

MISCHIEF NOT FUN.

BY
MARY ELLIOTT.

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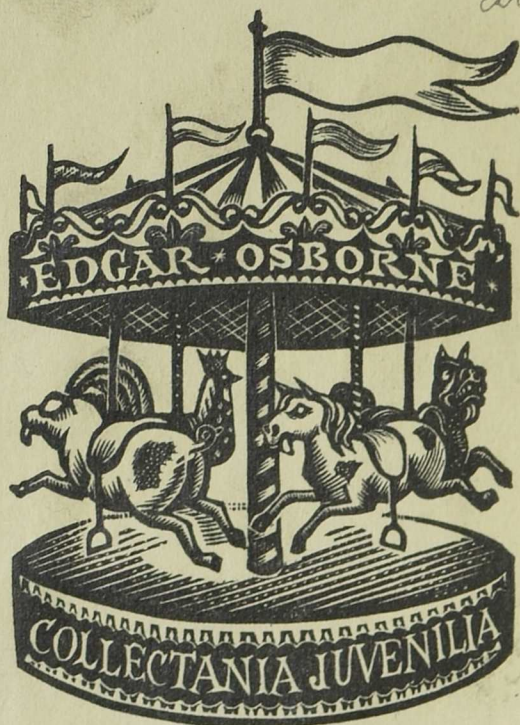
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FRONTISPIECE TO "MISCHIEF NOT FUN."



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see pages 20 & 21.

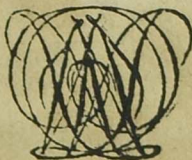
London, William Darton, at the Repertory of Genius, 58, Holborn Hill.

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1854.

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WE may be cheerful, and prudent at the same time; “Merry and wise,” as the old proverb says; but there are folks silly enough to think, that mirth and mischief must go hand in hand, yet as mis-

chief will produce harm, pain, and regret, no child of sense will mistake it for pleasure.

How sweet it is to parents, to see their children happy and merry, light of heart and spirits ; and what sight can be more lovely, than youth engaged in youthful sports. There were two little girls named Lucy and Sarah, who, with their brother Richard, lived on the kindest terms with each other ; they were fond of the same pursuits, and never crossed, or spoke sharply to one another. Richard was a merry boy, and would some-

times play tricks with his sisters, but they were harmless tricks, only adding to their mirth, and good-humour.

One day, Richard was called into the parlour to see the son of a new neighbour, who wished to be his friend ; he was a pretty cheerful looking boy, frank in his manners and seemed much pleased to have a playmate in one of his own age ; and when they parted, he promised to meet and play with him very often. Their gardens joined, and there was only a gate to open, when they wished to see each other.

Richard ran to seek his sisters, and tell them what a pleasant boy Frank Hardy was ; and how glad they should all be, to add him to the number of their play-fellows. The little girls liked what their brother did, and therefore felt sure they should find the new friend all he described. In a very few days, Frank became like one of themselves, joined their sports, helped to work in the garden, and lent them some pretty books, in reading which they had much delight. Frank had high spirits, and was very fond of a joke, but

his jokes were not such as our young friends had played off; it was true, they laughed more at his mirthful tricks, than they had ever done before, but it sometimes happened, that the end of such jokes were not so pleasant as their own, and left them in a scrape. Sarah was the first to find this out, and she could not help saying, that she thought they played best by themselves.

“Why is not Frank a nice playmate?” asked her brother, “then how good natured he is; how funny, and how often he makes us laugh.”---

“ Yes, brother, he makes us laugh, to be sure, but I am not certain that all his jokes are pleasant; it was no fun to me, when he bade me feel how smooth his drum was, and then rapped my fingers with the drum-sticks; and I think you did not look very merry, when he asked you to reach his ball, which he had placed upon the wall, and after you had climbed to get it, took away the ladder, and left you to come down as you might.”

“ O, such things dont happen every day,” said Richard, “ and he means no harm; it

is only for jest's sake." Sarah shook her head, and Lucy smiled, for like her brother, she was somewhat changed in her notions of tricks, and could laugh at many that she once thought very wrong indeed.

To speak with candour, Frank's jokes did more harm than good ; his fun was nothing better than mischief, and he spared not his kindest friends, when he was in what he called a merry mood. It is a great pity when such persons get among children of a better nature, for all have

not wisdom to withstand these tempters. Sarah's good sense told her it was wrong, but her brother and sister were content to be merry, without thinking if the cause were good or bad : still as Frank seemed really fond of them, and was willing to share his toys and sweets with those his chosen friends, even Sarah did not dislike him, and when he was in a quiet mood, was glad that he joined them ; for he could tell many pleasant stories, and did not forget what he had read in books, about divers Birds and Beasts,

all of which he could relate with truth, and in a most pleasing manner.

Franks' mother once gave a treat to all his young play-fellows, and a large happy circle they formed; tea, cakes, fruit, and many nice things were prepared for them, and their cheerful faces shewed how much they enjoyed the scene. But Frank was not content to finish their sports in this harmless way; no, he was longing to show off at his old game of mischief, and by degrees he gained over

Richard's scruples, and induced him to join in it.

Their first trick was, to spread the table cover with two chairs set apart from each other, and then tempting a little boy to sit between them, on this new kind of sofa ; the poor child was no sooner seated, than they jumped up, and he fell backwards, with his head against a screen ; the blow made him cry out, for the back of his head was much hurt, but they coaxed him, and gave him sweetmeats, whilst Sarah bathed the sore

part with cold water, and as he was very young, his pains and fears were soon hushed.

Richard at first felt some alarm, but seeing matters were settled so quickly, he did not feel averse to Frank's next trial of fun. Sarah saw this with concern, for it was plain to her, that Frank Hardy was spoiling her brother.

Lucy did not wish harm to any one, but she was too ready to laugh at the trick of Richard and his friend; and as Frank was always merry, and passing some joke on others, she thought he was a

pleasant play-fellow and a good-natured boy : but then Lucy was not one of the many, who were hurt in the course of this day, and it is easy, though not kind, to be merry at the expense of another's feelings.

Mary had her fingers burnt, playing at snap-dragon ; but then she was a peevish girl, so Lucy thought it was no matter of regret. Anna bit her tongue, by a sudden jerk Frank gave her chin, when she was eating a piece of muffin ; it made her tongue bleed, and the tears came into her

eyes ; yet as she was the eldest of the party, the poor thing was ashamed to cry, so they thought she could not be hurt, and therefore all joined in a laugh, to see how foolish she looked.

But I should not say all joined, for there was one who looked very grave, and felt very sorry and vexed ; this one was Sarah, who could not derive pleasure from mischief and folly ; more than once she chid her sister and brother, who tried to excuse themselves by saying, that they only did, what others did

also. This excuse was both silly and mean, but as there can be no proper excuse for acting wrong, it is no wonder that Richard and his sister could not make a better one.

The little party had met in great spirits, but they did not return in the same: few of them, but had in some way been tricked or hurt; the laugh was more often against, than with them; all had some fault to find with Frank, though his cakes and fruit were the nicest they had ever eaten; and there was not one, who did not think Richard



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see page 17.

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and Lucy were much changed for the worse. Sarah was now the only kind one, and Sarah they alone could love. She was indeed still the same, and the next day as she walked in the garden with her brother and sister, she plainly told her thoughts of their conduct the day before.

“Who could be more cheerful and happy, than we have ever been?” said Sarah, “we have played and enjoyed fun of our own, without hurting ourselves, or causing each other a tear. I do not think Frank is a more merry

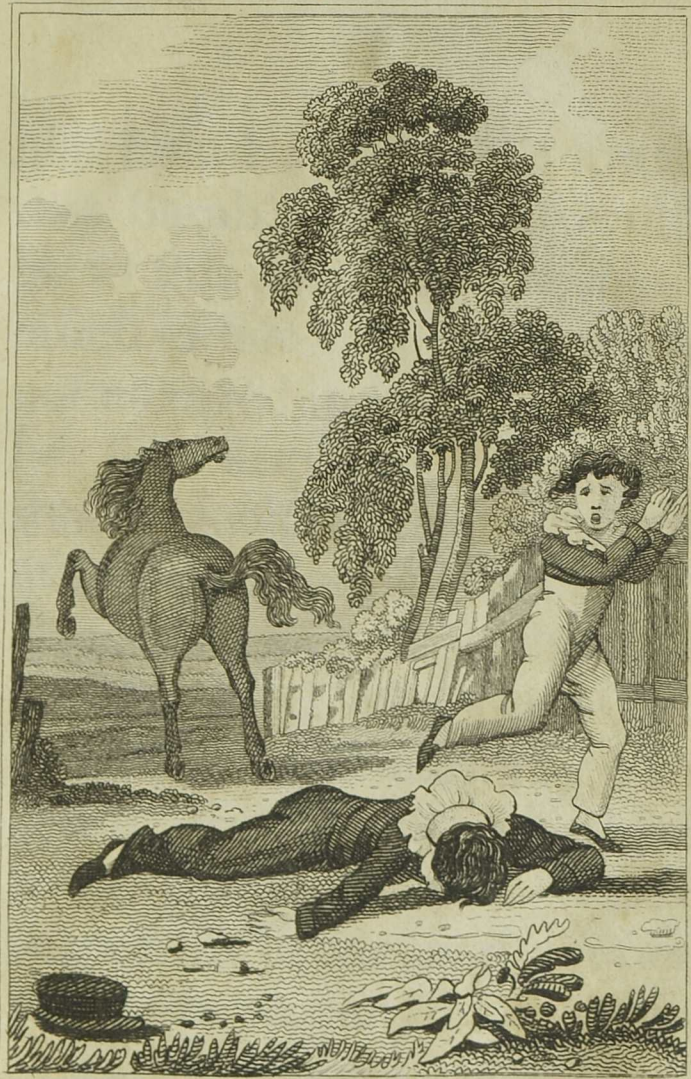
boy than you, Richard, ; he makes more noise, to be sure, and laughs louder, but then it is because others are deceived in his jokes, and perhaps crying from the pain they have caused. Pray let us return to our own pleasures, and not follow his plans of mischief." Richard wished to take his friend's part, and said a great deal of his good heart, and kindness to every body, but it was a poor defence ; and Lucy owned, that although she had been happy and merry in their late visit, she did not quite like Frank's jokes.

For two or three days the weather was wet, and as they could not work, or play in the garden, the brother and sisters did not meet Frank; and, although Richard boasted of his regard for him, he soon found himself very happy, without sharing in the pranks he used to call high fun.

On the fourth day, the air was warmer, and the sun shone, so they were again free; and like birds escaped from a cage, they flew rather than walked to the rustic seat themselves had partly formed; but scarcely had they reached the

spot, when the large tree which shaded it like a screen, was shaken so roughly over their heads, that the wet from its leaves fell upon them like a shower. All three jumped up, and ran into the gravel walk before they ventured to seek the cause, which was nothing less than a trick of Frank Hardy.

This lover of mischief had fastened a string to a stout branch of the tree, by which means he was able to shake the whole, as he stood behind the hedge that parted his father's grounds from those of



"The horse which had no rider, started as the children crossed his path, and gave Frank a kick on the leg, which made him fall senseless." *see page 33.*

his friends ; he well knew that Sarah's first visit would be to this spot, for she spent much of her time here, when not engaged in learning ; and he felt displeased that she should look so grave, when others laughed to see how clever he was ; so he thought by this kind of revenge, to punish the well-meaning girl.

But Sarah was not alone wet ; Richard and Lucy shared no better, and neither felt there was any pleasure in *this* joke. Frank's loud burst of laughter prepared them for his presence, and jumping

over the hedge he stood before them.

Richard, though vexed, tried to hide that he was so, fearful his friend should think him a coward ; but Lucy did not conceal her anger, and plainly said he was very rude. “ Now this is strange,” cried Frank, “ I am sure you were not angry the other day, when I played off greater jokes than this ; nay, and you laughed as much as any of us. Sarah then seemed to take offence, and thought all I did was wrong, but now she is much calmer than you are. I

suspect you liked to see others tricked, but cannot bear it yourself." Lucy blushed, for she felt what he said was true, while Sarah did not deny that she disliked all such jokes as caused pain to others, though she might herself escape. "But you are so very nice," replied Frank, you forget I am not a girl, like you, and afraid of being hurt."

"I am not afraid," said Sarah, "it is not pain I fear, which some time or other we may all feel; but I never heard till lately, that hurting other people, and giving them

pain, should cause us to be merry.”

“ Well, perhaps not, Sarah ; but really I do not wish to give pain ; and if people would but take a joke as it is meant, there would be no harm done.”

“ Then,” said Sarah, “ the best way would be, not to play tricks upon our friends, until the same have been tried upon us.”

Lucy and the two boys laughed at this, and so the matter ended.

Left to himself, Richard had no turn for mischief ; and

as Frank was now rather upon his guard, a week passed in a pleasant manner to all.

Happy would it have been for them, had each been kind and careful as Sarah ; but Frank was a wild boy, and Richard and Lucy were weak children, as we shall find when this story be ended.

Amongst the many tricks which Frank had learnt, was that of mocking dumb animals ; he could bark like a dog, mew as a cat, and bray like a donkey ; all of these he thought very clever, and there were some of his play-

mates who thought so too ; but Sarah and many others, were shocked at such vulgar habits, and refused to play with him, when he wanted to amuse them in this way, so that he was often checked, and obliged to play like other children.

One little, boy of a gentle nature and weak health, was always much frightened when Frank mocked his father's great mastiff, Growler, for it was a fierce dog, and none would venture nigh to it, but those who knew how to coax and manage the creature.

No wonder then, that poor Willy should tremble and turn pale, when he believed this rough foe was at his heels ; even when he found it was a false alarm he did not quickly regain his spirits, and as Sarah always took his part, he liked to keep close by her side when they met at Frank's house.

Once, when Frank came to ask Richard and his sisters to spend the day with him, he learned that Sarah had a bad cold and therefore could not join the party, he was at first sorry to hear it, for

although she did not join in the foolish plans he formed, he knew she was good and kind, which made him respect her very much. As he went home he began to think this was just the time to have some sport with Willy, and his love of mischief soon made him leave to regret the absence of his best friend Sarah.--- When the young folks met; Frank called Richard and Lucy aside to prepare them for his joke as he called it. Richard soon came into his views, but Lucy did not at first consent, she felt it would

be acting against the good advice her sister had often given her, besides that Willy was such a sweet tempered harmless child, that it was cruel to excite his fears.

But so well did Frank know her love of mirth, that he tried every means in his power to coax her to join in the plan, till at length the weak girl had no scruples to conquer.

Meantime, Willy came to them in high spirits, he had been promised the first trial of Frank Hardy's new wheelbarrow, and he longed to fill

it with stones and weeds as he had seen the Gardener do.

Well, said Frank, I have not changed my mind, you shall be the first to wheel my barrow, but then you must fetch it here, and I am thinking you will not like to do so, as it stands close to the yard-gate, where Growler sits in his kennel. Poor Willy looked grave and then there was a loud laugh at his expense, even Lucy called him a coward, and he knew not how to act, till Frank declared the dog was chained fast to his house and could not free himself,

so then the little boy gained courage, and said he would go.

Richard and Frank were then loud in his praise, and he set off on his errand very stoutly ; the rest of the party followed at some distance, saving the mischief maker, who crept softly after him, until within a few yards of the kennel, when putting his hands before his mouth he made a loud and frightful noise, just like Growler in a passion, the angry mastiff heard the mock bark, and yelled still louder.

This was a signal for all to enjoy the joke, and all burst into laughter.

The fright of poor Willy was great indeed, at first he seemed almost bereft of sense, but in a minute fear gave him strength, he climbed the garden gate and jumped into the road on the other side.

Frank did not wish to carry the joke farther, so he jumped over too, and called to him to explain, but Willy ran faster, till seeing a horse in full gallop he stopped in a new fright. Frank saw his danger, and ran forward to

protect him, the horse which had no rider, started as the children crossed his path, and gave Frank a kick on the leg, which made him fall senseless. Here then was an end of Frank Hardy's tricks, he who had caused so much pain to others, was now to suffer himself.

For many weeks did he lie in his bed, till he was wasted to a shadow, and when he once more joined his young friends, he was no longer a sprightly playmate, but a weak and lame boy, who

could never again walk without a crutch.

O," cried he, when Sarah came to see him, "O that I had been guided by you, and kept my jokes within bounds. I once thought you cross, and not a good play-fellow, but I have learned too late, that you were wise and humane, for as you have often told me,

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