for his want of due politeness, by proposing your taking a walk with me at six o'clock to my new farm.

Augustus. Thank you, Sir. I am sure we shall all like that.

Mrs. Franklin. Then my dears, that you may have time for sleep, had you not better go to bed directly?

Mr. Franklin. Well, well, go my boys, but take care your aunt does not kill you with kindness!—Bless me, it is eleven o'clock—I have no objection therefore to the *sleeping* plan, for myself. Pray ring the bell, Augustus.

Enter La Jeunesse with lights.

Edward. Good night uncle; good night aunt.

Augustus. Good night uncle and aunt.

Achilles (yawning). Good night! How sleepy I am.

Mr. Franklin. Tomorrow at six, you will not fail to be ready—

Mrs. Franklin. Remember my dears not to throw all the bed clothes off you, even if you find it hot—very dangerous colds are caught in this way.—God bless you.

(All leave the Apartment but La Jeunesse. Edward goes into his Bed-room).

La Jeunesse. Metink all de vorld go soon in bed dis night.—I shall den tak de occasion to be von gentilman, and spik som littel words vid myself. First I shall sit down in dis chaise; dat is certain.—I shall pray myself to take von small glass of wine. Me much want de comfort for keep off de tristesse. How may it be possible to keep up de spirits in dis melancholie place? In de charming London de pretty music was all day long *tinc a tinc a tinc,* quite charming! helas, no

music here but *hoaka, hoaka, hoaka*, de ugly goose, and *peep, peep, peep*, de silly shickabeddy; de cows say *mooe*; de sheep squeak *baa, baa, baa*. All de vorld beside speak no von vord. If La Jeunesse make a littel visit to de farmer's pretty daughter, de yong miss no dance no sing. Von more bad ting; dey speak also of tieves—me no love tieves—me hope dey no tink to come in here—dey shall find much place for hide temselves.—I see now dat great room de other end of dis—*(he looks toward the lumber-room)*—Me much vonder vat is in it—me take great envy to step and see—*(he goes a few paces and returns)*. No, no, me no hope for find de gay amusement dare. —De best ting in dis melancholie service is sleep in de bed. It shall vary quick be de time for de ghost. Me no love much de ghost *(he puts back*

the chairs, extinguishes the wax lights, and goes).

Enter Hector, wrapped round with the sheet, which trains on the ground, and the lighted gourd on his head; he advances cautiously a few steps, and speaks to himself in a low tone of voice.

I tremble from head to foot.—If this plaguy La Jeunesse had come into the lumber-room, he would have supposed me a thief—he would instantly have taken down one of the guns my uncle, I know, keeps in this room for fear of thieves, and fired it at me!—This is a lucky escape.—Well, now I will revenge myself on Edward, for the fright I have had.—I can't see very well by the faint light of the gourd, but I think the door of his room must be strait up in this corner!—

(Hector raises his head, and per-

ceives a phantom with its face turned towards him. He shudders, gives a dreadful scream, and falls senseless on the floor. The gourd falls from his head.)

Enter Edward.

Edward (with a light in his hand). Who can it be that screamed so?—It is Hector.—What ails you, speak Hector, dear Hector.—Heavens! He does not answer.

Enter Mr. Franklin in his night-gown, followed by Augustus, Achilles, and La Jeunesse, with lights in their hands.

Achilles (as he enters the apartment). Poor Edward, we ought to have told him, Augustus.

Mr. Franklin. What is the meaning of all this, my dears? Speak quickly.

Augustus. It was Hector, who contrived a trick to frighten Edward.

Edward. I heard some one scream, and ran out of my room to see who it was: I found Hector, as you see, senseless on the floor.

Achilles. Is it then *Hector* who lies there?

Edward. Yes, it is Hector.

Mr. Franklin. I really should not have known him in that uncouth dress; pray what does it mean? Help me La Jeunesse to raise him up. You, Augustus, hand me some cold water from the sideboard. *(They raise and seat Hector on a chair).*

Achilles. He begins to open his eyes!

Edward. He does not move a limb.

Augustus. He is as pale as death! Shall I fetch some hartshorn from my aunt's bed-room?

Mr. Franklin. He begins to move.

Augustus. He seems to be trying to speak.

Hector (in an inarticulate and feeble voice). Oh, bring me some relief. Oh! I am very ill.

Augustus. Hector, look at me! Speak to us!

Achilles. Don't be alarmed, dear Hector.

Hector (looking wildly). Where am I?

Edward. In the midst of the kindest friends, Hector.

Mr. Franklin. Some fancy seems to have seized upon his imagination; he does not know us.

Augustus. But how has it happened that Hector should have fainted, when it was he who was to play the trick upon Edward?

Mr. Franklin. I hope, Edward, *you* did not frighten *Hector*.

Edward. Indeed, Sir, I did not.

Achilles. He is now much recovered; he is able to tell us himself the cause of what has passed.

Mr. Franklin. Hector—

Hector. Ah my dear uncle, is it you?—If you did but know—

Mr. Franklin. Know what!—Speak, Hector.

Hector (still with terror in his looks). If you had but seen it.—I still think I see it!—

Mr. Franklin. What have you seen?

Hector. The most ghastly apparition—

Mr. Franklin. An apparition! Ridiculous!

Hector. Indeed! Indeed, uncle it is too true.

Mr. Franklin. You are not in your senses, my poor Hector.

Hector (with great emotion). Yes, I am justly punished.—Hear me confess the truth, my dear uncle.—I had a

death's head, and a lighted candle.—I was walking across the room—

Mr. Franklin. What is he talking of?—He is surely delirious.

Hector. No, no, I am not delirious.—As I was crossing the apartment, dressed in this sheet and a death's head, to go to Edward's room and frighten him, a spirit stood before me.

Mr. Franklin. A spirit! How silly to believe it.

Hector. It is true; it is most true—*There, there,* it stood.

Mr. Franklin. You were asleep, and dreamed this.—

Hector. There, there, it stood.

Mr. Franklin. I see nothing there—except indeed the looking-glass.

Edward. Ah! Ah! I understand it all, uncle.—Hector, dressed in the sheet and death's head, saw himself in the

looking-glass, and mistook the frightful figure for a spirit.

Mr. Franklin. You have surely guessed the truth.

Achilles. Yes, yes, this must be it.

Mr. Franklin. Well, Hector! Has Edward guessed the truth?

Achilles. I think he must be cured of the fancy, to sit up at night and frighten other people.

Augustus. He will not be in a hurry neither, to boast of his superior courage.

Achilles. Nor to tell us we may try to frighten him by night or day.

Hector. What do I care for your taunts? Call me coward, if you dare.—What I saw was a spirit; I wonder which of you could have looked it in the face.

Mr. Franklin. Are you still so silly,

Hector, as to believe that you saw a spirit?

Achilles (seeing the gourd, which had rolled to a small distance). See, see, uncle, here is the death's head with the candle in it. I wonder we did not observe it before.

Edward. Oblige us, Hector, with a second repetition of this tragi-comique scene. We will go and hide ourselves, and put out the lights, if you will get up and put the gourd on your head, and pull the sheet about you.

Hector. Pray, uncle, do not leave me.—

Mr. Franklin. What, still afraid of this imaginary spirit?

Hector. As long as I live, I shall believe I saw it.

Mr. Franklin. Lead him, La Jeunesse, before the looking-glass. Achilles, light the candle that was in the gourd, and put it into it again; then

follow us. You, Edward, put out the lights that are upon the table.

(The lights being extinguished, Mr. Franklin and La Jeunesse lead Hector, who goes reluctantly before the looking-glass; they then place the lighted gourd upon his head, and Mr. Franklin says to him):

Look up, Hector; see the spirit that frightened you.—It will be long before you will cease to blush at your own folly, and I trust it will also be long before you forget, that a plotter of tricks upon others, is not unfrequently caught in his own trap.

END OF THE PLOTTER CAUGHT IN HIS OWN TRAP.

THE

DANGERS OF GOSSIPING:

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT.

PERSONAGES.

Mrs. Mildmay, { Governess to Miss Montague.

Emily, } Children of Mr. Montague.
Augustus, }

Mr. Brown, Bailiff of the Farm.

Nicholas, a Working Servant Lad.

William, a Groom.

Michael, a Stable Boy.

John, the Chief Gardener.

Larkin, }
Tomkins, } House-breakers.
Boucher, }
Roustan, }

The Scene is at the Seat of Mr. Montague, Ten Miles from London.

THE

DANGERS OF GOSSIPING.

Scene, a Parlour.

Mrs. Mildmay, Mr. Brown.

Mrs. Mildmay.

I CANNOT doubt, Mr. Brown, of the pains you have taken to find my unfortunate pupils: what can have happened to them? Is it probable that in throwing their lines from the bank, Emily, who is so careless, should have fallen into the river, and that Augustus, in endeavouring to save her life—Oh God! I cannot bear the thought! How shall I find words to disclose the dreadful tidings to their fond surviving

parent, whose grief for the loss of their angelic mother is so affecting to us all? But no, I will not believe the worst. They may have wandered to so great a distance as not to know the way, and in this situation, it may be that night surprised them! Poor children! how unhappy they must be under the apprehension of such perils as they have often read of!

Mr. Brown. It seems to me, Madam, that the best thing to be done is to spend but little time in talking and lamenting, and to set all hands to work to discover where they are. Above all, if I may make so bold as to advise, it is not yet time to frighten a parent, that as you justly say, loves them so dearly—'tis hardly dark yet—at least.—No, Mrs. Mildmay, not quite dark—and for my part, I feel that the duty in my heart will make my eyes see the

longer. Cheer up, good Madam, I entreat you. I will again set out to look for them.

Mrs. Mildmay. A thousand thanks, good Mr. Brown! May heaven reward the kindness of your heart!

Mr. Brown. I will ring the great bell to call all the men servants together. I will send them five miles round the house in different directions.

Mrs. Mildmay. Lose not a moment, good Mr. Brown. Let them ask of all they meet, if they have seen the little wanderers.

Mr. Brown. Once more cheer up, my good lady, and expect good tidings. There goes Nicholas, I see, from putting up the young turkies; he is a good-hearted lad, and will not grudge his labour.—Nicholas! Nicholas!

Enter Nicholas.

Nicholas. What wull y ae plase to want wi mee ?

Mr. Brown. Where is William, Nicholas ?

Nicholas. In the stable.

Mr. Brown. And John, and Michael ?

Nicholas. Just come in from watering the flower garden, and sitting down to supper.

Mr. Brown. Run as fast as thou canst, Nicholas, and tell them to come to me, and come with them thyself. The children of our master are missing, and not a man of us should eat till they are found.

Nicholas. So saith Nicholas, Measter Brown, and so here he goes—But shall we bring our guns ?

Mr. Brown. By all means ; though

God forbid we should have occasion to use them. [*Nicholas goes.*] Now if I might but ask you, Madam, one little favour.

Mrs. Mildmay. It must be an unreasonable one, indeed, if at this moment, when I am so deeply indebted to your humanity, I should not grant it.

Mr. Brown. Yet I am half afraid—but I had best speak out at once.—Will—will you promise not to punish the dear little souls when we have brought them home, and your joy is over of seeing their sweet faces once again?—and will you forgive me for asking this?

Mrs. Mildmay. At this moment of apprehension for the safety of their lives, the heart that could refuse your request must be hard indeed! Bring them back, and you shall have no rea-

son to be dissatisfied with their reception.

Mr. Brown. Bless their little hearts! —I must now set my comrades a-going —but first I will unchain Cæsar, and leave him in the hall, to protect you till some of us come back again; and be sure, Madam, you try and keep up your spirits.

Enter John, Michael, Nicholas, William, each armed with a Gun.

Mr. Brown. That's well, my good fellows! all ready, I see. But do you understand your errand?—This evening about six o'clock, Master Augustus and Miss Emily got leave of their governess, to go and throw their lines into the little brook that runs by the hedge of old Simon Pitfield's farm, just the other side, as you know, of our master's little corn-field: they pro-

mised over and over to be back in time to have their supper at eight o'clock, as is their custom: 'tis now near ten, and the dear creatures are no where to be heard of.—We must each take a different road, and search about till they are found. You, Michael, shall take the path across the meadow that leads to the great wood. When you reach the cottage of the shepherd, the sheep-dogs will all begin to bark; then you must call out loudly that you are Michael. The shepherd will quiet the dogs, and you must ask if he or his wife have seen the children. From thence you can turn into that thick wood—

Michael. What all alone, Measter Brown?

Mr. Brown. Thou art not sure a coward, Michael? And hast thou not thy gun?

Michael. Sorry safeguard that, Mea-

ster Brown, when the night's as black as a crow!

Mr. Brown. Here's Nicholas then for thy companion; and mind me, if you hear no tidings of the young ones, come back by the footpath that winds round the rector's orchard.

Nicholas. Aye, aye, I'll go wi Michael; so never fear us, Measter Brown.

Mr. Brown. Now for you, comrade John. Take you the path to 'Squire Grindwell's mill, and as you have some little smiling cherubs of your own, my heart tells me I need not tutor you. You will guess, I warrant me, what's fittest to be done.

John. Bless their sweet souls! I'll try might and main, and it shall go hard but I'll find 'em.

Mr. Brown. You, William, shall strike down the walk of lime-trees, and then up the hill, and along the copse where the wild strawberries grow; and

keep on till you reach the village. Be sure not to let a soul pass, without asking if they have seen two children all alone?

William. Let's be off without delay.

Mr. Brown. I myself will follow the side of the river, along the marshy fields, where I saw Master Augustus and his two cousins the other day, sailing their little boats in the ponds. And now for one last word before we part. He that comes home first without the children, shall try all he can to comfort poor Mrs. Mildmay.

[*They separate, taking different ways.*]

Mrs. Mildmay, alone.

Yes, yes, I am indeed to blame.—Why did I yield to their entreaties? Into what a situation am I betrayed by that feebleness of Nature, which, rather than suffer the pain of inflicting mo-

mentary disappointment on these little objects of my affection, has exposed them to dangers of which I know not yet the extent!—That was a ringing at the entrance door.—Again I hear it —and a loud talking too.—Heaven grant it may be tidings of my beloved pupils!—not a sound from Cæsar.—It cannot, therefore, be strangers.—I dare not go to ask.

Enter Emily and Augustus.

Mrs. Mildmay (embracing each with emotion). Dearest children—how you have distressed me!—But we will not think of that.—You have met with no accident?

Augustus. Oh no, none in the world. And how have we distressed you, dear Mrs. Mildmay?

Emily. Now didn't I tell you, Augustus, that 'twas our supper-time, and that we had staid too long? I said

it would be nine o'clock before we got home.

Augustus. Oh to be sure, Miss Emily, it was all *my* fault, I dare say!—It was *my* fault too that you would stay chattering with the gentlemen who spoke to us.

Mrs. Mildmay. Do not, my dears, accuse each other, for I am ready to take the blame of what has passed upon myself.—Unwilling to refuse what you thought so great a pleasure, and relying on your discretion, which you will pardon me for saying I ought not, at your age, to have relied on, I have been the cause of the most painful alarm to many persons.—You will, I dare say, be surprised to hear, that it is near eleven o'clock instead of nine, as Emily supposes; and that Mr. Brown, and the men-servants, are all gone different ways to look for you.

Augustus. Good heavens, Emily,

how sorry I am! Let us join, and give them all the money we have saved, for a reward.

Emily. And let us ask papa to give them all a holiday.—And I will get up early every morning, to finish the new frocks for the gardener's children, and—

Mrs. Mildmay. We will talk of this tomorrow, my loves.—At present, I am impatient to know where you have been; and first, pray tell me who the gentlemen were you talked with?

Emily. Now I will begin, and tell you all about it, my dear good governess.

Mrs. Mildmay. First, the place—

Augustus. I was running as fast as I could by the brook where the water-cresses grow, and Favourite was jumping and barking by my side.—Emily was—

Emily. Now, Augustus, it is my

place to tell it. That's not fair for you to tell it all.

Mrs. Mildmay. Yes, I really think Emily should speak first, as I asked her a question.

Augustus. But I'm the eldest though. —However, I don't mind, so *preach* away, Miss Emily—but I can tell it best, that's all.

Mrs. Mildmay. Pray begin, Emily.

Emily. Favourite set off galloping through the long grass, across two or three fields; and as he wouldn't come back when we called him, we ran too for fear of his being lost.

Augustus. Yes, and I ran twice as fast as Emily.

Mrs. Mildmay. I begged you not to interrupt, Augustus.

Emily. It was a whole hour, I do believe, before we could catch Favourite.

Mrs. Mildmay. And then you met some gentlemen?

Emily. Yes, then, when I was trying to hold Favourite in my arms, two gentlemen got over the stile, and offered to hold him for me: so we sat down all together on the grass.

Mrs. Mildmay. Pray tell me, my dear, what they said to you.

Emily. I can remember every word, I am quite sure.—One was very tall; he said, Pray, little lady, can you tell me who lives in the elegant mansion to the left, across those fields?—My own papa lives there, Sir, said I; and so did my mama, when she was alive—And what is your papa's name, my dear, said he?—My papa's name is Montague.—He has, no doubt, a handsome fortune?—Oh yes, that he has. He has returned from India only two months, and he brought mama

such heaps of diamonds and pearls; but my poor mama died just before, and so papa keeps these jewels, and many more that she used to wear, locked up in the secretary in his library.

Mrs. Mildmay. I thought you knew, Emily, that it is not right to talk so freely with a stranger.

Augustus. But I don't see how we could help speaking, neither.

Mrs. Mildmay. If they were men of sense, my love, they did not fail to perceive how vain she was of being the child of a gentleman possessed of so much wealth, and I dare say they remarked this failing to each other as soon as you were gone.—Some time tomorrow we will have a little talk upon the subject, for I think my dear Emily is now old enough to understand what I shall have to say, as to the *real* value or use of diamonds and pearls, and other kinds of ornaments.—But I

was going to ask what else these gentlemen talked about?

Emily. Oh! they asked so *many* questions—

Mrs. Mildmay. Indeed! Pray tell me some of them.

Emily (laughing heartily, in spite of her endeavours to restrain herself). One of the gentlemen was so droll!—I suppose, says he, my little dear, that this frisking creature sleeps in your apartment, and the great bouncing Cæsar you have told us of, in your brother's? Oh no, said I, they would dirty the rooms.

Mrs. Mildmay. Well, what did he say to that?

Emily. What, bouncing Cæsar not sleep near either of you, though you both love him so well! However, you no doubt give him some of your cakes; and I think I can see, by those good-natured smiles in your faces, that you

play with him now and then, and I would lay a wager that you take care to remind the servants to unchain him every night at least.—Oh no, said I, my papa does not choose him to be unchained.

Mrs. Mildmay (much alarmed). And nothing more, Emily?

Emily. I b-e-l-i-e-ve that was almost all—wasn't it, Augustus? 'tis not fair to make *me* think of all.

Augustus. There now, Emily, when I began to speak, you would not let me go on; so now I have no mind to help you—besides, it was you that talked most to the gentlemen.

Mrs. Mildmay. Come, Emily, recollect a little more.

Emily. All the rest was—I said I could not stay any longer, because I thought my governess would wonder at our not being home by supper-time, and might go about to look for us, particu-

larly as papa, and the butler, and the footman, were gone to London for several days, and there was no one to see that the doors and windows were shut early.

Mrs. Mildmay. I can no longer conceal my fears—all that you have related, my Emily, makes me suspect, that the persons you so imprudently conversed with were not gentlemen: the questions they asked you appear to me to be exactly such as would be asked by men, who were laying a plan to rob the house. If my suspicions are just, you, Emily, for want of a little reflection on the impropriety of entering into familiar conversation with strangers, of whose names and characters you were ignorant, have given them all the intelligence they wanted for the execution of their wicked design.

Emily. But I am sure you and papa have told us a hundred times, never to be guilty of a falsehood.

Mrs. Mildmay. Your answer, Emily, is not at all to the point on which we were speaking; and I begin to feel angry at your endeavouring to excuse yourself by a sort of reasoning, that, even a year ago, you had understanding enough to know to be false.—At present, it is too late an hour, and I am also too much alarmed by what you have said to the strangers, to remind you what the difference is between giving your confidence hastily to persons you never saw or heard of before, and telling a falsehood.

Augustus. Do you really think they were robbers, Mrs. Mildmay?—And if they *were* to break into the house, we needn't mind it much—I am sure I could fight 'em with the pokers—and then Cæsar would wake all the men in

the yard, and they have each a gun ready loaded in their room; and—

Mrs. Mildmay. The scene would be far from pleasant, believe me, my dears. One little circumstance, too, you should recollect—the men are, one and all, gone five miles round the house in search of you and Emily.

Emily. Oh dear, how could I be so silly!—My dear governess, I know you are *very very* angry; I am sure you are, though you are so kind as not to tell me so.—I won't eat a bit of supper, I am determined. Papa, too, will be so angry!

Augustus. I have a mind to go and try to find one of the men, and then he could be sent after the others, and—

Mrs. Mildmay. I hear a ringing at the door.—Pray heaven it may be—yes, I hear his voice—it is Michael.

Enter Michael, out of breath, and apparently in great fright.

Mrs. Mildmay. For heaven's sake, what has happened to you, Michael?

Michael. Od zooks, and plase yea, ladies, Ise glad Ise be at hoam once agen. It be all the fault of ye yung ones—Michael do know that well enow. —There's Madam Mildmay would ne'er a thoft of sending a por worken lad to risk his live, if hur hadn't a thoft there was a good bit o' daunger along o' they.

Mrs. Mildmay. Pray, good Michael, tell us what has happened.

Michael. Why, Madam, you knows as how Measter Brown did send I and Nicholas the way o' the meadow, and thereabouts, to look for the young gintry, thof they be here safe and sound, as I sees. A plague o' Nicholas! if a didn't tak it into hes pate to zaiy ha

wud peart from I, and meet me again up there by the wood. Wull, there was I strook all o' a heap, as won may zaiy, wi' only the auld dog and a gun to keep me caumpany; so Ise didn't dare wag a stap.

Augustus. Why surely a gun was all you could want.

Michael. Aye, if Ise hadn't been afraid a wud a gon off in my hond, and knocked me doon so ded as a hammer.

Mrs. Mildmay. Well, well, but no accident happened after all, I hope?

Michael. But somwhat woose a happened though—

Mrs. Mildmay. Something worse!

Emily. What could it be?

Michael. Ise were trying to walk along, all trimbling and scarified, as won may zay, whin all o' a suddin Teazer begon to bark. Ise looked about to zee what wos the matter, and —marciful me!—what should Ise zee

but a heep o' men lying in wait for I, or zombody else.

Mrs. Mildmay. You must surely be mistaken, Michael; it was no doubt only some stumps of old trees you saw.

Michael. I only wish Teazer could speak, and plase yea; he'd soon tell ye a likelier story.—No, no, Ise ban't such a ninny as that do come to, neither. Why the fellows spoked, and didn't care to let me pass.

Mrs. Mildmay. Well, Michael, I would advise you now to take a comfortable supper, and go to bed.

Michael. Mony thanks t'ye, Madam, for Ise must needs confess Ise likes that main better than wandering lik a thief athirt the fields, wi' ne'er a bit of sun or moon to shew the way—'Tis only owls that see o'nights.—Your humble sarvant. Ise glad the young gintry be comed hoam. [*He goes out.*

Mrs. Mildmay. Poor Michael! I

hope he will sleep soundly after his fright.—Now, my dears, I would have you eat your suppers quickly, and go to bed.

Augustus. Oh do let us sit up—Shouldn't you like to sit up, Emily, till the men come home?

Emily. I am sure I should not sleep a wink, if I were to go to bed, especially after what Michael has told us.—I can't help being frightened out of my wits, and I can't eat one bit of supper.—I should so like to stay up, if it were only a quarter of an hour longer, and if my governess would but tell us a story.

Mrs. Mildmay. Really, my dears, I am not much in the humour for telling stories, and I know not what to say about your sitting up longer; for to confess the truth, I am myself alarmed at the account given us by Michael.

Emily. Pray, pray let us keep

you company; and only one short story will do, just to keep us from thinking about the ugly men Michael saw.

Mrs. Mildmay. I consent to your sitting up half an hour, on condition that you will not then ask me to let you stay longer; but as to telling you a story, it is quite out of my power.—I will, however, if you like it, read you something from a book your papa gave me, together with some others he bought at the New Juvenile Library, in Skinner Street, for your amusement, and all of which I shall give you, when I have looked them over, to see, as he desired me, that they are calculated for your improvement.—What I propose reading to you is one of Baldwin's Fables, a book that is, I know, highly approved of by parents of understanding and discrimination.—Now, then, to use the agreeable and playful

style of the author of these Fables, with which I am quite enchanted—" *Now, then, I begin.*"

" THE BOYS AND THE FROGS.

" Some school-boys were just come out of school. You cannot think what a noise they made. They seemed to be all talking at once. One snatched off another's hat, and ran away with it. A second jumped over his comrade's back. Some wrestled; some ran, and almost pushed one another down. They were all in high glee.

" They presently came into a field. Some had bats and balls; some had marbles, and a few came to fly their paper kites. In one corner of the field there was a pond, and by the side of the pond there was a number of frogs, that were basking and amusing themselves. Poor harmless frogs! Why should not a frog be happy as well as a boy?

"One inconsiderate boy caught up two or three stones, and began to throw them at the frogs. When one boy does a naughty thing, others are very apt to do the same. I will lay you a halfpenny, said one, that I can hit that large old one. I will hit that little skinny one in a corner, said a second, which is harder to do than yours.

"Esop says, one of the frogs, seeing the cruel mischief that was going to happen, spoke to the boys. I rather think it was one good and humane boy that spoke to the rest. I will tell you, however, what was said.

"Stop a minute, I beg of you, and consider what you are going to do. If you had one of the frogs in your hand, which I would not advise you to take, because I should be afraid you would hurt him, you would feel how his heart beats. What bright shining eyes he has got! What a vast way he jumps!

How nimble he must be! God gave him his eyes, and his legs, and his joints, and his heart, and all his motions! If you threw a stone at me, you might hurt me very much. But to throw it at a poor little frog! You might break one of his legs, or two, or dash out his brains. If you killed him, he could never take his pretty jumps any more, but would lay as still as the stone you have in your hand. If you broke his legs, he could not help himself, but would pine a day or two in misery, and then die. When you are laughing, always consider whether the same thing that makes you laugh, makes some other creature cry, or be miserable. None but a brute of a boy, who deserves to have every bone in his skin broken, would knowingly laugh at another's misery.

"These boys were convinced, and all of them agreed, that they would

never more run the risk of breaking a frog's legs, or knocking out one of his eyes.

"I am sorry to say, that boys are too apt to be cruel. They will sometimes throw stones at the pretty birds as they hop along in the hedge. But what I think worst of all is, taking away the birds'-nests, and thus making a mother miserable for the loss of all her young ones. A bird's nest is her home, and all her happiness: what good can it do you to disturb her? I hope, my dear Charles, I may depend upon you, that you will never do such things."

Augustus. What a delightful book it must be! Emily, didn't you think it exactly like papa *talking* to us?

Mrs. Mildmay. Your observation shews your good taste and judgment, my dear. The peculiar excellence of

this author, in the work of which my fable is an extract, is the extraordinary art he possesses of communicating the sources of sentiment and knowledge his lively fancy creates, in a style of affectionate playfulness, that captivates the heart of both the parent and the child: while in the old books of fables, that, for instance, called *Esop's Fables*, upon the same subjects, you are presented with a language so dry and uninviting, that you read it with no pleasure, and consequently, with very little improvement. This delightful author—

Emily. Hark! I heard a noise.

Augustus. Poor Emily! what a coward you are: 'twas only the warning of the clock.

Mrs. Mildmay. Which reminds me that our half hour is expired. Come, my dears, not an instant longer. I have put all your books away, supposing you would be tired. Take your

port-folio, Aug.—Bless me, *that was* surely a knocking at the window!—Hearken!

Emily. Oh, there it is again! Mercy, mercy, what shall we do!

Mrs. Mildmay. Try to be composed, my love.—I am myself alarmed, and I fear there is real cause to be so; but that is a reason—*(a louder confused noise is heard)*—Ha!—Run with me instantly to the inner cellar; the butler, fortunately, left his keys with me.—Not a moment to be lost—blow out the candles, Augustus—don't speak a word—tread softly. [*They hurry away.*

Enter Boucher, Tomkins, Roustan. (They come through the Window they have broken into the Parlour).

Roustan. The worst is over, my lads, and the land is now our own. To judge by this apartment, we shall gain a booty worth the pains.—The little chattering

rogues did not deceive us—Here's wealth enough, we may be sure.

Tomkins. The young ones must be fast asleep, I guess, and their governess too, no doubt.—Now's the time.

Boucher. That same Cæsar, though, may do us an evil turn yet, if Larkin should not be lucky enough to quiet him with the poisoned meat.

Roustan. You may be sure Cæsar is done for, my lads, or we should have heard his yell e'er this—To business, then, brave fellows! The first thing is, to break open the secretary, and take what we can find—Money and jewels, no doubt.—But here comes Larkin, who, when he had killed Cæsar, was to have kept watch.—Let's first hear the reason of his joining us!

Enter Larkin by the Window.

Larkin (in a low eager tone of voice). Be on your guard, comrades. Five or

six men, armed with guns, have just come into the outer court, who certainly must mean to fall upon us.

Roustan. Confusion!—Let us run off, for fear of being taken.

Boucher. I can't make up my mind to go empty-handed, neither.

(He remains alone, searching about the Apartment. Mr. Brown enters at the Door, as Boucher gets out at the Window.)

Enter Mr. Brown, Nicholas, William, John, armed with Guns.

Mr. Brown. Thieves! Thieves! He is escaping! Let's run after him!

(They all begin to run to the Window. Boucher throws a Time-piece in their faces, the glass of which breaks, and cuts William's hand. They stop suddenly at sight of the blood. Boucher escapes.)

William. I wish you hadn't stopt for me, comrades. Why look ye, 'tis nothing but a scratch, and the fellow is got off.

Mr. Brown. The man we saw is escaped; and if he has any accomplices, you may be sure enough he will tell them the reception he met with, and they will scamper off as fast as he.

Nicholas. Od zooks, Measter Brown, I shod like mainly to go a bit o' way arter 'em, just to try to bring 'em back. And I zay, William, Ise can't but think how shame-faced the fellow that broke that fine outlandish clock upon thy nuckles wod look, if as how we shud catch en, and keep en locked up till the 'Squire do cum hoam!

Mr. Brown. No, no, Nicholas; it is better to get rid of them entirely.—Have we not other business on our hands?—Let us see for Madam Mildmay, and hear if any of the neighbour-

ing peasants have brought tidings of the children. You all stay here, while I go and look for her.

Enter Mrs. Mildmay, Emily, and Augustus.

Mrs. Mildmay. Oh heavens! It is you then, my friends, who have frightened the thieves away, and no doubt saved our lives!—They forced an entrance at this window, as we were sitting to wait for your return. We ran and concealed ourselves in the cellar which looks into the orchard, and the window being open, we a minute ago heard the voices of several men, and what they said convinced us they had been interrupted, and were hurrying away, so we saw we might return in safety.

Mr. Brown. You know then as much as we do, excepting that as we came up the outer court, we saw by

the light of our lantern, poor Cæsar lying dead upon the ground, and that one of the villains, to stop our pursuit of him, threw the new time-piece that stood upon the secretary, at William's head, but luckily he received the blow upon his hand, which he raised at the very moment.—But let us talk of Miss Emily and Master Augustus.—How long have they been home, and where did you keep yourselves, my pretty ones? Come let us talk of that, and then lock up the doors and thank God it is no worse.

Mrs. Mildmay. It is very late, and my good friends here must, I am sure, want repose. In the name of Mr. Montague, I thank you one and all for the ready assistance you have afforded on an occasion of so much danger. The children and the house, thank God, are safe. You, Mr. Brown, will do me the favour to procure for

their refreshment, whatever the kitchen and the cellar afford, and if it will give you pleasure, my good fellows, you may drink the healths of the little wanderers in a bumper, and long life to Mr. Montague—the best of fathers, and of masters.

END OF THE DANGERS OF GOSSIPING.

THE

FIB FOUND OUT.

PERSONAGES.

Mr. Wilmott.
Mrs. Wilmott.
Lionel, their Son.
Dorothy, their Daughter.
Edmund, their little Child.
Mrs. Anson, Mother to Mrs. Wilmott.
Thomas, a Servant.

The Scene is in London, in Mr. Wilmott's House.

THE

FIB FOUND OUT.

Scene, a Parlour.

Lionel (coming out of Mr. Wilmott's Study).

OH heavens! What have I done! —What a terrible misfortune—what will become of me.—Papa *must* know it the minute he comes in—The nasty parrot, how I shall hate the sight of him. 'Twas all his fault—Ah, I really think I heard papa's voice—Then there is no hope left. I must run and hide myself. [*He is going.*

Enter Dorothy.

Dorothy. How frightened you look, Lionel! What is the matter?

Lionel. Is it only you, Dorothy, how glad I am it was not papa!

Dorothy. Why should you be so afraid to see him?—Well, *I love* to see him, dearly, and the moment I hear his voice, I jump all the way to meet him, and then if he does not seem to be *thinking*, I get to kiss the back of his hand, which is sure to make him smile.

Lionel. If you were in my place, you would be afraid too, Dorothy.

Dorothy. What, have you not got your lesson ready? What a shame! It was so short.—We had to day only two pages of geography and one of grammar—I could say mine perfect in a quarter of an hour.—Now I'll just say it over—"The earth is divided into

two great continents; called the *old* and the *new* world. The old world consists of three parts, which are named *Europe*, *Asia*, and *Africa*. The new world consists of only one part, and it is called *America*.

Lionel. Don't be so provoking, Dorothy.—Don't I tell you I am in a shocking scrape.—I don't know what in the world to do.

Dorothy. Why don't you learn it then, lazy bones?—" *Europe* is the least extensive of the four quarters of the globe; it is bounded on the *north*"—

Lionel. You ill-natured creature, you care for nothing but teazing.—Papa will be so angry for what I have done.

Dorothy. " On the *north*, by the Frozen Sea; on the *south*, by the Mediterranean Sea; on the *west*, by the Ocean."

Lionel. Oh what an accident I have had!

Dorothy. Have you had an accident? I thought it was only that you could not say your lesson.

Lionel. Oh dear, if you did but know what I have done—I am *very very* sorry; but that can do no good.

Dorothy. Good gracious! Yes, I see now how frightened you look—do tell me what it is.

Lionel. But it will be of no use. Papa *must* know it.

Dorothy. I'll help you to hide it if I can.

Lionel. You know the large machine in papa's study—

Dorothy. Which do you mean?

Lionel. That which stands by the window, with which papa makes experiments upon little birds, to take away their breath, and to shrivel the skin of an apple.

Dorothy. I know which you mean—I wrote the name of it in my pocket-book, because I thought I could not remember it.—Let us see *(takes out the pocket-book)*—it is—it is a very hard name—

Lionel. I wouldn't give a fig to know the name—

Dorothy (looking earnestly for the place). The—The—

Lionel. Pish, that's your way, you never will be satisfied without learning the *exact* name—how tiresome it is.

Dorothy. The *air-pump*—

Lionel. Yes,—how I wish I had never touched such a provoking, ugly, ridiculous thing.—But let me tell you how it all happened.—The other day, you remember papa was making some experiments with this machine.—First he put an apple under the glass—

Dorothy. Which is called the receiver, you know.

Lionel. Just so. Well, then he drew all the air out of the receiver in some way or other, and the apple instantly became shrivelled, so that you could scarcely believe it to be the same.

Dorothy. I remember very well.—Then he filled the glass with air again, and the apple was as fresh as ever.

Lionel. Another day he put a sparrow into the receiver, and as soon as the air was drawn out, the sparrow fell down, in appearance dead.

Dorothy. Yes, I was so sorry for the poor sparrow, till papa brought him to life again by letting in the air.

Lionel. Well, now then listen to what has happened.—To day there was no one in the study, and I thought I would just try to use the air-pump myself—

Dorothy. Oh heavens! how could you think of venturing?

Lionel. I knew I should not be

caught; for I could get the air out and in again in ten minutes, and papa never comes in to dress till one o'clock.—When I first went into the study, it was so nice to be there all alone, like papa—shouldn't you think so, Dorothy?

Dorothy. Y-e-s—but I should never have ventured—did any one see you?

Lionel. Not a creature.—And if it had not been for the nasty parrot—

Dorothy. Ha, ha, ha, you are afraid that he will tell of you. How silly—he can say nothing but *Jacco, Jacco;* and *what's o'clock.*

Lionel. I am quite enraged with him, and if I had him now—

Dorothy. Why how can you be so angry with Jacco?

Lionel. I wanted to make my experiment upon Jacco; and only meant to do the same to him as papa did to the sparrow, which you know did not

hurt him the least, and I should have let in the air in less than half a minute. Well I took him upon my finger, and put him under the receiver, and what do you think, the provoking creature began to be frightened, and beat his wings all round the glass till he broke it all to pieces, and then flew out at the window.

Dorothy. And didn't you catch him?

Lionel. No, he flew to a distance, and I quite lost sight of him before I could recover from my fright.

Dorothy. I am afraid papa will be *very, very* angry. What can you say to him about your being in his study, where he so strictly forbids us to go? It was, too, papa's favourite machine—and Jacco was grandmamma's favourite bird.

Lionel. Won't you help me all you can, dear Dorothy?

Dorothy. Yes, Lionel, I will beg and

pray papa and grandmamma to forgive you.

Lionel. Oh that will be no use at all.—If it was but *one* thing, it wouldn't be so bad, but it was papa's favourite machine, and grandmamma's favourite bird—and then I am so unlucky in meeting with accidents you know, Dorothy—but—you never meet with any, so they would not be half so angry with *you.*

Dorothy. Oh heavens! Lionel, you want me then to say I did it—

Lionel. If you would say you did only *one* of the things—I will give you my new globes, and—

Dorothy. No, no, I am sure I never can—I could not go into the room and say it was I that did it for all the world.

Lionel. What shall I do? What shall I do?

Dorothy. I wish we could think of any thing—

Lionel. Suppose I were to say little Edmund did it—

Dorothy. Oh papa would never believe us.

Lionel. Why not? Doesn't he touch every thing he sees? And isn't mamma always telling Sally to take care he does not go into papa's study? Well, might he not have got in while Sally stepped up stairs, and then he would be sure to take papa's cane to play with, and jumping with it about the room, might strike the receiver and break it to pieces,—Then you know, he cannot speak plain enough to contradict us, for he can only say, *papa*, *mamma*, *Jacco.*—So it is quite certain he would not be questioned—What say you, Dorothy? Promise me that you will tell mamma it all happened so—

Dorothy. I don't know what to do, dear Lionel—How can I bear to accuse poor Edmund, who I know is quite innocent.

Lionel. What great harm would it be to Edmund? And it would save me from such a punishment.—Now do, do, Dorothy.

Dorothy. But *Sally* would contradict every word.

Lionel. Oh never mind her, I can get her to say any thing, I am quite sure, for you know it was but yesterday that she went out with Edmund as soon as mamma got into the carriage, so I may tell of that—Hearken—that's papa's voice—dear Dorothy, you will be good-natured, won't you?—

Enter Mr. Wilmot.

Lionel and Dorothy together. Good morning, papa.

Mr. Wilmot. Good morning, my

dears! What, both in the parlour—A game of play, no doubt—

Dorothy. Oh but papa, I have not wasted my time—I know my two pages of geography and my one page of grammar quite perfect.—Will you hear me, papa, I shall not miss one word.

Mr. Wilmot. And what say you, Lionel?

Lionel. I should have known my lesson too, papa, if it had not been for a sad accident—

Mr. Wilmot. An accident! Pray what might it be?

Lionel. You will be angry I am afraid, papa—

Mr. Wilmot. Do not keep me in suspense—Pray tell me what it is—

Lionel. I was here in the parlour, getting my lesson by heart, and in comes little Edmund tossing about his marbles; he seemed to want me to

play with him, but I was determined to learn at least one of my lessons first, so then the little rogue began to chatter, *aba, abou, nana, nona,* in his way, you know, papa—Well, he put me out so that I was obliged to go and learn my lesson in mamma's room by myself—

Mr. Wilmot. You called Sally first, I hope—

Lionel. No, papa, for I thought she would be sure to fetch him in a minute.

Mr. Wilmot. What then?—

Lionel. Then, just as I got to the division of Europe—I heard the sound of glass broken—

Mr. Wilmot. And it was Edmund breaking the window—

Lionel. Worse than that—I am afraid to tell—

Mr. Wilmot. One of the looking-glasses?—

Lionel. I ran as quickly as I could, and found Edmund in your study.

Mr. Wilmot. I imprudently left it open this morning.

Lionel. I found him with your cane in his hand, and I saw that he had broke the glass of the air-pump.

Mr. Wilmot. This is Sally's fault, and I must instantly—

Lionel. And besides this, papa, he had opened Jacco's door—

Mr. Wilmot. And Jacco bit his fingers?

Lionel. I believe not, papa, but Jacco was flown out at the window.

Dorothy. Grandmamma will be so vexed.

Mr. Wilmot. But where was Sally? I must have her called—I must make her sensible of her neglect.

Lionel. Oh papa, she will deny it all, I dare say—and very likely will try to make you believe that I and

Edmund were playing together, and that—

Mr. Wilmot. We shall see; but step directly and fetch her to me.—In the mean time I will look at what the little mischief-maker has done.

[*Mr. Wilmot goes into his study.*

Lionel. Oh be joyful! Then Dorothy all is safe! Now I will step to Sally and tell her what she is to say, and then we have nothing more to fear.

Dorothy. Go quickly then, for papa will be with us in two minutes, you may be sure. [*Lionel goes.*

Enter Mr. Wilmot.

Mr. Wilmot. Come to me, Dorothy. Now tell me all about this accident. Where were you when it happened?

Dorothy. I was in my own room, papa, studying my lesson.

Mr. Wilmot. How then did you know all the circumstances? Did Lionel call you and tell you what had happened? Or did you come in by accident?

Dorothy. When I came down, Lionel told me, papa.

Mr. Wilmot. And were not Edmund's fingers cut with the glass of the receiver? And was he not frightened?

Dorothy. No, papa; his fingers were not cut, and he was not frightened.

Mr. Wilmot. Pray how long ago did all this happen?

Dorothy. About half an hour, papa.

Mr. Wilmot. Very well. Here comes Lionel. Now leave us, Dorothy. I wish to ask him some questions. [*Dorothy goes.*]—*(Aside)* I begin to suspect this tale; I must learn the truth.

Enter Lionel.

Lionel. I have looked every where for Sally, papa, and I cannot find her. I think she must be gone out to walk with Edmund.

Mr. Wilmot. I am extremely sorry, for I intended to reprimand her most severely. An infant not two years old, left to run thus about the house, exposed to a thousand dangers! It is truly shameful.

Lionel. It is very sad indeed, papa.

Mr. Wilmot. While we are waiting for her, let me hear from you, Lionel, all the particulars of the affair, that I may be the better prepared to reprove her effectually.

Lionel. I thought I had told you all, papa.

Mr. Wilmot. Where was your sister at the time?

Lionel. As she had learned her les-

son, she was playing in the garden, and I saw Jacco flying over the roof of the house—I—I—called her—to tell her—a-n-d—I called Sally too—

Mr. Wilmot. And Dorothy came to you?

Lionel. Yes, papa.

Mr. Wilmot. And Edmund was still in the study?

Lionel. Yes, papa.

Mr. Wilmot. The falling of the pieces of glass must have frightened him?

Lionel. Yes, papa. He cried so I knew not what to do to quiet him.

Mr. Wilmot (discomposed). Lionel! —Ungrateful boy—I am no longer deceived. I am convinced that you, Lionel, broke the receiver, and that your little brother is innocent.

Lionel (endeavouring to cry). Indeed, papa, it was not I who did it—only ask my sister—here she comes.

Enter Dorothy.

Dorothy. Here is a letter for you, papa, and "*with speed*" is written on the cover.

Mr. Wilmot. Give it to me—*(He reads).*

Dorothy (in a whisper to Lionel). Papa looks angry—Do you think he suspects?

Mr. Wilmot. Come to me Lionel. And you, Dorothy. I have a letter, which it is proper you should hear read. It comes from your mamma.

Dorothy. Mamma has been out ever since breakfast. I wonder—

Mr. Wilmot. She went to see your aunt Andrews, where she is detained—But I will read her letter, and see what you will then have to say—

"I cannot resist my sister's kind entreaties, my dear, and therefore you

will kindly give us leave to spend the whole day with her; that our pleasure may be complete, she begs that you, and Lionel, and Dorothy will join us. The weather is so tempting that we propose going all together to the park; we shall therefore call for you in my sister's carriage in half an hour. Pray then be so good as to tell Lionel and Dorothy to be dressed in time. They will both I suppose be mightily pleased."

Dorothy. How kind of mamma!—Shall I run and dress directly, papa?

Mr. Wilmot. We must first say a few words more about the accident.—Lionel, you are quite sure, are you, that you saw Edmund in my study, and that he broke the receiver—you are *quite* sure?

Lionel. Oh yes, papa, quite sure.

Mr. Wilmot. Suppose I were to

tell you, that Sally and Edmund went out with your mamma, and have not since been within this house.

Dorothy (aside). Oh heavens! what will poor Lionel do!

Mr. Wilmot. Dorothy, I beg you will read aloud the remaining lines of your mama's letter—

Dorothy. Here—are—the—l-e-t-t-e-r-s, P, and S, in this corner.

Mr. Wilmot. Go on if you please; I will tell you what *P. S.* means another time. Read—

Dorothy. "Do not be uneasy, my dear, about the little one. This once I think I can answer, that he has had nothing improper to eat, for I mentioned his being poorly to my sister. He breakfasted at our table, and Sally has been with him in the nursery and in the garden ever since. Little Emily and he are excellent companions."

Mr. Wilmot (angrily). Unworthy

children! What have you now to say for yourselves?

Enter Mrs. Anson.

Mrs. Anson. Yes, yes, your serious faces tell me that the news is really true.—Little mischievous boy!—But where were you, Dorothy, you who only yesterday begged mamma to let Edmund be your child—Pretty care you would take of him truly.—Oh my poor Jacco—

Mr. Wilmot. Our serious faces, my dear mother, but too truly indicate, that none of us are happy.—Nor is Jacco the only subject of our uneasiness. Your upright heart I know will partake the anguish of a father, who fondly hoped—

Lionel, Dorothy (speaking eagerly together, and bursting into tears). Oh dear papa! Oh spare us, dear papa!

Mrs. Anson. What can this mean? May I inquire—

Enter Mrs. Wilmot, Mrs. Andrews, Sally, Edmund, and Emily.

Mrs. Wilmot. Well my dears, we are not too soon I hope—come, quickly, quickly—But—Lionel—Dorothy—something is the matter—

Dorothy (clinging round Mrs. Wilmot, hiding her face, and sobbing). Oh dearest, best mamma, you will hate your poor children—never—never will you forgive us—

Lionel. No, mamma, it was not Dorothy, I did it all myself, and made her tell the story—I wish *(sobs)*—I wish I had died sooner—

Mr. Wilmot. Enough—enough, my children. I have suffered some moments of such grief as only a parent's heart can feel, for the fault you have committed, but I now feel a parent's joy, for that ready and ingenuous avowal, which tells me, that the twelve years devoted

to your moral improvement, have not been spent in vain. Come and receive from your mother and myself, a kiss of reconciliation, and our promise to forget this morning's vexations.

END OF THE FIB FOUND OUT.

4

THE LITTLE COXCOMB.

PERSONAGES.

Mr. Belfield.

Narcissus, his Son.

Henry, }
Julio, } Cousins of Narcissus.
Charles, }

Mr. Sealskin, a Shoemaker.

Stephen.

The Scene is in London, at the House of Mr. Belfield.

THE LITTLE COXCOMB.

Scene, an Apartment.

Narcissus, alone.

A GOLD watch—with a nice chain, a key, and these handsome seals!—This is the most costly birth-day present I have ever received.—I could not sleep a wink all last night for thinking of it.—'Tis plain my papa thinks me almost quite a man, or he would not have made me such a present. What transport I shall feel, as I slide my hand under the bolster in the middle of the night, and draw out my watch!—I shall put it to my ear—it will go tick, tick; and I shall know by that, even in the dark, that it has not stopped.—Then yesterday, when I

was walking with my companions, one exclaimed, What a beautiful chain!—another kept looking slyly at it, by which I knew how he envied me.—My uncle, too, as soon as he met me, though papa and other gentlemen were present, said, the first word, Pray what is it o'clock, Narcissus?—No doubt, as this is the case, they think me of importance, and I shall soon be considered old enough to sit and walk with them on all occasions.—I am sure I thought I looked very manly just now, when I looked in the glass.—Now what care I if there should be no more watches in all Paris! I have one of my own; and should any one meet me in the street, and, taking off his hat, inquire of me what it is o'clock, I should say, Ah, ah! you have no watch; well, it is lucky that I have one—it wants a quarter to eleven, to a minute.—I think I see the person so

obliged, making me a low bow, and saying to himself, as he leaves me, What a beautiful watch! I never saw so young a gentleman with any thing so handsome!

The house clock is striking ten *(he takes out his watch)*. How is this? Does my watch gain, or does the house clock lose?—That was a church clock which struck. I will put my watch to the same time, and next, I will retard the regulator a little.—Well, now I am five minutes past ten. This was the time when the shoemaker was to have come—what impertinence I shall think it, if he should not be here in a few minutes.—He knows very well that I am to walk out this morning in my new coat, and with my gold watch.—Nothing is wanting to complete my dress, but a thin, well-made pair of pumps.—Every one will fix their eyes upon me, as I walk up and down in

the Park.—The street-door bell rings —it is he, no doubt.—How provoking!—It is only Stephen.

Enter Stephen.

Stephen. Here is a letter the postman has just brought for your papa.

Narcissus. What, is the postman come already?

Stephen. It is near eleven o'clock.

Narcissus. Much you know, Mr. Nincompoop, about the matter.—Look at my watch—it is one, two, three, four, five, six minutes past ten, and neither more nor less. Do you see?

Stephen. It's no matter for my looking, Master Narcissus; for I don't understand it when I've seen it.

Narcissus. What a silly fellow!—You see these small black lines which are all round the dial-plate; they are called minutes.

Stephen. I never saw you with a watch before, Master Narcissus. Is it your own ?

Narcissus (consequentially). Most assuredly it is mine.—Do not all gentlemen, at a certain age, wear a watch ?

Stephen. But does it go ? Is it a *real* watch ?

Narcissus. It goes day and night without stopping.—Put it to your ear, then you will be sure.

Stephen. Sure enough, and so it does. Well, I never could understand how a watch can go all alone, as one may say. Will you be so kind, Master Narcissus, as you be so good a scholar, just for to tell me how it can be ?

Narcissus. Poor Stephen, how very ignorant you must be !—But I will instruct you with great pleasure. A watch is composed of different wheels, which are set in motion by the main

springs; and, by the ingenuity of the maker, are arranged to communicate their motions to each other. On one side of the watch there is a spindle, that, to speak so as for an understanding like yours to comprehend, I may say resembles a top, such as boys play with; only that instead of packthread, it has a thread of fine metal that winds round it, and so produces the motion of the hands. The shortest of the hands marks the hours, and the longest the minutes. Is this clear enough, Stephen?

Stephen. It is so clear, Master Narcissus, that I don't understand a single word of it all.

Narcissus. It is because you are a stupid blockhead.

Stephen. That's no fault of mine. Every body can't be alike in this world. Every body can't have such a fine gold watch! The greater the pity, says Stephen.

Narcissus. But, Stephen, don't you think that I have something distinguished in my manners; and, with this handsome chain, which I know is seen at a great distance, do I not look better than most gentlemen at my age? I want nothing to complete me but a pair of thin shoes.--Only conceive of Sealskin's not being come yet! It is plain enough he has no watch, or he would be more punctual.

Stephen. Here he comes—and your three cousins too.

Narcissus. Then you may go, Stephen.

Stephen. Don't forget the letter I gave you for my master.

Enter Henry, Julio, Charles, Mr. Sealskin.

Narcissus (looking at his watch). My friends, you are exactly ten minutes before your time; you, Mr. Sealskin,

are twenty minutes after yours. I can forgive my young companions their want of punctuality, since they have not watches: besides, their eagerness is a proof of their friendship. But as to you, Mr. Sealskin, your inattention is absolutely unpardonable. I see you have a dirty kind of leather string hanging from your fob, by which I know you have a watch. I suppose it is very old, and I dare say it was your father's; perhaps your grandfather's. Is it shaped like a warming-pan? Pray shew it me.—Is it a silver, or a pinchbeck watch?

Mr. Sealskin. It is of no importance to you, young gentleman, to know what metal my watch is made of; such as it is, I value it more than if it were set in diamonds. You guessed truly, that it has descended from my ancestors to me. I never look at it but it reminds me of the venerable character

of my deceased father, and I cannot hold it in my hand without feelings of respect. Give me leave to say, that the contempt you have expressed for it on account of its antiquity, is no proof of the goodness of heart one might expect to find in a young person of your education.

Narcissus. A fine sermon, truly!—Then who, I wonder, has ever heard of the *ancestors* of *Mr. Sealskin?*

Mr. Sealskin. My ancestors, young gentleman, were respectable heads of families, who filled each his station in the world with credit and with honour. They bequeathed me, it is true, a condition in which I am called upon to labour; but I inherit also from them a love of independence, and an abhorrence of every mean or dishonest action.

Henry, Julio, Charles. Well done, Mr. Sealskin; that's well said.

Narcissus. Follow me, Mr. Sealskin, and fit me with a pair of pumps. You, companions, will wait here for me; I have very little more to do to my dress, and I will be with you in—*(he looks at his watch)* yes, in less than ten minutes.

(Narcissus and Mr. Sealskin go into an adjoining room.)

Henry. If you two were of my mind, we should all instantly go away. Are we to bear the insolent superiority he always assumes? Why was he not dressed by the time we came, instead of keeping us waiting? And then observe the tone in which he speaks to us. I, for my part, will not bear it. Today you may perceive, and no doubt it is because he has a gold watch, he is worse than ever.

Charles. With what a sneer he spoke to the shoemaker! I was pleased to hear Sealskin answer as he did.

Julio. He was vain enough before, but this gold watch will make him absolutely insupportable.

Charles. I observed Narcissus yesterday. If any one came into the drawing-room, no sooner were they seated than he got near; and the moment he could be heard, he said, Pray is your watch right? What o'clock is it by you? The visitor looked at his watch, and answered, it is such an hour.—Then Narcissus, taking out his gold watch, was sure to say, Thank you, Sir; I will set mine by yours: and all this was a mere pretence, to let every one see the handsome present he has received.

Henry. I can tell you something that shews his ridiculous vanity still more. You know the old woman who sells matches, at the corner of this street.—Well, yesterday evening, as Narcissus and I passed her, he left me

all at once, and going up to the old woman, Is that four o'clock that is striking? said he. Yes, it is four, and I wish it were bed-time; for here I stand, and cannot sell my matches, said the poor creature. Narcissus then drew out his watch: *I am quite right, I see then,* continued he, for I am four exactly. I was so vexed and mortified at his unfeeling conduct, that I could not help giving her the only sixpence I had, to console her for her disappointment.

Julio. I dare say he did nothing all yesterday, but seek occasions for the display of his bauble. Henry has just told us what he did at four o'clock; now I will relate what I saw him do at five. I met him just opposite the Palace, in Pall-Mall: there were a great many well-dressed people passing near us. Narcissus puts himself into an affected posture, and fixing his eye on

the clock, takes out his watch, and spent, I am quite sure, more than five minutes in putting the hour-hand and then the minute-hand forward and backward, to have, as he said, his watch exactly right. I pulled him by the sleeve, and wanted him to move away, for I observed several gentlemen ridiculing the consequential air he assumed.

Henry. We all agree in thinking his behaviour the most—but what noise is that—it sounds like quarreling.

Charles. I hear the voice of Narcissus.

Julio. I hear Mr. Sealskin talking very loud.

(They all listen, and distinguish the following words).

"Stop him! Stop him! You shall not go until you have returned my watch. Stop thief! Stop thief!

Henry. It seems as if our little coxcomb had got into a scrape.

Julio. I should not be sorry.

Henry. Nor I. I would not stir a step to help him.

Charles. Let's run and see what it is.

Enter Narcissus and Mr. Sealskin.

Narcissus (holding Sealskin by the coat). No, you shall not go till you have given me my watch.

Mr. Sealskin (to Henry). Can you tell me if his papa is at home?—I am extremely sorry for the accident, but it was Master Belfield's fault.

Henry. What has happened, Mr. Sealskin?

Charles. Why what's the matter with you, Narcissus?

Narcissus (to Mr. Sealskin). If you do not instantly pay me the value of my watch, it is to *me* you shall answer for the offence.

Mr. Sealskin (laughing immoderately). Ha, ha, ha, to you, high and mighty Sir.

Narcissus. Do you continue to mock me!—Companions, I beg you will stop him.

Henry. Why should we stop him, Narcissus? What has he done to you?

Narcissus. How can you be ignorant? Do you not see I have no watch?

Charles. Good heavens! What will become of us?

Narcissus. True; my dear friends cannot but be sensible of the serious loss both they and I sustain.—I can never tell you any more what o'clock it is, when we want to be at home by a certain hour.—He has broke it in a thousand pieces—He has stolen it from me—We will send for a constable, and have him put in prison.

Mr. Sealskin. Idle prating boy! We

will have Mr. Belfield's opinion on the affair.

Narcissus. You may be sure enough I shall acquaint him with the whole.

Mr. Sealskin. You shall see what his decision will be.

Henry. Will you submit the matter to our judgment?

Mr. Sealskin. With all my heart, gentlemen.

Charles. Do you agree to this, Narcissus?

Narcissus. There is no room for any further decision—the case is quite plain—He has stolen my watch—He has broke it in a thousand pieces—He must pay me the full amount of it instantly.

Julio. So then, you have taken Master Belfield's watch, Mr. Sealskin?

Mr. Sealskin. I took up the pieces as they lay on the floor, that I might shew them to his papa.

Henry (laughing maliciously). So this is the superb watch we all admired so much—It is indeed a pity.

Charles. The spring is broken to a certainty.

Julio. It stops.

Henry. The gold case is bulged.

Mr. Sealskin. The whole machine is rendered useless, it cannot be denied, nor do I believe even the most ingenious workman could repair it.

Narcissus. And you persist in not satisfying me for the loss?

Mr. Sealskin. You may apply to my wig, which you prompted to do all the mischief.

Narcissus (stamping upon the wig as it lays on the floor). I will tear you to pieces, you provoking wig!

Mr. Sealskin. Fair and softly, young gentleman—if you use my wig so ill, I cannot answer that this stick in my my hand may not resent it.

Enter Stephen.

Stephen. The housekeeper sent me to beg that Master Narcissus would be so kind as to tell her exactly what it is o'clock ?

Narcissus. Do go along about your business.

Stephen. I wonder what Master Narcissus is glumpy about now—always something or other—I should have been glad to have had another peep at his fine watch—I wanted to ask one question more about the hands—but I see 'tis no use—I'll try though.—Master Narcissus—Does your watch mark the days of the month ?

Narcissus. Alas, Stephen, my watch is no longer in existence—this wretch has broke it in a thousand pieces.

Stephen. Now you are joking, Master Narcissus.

Narcissus. No, Stephen, it is but

too sure, and the greatest service you can do me is to prevent his leaving the house till he has given me satisfaction.

Enter Mr. Belfield.

Mr. Belfield. For what reason would my son detain my old acquaintance, Mr. Sealskin?

Narcissus. Would you believe it, Sir, he broke my watch in a thousand pieces, and then he stole it.

Mr. Belfield. A vastly pretty story, I must needs confess—are you aware, Narcissus, that I have known and respected Mr. Sealskin a great number of years; my opinion of him, therefore, is not easily to be shaken. Would it be too great a favour, Mr. Sealskin, to beg you to relate the particulars of the affair?

Mr. Sealskin. I will relate them with great pleasure.—First, here are the

broken pieces of Master Belfield's watch, which I took up with great care from the floor.—How it was broken, I will next explain, having first declared my own innocence of the fact.

Mr. Belfield. Of this I request you to believe me perfectly convinced. You will now be kind enough to proceed.

Mr. Sealskin. I will obey you, Sir. I was on one knee, trying Master Belfield with a pair of shoes, and repeatedly desired him to sit still, while he did nothing all the time but exclaim, that I pinched his foot, and was very awkward at my business. I tried again and again, but with no better success.

Narcissus. You *did* hurt me very much.

Mr. Belfield. I command you to be silent, Narcissus. Go on, Sir.

Mr. Sealskin. All the time I was fitting the shoes, and in a heat with stooping, Master Narcissus thought

proper to amuse himself with making game of me, and at different times he stuck the hook of his watch-chain into my wig.

Mr. Belfield. Well, Narcissus, what can you say to this ?

Narcissus. Great harm, to be sure, I did him.—I suppose he was afraid I should take a fancy to his old wig, and wear it as an ornament to my watch-chain.

Mr. Sealskin. Not knowing that my wig was hooked, and fatigued with the posture I had kept so long, I rose suddenly ; the watch sprang from the fob, and was dashed against the marble chimney-piece, and fell upon the floor broke to pieces. This, Sir, is the true account of what has passed ; your son will not, I am persuaded, think of denying any circumstance I have related.

Mr Belfield. Give me the broken pieces of the watch. I feel deep con-

cern, Mr. Sealskin, for what has happened; but it is on account of the indecent conduct of my son toward one of the most respectable of my fellow-citizens, and not for the loss of the bauble which, I fear, was the principal occasion of it. Far from regretting the destruction of the watch, I am thankful for the lesson the accident has afforded, by shewing me the imprudence of making such a present, to a boy I before knew to be of a proud and arrogant disposition. Go, Narcissus, to your own room. I forbid your seeing, at present, any member of the family. On some previous occasions, you have shewn yourself both sensible of your faults, and desirous to amend them: a sign, I trust, that your heart is not absolutely corrupt. I will therefore, in the mean time, entertain a father's fondest hope, that silent reflection on what has passed will fill

you with contrition and regret for your offence against the best precepts of benevolence, and of general morality. Till you can assure me that this is again the case, I desire I may not see you, and you will not leave your room. [*Turning to Mr. Sealskin.*] To you, Sir, I owe my heartfelt acknowledgments for the extraordinary forbearance you have evinced, on an occasion of the most aggravating nature.

Mr. Sealskin. It is I, Sir, who should offer thanks for such extraordinary impartiality, and—

Mr. Belfield (seeing Narcissus retiring toward the door). Pardon me for interrupting you.—Narcissus, there is one thing more I would remark—it is the example you have now before you, how impossible it is for arrogance to make a single friend. I, your father, and a fond father too, take part against you. Your young companions here,

your relations, who have a thousand reasons for wishing to be friends with you—shew but too plainly that *they* not only take part against you, but also, that they despise you. May you profit by the lesson, and regain our affection. May you have forgot for the last time, that the man who toils to gain an honourable subsistence, is infinitely more entitled to the esteem of the virtuous, than he whose greatest merit consists in a gaudy equipage and a costly expenditure.

END OF THE LITTLE COXCOMB.

THE

SPOILED CHILD.

PERSONAGES.

Mr. NUGENT.

Mrs. NUGENT.

EDWIN, their Son.

Dr. SYMONDS, a Physician.

Mr. SANDFORD, an Apothecary.

The Scene is in London, in Mr. Nugent's House.

THE

SPOILED CHILD.

Scene, a Parlour.

Mr. Nugent, alone.

NINE o'clock, and Edwin still in bed! My endeavours to give him habits of industry are all in vain—He grows worse every day.—This is the consequence of our ill-placed indulgence, and our blind affection!—Edwin, endowed by nature with an excellent understanding, is more ignorant than any boy I know of his age.—The more I consider, the more I am convinced this misfortune is owing to the ill-judged tenderness of his mother and myself.—We must really think of a more rational plan of behaviour toward him.—His character will soon begin to

form itself, and I trust I am yet in time to create in him the dispositions which alone can make him happy. Here he comes—His nightcap on, I see, so I shall hear of aches enough!

Enter Edwin.

Edwin (mumbling between his teeth). How d'ye do, papa? Isn't it very cold this morning?

Mr. Nugent. Why how now, Edwin? What is the night-cap on for? you put me in mind of Moliere's Argan.

Edwin. And what of him, papa?

Mr. Nugent. He conceived the ridiculous fancy of wishing every one to believe him ill, though he was in perfect health.

Edwin. Do you mean to say then, papa, that I am not ill? If you had but heard me cough all night long! I thought I should have died.

Mr. Nugent. Poor child!

Edwin. I had lozenges in my mouth all night, and yet could not help coughing terribly. *(He coughs).*

Mr. Nugent. Poor child!

Edwin. I tried all I could not to disturb you and mamma, but the cough would come.

Mr. Nugent. We must see what we can do to cure this cough. Linseed tea, I think, your mamma says is an excellent remedy.

Edwin. Oh papa, it is so nasty.

Mr. Nugent. A cough, however, should not, my dear, be neglected. We shall be quite uneasy if it is not soon got rid of.

Edwin. It is very bad indeed; but nothing, I am quite sure, is so good for it as lozenges.

Mr. Nugent. I fear it will be necessary to keep you from school, and put you on the sick list.

Edwin. Yes indeed, I fear I shall not get well without it.

Mr. Nugent. We will send for Dr. Symonds, and let him prescribe for you.

Edwin. Oh papa, I cannot bear the sight of a physician.

Mr. Nugent. But you must submit —It is absolutely necessary. I shall call upon him this morning.

Edwin. I think calf's-foot jelly would quench my thirst and do me good. Some tamarinds too, I should like, and as neither of these can possibly do me harm, might they not be sent for directly? I am so thirsty!

Mr. Nugent. He will soon be here, no doubt. I will try to bring him with me.

Edwin. A few baked apples, papa.

Mr. Nugent. I will talk to your mamma about it. [*Mr. Nugent goes.*

Edwin (alone). I thought papa would have been more frightened about my cough, for I have heard many grown up people say, a cough is the beginning of a consumption. I am sure, however, that he thinks me ill, so I shall certainly be kept from school, which was what I wanted. I must remember to cough at least fifty times a day, and complain of being thirsty, and then I may stay at home as long as I like, and have plenty of nice things.—That tiresome Latin! How plagued I should have been with it—But let me see, I must make haste and get my breakfast before the Doctor comes. *(He goes to the door of the apartment, and calls)* William—Sally, —Oh heavens, here he is! How provoking to come so soon!

Enter Dr. Symonds.

Dr. Symonds. Good morning, young

gentleman; I am sorry to hear from your papa, that you are somewhat indisposed. Let me see what I can do for you.

Edwin (alarmed). Yes, Sir—no—Sir—I don't know indeed, Sir. I believe I am not very ill, only a little cough—I hope I do not want a physician.

Dr. Symonds (in a commanding tone). I fear from your looks, I shall find you worse than you think—that pale cheek—that hollow eye—

Edwin. Am I very pale, Sir? *(aside)* I must be ill in earnest then, I suppose. I am sure I don't feel any pain, except in the tip of my tongue, which I burnt last night with the sugar I toasted at the candle.

Dr. Symonds. Let us sit down quietly; give me your hand. You cough, you say.

Edwin. Yes, Sir, but the lozenges,

and the honey, and lemon-juice mamma gives me, always does me good.

Dr. Symonds. Silly remedies, these, my dear; we must think of some powerful medicine.

Edwin. I am sure they did me good though—

Dr. Symonds. You must begin with drinking barley-water, and taking a spoonful of emulsion several times a day.

Edwin. Oh dear, I never shall be able to swallow it.

Dr. Symonds. It will soon grow familiar to you, and cannot be dispensed with.—Do you sleep in the night?

Edwin. I sleep but badly, and for that reason there is a lamp left burning in my room, for if I were to wake, and find myself in the dark, I should be sadly frightened.

Dr. Symonds. A sure sign, my child,

of the weakness of your organs. Nothing but a confirmed state of ill health could occasion this. Is it in the night that you cough?

Edwin. Yes, Sir, that is the reason that my papa and mamma keep me from school.

Dr. Symonds. And does the cough proceed from the stomach or the throat?

Edwin. From the stomach, Sir, I believe—But you really frighten me with all these questions.

Dr. Symonds. My design is not to frighten you, but to find out your disorder, and to apply the proper remedy. Let me feel your pulse.

Edwin (aside). Suppose he should find out that nothing ails me.

Dr. Symonds. What are you saying to yourself. Ah! Ah! I understand, you young folks are not fond of Doctors.

Edwin. N-o—It is not that.

Dr. Symonds. The pulse is much agitated.

Edwin. Am I feverish, Sir? *(aside)* This would be very lucky.

Dr. Symonds. You are feverish indeed—I perceive truly some alarming symptoms—An attack of the lungs.

Edwin. Oh dear, that is the very thing mamma is so much afraid of. She was always saying, take care, my dear, how you expose yourself to the cold air: a cold is so soon caught, and may fall upon your lungs.

Dr. Symonds (aside). I perceive he begins to be alarmed. *(To Edwin)* Then your mamma considers you, perhaps, as somewhat inclined to consumption. —We must lose no time in prescribing some very powerful medicines. At all events I think we had better have the advice of a second physician. I will

step and speak with your mamma, my dear.

Edwin. In the meanwhile I will get my breakfast, for I—

Dr. Symonds. On no account, young gentleman, must you eat at present. You must go immediately to bed. The greatest care and the strictest attention to diet and medicines are absolutely necessary. [*He goes.*

Edwin (alone). I don't know what to make of all this—I wonder what it is ails me—I am sure I don't feel any pain, yet the Doctor says I am seriously ill. He says I am very pale—Suppose I get on this chair and look at my face in the glass *(he steps upon the chair).* I really look as pale as death—Oh heavens! I am then really very ill.—My poor mamma will be so unhappy when she is told that I am consumptive.—But then I need not be

very uneasy neither, for I shall be better soon, no doubt—Then I am to get rid of all my lessons—No Latin, no nasty Mythology now, no—

Enter Mrs. Nugent.

Mrs. Nugent (with great emotion). My poor Edwin! Where are you? Dr. Symonds's account of you has almost broke my heart.

Edwin. He says I must go to bed, mamma.

Mrs. Nugent. Why, why did we not send for him before?—But where is the Doctor?

Edwin. He is gone to fetch another physician, mamma.

Mrs. Nugent. Another physician! Oh heavens! What will become of me if—

Edwin. Do not grieve, mamma. I think I cannot be so ill as he believes, for I feel no pain.

Mrs. Nugent. So much the worse. It is the worst of symptoms not to feel one's pain! Let me put you instantly to bed. But there is no chimney in my darling's apartment—I will have your bed removed to my dressing-room; I can then be always near you; should you not like that, my love?

Edwin. Oh, very much indeed, mamma.

Mrs. Nugent. I will go and order it to be done. In the mean time lie down my dear upon this sofa, and I will put a pillow under your head, and make it comfortable for you *(Edwin lies on the sofa).* There, does that make you easy?

Edwin. So so, mamma; but it is very late, and I have not yet breakfasted—Mayn't I have—

Mrs. Nugent. Be patient, my love, till I hear from Dr. Symonds what I may give you.

Enter Dr. Symonds and Mr. Sandford.

Dr. Symonds. Good morning, Madam. I have been consulting with this gentleman on the case of my young patient.

Mrs. Nugent (in a whisper). I fear you think him very ill, Doctor.

Dr. Symonds. I cannot pronounce upon his case till Mr. Sandford and I have considered of his symptoms; and if you, Madam, would not be offended, we would request the favour of being left alone with him.

Mrs. Nugent. I will leave you, gentlemen; but recollect my whole happiness is in your hands.—I will return soon, my Edwin, and then you shall have your new story books to amuse you—Good bye, don't be frightened my love. [*She goes.*

Edwin (calling her back). Mamma!

Mrs. Nugent. What would you say, my dearest?

Edwin. I wish I might have my breakfast—Do come back soon.

(Dr. Symonds and Mr. Sandford sit down by his side.)

Dr. Symonds. If it were a common cough, we might easily proceed, the emulsion and a milk diet would set him to rights. But here you see—*(he whispers Mr. Sandford)*—with a constant cough. Let us each take one of his hands, and feel his pulse—Considerable fever, which is a sure sign of inflammation—I think he must be let blood directly, after which we may with safety give him the vomiting draught every four hours, for several days. A blister on the stomach, I also think, cannot be dispensed with.—Does your opinion coincide with mine?

Mr. Sandford. As nearly as possible,

taking it for granted, that you intend his diet, for a month at least, to be boiled milk and vegetables, with the addition of barley broth when he finds himself thirsty.

Dr. Symonds. This is understood in all such cases.

Edwin. Indeed I never shall be able to bear a blister. And couldn't I be cured with lemonade, or prunes, which are so cooling?

Mr. Sandford. We will see what can be done, young gentleman, when the blister and the vomit have been tried.

Edwin. A vomit! Oh dear, I am so hungry.

Mr. Sandford. A false appetite, my dear—A very common symptom.

Edwin. Oh no, it is because I have eaten nothing to day. I shall die if you will not let me have some breakfast.

Dr. Symonds. The vomit, the vomit, my good friend, and one hour after its

operation has ceased, you shall be allowed a little panada. Now, Mr. Sandford, we will retire.

Edwin, alone.

Oh dear, I little thought what it would come to! A nasty vomit, and a pinching blister!—I vow I never will submit to either.—I know nothing ails me; and do they think I shall lie quietly here, and wait for all their stuff—no, that I won't. *(He gets up, and jumps about the room).* Away with you, ugly night-cap!—Oh, here's a piece of bread on the side-board—I should have liked some butter on it, though.—But I don't mind; I am too hungry to quarrel with dry bread.—Some one is coming; I will hide in the closet.

Enter Mrs. Nugent, Dr. Symonds, and Mr. Sandford.

Mrs. Nugent (in a whisper). Pray, gentlemen, don't say a word of bleeding my poor Edwin, till the bandages are ready—it will then be almost more than he can bear.

Dr. Symonds. I do not see him. He has left the sofa.

Mrs. Nugent. Where can he be? Oh heavens! what has become of him? —He was too ill to move by himself, unless, indeed, a delirium should have seized him.—Oh my Edwin! my darling—

Mr. Sandford. Compose yourself, Madam; he is safe, no doubt. He is, perhaps, gone up stairs.

Enter Mr. Nugent.

Mr. Nugent. What is the matter, my dear?

Mrs. Nugent. Edwin has disappeared —where can he be?

Mr. Nugent. Be sure, my dear, there is no occasion for alarm.

Mrs. Nugent. May heaven preserve my child!—Oh Edwin! Edwin!

(Edwin comes out of the closet.)

Edwin. No, no, dear mamma, I am not lost, nor has any accident befallen me.—But—but—I—I—wish I might speak with papa in private.

Mr. Nugent. Have you any objection, Edwin, to speak before your mamma?

Edwin. No—papa—but not before these gentlemen.

Mr. Nugent. These gentlemen already know your secret; but, Edwin, they are fathers, and have kind hearts: perhaps I can prevail upon them not to expose your folly as it deserves.

Edwin. Oh papa! Oh dear mamma!

I understand now what the visit of the Doctors means, and I am quite ashamed of my silly behaviour! If you please, I will beg their pardon for the trouble they have had, and set off for school directly.

Mr. Nugent. I thought I could rely, both on your good sense, and on the purity of your heart, my son, for giving up this silly scheme.—Your resolution gives me the greatest pleasure. Next, I would have you apologize to your mamma, for the uneasiness you have occasioned her; for she really believed you were extremely ill, and felt all a mother's fears for your recovery.—I shall withhold any observation on the mean falsehoods you were obliged to have recourse to, to keep up the appearance of this assumed indisposition, since they are not habitual to your character, and, I trust, have been

employed for the first and only time. *(To Dr. Symonds and Mr. Sandford)* Well, gentlemen, have you seen the Chronicle today?

END OF THE SPOILED CHILD.

FREDERICK.

PERSONAGES.

Mrs. Montgomery.

Frederick, a Youth.

Mr. Bretland, { a Clergyman advanced in years.

Davison, an old Servant.

The Scene is in the Country, a few Miles from London.

FREDERICK.

Scene, a Sitting Room.

Mrs. Montgomery (alone, and in a musing posture).

NO, no, I will not quit this tranquil, this beloved abode, which grief has rendered sacred.—Here, every thing I see recals his image to my fond remembrance.—Here I may indulge my tears without restraint. It was in these scenes my Frederick first beheld the light, and here, he closed his eyes for ever.—In these scenes will I also pass my remaining days—*(after a pause)* No, no, I will not go—My enfeebled state of health will surely excuse the only answer I can make to their pressing invitation.—Mix in the

vain pleasures of London!—Oh no—*(She sits down to write)*—That will do. How little do they know of a mother's fondness, who think the noisy scenes of a metropolis can for a moment cheer the sadness of her heart for the loss of an only, a beloved child.

Enter Davison.

Davison. A gentleman, Madam, at the door desires to speak with you.

Mrs. Montgomery. Did he not send his name? You know my orders.

Davison. I inquired his name, Madam, and he answered, that being a stranger, it would be of no use to send it—I would then have obeyed your orders, but his age and venerable appearance—

Mrs. Montgomery. By all means. Shew him in.

Davison (at the door). Be pleased, Sir, to walk in.

Enter an elderly Clergyman, leading a young Boy. Davison goes.

Mr. Bretland. I entreat your pardon, Madam, for the liberty I have taken in thus requesting to be favoured with an interview. I am sensible how unwelcome such intrusions are to persons who, like yourself, seek not the pleasures of society.

Mrs. Montgomery. I beg, Sir, you will be seated.

Mr. Bretland. The interest I take in the misfortunes—

Mrs. Montgomery. Most happy am I, Sir, to find that there is so much kindness among mankind, as to induce them to break in upon ordinary and worthless forms, to do a fellow-creature service.

Mr. Bretland. For the honour of humanity, we will hope, Madam, that there still exist such persons.

Mrs. Montgomery. Let me know, Sir, in what way I can assist your humane designs. My purse, for any reasonable object, is at your service.

Mr. Bretland. It is not money, Madam, that, in the present case, would afford relief—The question is of a different nature.

Mrs. Montgomery. Your pardon, Sir, I perceive I too hastily interpreted the motive of your visit—You spoke of the misfortunes—

Mr. Bretland. Of the misfortunes of this child, I was going to speak—

Mrs. Montgomery. Of this child?—Are you aware, Sir, that I was once a mother?—That my only child, a boy, who would now have been about the age of this youth, was snatched from my fondest affection *(she sobs)* by the hand of death?—Can you think a parent, thus afflicted, a proper person to

apply to on behalf of him you wish to benefit? *(She bursts into tears).*

Mr. Bretland. Allow me, Madam, to explain—I hope—I trust—I have nothing to solicit that should thus renew your grief.

Mrs. Montgomery. I have again to beg your pardon, Sir, for interrupting you. Alas! the recollection of an only child, of the very age of this little one now before me—of his dying in my arms—Oh, Sir, if you are yourself a parent—

Mr. Bretland. I will wait, Madam, till you are more composed.

Mrs. Montgomery. Proceed, Sir, I will command myself—This child interests your humanity—

Mr. Bretland. You, Madam, lament the loss of an only child—This poor boy is bereft of his only surviving parent—A mother.

Mrs. Montgomery. Unhappy orphan! *(A confused sound of voices is heard outside the door).*

Enter Davison.

Davison. A person desires to speak with the Rev. Mr. Bretland, and will not be denied—I therefore venture to ask if that is the name of the gentleman *(looking at Mr. Bretland)*—

Mr. Bretland. That is my name. With your leave, Madam, I will soon return.

[*Mr. Bretland and Davison go out.*

Mrs. Montgomery (drawing the child toward her, who was preparing to follow Mr. Bretland). Stay with me, my little fellow. Your good friend will not long be absent; in the mean while, let us see if we cannot talk of something to amuse us. What is your name?

Little Boy. Robert, is my name.

Mrs. Montgomery. I dare say you can eat some cherries!

Robert. Thank you, Madam, but I have already eaten a great many, at a little cottage in our way hither from Ringdale.

Mrs. Montgomery. From Ringdale! —And do you live in that village?

Robert. Yes, I live there, and I never saw any other place till today.

Mrs. Montgomery. What was your mother's name, my love?

Robert. Widow Blanch, the folks used to call her.

Mrs. Montgomery. Oh heavens! my poor Frederick's nurse.—Mr. Bretland was right indeed in applying to my bounty. How grieved I am I did not sooner know her fate, that I might have administered consolation to her unhappy family. Did not your mother sometimes speak of a little boy she had to nurse, some years ago?

Robert. Often and often, Madam.

Mrs. Montgomery. Yes, and often too, she came hither just to see and kiss him—Kind-hearted creature!—No doubt she loved her Robert, too.—*(Aside)* I really think I might let him be in the house long enough to receive an education.

Robert. I remember, though, she once took away a nice wheel-barrow Harry Simkins made for me, to take it to the little gentleman at Ivy Hall, for she said the hay was making, and he would so like to wheel it along the field.

Mrs. Montgomery. Do you know what they called your mother's illness?

Robert. They said she fretted; she grew very thin; and that's all I know about it, for my mother used to say to Hannah Robbins, that she wished they would not let me come to her bed side; and so, Ma'am, as I could not stay

with my mother, I thought it would be wicked to play about the village. So I asked the school-master who lived next door, to teach me how to read, and how to dig the garden, and how to sow the seed, and water the plants.

Mrs. Montgomery. Good boy! I hope, Robert, you will find a friend who will take still greater pains for your improvement. How old are you, my child?—About nine, I guess.

Robert. No, Madam; I am eight years and five months exactly.

Mrs. Montgomery. The very age of my beloved Frederick.—Should you like, my dear, to live in this large house, and learn to write as well as read? What say you, shall I ask Mr. Bretland to leave you?

Robert. I think I should be very happy—Are there any hay-fields here now? And have you got my wheel-

barrow all this time? Oh here comes Mr. Bretland, will you ask him?

Enter Mr. Bretland.

Mr. Bretland. With your permission, Madam, I will resume.

Mrs. Montgomery. You cannot more oblige me—The little stranger appears most worthy of your kindness. I have seldom met with so clear an understanding, or so interesting manners in a child of his age.

Mr. Bretland. Ah, Madam—I have something to disclose—Some particulars to mention—You will find reasons for liking him still better.

Mrs. Montgomery. Why are you thus agitated? Let us lose no further time—How can I be of use in helping you to promote his welfare?

Mr. Bretland (to Robert). The lady will give you leave, Robert, to amuse

yourself in the garden ; you may go by this glass door. When I want you to return I will call you. [*Robert goes.*

Mrs. Montgomery. Proceed, Sir, I feel a strange impatience.

Mr. Bretland. Yes, I will proceed —Arm yourself, Madam, against the overpowering effects of a discovery—

Mrs. Montgomery. What new affliction have you to impart ?—*(Much alarmed)* Alas, alas ! six years ago I lost a husband, the dearest object of my affection—Two years after that, it was the will of heaven to snatch from my doting heart, the only child that husband left—And now *you* seem to be the messenger—

Mr. Bretland. Not of affliction, Madam—Of joy—Of consolation for your past sufferings *(with great emotion)*—Your son—Your Frederick is still alive !

Mrs. Montgomery. That cannot be !

Oh most vain illusion—In these fond arms he breathed his last.

Mr. Bretland. I know you think so —The child that died in your arms was not your true son.

Mrs. Montgomery (in great agitation). Oh merciful heaven !—Explain the meaning of your words.

Mr. Bretland. Be composed, Madam, while I relate a story that will fill you with astonishment, and no less with gratitude to heaven !—You must well remember, that just before the birth of your son, you received intelligence of the dangerous disease with which Mr. Montgomery was afflicted in India, and that you instantly resolved on going to him.

Mrs. Montgomery. I well remember, you may be sure.

Mr. Bretland. You at that time, I understand, had known for several years, a person of the name of Cathe-

rine Blanch; and you confided to her the care of your child, she having about the same time also lain in of a son.

Mrs. Montgomery. Most true.

Mr. Bretland. This Catherine Blanch —May heaven and you forgive her— She conceived and executed the cruel project of robbing you of your child, and leaving her own to be brought up in his place.

Mrs. Montgomery. Unhappy woman!

Mr. Bretland. Permit me to proceed. The last request of the dying Catherine was, that I would disclose to you, Madam, the particulars she had just related. They were as follow —The death of your supposed son, but who was in reality her own, at first overwhelmed her with grief and disappointment. In a short time, these were succeeded by remorse for the crime she had committed. The terrors

of her upbraiding mind preyed upon her health. The guilty secret she had concealed from all the world, by degrees consumed her. At length, finding that she had but a short time to live, she resolved to confess it to some friend, but before she had decided who to choose, she grew suddenly worse, and sent for me.

Mrs. Montgomery. Oh! let me press him to my heart.

Mr. Bretland. A moment longer, Madam, and your maternal longing shall be gratified—Go, Reverend Sir, said she, and make the disclosure of my crime to my ever-honoured and much-injured benefactress; and if she should doubt the truth of even the death-bed assurance of a wretch like me, tell her, that the mark the child has to this moment on his right foot, was noticed by the surgeon at his birth, to whom she can apply to have the

fact confirmed—Here the poor woman seemed overwhelmed. In a few moments, she said she felt much worse in body though relieved in mind, and while I endeavoured to console her, she became suddenly silent, and expired.

Mrs. Montgomery (speaking eagerly). We will talk of her some other time—Let me embrace my boy.

Mr. Bretland. I will fetch him instantly. [*He goes into the garden.*

Enter Mr. Bretland with Robert.

Mr. Bretland. Receive, most amiable of parents, the child of your affection. You, dear boy, approach, and ask a mother's blessing.

Mrs. Montgomery (embraces Robert without being able to speak).

Robert. My mother?

Mr. Bretland. Yes, my dear, you are the son of this lady, and not of the Widow Blanch, as you have always

thought—May you prove a blessing, and console her for the past.

Robert. I can hardly stand, I am so glad—Am I to live in this fine house, and may I say, *mother*, to this handsome lady? Oh! I believe I am so happy.

Mrs. Montgomery. Oh happy, happy day! Let my servants be informed of the joyful tidings—Let their mourning apparel be thrown aside, and let every heart that felt my grief now partake my joy. A feast shall be prepared to celebrate the blissful event, and my Frederick shall carry an alms to every distressed family throughout the village! Oh hour of unlooked-for felicity!

END OF FREDERICK.

A DETACHED SCENE.

DISCRETION

PUT TO THE PROOF.

DISCRETION

PUT TO THE PROOF.

ADOLPHUS had nearly completed twelve years of age, and no words can express the impatience with which he waited for the birth-day, when he was no longer to be considered as a child. "As soon as I am twelve years old," said he to himself, at least ten times a day, "I shall be allowed to sit at table after dinner, instead of being sent away with my younger brothers and sisters. I shall have more manly books given me to read; my papa (but I think I must then learn to say *father)* will sometimes send me on a message. I dare say, too, that I shall have a watch,

and that the tailor will be told, that the cut of my last suit of clothes is too childish. From that very day I will be quite grave. If my cousins ask me to play with them at bat and ball, I shall answer very civilly, that I happen to have some business upon my hands; and if they joke to make me laugh, I shall tell them, that all this was very well *when I was a child.* By this behaviour, instead of twelve, I shall seem to strangers to be fourteen at least, and I shall be treated with very great respect." Adolphus, glancing at himself in the glass as he spoke, could not help muttering, "I am not *quite* tall enough for fourteen, neither."

At last the happy, happy day came. Adolphus was twelve years old! His parents congratulated him on the event with fondness, and it would have been the most joyous of his whole life, but

for an adventure which occurred. Just as the dinner was serving, the postman delivered a letter at the door for Mr. Aubrey. Adolphus ran to receive it, and flew rather than walked with it to his papa; yet even in his haste, he could not help peeping at one of the ends of the letter, to make out a word or two of its contents. This was perceived by Mr. Aubrey, who, unluckily, was standing on the landing-place, and who, unwilling to disturb the happiness of a birth-day, contented himself with calling Adolphus aside, and reproving him with great gentleness. "At your age, my dear," said he, "you are expected to reflect a little on what you do; and a fault that would be overlooked in a child, is regarded as serious in a boy twelve years old. With respect to what has just happened, I will for the present slightly observe, that a letter, by the silent

consent of mankind, is considered as of the most sacred nature; and that the person who should be so lost to delicacy as to violate its secrecy, would every where be esteemed an object of contempt."—" Indeed I had no notion of this, papa; and I hope you will forgive me when I tell you, that I did not read a single word. But I cannot think why it should be thought so dishonourable, just to look in at the end of a sealed letter."

Mr. Aubrey. Because it may contain secrets.

Adolphus. But you have often told me, papa, that it was wrong to have secrets about any thing.

Mr. Aubrey. I told you, that a child should conceal nothing from his parents.

Adolphus. And why so, papa?

Mr. Aubrey. Because it could scarcely happen, that a father should

betray the secret of his child; while, on the other hand, it is quite certain that he may serve him by his advice.—But let us join our party in the parlour, where I suppose the dinner must be waiting.

Adolphus. Well, but papa—One word more.—I, too, could keep a secret, or I could refrain from looking into any thing I knew was intended to be secret. I am quite sure you would find me as worthy to be trusted as a grown person.

Mr. Aubrey. So you consider yourself a man, Adolphus.

Adolphus. Not quite, but I am twelve years old; and I have always been told, that I have more discretion than boys of my age generally have. —But why do you smile, papa?

Mr. Aubrey. I smile at the good opinion you seem to entertain of yourself.

Adolphus. It is no more than the truth, indeed, papa; my companions would all tell you, that they had rather trust me with a secret than the Gibbons's, or the Bryants, or either of my cousins. I only wish you would try me yourself, papa; you would find how I should disdain to act like a child, by prying into what you had told me was a secret; or if it were confided to me, to disclose it for the world!

Mr. Aubrey. You little think, Adolphus, how great a burden a secret is.

Adolphus. Not too great, papa, for me to bear.

Mr. Aubrey. We sometimes overrate our own strength.

Adolphus. You should not judge thus of me till you have tried me.

Mr. Aubrey. Well, since you are so eager, I have a great mind to indulge you.—But the dinner must surely be waiting.

Adolphus. I cannot eat one bit till I know what it is you will confide to me.

Mr. Aubrey. Step, then, as there may be some of our party not exactly of your mind, and see if we are likely to have a few minutes allowed us.

Adolphus. I am certain we have plenty of time, papa; my cousins were not come just now, and there has been no knock at the door since.

Mr. Aubrey. Ah! Adolphus! I fear you will repent of your eagerness.

Adolphus. I am not the least afraid, papa; only try me.

Mr. Aubrey. Well, then, I will entrust you with a paper of great importance; I will explain to you its nature, and tell you what you are to do with it.—But no, at your age, Adolphus—

Adolphus. Oh pray, papa, do not be uneasy about my age.

Mr. Aubrey. Suppose the contents

of the paper were such, that any indiscretion on your part would bring upon me serious consequences?

Adolphus. Oh dear! how strange it is, papa, you should believe it possible for me to act so like a child, now that I am twelve years of age!

Mr. Aubrey. Well, well, I will put this said discretion of yours to the proof. Wait till I bring you the paper.

Mr. Aubrey now left his son for a few minutes, and could not repress a smile, as he contemplated the temptation he was about to throw in his way. On entering his study, he wrote a few words in a large hand, with lemon-juice, on a piece of paper. The writing became instantly invisible. He folded the paper, and returned to Adolphus, who was waiting with eager impatience. "See here, Adolphus," said Mr. Aubrey; "this is the paper of

which you are the depositary. Its contents, I must inform you, are written with lemon-juice; and all I have more to say about it is, that *should* your discretion give way, and you should try to read them, you will have more cause than you are aware of to repent of your folly.

Adolphus. It is sympathetic ink you have used then, papa.

Mr. Aubrey. It is so. But how came you to know of such an ink?

Adolphus. Oh I don't know, papa—I believe some of my school-fellows have used it. But I have never seen any of it, nor do I know how to make it.

Mr. Aubrey. Well now, Adolphus, I have gratified your wish to be entrusted with a secret. Let us see how you will acquit yourself.

Mr. Aubrey and his son then joined

the family in the eating-room. Adolphus saluted his cousins, but during the dinner appeared thoughtful, and more than once gave an answer quite foreign to the question he was asked. When the cloth was removed he hurried out of the room, to meditate alone on the new honours of his birthday, again and again repeating to himself, "I am twelve years old; papa will no longer treat me like a child!" In a short time his young visitors, regretting his absence, came to seek him in the play-room. "Why did you run away from us?" cried one.—"I have a great mind to be affronted," said another.—"He is not the only one among us who is twelve years old," exclaimed a third.—"I am sorry, truly sorry," said Adolphus; "I intended no affront, I assure you, my good friends; but since you seem to think me rude, I must inform you, that I left you to

consider of some serious business on which papa has employed me."

Edward. What nonsense! Your papa couldn't mean for you to go about it on your birth-day.

Charles. Nor when you had company, I am sure.

Robert. Let us think of some play.

William. Let us have blindman's buff.

Adolphus. This is always your way; you like nothing but playing at childish plays.

Charles. To be sure. Why, what a piece of work you make because you are twelve years old!

William. Well, I intend to play at childish plays till I am sixteen, at least.

Edward. Do you like a game at swinging better, Adolphus?

Robert. Why what ails him, he looks so dismal?

Adolphus. Nothing ails me, I assure

you; and I do not think I am a bit too serious.

Robert. At least I never saw you so before.

Charles. I'd lay a wager something is the matter, though he will not tell us what.

Edward. Now do tell us, Adolphus?

Adolphus. It is nothing that concerns either of you.

Robert. How cross he is! Come, come, Adolphus, don't be out of humour, now that we are come to spend the day, and play with you.

Adolphus. Those who have nothing better to do, may like play if they choose.

William. Ha! Ha! Ha! Pray why did you invite us to keep your birthday?—But come along, Adolphus—I will be blinded first.

Adolphus. How childish, to care for nothing but play!

William. Why what ails you, Adolphus? One would think you were fifty years old.

Adolphus. I am young in years, it is true; but one thing I know, my papa no longer considers me a child.

Robert. What then *does* he consider you? I should like vastly to know.

Adolphus. I do not choose to explain myself further—but I know what I am saying.

Charles. For my part, I think cousin Addy isn't quite in his right senses!

Adolphus. I assure you, cousin Charles, I never was so rational in all my life.

Edward. That may be; but, for our parts, we have no fancy to leave off play, as we were invited on your birth-day on purpose to—*(Adolphus goes a few steps from his companions).*

Charles. He is going to leave us.

William. See, he is taking a paper from his pocket.

Adolphus (speaking to himself). How silly I was to put a paper of such importance into my pocket carelessly.—It is all rumpled.—Now I will put it smoothly into my left-hand pocket.

Charles (in a whisper to his companions). There is certainly some mystery in all this.—It is that paper, I would lay a wager, that makes him so serious.—Let us try to get it away.

Robert. Nothing is easier.—Let me get behind him, and snatch it out of his hand.

Charles. He will be affronted, I am quite sure.

Robert. Oh yes, I suppose we are to stand like blocks, and have no fun at all!—Why he has played me such a trick many times, and—

William. Don't let us stay with him at all.

Charles. Let us take a run in the fields without him. Come along.

[*They turn towards the door.*]

Adolphus. I am much indebted to your politeness, gentlemen, this I must needs confess.

William. Why, you will not play with us.

Adolphus. You proposed such childish plays.

Robert (pulling Charles by the sleeve secretly). Well, let us play at slight of hand.

Adolphus. Robert means to be witty, I think. I should like to see such an amusing game.

(Robert slides his hand into Adolphus's pocket, and draws out the paper; then runs about the room, holding it up, and crying out: This is the game called slight of hand! Do you see, Adolphus?)

Adolphus (putting his hand in his pocket). Oh heavens! he has taken away my paper! What shall I do? Give it to me, I entreat you, Robert! It is my papa's paper! Take care not to tear it.—Pray, pray Robert, give it to me!—You little think its value, or you could not torture me so cruelly. *(Robert runs with the paper towards the door).* Stop him, Charles! Stop him, William! I must have my paper!

Robert (throwing the paper up in the air). What a preachment he is making! Why it is only a piece of plain paper.—I thought I had a better prize.

Adolphus (picking it up eagerly as it falls on the ground). Oh I have got it, and fortunately it is not torn; only a little rumpled.—You all wonder how a plain piece of paper can be of so much value to me.—Let me explain your

mistake.—There is writing on the paper, though you would never have found it out.

Charles. I will lay a wager there is no such thing. Will you go my halves, William?

Adolphus. You think so, because the paper is white all over.

Robert. I, too, would lay all the money I have, that there is no writing on the paper we saw.

Adolphus. I only wish I had my papa's leave to shew it to you—you would see.—But certainly, my young friends, you must be very ignorant, not to know that there is such a thing as sympathetic ink!

Charles. What do you mean by sympathetic ink?

Adolphus. It is a particular kind of ink, which, when used on paper is not always visible.

Robert. Oh that's all a fudge, I am sure.

Adolphus. Your rudeness, Robert, forces me to say more than I intended —The whole mystery is this—A piece of paper that has been written upon by the sympathetic ink, appears white to the eye; but the moment it is held to the fire, the writing, as if by the stroke of a wand, instantly appears.

William. Well, if that is true, it must be well worth seeing. What fools we were not to keep the piece of paper! We could have run with it to the fire and have known the secret at once!

Adolphus. You mistake, if you think I would have suffered you to do so.—I must inform you, that if such a misfortune had happened, as your reading the paper—But I must say no more.

Charles. What a fuss he is making—

I *must inform* you, cousin Adolphus, that we wouldn't give a fig to know your secret; we don't want to know what words are written on the paper, but to be certain that it is written on at all.

Adolphus. What right have you, gentlemen, to doubt my word?

William. But you may not know yourself, Adolphus.

Robert. Let us run to the kitchen, and try it at once!

Adolphus. My honour is pledged to shew the writing on the paper to no one, and I am not such a child as to be prevailed on.

Charles. But Adolphus—only just one of the corners, to convince us that there is writing on the paper.

Robert. You cannot refuse us this.

Adolphus. Well, if I were quite sure—

William. This really, Adolphus, seems but reasonable.

Adolphus. You shall let me hold the paper myself.

Charles. So we will.

Adolphus. And you shall be satisfied with just the corner?

Robert. Yes, just a corner to convince us it is a written paper.

Adolphus. Just one corner, and you will not read a single word?

Robert. Come along then. There is a fire in the laundry, and Martha I dare say is gone to her dinner. Let us go there instead of the kitchen.

Charles. Come along then quickly.

Adolphus. I am not quite determined.

Robert. I will bet a shilling that the paper is not written.

William. And so will I.

Adolphus. Though I am certain of

winning, I am but half inclined to accept your wager.

Robert. Come along. Come along.

[*They go.*

Scene, a Laundry.

Adolphus. I hope no one will come in.

Charles. Pooh! Never fear.

Adolphus. Well then—(*He takes out the paper, unfolds it, and holds one corner of it to the fire*).

Robert. Not a single letter you see appears.

Adolphus. No doubt the writing begins farther in. I will warm a little bit more of the paper.

Robert. No sign of writing yet.

Charles. Look, look! now I see the letters A-d-o-l-p begin to appear.

William. Well, now we ought to be convinced; we have no right to look any further.

Adolphus (aside). The five first letters of my christian name—So then it is no doubt all about me—I really should like to know what the rest can possibly be.

Robert. Are you going to hold more of the paper to the fire, Adolphus?

Adolphus. I might read just a word or two more—But you would not expect me to let you see.

Robert. Shew us only the first line and we will be satisfied.

Adolphus. Well then, only the first line.

Adolphus, as he said these words, again held the paper to the fire, when it immediately appeared, that the whole contents were no more than the following words: ADOLPHUS IS WHOLLY UNWORTHY OF CONFIDENCE. His companions laughed immoderately, and the confusion of Adolphus can be better imagined than described. He

thrust the paper into his pocket and retired to his bed-room, nor did he leave it till he had made some wise reflections on the danger of being entrusted, at twelve years of age, with an important secret.

THE END.

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