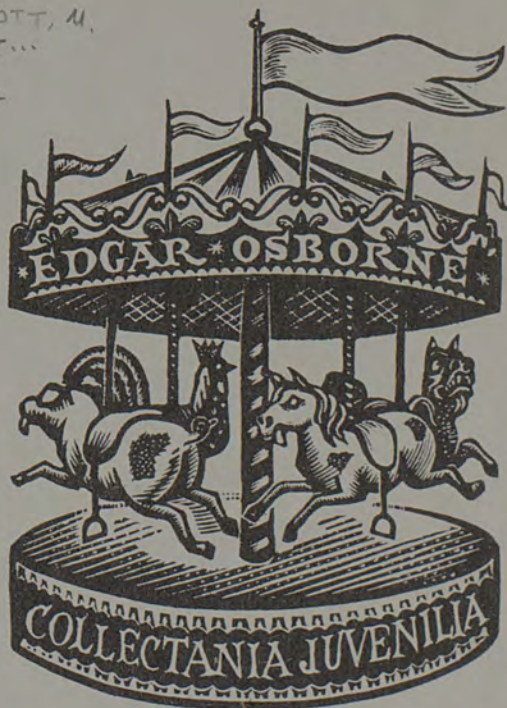
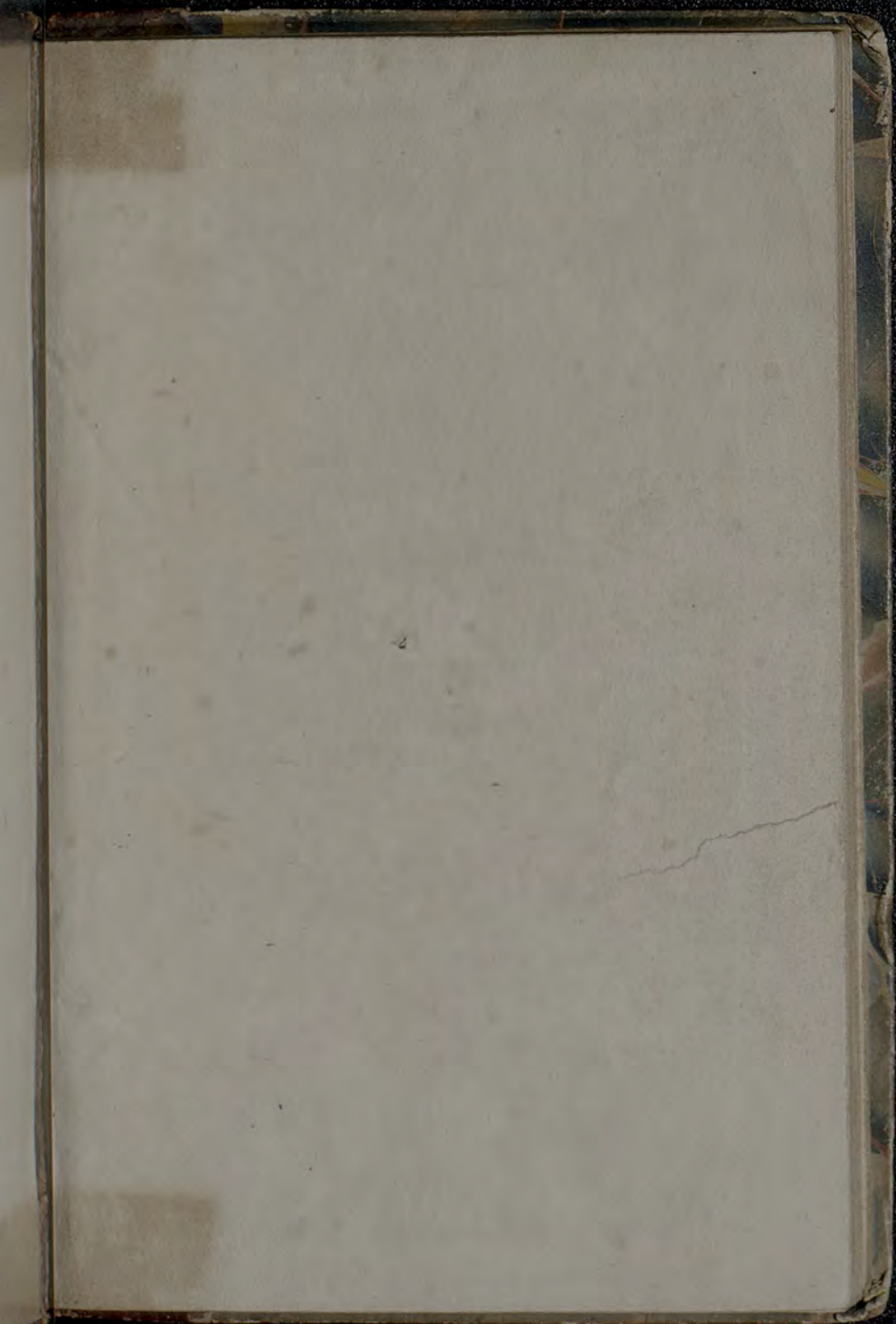


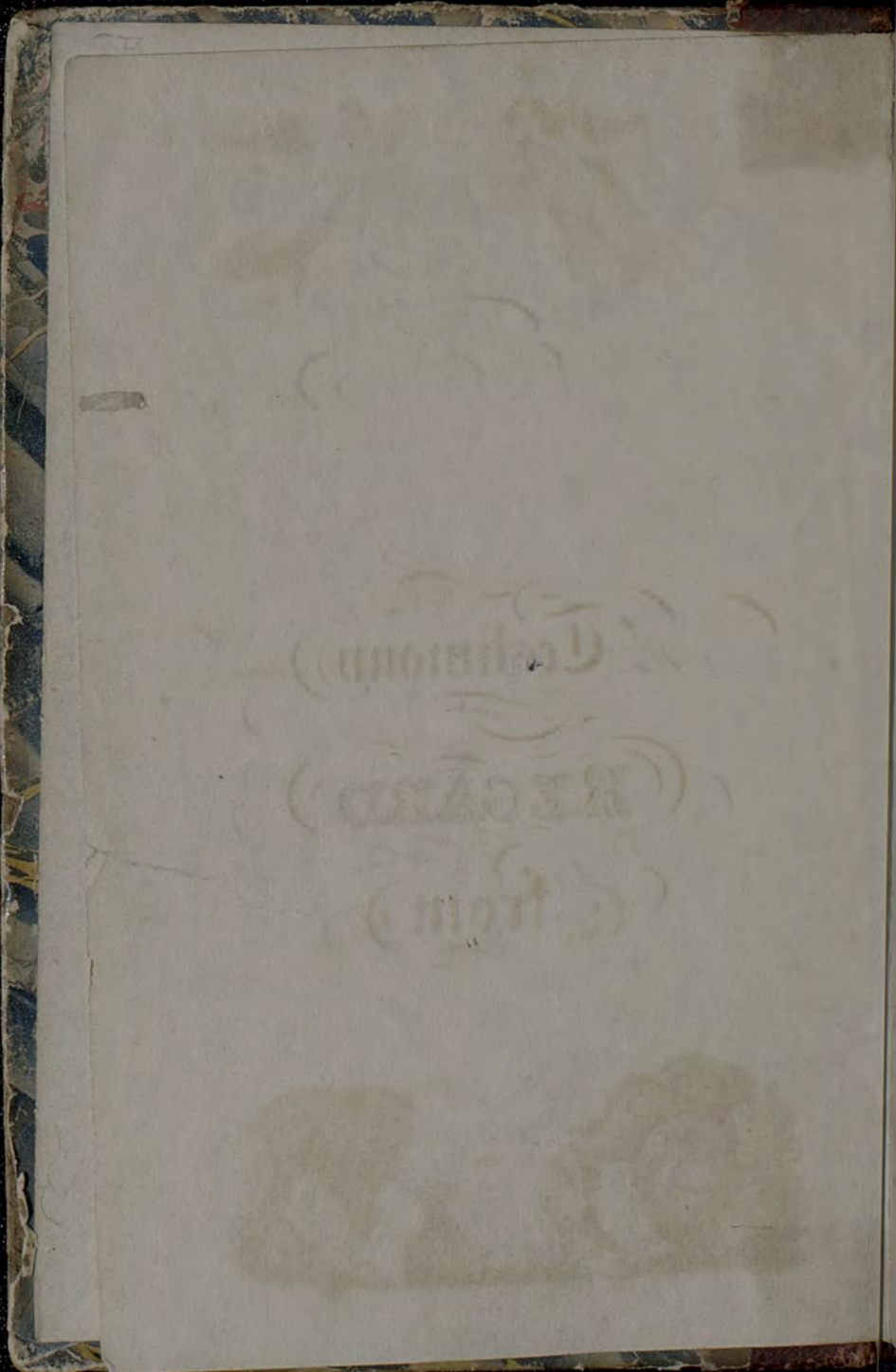
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To

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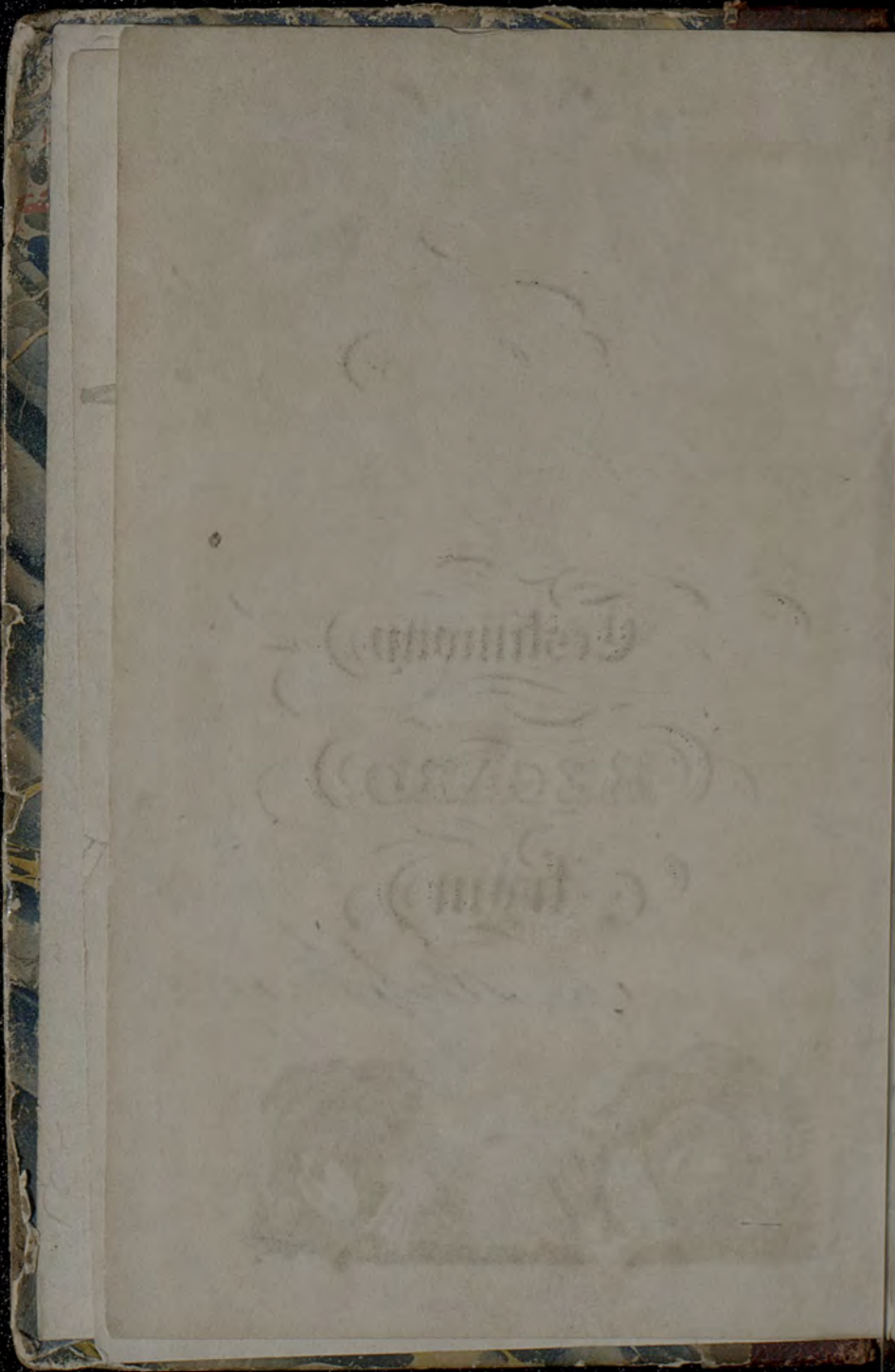
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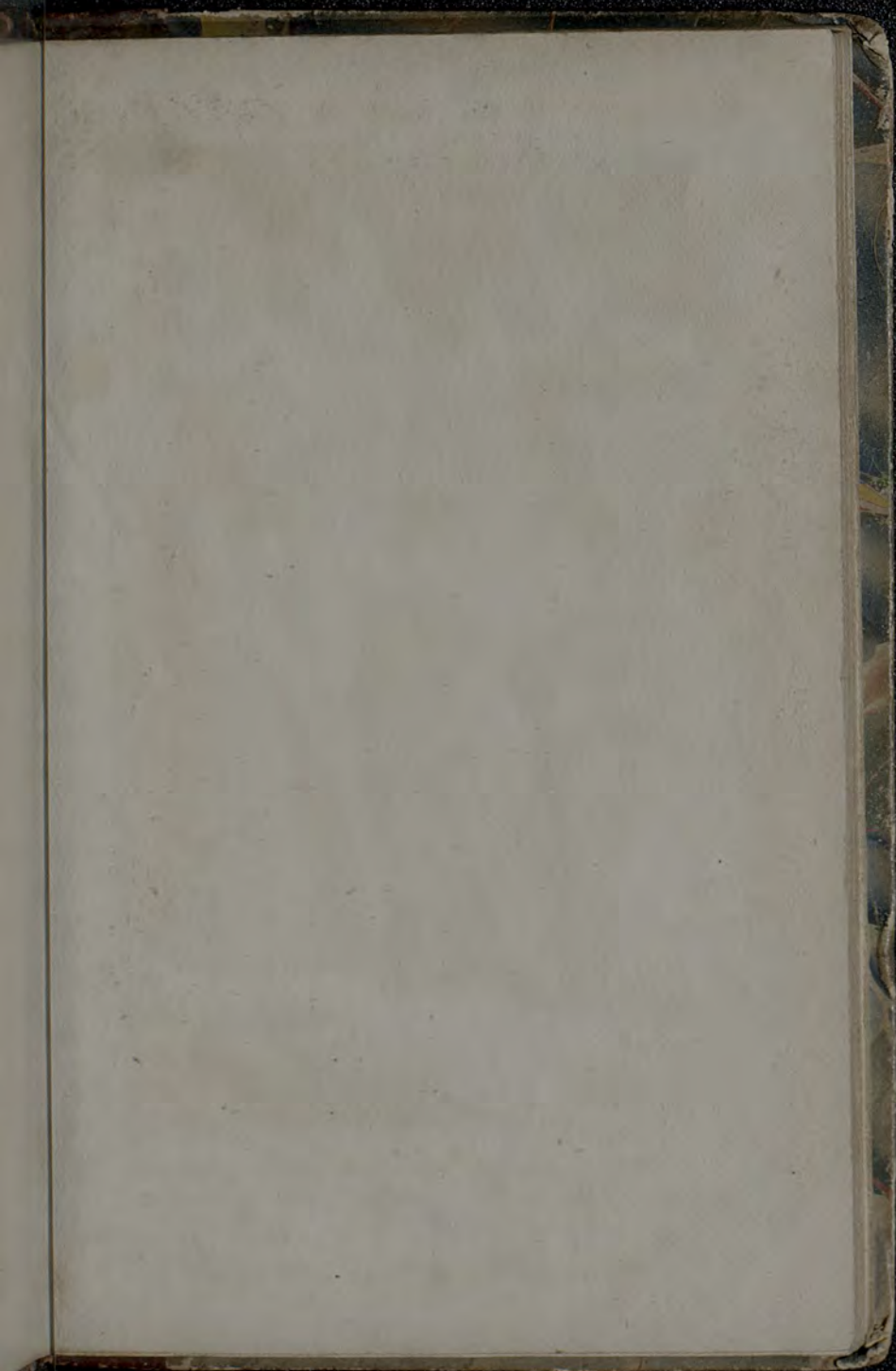
REGARD,

from

her cousin, Miss Agrippa







Frontispiece to the Gift of Friendship.



It was an elegant structure of moss and shells, and our young travellers detained the carriage a few minutes to admire it. &c. &c.

see page 45.

London, William Darton, 58, Holborn Hill, 1822.

THE
GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP ;

OR,

THE RIDDLE EXPLAINED.



BY MARY ELLIOTT,
(*LATE BELSON.*)



LONDON :

WILLIAM DARTON, 58, HOLBORN HILL.

1822.

THE
GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP
OR
THE RIDDLE EXPLAINED
BY
JAMES H. HARRIS
IN TWO VOLUMES
VOLUME I
LONDON
WILLIAM BAKER DEVEREUX & CO. LTD.
1902

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THE
GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP.

CHAP. I.

SOMETHING NEW.

Edward and Mary's early education contrasted with that of George and Lucy.—Idleness no promoter of enjoyment.—The young mind awakened to rational pursuit, which promises something useful, as well as new.

EDWARD and Mary were the children of a gentleman of fortune, residing within a few miles of the metropolis. Their dispositions were not worse than those of the generality of

4 THE GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP.

their young friends, but their tempers were rendered uneven, and their wishes fickle, from the injudicious indulgence of their remaining parent, for they had lost their mother, during the early stage of infancy.

At the ages of twelve and ten, the brother and sister were under trifling constraint; true, Edward had a tutor, and Mary received daily instruction from masters; but, when the hours of study were over, there was no guiding hand to direct their amusements, or check the volatility of youth; no judicious friend

to question them as to the nature of their previous studies; the seed was sown, but its farther culture neglected.

From their mother, they inherited delicate constitutions; and the fond father, fearful of increasing this weakness by fatigue, or *ennui*, would not allow of long study or necessary exertion: but, as our little friends were of active minds, they required some employment; and, since instruction was deemed a toil, they sought, by amusement, to fill up time, and divert that idleness which is ever wearisome to chil-

dren endowed with common sense.

It is generally the case, that children who are supplied with numerous and expensive toys ; are less amused, and satisfied, than those who are obliged to exert their ingenuity to obtain the object desired : in the first instance, reality seldom equals expectation ; in the last, successful exertion gives a value to the article, however trifling, and the reflection, that “ this is all my *own* work,” adds a degree of laudable pride to pleasure.

Variety will cloy, as well as

sameness, and it is not quantity alone, that gives satisfaction.

Edward and his sister abounded in toys, many of them as useless as expensive; every servant who went to London on family business was loaded with commissions. *Something New* was ever wanting, and no sooner procured, than found to be an old acquaintance. Mr. Reynolds, indulgent as he was, sometimes thought this love of novelty carried to excess, and would suggest a belief of their present stock being sufficient for the amusement of half-a-dozen children.

“ Yes, papa ; but then we are tired of them ; our toys are all so very old fashioned, we want something new.”

This was not to be denied ; so another extravagance was committed, quite as absurd as former ones.

Among the visitors who were invited to amuse our young friends were a brother and sister, nearly of their own ages, and whose mild and pleasing manners insensibly won on the fickle regards of the spoiled pair, who often regretted, that George and Lucy Wilder resided so far from them ; five

miles was a great distance, and this obstacle but added to the desire of seeing them more frequently.

Mr. Reynolds, indeed, would readily have sent his carriage for them whenever his children coveted their society, for he was aware they were companions most desirable for them ; but Mr. and Mrs. Wilder pursued a different plan of education, and, although happy to afford their offspring every reasonable indulgence, were properly strict in their attention to their studies, and pleasure was never allowed to interfere

with instruction ; thus, they visited Park Lodge but seldom, yet none were received with greater warmth and real pleasure.

The young Reynolds's were agreeably surprised one spring morning by a visit from their favourites.

“How delightful,” cried Mary, “we shall have your company all day, for this is a holiday with us.”

“So Mr. Reynolds told papa yesterday, otherwise we should not have intruded on your studies.”

“O! never fear, (returned

Mary,) we can always get off lessons when we please, for you know they are very tiresome,—are they not?”

“I never find them so,” answered Lucy, “I take care to learn them in proper time, and to be prepared for Papa or Mamma when they require me to repeat them.”

Mary felt she was not thus correct, and looked somewhat silly: after a moment's silence, she observed, “Certainly *that* is the best way, but even when I do learn them correctly the matter does not rest there, for my masters often ask me

questions on the very lesson I learned a week before.”

“ I am not surprised to hear that,” said Lucy, “ for we are examined every Saturday, upon *all* the lessons of the week.”

“ Indeed!” exclaimed her astonished hearer ; “ how difficult you must find— to, to,” —and Mary stopped.

Lucy smiled at her astonishment, while she observed, there was no great difficulty in answering questions, the subjects of which were already known to her.

“ Perhaps not,” answered Mary ; “ but, for all that, such

examinations must be tedious and dull, it is all the same thing over again. I own I like something new, even in my studies.

“Something new!” repeated her brother, who only heard the latter part of this conversation. “Aye, so say I; and I have been lamenting that I had nothing but old playthings to show George Wilder; and would you believe it, Mary, he says, he never saw a greater variety of toys in his life.”

George repeated his remark, adding, they had so few themselves, that, to him, his young

friend's collection appeared a great one.

“But why have you so few?” enquired Edward: “you should tease your papa as we do ours and then; I doubt not, you would soon get as great a number as Mary and I possess.”

“I doubt it very much,” said George, (smiling archly;) “in the first place, we should not be allowed to tease papa for any thing he did not think proper to give us; in the next, we know he is not rich, and it would be very wrong to ask for what we know he could

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'It would be very wrong to ask for what we know he could not afford; and besides, I am not quite sure that I could use all these fine things if I had them.'

not afford; and besides, I am not quite sure that I could use all these fine things if I had them."

"Use them! no, nor can we; but then I like to have them, if it be only to look at; we can but throw them aside or give them away, when we are tired of them."

George was silent, but he gave his sister a meaning look.

After exhibiting all their finery, the little Reynolds's were at a loss to entertain their visitors. George proposed a game of nine-pins, and, as Edward had not played for some

time, he readily assented, declaring it was something new.

Meantime, Lucy charmed with a discarded wax doll of her playfellow's, offered to arrange its tumbled, and ill assorted dress; to Mary, even order was a novelty, she watched Lucy's proceedings and beheld the altered appearance of her waxen baby with surprise and interest, declaring it was no longer the same doll, and that she could almost fancy it a new one.

“You seem to have no regard for what is old,” said Lucy; “*our* playthings would

never suit you, for they are old acquaintance, and, indeed, chiefly of our own making."

"Of your own making, Miss Wilder! can you, or your brother, make toys?"

"Not exactly toys; but what amuses us equally well. I do not make my doll certainly, but I make all her clothes; I cut the paper furniture and ornaments for my baby-house, which George made out of a wooden box. I cover my work-box when it gets soiled, or worn, with many other things that I will shew you when next you favour me with

your company. My brother makes his own kites, shapes his bat for cricket, and indeed most of his playthings are made by himself; for George is far more clever than I am: you cannot imagine what a pretty book-case he has made for my little books; the front of pasteboard, carved with a pen-knife, and isinglass in each square, so that it looks quite as well as the expensive ones you see in the toy-shops, and for which, they ask three or four pounds."

"How curious," exclaimed Mary; "and pray, who taught you both to do these things?"

“ We were not taught, my dear ; but the materials were given to us, whenever we felt inclined to exert our skill, for papa and mamma always say, that children will soon learn to provide their own amusement, if left to their own ingenuity : yet they say, we are not so ingenious as many young people they have known ; however, we are satisfied with our own performances, because they answer the purposes intended, and, perhaps, as we grow older, we may improve.”

Mary's eyes were stretched in wonder : she had seen hand-

some toys, longed for them, and her friends had paid a high price to gratify her. But here was one of her own age, who, by the work of her own hands, and at a trifling expence became possessed of a useful, as well as curious toy, for which Mary *then* thought she would willingly exchange all in her play-room. A book-case, with pasteboard front, glazed with isinglass, was, indeed, something new.

CHAP. II.

AN AGREEABLE PROMISE.

The real Value of Toys discovered.—Mr. Robson's promised Gift, and the Riddle, which is to gain the same.—Two ways of using rubbish.—Youthful Curiosity awakened; and a fortunate Friendship cemented.

Opposite as were the characters of the young Wilders to Edward and his sister, the two last felt a growing esteem for their companions each time they met; and insensibly contrasted some of their habits, while they as unconsciously lessened their own bad ones.

The approbation of George and Lucy led them to inspect the articles in their play-room; and, Mary having arranged them according to Lucy's advice, both were astonished to find how many pretty things they had overlooked, and which now appeared as new.

Mr. Reynolds, surprised by their ceasing to urge him for *something new*, was induced to seek into their leisure employment, as it might be called, and so well pleased was he on perceiving the nature of it, that it is more than probable he had rewarded them by some addi-

tional temptation to former extravagance, had he not been withheld by the judicious advice of his brother-in-law, who just then came to pay a visit of two or three days. This uncle, although tenderly attached to his young relatives, had long lamented the erroneous system his brother was pursuing, and felt even shocked in observing the money squandered on useless baubles, which (properly applied) might have administered to the necessities of the indigent in the neighbourhood. He perceived with pleasure that neither Edward or Mary were

selfish or naturally uncharitable; but they had no idea of curtailing their expences, to procure the comfort of others; or did it occur to them that their discarded toys would have been valuable gifts to the less indulged youth of their acquaintance.

Mr. Robson rightly judged: such children wanted but guidance to be amiable and useful; and he learned with much satisfaction that a close intimacy existed between them and Mr. Wilder's family, whose conduct he had so often approved, and desired to see imitated by his nephew and niece.

On the second day after his arrival, he entered their play-room somewhat suddenly, and beheld a display of toys, such as, he affirmed, would furnish a village shop.

“Yes, my dear uncle,” cried Edward, “they are numerous enough, but most of them very old. I do believe we have not bought a single article for the last three weeks.”

“So much the better, my dear; for it appears to me you have already more than is necessary, or even desirable; and, as to their being old, I see not one that does not look good

and clean : this peg-top looks just from the shop ; here is a puzzle of Mary's which cannot have been used half a dozen times ; and this tambourine only wants a jingle to be perfect, and worth, at least, five shillings. I saw an inferior one in the hands of Lord Belton's little girl, which she told me cost four."

"Only four shillings, uncle ; and did Lord Belton buy so shabby a one for *his* daughter?"

"Indeed, my dear, he did ; and thought it a very handsome present, I assure you."

"Yet I have heard papa say he was very rich."

“I believe he is,” returned Mr. Robson, “but he does not spend his riches in toys, neither do his children require him to do so; notwithstanding, I have seen him give them a pound-note more than once.”

“For what purpose?” eagerly enquired Edward.

“To relieve a worthy family in distress, or some other deed of charity.”

Edward asked no more questions, but a deep blush spread over his cheeks, and his eyes watered a little as he turned and twisted his curling locks

that hung thickly on his temples.

This his uncle observed, but did not notice this confusion to him; yet he flattered himself the hint was not thrown away.

“What have we here? (enquired he, taking up a battered watch,) this does not appear to be a toy; surely, it is a real watch.”

“It is a *real* one, uncle; but, for all that, a great cheat. I won it by raffling, at Richmond, last summer, and it was said to be silver; but William, the gardener, told me it was metal directly he saw it.”

“Who took you to the raffle?” asked Mr. Robson.

“Mary’s maid; for the person to whom it belonged, was a friend of her’s.”

“Yes,” added Mary; “and the gardener said it was very wrong to let us raffle without asking papa’s consent, and so Jane quarrelled with him, and papa heard something of it: I don’t remember all that happened, but I know that poor Jane was sent away, and papa thanked William; did he not, Edward?”

“And I believe he was right,” returned he; “for Jane had

many tricks that papa would not have approved, although she appeared so good-natured."

"No doubt, my dear," observed their uncle; "and I am truly glad to hear she has left you: but, to return to the watch; the works seem worth repairing; how came the case so battered?"

"Why, uncle, when I found that it was metal instead of silver, I was so vexed that I threw it out of the window on the stone terrace. I believe that was foolish enough, but you know it is so provoking to be deceived."

“Aye,” said Mary, “so it is; but indeed, brother, it was a pity to destroy the watch; it went very regularly, and I used to wind it up every night, before going to bed.”

“It was a pity indeed,” added Mr. Robson; and he mused a few minutes.

In the course of conversation, he learned in what manner they disposed of their pocket-money, or weekly allowance, and again regretted they had not been taught to distribute the same through a proper channel. He found, also, that a watch was the first of Edward's wishes;

and that he could form no idea of greater happiness than to possess a gold one.

“I have some intention,” said Mr. Robson, “of giving you one, next Christmas; but it will be on certain conditions.”

“Oh! name them, name them, dearest uncle; I am sure I shall readily agree to them.”

“Do not be too certain, Ned, but listen; I will give you a watch at the time stated, provided you solve a riddle I shall leave with you; and on Christmas Day acknowledge that it be *still* the first wish of your heart.”

Edward clapped his hands in exultation. "Then I am certain of your gift, uncle; for I am very fond of making out riddles, and Mary says I am very clever in doing so, and, as to changing my mind, it is impossible I should ever prefer any thing to a gold watch; so, no fear of my present. Oh! how I shall long for winter, in spite of frost and snow."

Mary, who truly loved her brother, was equally pleased by this promise of her uncle, and the good gentleman had great gratification in observing this instance of liberality in the

little girl; indeed, every day convinced him that mismanagement was the origin of all their faults; and the only obstacle to their reformation.

With what buoyant spirits did Edward run to meet the young Wilders, who came to dine at the Lodge on this happy day; and how rejoiced he felt when dinner was over, and the juvenile friends retired to their own apartment, where they could converse and play undisturbed.

No sooner alone, than Edward, in eager terms, related the late conversation with his

uncle, and the valuable present he was to receive at Christmas.

“A valuable present, indeed,” returned George; “I only wish you may solve the riddle; I think there is no fear of your changing your mind.”

“So I told him, but he smiled and looked so cunning, that I see he doubts me. I begin to think Mary and I are a little fickle in regard to our play-things, though, since you were last here, we have not added to our store; you seemed to think we were overstocked, and really I begin to fancy we

are; at any rate, we do not want any thing new, just now.

“I am glad you have discovered the truth,” said George; “for I am convinced, half of what is here, would suffice to amuse you both; but you talk of a new watch, is not here a silver one? A little bruised, to be sure; however, I should suppose this case might be beaten out again.”

“O! that is a trumpery affair,” cried Edward; and he repeated the story of the raffle.

“All this may be true; yet I should think the watch worth attention.”

“No, indeed,” replied Edward, “it is not worth a straw.”

George said no more; but he examined it minutely; and several times, during the intervals of their play, he took up the watch, tried to wind it, and then put it down again.

“I do think,” said Mary, “that George Wilder could make some use of that watch, though we believe it spoiled. Lucy was telling me how many pretty things he can make, and how cleverly he turns trifles to advantage.”

“Then, I am sure he is wel-

come to it," cried Edward, quickly, "no one more so."

"By no means," answered George, colouring; "I could not think of taking any thing from a playfellow of this value."

"Value, my dear fellow! how can you call it valuable? I am only sorry to offer you such rubbish."

But George was yet tenacious of accepting this rubbish, and it was not until Edward had mentioned the subject to his uncle, who stepped in, to peep at their sports, as he termed it, that he was prevailed on to do so.

“ It seems to me, my dear,” said Mr. Robson, “ that, although useless to my nephew, you would not find it so; as such, I beg you will make the trial; it is a shabby present, as Ned observes, but, if it answer the purpose intended, its want of value, would not lessen its utility.”

“ Certainly not, sir; and I really think I have a use for it.”

“ Ah! I guess what that use is,” cried Lucy.

George put his finger on his lips.

“ No matter,” observed his uncle, smiling; “ George

may keep his secret, I doubt not we shall hear it some day."

"O, you shall all see the use I make of it, if I succeed," said George; "but I must consult a wiser head than my own, before I accomplish the task."

Edmund and Mary confessed themselves somewhat curious; but promised to await the trial without further enquiry.

CHAP. III.

AN OLD FRIEND WITH A
NEW FACE.

A secret revealed and ingenuity displayed, proving that something may be made of a trifle, by goodwill and perseverance.—How to dispose of a watch; or a sister's anecdote of a brother.—Pleasing effects of good example.

During the ensuing summer, the friendship of the two families became more strongly cemented by the frequent intercourse the fine weather permitted them to enjoy; the inmates of Park Lodge be-

came more steady in their pursuits, and attentive to their studies; the praise their masters bestowed, in consequence of this change, gave a stimulus to such exertions, and Mr. Reynolds saw, with delight, that education was no longer a toil, for his children had pleasure in improvement. Novelty had lost its charms, and they no longer trespassed on his indulgence for *something new*.

More than once, Edward had asked his friend George, "How the watch-secret went on?" but the reply was only a shake of the head, and an ex-

pression of regret at the absence of some person, whose aid was necessary to its completion; however, one Sunday morning, returning from church, George invited Edward and his sister to take tea with his family on the following day, when they should see the result of his labour.

It was a fine afternoon in autumn, when, seated in an open barouche, they proceeded to Mr. Wilder's cottage. Mary, who had a natural taste for drawing, and was receiving instruction from an eminent teacher, felt more than usual

pleasure in the ride, because more alive to the beauties of nature.

“ Look, my dear Edward, what a beautiful view of the water through that opening of the road; and there is a group of trees,—are they not very grand?”

“ Yes, they are,” returned Edward, “ and their fading leaves give them additional beauty; but, see, we are coming to your favourite grotto.”

The grotto was indeed a favourite with Mary, and a great ornament to the grounds in which it was erected: it was

an elegant structure of moss and shells, and our young travellers detained the carriage a few minutes to admire it, when Edward, pointing to the dial in its front, surrounded with ivy, observed the hour was later than he imagined, and advised their proceeding quickly.

Mrs. Wilder came forward with her children to receive them, and welcomed them to the cottage in so friendly and condescending a manner, that they soon felt at home.

After the first salutations were over, Edward whispered

George, to that he was on the tip-toe of expectation to behold the watch.

“ You do not wear it, I see.”

George laughingly led the way to his father's study, Lucy followed with her companions, and, in a recess near the window, beheld a complete imitation of her favourite grotto, Edward's discarded watch being the dial.

“ What do I see ! ” exclaimed she, “ can this be the work of your hands, George ? how exactly like Sir James Nelson's grotto ; is it possible you could do all this yourself ? ”

“Lucy had some share in the task,” replied he, “and Sir James was kind enough to let me go into his park whenever I desired: those beautiful shells were a present to my sister; I thought it a pity they should lie useless; and, having long admired the original, I was determined to attempt a copy. On the day I first saw your brother’s watch, it occurred to me, that, if it could be repaired, it would be an excellent substitute for a dial. I had a good friend, who I was

assured would willingly put it in repair, if it was not quite spoiled, and, he being absent, I had to wait nearly three months for his services, as I was not rash enough to attempt putting it in order myself. And now you see it well repays my patience, for, Hudson says, the works are very superior, and you would be surprised to see how regular it goes; we find it very useful in the study, I assure you."

"Every thing is useful to you," returned Edward; "my uncle might well say, you and

your sister were two books, that we could not read too often."

George smiled at the compliment, but we may suppose it was not displeasing to his or his sister's ear.

"But who is Hudson?" enquired Mary, "is he a watch-maker? for I think I have seen the name on a window of one of the cleanest and prettiest cottages in the village."

"You are right," answered Lucy, "every body notices his pretty house, and he is a very clever workman, papa says; poor man, he is getting

quite a good business now : his uncle died some months since and left him £40, so he has been able to conquer all his troubles ; and he does look so happy : we rejoice more and more every day, that George won the watch."

"What watch?" asked Edward and Mary in a breath.

Lucy now first recollected they were unacquainted with the circumstance, and she hesitated to explain, for her brother was tenacious of being praised publicly ; but, at that moment his mother calling him to remove some flower-

pots, Lucy drew her companions through the folding doors that led into the shrubbery, and, seating them in a rustic alcove, related the following tale.

“ Last March, mamma was told, there was a poor industrious mechanic, whose goods were going to be sold, if he did not pay his landlord on quarter-day; and that he had put up a silver watch to raffle, in order to procure a part of the sum wanted. Mamma does not like raffling; she says, it is a species of gambling, and ought to be discouraged; but

as she could not afford to assist the poor man according to her wishes, and papa was then in Scotland, she sent him a trifle, and allowed George to raffle with his own money, because (as she afterwards told us,) that she hoped, in case of George winning, he would act, as indeed he did. Well, my brother did win, at which all our servants rejoiced, and Hudson got his rent within two pounds; then George, unknown to any one, went and begged the landlord to wait a little longer for this small sum, and the person was

so much pleased to see such kindness in a child, (he said,) that he consented to give Hudson a convenient time; this was doing great things.

Well, when papa returned, he enquired into the affairs of the poor fellow, and, finding him deserving, he procured him many jobs, and lent him a little money; by which means he was getting on, when his uncle died, and left him a legacy, as I told you. He was in Yorkshire settling this business, when Edward gave George the metal watch; but

he was delighted to repair it when he did come back."

"But what has your brother done with Hudson's watch, Lucy; I never remember seeing him use one?"

"Ah! Edward, that is the best part of the story; you must know, that, two or three days after the raffle, mamma observed my brother did not wear it, and enquired what he had done with it; poor George looked rather sheepish, and blushed very much, when he acknowledged, that he had restored it to the

owner, for he should have considered it unjust to keep a thing so gained, knowing the distress of the party. O! how joyful mamma looked when he said this, and how she kissed him; though she said it was what she had expected from him.

“Papa, too, was well pleased when he heard it; but George does not like to have the story told, he says it is boasting of a trifle.”

“How I wish you had acted so with your watch,” said Mary to her brother.

“Dont say a word, Mary, we shall never be half so good or thoughtful as Lucy and George.”

“Indeed you are mistaken, Edward,” cried Lucy eagerly; “both papa and mamma say you are good-hearted children, and will make an excellent man and woman. I heard them repeat this yesterday, when we came from church, and papa said it delighted him to see how Edward’s eyes filled with tears, when the clergyman spoke of poor orphans in his sermon.”

Edward's cheek glowed as the animated Lucy related this instance of her father's approbation, whilst Mary determined, in her own mind, to treasure the anecdote for her uncle.

Edward was silent and thoughtful during their ride home, but his mind was not inactive.

CHAP. IV.

A PUZZLE, AND A DISASTER.

Some difficulty in decyphering a blank piece of paper, and the gold watch none the nearer.—Worse misfortunes than losing a Christmas present.—Edward and Mary endeavour to find a cure for them, and prove themselves skilful physicians.

From this period, a material alteration took place in the conduct of our young friends ; but it was not, as heretofore, unconscious improvement ; for they had now an object in view, and consequently a motive for action. To be as de-

serving and beloved as their friends at Grove Cottage, was their fondest wish, and earnest endeavour. To attend steadily to their lessons was at first an effort, but it was overcome in time, and they could refer to their daily studies without trouble, and even take pleasure in pursuing them farther, when the hours of relaxation arrived. *Something new* was out of the question, for they had discovered the secret of never ending amusement — “Rational Employment.” Their tempers gradually softened, their spirits

became more equal, yet were they more constantly cheerful.

It may be supposed their father was not backward in perceiving the desired amendment; he was no stranger to the advantages his children derived from the examples of his friend Wilder, and he determined to consult that friend as to the plan to be pursued henceforward; meanwhile he wrote, in the fulness of his joy, to Mr. Robson, inviting him to witness what had created such pride in his parental heart.

Mary's birth-day was in

November, and it was on that day the riddle of their uncle was to be inspected for the first time. George and Lucy were present, and we must own curiosity was pretty generally excited.

“Now for it, Ned,” cried George, (as his friend broke the seal of the envelope.)

“I hope it is not a blank piece of paper,” said Mary.

“But it is;” exclaimed her brother, in astonishment.

“Why, this is a riddle of riddles,” observed George; “had there been but a line, a word, one might have guessed

at its meaning, but out of nothing we can make nothing."

"Ah! but it is meant for *something*," said Mary, with a gravity that caused a general laugh.

Vain were the conjectures of the next half-hour, though all agreed they had been more puzzled by a piece of blank paper than by the most difficult riddle they had ever tried to expound.

Many times, in the course of this evening they quitted their sports, to ponder over the enigma, which Lucy declared

would haunt her dreams for a month to come.

“You must exert all your wit, Edward,” said George, “to discover the meaning ere your uncle comes; it would be a pity to lose a gold watch for nothing, as one may say.”

“I wish I had lost it, as you did the silver one,” answered he.

“I know you will all laugh at me,” said Mary; “but I really do believe I have found the meaning of this famous riddle.”

“Out with it, then,” cried all.

“Well then, perhaps my uncle thinks that you would change your mind before Christmas, for you know he has often said we were fickle in our wants, and he means you to tell the truth on this sheet of paper.

“Not a bad idea, Mary,” said George, shaking her by the hand; “but I believe there is no fear of your brother’s preferring any thing to such a gift as the one promised.

“I certainly don’t prefer any thing to a watch, at present,” returned Edward; “yet I am not so eager for it as when

my uncle mentioned it to me ; however, there are three weeks to elapse before we shall see him, and I hope in that time to solve his riddle. I own Mary's idea has made some impression on me ; it is so like his odd ways, when he wishes to please us."

Lucy avowed her belief that Mary was right ; and all agreed, at parting, to give the affair due and ample consideration.

The following day was frosty and dry : the little Reynolds' gladly availed themselves of it, to take a race in the grounds, for the weather had previously

been wet, and kept them prisoners for some days. While thus enjoying a healthful sport, a loud crash struck on their ears, succeeded by as loud cries and sobs of some one in distress.

Both ran eagerly to the gate to look for the cause, but, although they perceived several persons assembled near the road-side, the distance was too great to discern what they were doing; however, as the gardener made one of the crowd, they watched his return to the Lodge, and sought information from him.

William told them it was a poor lad driving a cart of earthenware, and, not being accustomed to the road, had guided the horse too near the road's edge, when, in turning the corner of the shrubbery wall, the animal lost its footing, fell, and overturned the brittle load he was drawing.

Genuine was the concern the youthful pair expressed on hearing of this disaster, and William was dispatched with their whole stock of pocket-money (consisting of eight shillings,) to the sufferer.

The poor boy and his acci-

dent formed the chief topic of conversation the remainder of that day; and when at breakfast, the next morning, Mary again alluded to it.

“Yes, it was a sad thing for him, poor fellow,” replied Edward, “and I am glad we had so much of our quarterly allowance left to give him; but I am thinking, Mary, that George and Lucy Wilder would have done something more; they would have enquired into particulars, and have exerted all their power to serve him; yet Mr. Wilder is not so wealthy as papa.

“ True, brother, and I well remember how often we have teased papa for foolish toys; he will surely never refuse us money for a good purpose.”

“ Certainly not, Mary; but, before we trouble him, I will ask William to go into the village, and make enquiries, for I recollect he said something about knowing his father.”

Mary agreed this was the best plan, and, in the hope of doing essential good, these amiable self-reformed children went to their lessons in

high spirits, and accomplished the morning's studies greatly to the satisfaction of their different masters.

They had spoken to William, and he promised to obey their wish, as soon as his occupation would allow.

While at dinner, Mr. Reynolds came into the room, to take leave of them, unexpected business requiring his presence in London, where it was probable he might remain two or three days; but he hoped on his return to bring something that should compensate for his absence, and he doubted not

to have a good account of them from their trust-worthy attendant, Martha.

With affectionate regret they parted from this fond parent, promising to attend to all his commands.

Towards evening, William tapped at the study door, and, upon being admitted, and importuned for further accounts of the boy and his cart, gave the following relation:—

“Aye, Master Edward, it is a sad affair indeed when all be told. I dare say you remember the old man you saw one morning, near Putney-

Bridge, when you were going to Town. James, the coachman, says, you were both shocked to see such an aged person dragging a cart-load of goods; and he says, Miss Mary admired his silver locks, and gave him a shilling."

"Yes, yes, we remember him well cried both in a breath.

"Well sir, this poor creature lost his wife and son in a fever last year, and the son left him six young children to maintain, who were motherless. I am told, he once kept a small shop in Fulham, but, meeting

with misfortunes, and getting old into the bargain, the business dropped off, and he was obliged to give it up: then he took to hawking of earthenware about; and hard work it was, for he could not afford to keep a horse: then came the death of his wife and son, and all the poor children thrown on his hands; so bad became worse: and then, to finish the whole, he was seized with a paralytic stroke a few weeks since, and there he is lying helpless in his bed."

"Poor, poor man," ex-

claimed Mary, tears starting to her eyes.

“Was it his grandson who drove the cart yesterday?” enquired Edward.

“Yes, sir, and the eldest of the family; you see the boy was not strong enough to drag the cart, as the grandfather used to do; so the old man hired a horse out of a little money he had saved, in the hope of getting into the old shop again; but this only brought on a new misfortune, for Ben, not knowing how to drive the animal, occasioned

the accident yesterday. It was a poor half-starved beast, but the owner wants to make him out great things ; says he has broken his knees, and a peck of harm beside : any how, he charges old Jones two pounds damages ; so that, what with horse, cart, and goods, six guineas will not repay the good old soul."

"I never heard so sad a tale," said Edward ; "how much I regret papa's absence, but I will speak to Martha, and ask her advice ; if we cannot give him money, at least we may send him some

comforts, and that must be done immediately ;” so saying, he hastened to seek Martha, who he well knew was ever ready to forward the happiness of others.

Mary remained, thoughtfully leaning her head on her hands, while William the gardener departed, muttering blessings on their feeling hearts.

CHAPTER V.

A CHARITABLE PLAN, AND A
WELCOME VISITOR.

The true value of riches, and the pleasure of sympathy.—Good effects of regular habits.—Healthy cheeks preferable to pallid ones.—Change of mind not always a proof of fickleness.—Edward resigns the watch, but gains more than he loses.

Martha readily undertook to prepare what was necessary and nourishing for the old man, and William offered to take the same, his work of the day being finished.

When Edward and his sister

first became intimate with the amiable Wilders, their habits of rising, and going to bed, were far different to their present ones: *then* they were accustomed to sit up late, and lie in the morning, until they had scarcely time to hurry over breakfast before the arrival of masters, and consequently little leisure to look over their lessons.

When Mrs. Wilder heard of this baneful practice, and beheld the pallid hue of their youthful cheeks, she felt all a mother's concern, and took the liberty of recommending

to Mr. Reynolds a different system: it was by her wish Martha was engaged to attend Mary, for she was well acquainted with her worth and steadiness of character.

The good effects of regular hours were soon perceivable, and in less than three months their healthful appearance and general good spirits plainly evinced the advantages of the new arrangement; and both frequently wondered how they had kept awake until ten at night, when *now*, their heads were no sooner on the pillow than they were half asleep.

But on this night, Edward did not enjoy the usual lengthened slumber, for his mind was too much occupied with the misfortunes of the aged sufferer, and his active imagination forming a plan of permanent relief.

The next day's post brought a letter from Mr. Reynolds, informing them he should be home on the following evening, with their kind uncle, whom he had persuaded to return with him.

This was additional pleasure, for Mr. Robson was

tenderly regarded by his young relations.

Mary observed, they must be quick in solving the riddle.

“Christmas was the time appointed,” returned her brother, “but I am not very anxious to find it out, and so my uncle will find, for I have certainly changed my wish since we parted.”

“Changed!” echoed Mary, “surely you are joking.”

“No, indeed; as you shall see to-morrow: but, as I mean to tell him the truth in that very sheet of paper; perhaps, as

you once said, that may prove the riddle's meaning."

Mary had now her doubts, but Edward had determined how to act, and before he retired for the night, had written, and sealed his letter : his sister meantime, gave directions for a fresh stock of provisions being sent to the invalid, who, they were informed, was still in the same helpless situation ; " though," added William, " he blessed his young benefactors most audibly, when I told him who sent the provisions ; and I am

sure it would have moved any heart, to see the hungry children crowd round my basket, and beg for a small bit of meat." And William's voice faltered, as he said this.

As Mary kissed her brother when bidding Good night, she thanked God, that her dear Edward and herself were blest with so many comforts, and a kind parent to supply all their wants.

"True!" replied he, "and such dear friends as George and Lucy, whose example has made us happy."

A dark, rainy November day, gave a gloomy appearance to all without, on the next morning ; but our little friends were insensible to every thing unpleasant ; for they were anticipating the happiness of the evening, and Edward, full of his project.

As the afternoon advanced, Mary busied herself in stiring the blazing fire, and placing the two arm-chairs in readiness for the expected guests, who arrived, just as her patience was exhausted.

For the first ten minutes all

was joyful confusion; but the bustle over, each had much to say; for it seemed a long time since their uncle had been there, and they declared their papa's absence appeared weeks, rather than days.

After dinner, Mr. Robson had opportunity of questioning them on various subjects relating to their education, and greatly was he surprised by their answers; nor was their healthful appearance the least source of his satisfaction, for he had long feared their con-

stitutions were but two similar to his sister's.

How much they had to tell in praise of George and Lucy ; and how eloquently Edward related the anecdote of the watch in the grotto !

Mr. Robson heard him with delight, and, while he did justice to his young friend's conduct, could not forbear commending the disinterestedness of his nephew's character, in thus exalting George, at his own expence.

“ But *apropos!*” exclaimed he ; “ I suppose my poor rid-

dle has slipped your memory, unless the gold watch brought it to mind."

"The *metal one* has often enough, I assure you uncle; for I never look at George's 'Old friend with a new face,' as he calls his dial, without remembering you, and your promise: but you shall learn more of your riddle before I go to bed, though you may think me very bold in my explanation."

Mr. Robson declared he had courage to meet it; and they drew round the tea-table in the utmost harmony; Mary

trying to puzzle her uncle by various riddles and charades she had learned in French, from Lucy.

While Mr. Reynolds was reading the newspaper to his brother, George, gently placing the sealed paper before his uncle, ran off to bed.

It may be supposed the two gentlemen were equally curious to learn its contents; but it was some minutes before Mr. Robson's emotion would allow of his reading aloud, what he had first glanced over in silence.

The letter ran thus:

“ My dear, dear uncle,

“ I am indeed fickle, a watch is no longer the first wish of my heart, nor can I really make out your riddle, although I have a confused idea of its meaning.

“ George Wilder tells me, that a gold watch would cost more than ten guineas! what a great sum! how can I wish for such an expensive thing, when I know, that *six guineas*, would save a helpless broken-hearted old man, and five starving children, from want and misery. Last Christmas,

I might have been more steady in my wishes, but thanks to dear George and Lucy I am in this respect, fickle,—not that fickleness which used to give you so much uneasiness.

“ I shall say no more, than forgive me, if I have said too much,

“ Your affectionate nephew,

“ EDWARD REYNOLDS.”

Neither of his readers thought George had said, or written a word too much ; the letter was read over many times, with a pride and plea-

sure, none but such interested relatives could feel, nor did they separate, until they adopted a plan to meet Edward's wishes, and relieve the distress he had so simply stated.

Mary was surprised and wounded, when Martha told her, that her papa considered it no longer necessary to send provisions to old Jones.

"Oh! it must be a mistake," cried she; and away she ran to the breakfast parlour, but her little heart was too full, to explain her story

intelligibly, and tears choaked her utterance as she enquired, why he had forbidden Martha to assist the poor grey-headed old man.

“Not forbidden, my love,” answered her father, tenderly, “I said, indeed, there would be no farther occasion to send your well-stocked basket; but my reason was, because your uncle and I mean to ride to the poor man’s habitation this morning, and render him effectual assistance.”

“How glad I am,” said Mary, throwing herself into

her father's arms, "this will be good-news for Edward;"—and, at that moment, Edward entered with his uncle, his countenance so glowing, his step so light, that it was easy to suppose *her's* would not be the first good-news of the morning; the fact was, Edward and his uncle had just been conversing on the same subject, and the result was all the former could wish.

CHAP. VI.

THE LAWYER'S DECISION,
AND HAPPY CONSEQUENCES.

Advice without a fee, charity well bestowed, and the wretched made happy.—The important meeting, the lawyer pleads in verse, gains his cause, and the riddle is explained to the satisfaction of all parties.—Edward receives the prize, but confesses the dial is the best monitor.

“Much as I applaud your change of opinion,” said Mr. Robson, “I feel at a loss in regard to the riddle of mine, for its solution was that you should give “A good Reason”

for giving up the watch ; and a better than you gave cannot be imagined, so that notwithstanding one condition has failed, the other stands in force ; you have lost, and yet have *not* lost the watch, this is a knotty point, and requires a wiser head than mine to adjust ; I think it would be advisable to call in the aid of Counsellor George ; what say you ?”

Edward, laughingly replied, that his case could not be argued by a better lawyer ; but assured his uncle, he felt no right to the watch, since he

kindly acceded to his wish of assisting old Jones.

“But my conscience is more delicate,” said Mr. Robson, “therefore I shall call at the cottage after adjusting matters for your *protegé*.”

He did so, when the young counsellor candidly acknowledged it was a point that required consideration, but promised to give his opinion by the tenth day of the coming month, when the party were to assemble at Park Lodge.

Much pleasure was anticipated from this meeting, but

the interval passed not idly. With proper medical attendance, and good nursing, old Jones recovered sufficiently to walk with a crutch; the children were fed and clothed, and the whole family removed from a miserable damp lodging, to a small comfortable house, with a shop furnished with every necessary in the general line, such as the grandfather had once kept; and a proper person engaged, to instruct the eldest girl in the business, who soon gave fair promise of being a good shop-woman.

Ben, whose accident had produced all this good-fortune, was bound apprentice to a grocer in Richmond, and Mr. Reynolds undertaking to pay the schooling of the two next children, prosperity and happiness once more beamed on the worthy old man and his family.

As all this business proceeded, the interest and exertion of Edward and Mary was excited in the most lively manner.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilder accompanied their children on the

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Mary raised the covering.

'O! brother, look, look, it is an 'old friend, with a new face,'
(for thus, George's Grotto was now generally called.)

see page 99.

day appointed; and a happy family party sat down to a social repast, after which, the younger branches retired to the drawing-room.

“What is this?” cried Edward, approaching the table, where some bulky article was placed, covered with much care.

Mary raised the covering.

“O! brother, look, look, it is an ‘old friend, with a new face,’ (for thus, George’s grotto was now generally called.)

“Yes, my dear girl,” said Lucy, “and I hope you will

accept this mutual present, for it was for you it was made, knowing how much you admired the original."

Mary threw her arms round Lucy's neck, kissing and and thanking her a hundred times; nor was her friend George forgotten.

"For such a present said she, I shall never be able to make a suitable return."

"Yes you will, dear Mary," returned George, "by loving us through life, as you do now."

"That, I am sure I shall," answered she.

When the tea-tray was removed, Mr. Robson assembled the group round the table, and, placing George Wilder on his right hand, begged to know the result of his deliberations, and requested the undivided attention of the whole party, the decision of this long pending cause, being a point of moment to him, as to his future intentions.

The assumed gravity of their condescending relative, created a strong inclination for mirth in the parties most concerned, but he soon called them to order, and again de-

manded the young counsellor's opinion.

With a pleasing confusion of countenance, George drew from his bosom a folded paper, which he handed to Mr. Reynolds, requesting the favour of his reading it aloud, acknowledging, that his practice at the bar, had not been sufficient to give consequence to his verbal pleading.

This natural and modest excuse, being admitted, the paper was unfolded, and Mr. Reynolds delivered the following to his interested auditors.

THE DECISION.

As far as my judgment can help to expound
A point of decision so nice,
I will venture to say, and on very just ground,
That the subject needs little advice.

If, in changing his wish, my client has lost;
This only decides half the cause;
In explaining the riddle, he regains his post,
And 'tis here, I presume, that we pause.

With a judge like his uncle, a counsel like me,
The verdict can't fail to be right,
In his solving the riddle, we both must agree
He has given us mutual delight,

So that, weighing the matter with justice and care,
The truth of our verdict to crown;
The scale with his failure, mounts up in the air,
But firmly the other keeps down.

George's amusing effort was
received with due indulgence,

the junior branches indeed, saw no fault in it, and the senior, looking to the motives of the amiable writer forbore any critique on the poetical claims, so that it may truly be said, to have added pleasure to the pursuits of the evening.

Before separating, Mr. Robson taking the two boys by the hand, thus addressed them:

“So highly do I applaud the conduct of my deserving young counsellor and his client, that I mean to decide agreeably to the opinion of

the former, and Edward shall have his gold watch."

Here Edward whispered in his ear, "two silver ones, dear uncle, one for George."

"No, my dear boy," returned his uncle, with a smile of approbation; "not two silver, but two gold ones; and George's friend Hudson shall have the making of them; so that more than ourselves may benefit by our whims. I am persuaded that my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Wilder, will not refuse my request of their son's acceptance of a gift, arising

from his and your deserving conduct."

No objection could be reasonably started to such a request ; and it may be supposed the two friends were in high spirits on learning Mr. Robson's decision ; nor were Lucy and Mary uninterested hearers, for, to them, the praises of their respective brothers, was ever a theme of delight."

"This is the happiest evening of my life," exclaimed Lucy, "thanks to our dear Mr. Robson !"

"And another friend, Lucy,"

said Mary, "though a silent one, for much of the good that has happened, and the pleasure we are now enjoying, is owing to George's

'Old Friend with a New Face.'"

"And *my riddle!*" observed Mr. Robson.

THE END.

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