

THE TWO
BIRTHDAYS.

LONDON:

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health and spirits; and each had sisters younger than herself.

Elizabeth Maxwell lived in the country. Her parents were rich and worldly, and their children were taught to derive too much of their pleasure from the luxuries wealth procured, without bearing in mind who bestows everything we possess, and what an account those who receive much will have to render in return. True, she said prayers, and was told it was not only right but necessary so to do;

but, poor child, she merely repeated, she did not feel them.

But, to shew more clearly the state of the two children, I shall relate how each child passed her eighth birthday; hoping my little reader may make a wise election which example to follow.

Elizabeth, by way of indulgence, got leave to remain as long in bed as she liked: though the fifteenth of May was bright and invitingly fine, she did not get up till nine



o'clock, hurried over her prayers, and went down to the breakfast-parlour dressed in a nice new blue silk frock. Her parents kissed her affectionately, and wished her many happy returns of the day; admired her new frock, and told her she was

to do exactly as she liked all day, and only what she liked.

After breakfast (which she was allowed to have with her papa and mamma) the children went to play together. Elizabeth had many new toys given her, and many cakes and sweetmeats. Being usually much in the nursery, and in her maid's charge, feeding plainly, and under restraint, the total absence of it this day was too much for her; she could not enjoy herself without excess, and she was peevish and

fretful all the morning, if the least thing interfered with her will.

She had been promised a ride, and about twelve o'clock the groom came to intimate that the pony had hurt himself in the stable and could not be taken out: at which Elizabeth got quite in a passion, crying, and saying, "It is my birthday! I was promised my own way, and I will have my ride: it is very hard that I am to be disappointed!"

Her companions tried to com-

fort her, and to induce her to come and play with them; her parents promised that she should ride another day; but all would not do: this one little disappointment spoiled all her day's enjoyment.

At length dinner-time came, and, for a great treat, the children were all permitted to dine in the dining-room with Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell. Elizabeth must not be crossed again. So she had everything she asked for; consequently, she had

too much of several rich dishes, which she was not in the habit of tasting.

In the evening there was a grand ball; all the neighbouring families were invited, and no expence was spared. It was a very gay scene; and as it was in honour of Elizabeth, and as she was very neatly and gaily dressed, and looked very well, she was much caressed. But she began to feel the effects of eating what she was not accustomed to, and felt heavy and un-

comfortable. She, however, danced a little, but was soon tired; and having an overloaded stomach, she felt drowsy and cross. Mrs. Maxwell tried to persuade her to go to bed; but she always urged, "I do not wish to go; and you promised to let me do as I liked on my birthday!"

Instead of admiring her now, most of the company, though too polite to say so, thought she would be much better in the nursery asleep.

At length, after dosing for some time, first on one sofa, and then on another, after teasing every one by her fretful complaints, she was induced to retire. All her fine new frock was crushed and spoiled by the manner in which she had been lying about on the couches. Tired, and sick, and sleepy, she was now in no humour to pray to God, and the servant was too glad to get her into bed to ask her to do so. After grumbling at being sent to her room, she lay down: far from feeling any thankfulness for the great blessings



and indulgences around her, she fell asleep in anger with her parents for dismissing her from the ball-room. Thus all the enjoyment of the day seemed cancelled by this last act; and Elizabeth's last impressions were murmurs at being

denied her own way on her birthday.

Worn out, discontented, and with too much on her stomach, she slept heavily, and awoke next morning with a headache, and very sick. Instead of being ready to go cheerfully to her governess, poor Elizabeth had to be coaxed to take some medicine, and she found her lessons irksome and difficult; while her fond but injudicious parents only remarked, "*It is lucky a birthday comes but once a year!*" never re-



flecting that, by these and such like over indulgences, a child's temper and dispositions are formed, and that children cannot be too early taught to enjoy all things in thankfulness and moderation, nor too soon imbued with a sense of their

liability to disappointments, and the necessity of bearing them with resignation and even cheerfulness.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot also resided in the country, had an income sufficient to enable them to live comfortably and do much good among their poorer neighbours.

Fanny, their eldest child, had a holiday granted her on her birthday; and, to enjoy it the more, she got up about an hour before her usual time. She prayed simply and sin-



cerely to God to make her a good child, and thanked him for all His care of her. Neatly but simply dressed, she went to her parents' bed-room, where, with the most tender embraces, she received the prayerful blessing of both.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot always had their children as much with them as possible; therefore it was nothing new to Fanny and her sisters to breakfast with them. As soon as breakfast was over, the Bible being placed before Mrs. Wilmot, she first asked God's blessing on His holy word, and then read the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes and the eighteenth chapter of St. Luke; the children then read the Psalms of the day; and Mrs. Wilmot closed the morning's worship by offering up a prayer and thanksgiving for

the many mercies bestowed on them all during the past year, and especially prayed for the dear child who this day completed her eighth year.

The books being restored to their places, the children went to play, and Fanny devoted herself to the amusement of her sisters; preventing, as far as she could, even trifling disputes, so as not to spoil the enjoyment of the day.

She had been promised a nice

long drive in the new carriage; but her papa being called away on business for a few hours, this anticipated pleasure had to be renounced: and Fanny gave it up so cheerfully, saying, "I am very happy now, and have had so many pretty things given me, that I need not grumble at one disappointment, especially as grumbling would not bring papa back sooner."

The children enjoyed a good plain dinner with their parents, and had a nice plum-pudding by way of a

treat. There was no grand ball in the evening, but a number of the surrounding poor were allowed to call and receive some relief from Fanny's own hands; and the dear child, in hearing the blessings and prayers of the needy, felt that it is "more blessed to give than to receive."

Instead of the ball, Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot joined in their children's games till nine o'clock; when, pretty well tired with this long holiday, they all went cheerfully and quietly

to their rooms. Each put up his simple prayer and thanksgiving. Fanny especially marked the beginning of a new year to her, and prayed for improvement in all things pleasing to a gracious God. Once more receiving her parents' blessing, and the cordial "good night" of her sisters, she went calmly and happily to sleep.

The day began with God, closed with Him; and after a peaceful night the dear girl awoke, ready to resume her lessons with a pleasing

recollection of the yesterday's enjoyment, and a firm resolution to be very attentive in future, to take every pains to improve herself, that she might thus earn another holiday and the approbation of her parents, with the blessing of God.

Which of the children had the most perfect enjoyment? Whose example would you, my little reader, follow?

O! if parents would all, like Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot, teach their chil-

dren from their very infancy to acknowledge their God in all things, to ask his blessing at all times, and praise his name for every enjoyment, how rich a store would they thus lay up for their offspring! and what a fund of comfort for themselves!

I must give you a little idea of the consequences of such different training.

Misfortunes overtook the Maxwells; they had to leave their fine

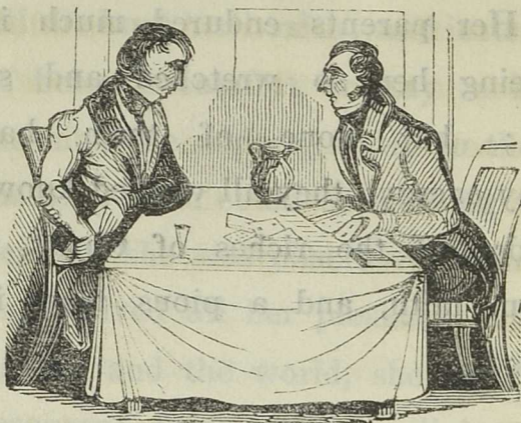
house, sell all their handsome furniture, dismiss their servants except one, and live very economically indeed. Poor Elizabeth, not accustomed to bear trifling disappointments, was overwhelmed by this change. She murmured and fretted



till she hurt her health; and instead of being a comfort or stay to her parents, she added greatly to their distress. She could do nothing for herself: she was miserable. Having derived all her pleasures from luxury and the world, she had no resource: there was no religion in her. She had never in all her prosperity been taught to thank her God for all the mercies she received from him; and now in her adversity she did not know how to derive comfort or help from His holy word.

Her parents endured much in seeing her so wretched and so ill; but none of them had any energy: they all wanted knowledge of the riches of Christ, a firm faith, and a pious trust in God.

Thus they lived on, making no exertions to better their condition: and when I last heard of them, the courses of the father were very wicked, and the mother and her children were suffering in penury and distress.



On the other hand, when losses of various kinds reduced the income of the Wilmot family to an insufficiency for their support, and when sickness carried off their youngest children, they blessed God that these blessings had been so long

lent to them, prayed to be enabled to say in faith, "Thy will be done," and acknowledged those good things which were still left them; for God never leaves his *faithful* servants comfortless.

Fanny, reared in the knowledge and fear of the Lord, cheered them, and exerted herself for their sakes. She thanked the Giver of all things for having given her talents to do so, and for having enabled her in her childhood to cultivate them; and imploring this blessing on her

pious endeavours, she employed her education profitably. She had God's blessing and prospered, and had the happiness of thus evincing to her father and mother her gratitude to them, and convincing them more and more that "by humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honour, and life." (Proverbs xxii. 4.)

Fanny is now happily married, and is bringing up her children in the nurture and fear of the Lord.



Mark the striking difference!—
With equal talent, and a much more
expensive education, poor Elizabeth
could do nothing for want of the
great basis, *religion*.—"The fear of
the Lord is the beginning of wis-
dom." With it, Fanny was enabled

to comfort and assist her parents.

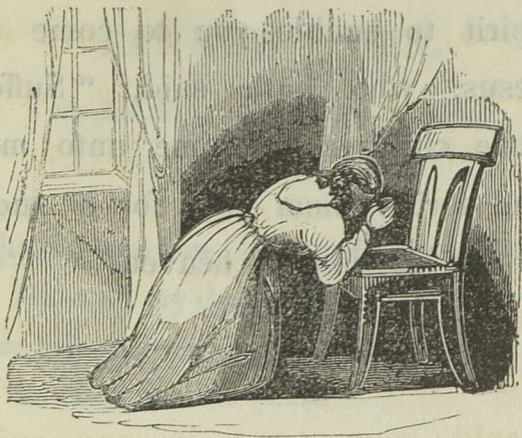
O! learn to see God in all things. Have you health? He gives it. Parents? He lends them to you. The comforts of life? They are his gifts, and to be enjoyed prayerfully and humbly. In short, all good things are His to dispose of. Affliction may be sent to try if your faith be firm. Does your health depart? The soul that trusts in God rejoices still. The body is afflicted to try the heart.

Pray that you may say, sincerely, "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away: blessed be the name of the Lord!"

Parents are taken away. God the Father remains: they are but gone before. "Who hath the Father and the Son may be *left*, but *not* alone." Poverty overtakes you; resources will open up to you, if you ask for them faithfully and humbly. In fact, there is no possible situation in life in which the mercy of God is not discernible,

if we seek it with the eye of faith. But we must be very watchful, for we are all more prone to evil than good. Our natural hearts are proud and deceitful; and did not the Almighty afflict us from time to time, we should soon trust in our own righteousness, and forget the caution — “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

When you then, my dear child, form good resolutions, and wish to do well, trust not in yourself,



but pray to God for grace to fulfil them. Trust in your heavenly Father in all things, and in the blessed death and intercession of the Son for your final salvation and joy everlasting; at all times imploring the grace of the Holy

Spirit to enable you to come to Jesus, who hath said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."



FANNY'S HYMN,

On her Birthday, the 18th of May.

Thanks, gracious God, (and O, do Thou
Make all my thanks sincere!)
For bringing me thus safe and well
To close another year.

I thank Thee for the health I have,
The parents kind and good;
For all the comforts round me here,
The clothing, and the food.

I thank Thee for the Saviour sent,
The Holy Bible given,
To wipe out all my many sins,
And point the road to heaven.

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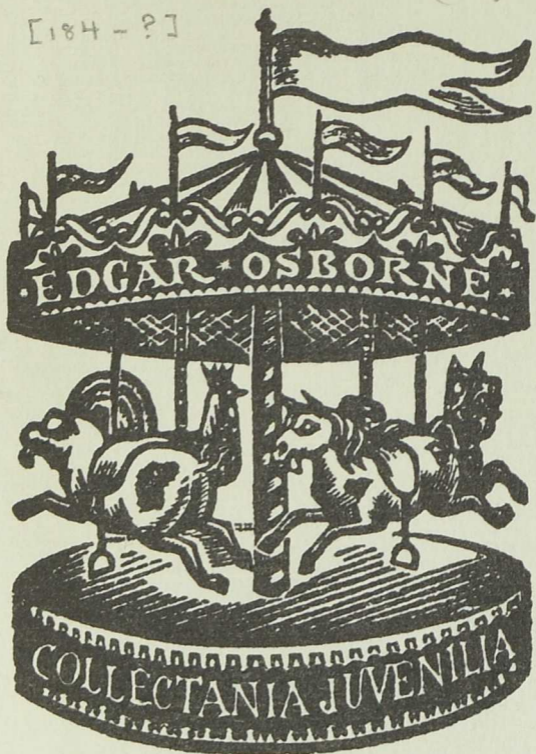
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