THE PARENT'S ASSISTANT

MARIA EDGEWORTH

This edition published 2025
by Living Book Press

ISBN: 978-1-76153-765-3 (hardcover)
978-1-76153-783-7 (softcover)

First published in 1796.

A catalogue record for this
book is available from the
National Library of Australia

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by

Maria Edgeworth

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Contents

"'Tis Education forms the common mind,—
Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined."

POPE.

PREFACE

ADDRESSED TO PARENTS.

Our great lexicographer, in his celebrated eulogium on Dr. Watts, thus speaks in commendation of those productions which he so successfully penned for the pleasure and instruction of the juvenile portion of the community.

"For children," says Dr. Johnson, "he condescended to lay aside the philosopher, the scholar, and the wit, to write little poems of devotion, and systems of instruction adapted to their wants and capacities, from the dawn of reason to its gradation of advance in the morning of life. Every man acquainted with the common principles of human action, will look with veneration on the writer, who is at one time combating Locke, and at another time making a catechism for *children in their fourth year*. A voluntary descent from the dignity of science is perhaps the hardest lesson which humility can teach."

It seems, however, no very easy task to write for children. Those only who have been interested in the education of a family, who have patiently followed children through the first processes of reasoning, who have daily watched over their thoughts and feelings—those only who know with what ease and rapidity the early association of ideas are formed, on which the future taste, character and happiness depend, can feel the dangers and difficulties of such an undertaking.

Indeed, in all sciences the grand difficulty has been to ascertain facts—a difficulty which, in the science of education, peculiar circumstances conspire to increase. Here the objects of every

experiment are so interesting that we cannot hold our minds indifferent to the result. Nor is it to be expected that many registers of experiments, successful and unsuccessful, should be kept, much less should be published, when we consider that the combined powers of affection and vanity, of partiality to his child and to his theory, will act upon the mind of a parent, in opposition to the abstract love of justice, and the general desire to increase the wisdom and happiness of mankind. Notwithstanding these difficulties, an attempt to keep such a register has actually been made. The design has from time to time been pursued. Though much has not been collected, every circumstance and conversation that have been preserved are faithfully and accurately related, and these notes have been of great advantage to the writer of the following stories.

The question, whether society could exist without the distinction of ranks, is a question involving a variety of complicated discussions, which we leave to the politician and the legislator. At present it is necessary that the education of different ranks should, in some respects, be different. They have few ideas, few habits in common; their peculiar vices and virtues do not arise from the same causes, and their ambition is to be directed to different objects. But justice, truth, and humanity are confined to no particular rank, and should be enforced with equal care and energy upon the minds of young people of every station; and it is hoped that these principles have never been forgotten in the following pages.

As the ideas of children multiply, the language of their books should become less simple; else their taste will quickly be disgusted, or will remain stationary. Children that live with people who converse with elegance will not be contented with a style inferior to what they hear from everybody near them.

All poetical allusions, however, have been avoided in this book; such situations only are described as children can easily imagine, and which may consequently interest their feelings. Such

examples of virtue are painted as are not above their conception of excellence, or their powers of sympathy and emulation.

It is not easy to give *rewards* to children which shall not indirectly do them harm by fostering some hurtful taste or passion. In the story of "Lazy Lawrence," where the object was to excite a spirit of industry, care has been taken to proportion the reward to the exertion, and to demonstrate that people feel cheerful and happy whilst they are employed. The reward of our industrious boy, though it be money, is only money considered as the means of gratifying a benevolent wish. In a commercial nation it is especially necessary to separate, as much as possible, the spirit of industry and avarice; and to beware lest we introduce Vice under the form of Virtue.

In the story of "Tarlton and Loveit" are represented the danger and the folly of that weakness of mind, and that easiness to be led, which too often pass for good nature; and in the tale of the "False Key" are pointed out some of the evils to which a well educated boy, on first going to service, is exposed from the profligacy of his fellow servants.

In the "Birthday Present," and in the character of Mrs. Theresa Tattle, the "Parent's Assistant" has pointed out the dangers which may arise in education from a bad servant, or a common acquaintance.

In the "Barring Out" the errors to which a high spirit and the love of party are apt to lead have been made the subject of correction, and it is hoped that the common fault of making the most mischievous characters appear the most *active* and the most ingenious, has been as much as possible avoided. *Unsuccessful* cunning will not be admired, and cannot induce imitation.

It has been attempted, in these stories, to provide antidotes against ill-humour, the epidemic rage for dissipation, and the fatal propensity to admire and imitate whatever the fashion of the moment may distinguish. Were young people, either in public schools, or in private families, absolutely free from bad examples, it would not be advisable to introduce despicable and vicious

characters in books intended for their improvement. But in real life they *must* see vice, and it is best that they should be early shocked with the representation of what they are to avoid. There is a great deal of difference between innocence and ignorance.

To prevent the precepts of morality from tiring the ear and the mind, it was necessary to make the stories in which they are introduced in some measure dramatic; to keep alive hope and fear and curiosity, by some degree of intricacy. At the same time, care has been taken to avoid inflaming the imagination, or exciting a restless spirit of adventure, by exhibiting false views of life, and creating hopes which, in the ordinary course of things, cannot be realized.

THE ORPHANS.

NEAR the ruins of the castle of Rossmore, in Ireland, is a small cabin, in which there once lived a widow and her four children. As long as she was able to work, she was very industrious, and was accounted the best spinner in the parish; but she overworked herself at last, and fell ill, so that she could not sit to her wheel as she used to do, and was obliged to give it up to her eldest daughter, Mary.

Mary was at this time about twelve years old. One evening she was sitting at the foot of her mother's bed spinning, and her little brothers and sisters were gathered round the fire eating their potatoes and milk for supper. "Bless them, the poor young creatures!" said the widow, who, as she lay on her bed, which she knew must be her deathbed, was thinking of what would become of her children after she was gone. Mary stopped her wheel, for she was afraid that the noise of it had wakened her mother, and would hinder her from going to sleep again.

"No need to stop the wheel, Mary, dear, for me," said her mother, "I was not asleep; nor is it *that* which keeps me from sleep. But don't overwork yourself, Mary."

"Oh, no fear of that," replied Mary; "I'm strong and hearty."

"So was I once," said her mother.

"And so you will be again, I hope," said Mary, "when the fine weather comes again."

"The fine weather will never come again to me," said her mother. "'Tis a folly, Mary, to hope for that; but what I hope is, that you'll find some friend—some help—orphans as you'll soon all of you be. And one thing comforts my heart, even as I

am lying here, that not a soul in the wide world I am leaving has to complain of me. Though poor I have lived honest, and I have brought you up to be the same, Mary; and I am sure the little ones will take after you; for you'll be good to them—as good to them as you can."

Here the children, who had finished eating their suppers, came round the bed, to listen to what their mother was saying. She was tired of speaking, for she was very weak; but she took their little hands, as they laid them on the bed and joining them all together, she said, "Bless you, dears; bless you; love and help one another all you can. Good night!—good-bye!"

Mary took the children away to their bed, for she saw that their mother was too ill to say more; but Mary did not herself know how ill she was. Her mother never spoke rightly afterwards, but talked in a confused way about some debts, and one in particular, which she owed to a schoolmistress for Mary's schooling; and then she charged Mary to go and pay it, because she was not able to *go in* with it. At the end of the week she was dead and buried, and the orphans were left alone in their cabin.

The two youngest girls, Peggy and Nancy, were six and seven years old. Edmund was not yet nine, but he was a stout-grown, healthy boy, and well disposed to work. He had been used to bring home turf from the bog on his back, to lead cart-horses, and often to go on errands for gentlemen's families, who paid him a sixpence or a shilling, according to the distance which he went, so that Edmund, by some or other of these little employments, was, as he said, likely enough to earn his bread; and he told Mary to have a good heart, for that he should every year grow able to do more and more, and that he should never forget his mother's words when she last gave him her blessing, and joined their hands all together.

As for Peggy and Nancy, it was little that they could do; but they were good children, and Mary, when she considered that so much depended upon her, was resolved to exert herself to the utmost. Her first care was to pay those debts which her mother

had mentioned to her, for which she left money done up carefully in separate papers. When all these were paid away, there was not enough left to pay both the rent of the cabin and a year's schooling for herself and sisters which was due to the schoolmistress in a neighbouring village.

Mary was in hopes that the rent would not be called for immediately, but in this she was disappointed. Mr. Harvey, the gentleman on whose estate she lived, was in England, and, in his absence, all was managed by a Mr. Hopkins, an agent, who was a *hard man*.[1] The driver came to Mary about a week after her mother's death, and told her that the rent must be brought in the next day, and that she must leave the cabin, for a new tenant was coming into it; that she was too young to have a house to herself, and that the only thing she had to do was to get some neighbour to take her and her brother and her sisters in for charity's sake.

The driver finished by hinting that she would not be so hardly used if she had not brought upon herself the ill-will of Miss Alice, the agent's daughter. Mary, it is true, had refused to give Miss Alice a goat upon which she had set her fancy; but this was the only offence of which she had been guilty, and at the time she refused it her mother wanted the goat's milk, which was the only thing she then liked to drink.

Mary went immediately to Mr. Hopkins, the agent, to pay her rent; and she begged of him to let her stay another year in her cabin; but this he refused. It was now September 25th, and he said that the new tenant must come in on the 29th, so that she must quit it directly. Mary could not bear the thoughts of begging any of the neighbours to take her and her brother and sisters in *for charity's sake*; for the neighbours were all poor enough themselves. So she bethought herself that she might find shelter in the ruins of the old castle of Rossmore where she and her brother, in better times, had often played at hide and seek. The kitchen and two other rooms near it were yet covered in tolerably well; and a little thatch, she thought, would make them comfortable through

1 A hard-hearted man.

the winter. The agent consented to let her and her brother and sisters go in there, upon her paying him half a guinea in hand, and promising to pay the same yearly.

Into these lodgings the orphans now removed, taking with them two bedsteads, a stool, chair and a table, a sort of press, which contained what little clothes they had, and a chest in which they had two hundred of meal. The chest was carried for them by some of the charitable neighbours, who likewise added to their scanty stock of potatoes and turf what would make it last through the winter.

These children were well thought of and pitied, because their mother was known to have been all her life honest and industrious. "Sure," says one of the neighbours, "we can do no less than give a helping hand to the poor orphans, that are so ready to help themselves." So one helped to thatch the room in which they were to sleep, and another took their cow to graze upon his bit of land on condition of having half the milk; and one and all said they should be welcome to take share of their potatoes and buttermilk if they should find their own ever fall short.

The half-guinea which Mr. Hopkins, the agent, required for letting Mary into the castle, was part of what she had to pay to the schoolmistress, to whom above a guinea was due. Mary went to her, and took her goat along with her, and offered it in part of payment of the debt, but the schoolmistress would not receive the goat. She said that she could afford to wait for her money till Mary was able to pay it; that she knew her to be an honest, industrious little girl, and she would trust her with more than a guinea. Mary thanked her; and she was glad to take the goat home again, as she was very fond of it.

Being now settled in their house, they went every day regularly to work; Maud spun nine cuts a day, besides doing all that was to be done in the house; Edmund got fourpence a day by his work; and Peggy and Annie earned twopence apiece at the paper-mills near Navan, where they were employed to sort rags, and to cut them into small pieces.

When they had done work one day, Annie went to the master of the paper-mill and asked him if she might have two sheets of large white paper which were lying on the press. She offered a penny for the paper; but the master would not take anything from her, but gave her the paper when he found that she wanted it to make a garland for her mother's grave. Annie and Peggy cut out the garland, and Mary, when it was finished, went along with them and Edmund to put it up. It was just a month after their mother's death.

It happened, at the time the orphans were putting up this garland, that two young ladies, who were returning home after their evening walk, stopped at the gate of the churchyard to look at the red light which the setting sun cast upon the window of the church. As the ladies were standing at the gate, they heard a voice near them crying, "O, mother! mother! are you gone for ever?" They could not see anyone, so they walked softly round to the other side of the church, and there they saw Mary kneeling beside a grave, on which her brothers and sisters were hanging their white garlands.

The children all stood still when they saw the two ladies passing near them; but Mary did not know anybody was passing, for her face was hid in her hands.

Isabella and Caroline (so these ladies were called) would not disturb the poor children; but they stopped in the village to inquire about them. It was at the house of the schoolmistress that they stopped, and she gave them a good account of these orphans. She particularly commended Mary's honesty, in having immediately paid all her mother's debts to the utmost farthing, as far as her money would go. She told the ladies how Mary had been turned out of her house, and how she had offered her goat, of which she was very fond, to discharge a debt due for her schooling; and, in short, the schoolmistress, who had known Mary for several years, spoke so well of her that these ladies resolved that they would go to the old castle of Rossmore to see her the next day.

When they went there, they found the room in which the children lived as clean and neat as such a ruined place could be made. Edmund was out working with a farmer, Mary was spinning, and her little sisters were measuring out some bogberries, of which they had gathered a basketful, for sale. Isabella, after telling Mary what an excellent character she had heard of her, inquired what it was she most wanted; and Mary said that she had just worked up all her flax, and she was most in want of more flax for her wheel.

Isabella promised that she would send her a fresh supply of flax, and Caroline bought the bogberries from the little girls, and gave them money enough to buy a pound of coarse cotton for knitting, as Mary said that she could teach them how to knit.

The supply of flax, which Isabella sent the next day, was of great service to Mary, as it kept her in employment for above a month; and when she sold the yarn which she had spun with it, she had money enough to buy some warm flannel for winter wear. Besides spinning well, she had learned at school to do plain work tolerably neatly, and Isabella and Caroline employed her to work for them; by which she earned a great deal more than she could by spinning. At her leisure hours she taught her sisters to read and write; and Edmund, with part of the money which he earned by his work out of doors, paid a schoolmaster for teaching him a little arithmetic. When the winter nights came on, he used to light his rush candles for Mary to work by. He had gathered and stripped a good provision of rushes in the month of August, and a neighbour gave him grease to dip them in.

One evening, just as he had lighted his candles, a footman came in, who was sent by Isabella with some plain work to Mary. This servant was an Englishman, and he was but newly come over to Ireland. The rush candles caught his attention; for he had never seen any of them before, as he came from a part of England where they were not used. Edmund, who was ready to oblige, and proud that his candles were noticed showed the

Englishman how they were made, and gave him a bundle of rushes.[2]

The servant was pleased with his good nature in this trifling instance, and remembered it long after it was forgotten by Edmund. Whenever his master wanted to send a messenger anywhere, Gilbert (for that was the servant's name) always employed his little friend Edmund, whom, upon further acquaintance, he liked better and better. He found that Edmund was both quick and exact in executing commissions.

One day, after he had waited a great while at a gentleman's house for an answer to a letter, he was so impatient to get home that he ran off without it. When he was questioned by Gilbert why he did not bring an answer, he did not attempt to make any excuse; he did not say, "*There was no answer, please your honour*," or, "*They bid me not to wait*," etc.; but he told exactly the truth; and though Gilbert scolded him for being so impatient as not to wait, yet his telling the truth was more to the boy's advantage than any excuse he could have made. After this he was always believed when he said, "*There was no answer*," or, "*They bid me not wait*"; for Gilbert knew that he would not tell a lie to save himself from being scolded.

The orphans continued to assist one another in their work according to their strength and abilities; and they went on in this manner for three years. With what Mary got by her spinning and plain work, and Edmund by leading of cart-horses, going on errands, etc., and with little Peggy and Anne's earnings, the

2 "The proper species of rush," says White, in his 'Natural History of Selborne,' "seems to be the Juncus effusus, or common soft rush, which is to be found in moist pastures, by the sides of streams, and under hedges. These rushes are in best condition in the height of summer, but may be gathered so as to serve the purpose well quite on to autumn. The largest and longest are the best. Decayed labourers, women, and children make it their business to procure and prepare them. As soon as they are cut, they must be flung into water, and kept there; for otherwise they will dry and shrink, and the peel will not run. When these junci are thus far prepared, they must lie out on the grass to be bleached and take the dew for some nights, and afterwards be dried in the sun. Some address is required in dipping these rushes in the scalding fat or grease; but this knack is also to be attained by practice. A pound of common grease may be procured for fourpence, and about six pounds of grease will dip a pound of rushes and one pound of rushes may be bought for one shilling; so that a pound of rushes, medicated and ready for use, will cost three shillings."

family contrived to live comfortably. Isabella and Caroline often visited them, and sometimes gave them clothes, and sometimes flax or cotton for their spinning and knitting; and these children did not *expect*, that because the ladies did something for them, they should do everything. They did not grow idle or wasteful.

When Edmund was about twelve years old, his friend Gilbert sent for him one day, and told him that his master had given him leave to have a boy in the house to assist him, and that his master told him he might choose one in the neighbourhood. Several were anxious to get into such a good place: but Gilbert said that he preferred Edmund before them all, because he knew him to be an industrious, honest, good natured lad, who always told the truth. So Edmund went into service at the vicarage; and his master was the father of Isabella and Caroline. He found his new way of life very pleasant; for he was well fed, well clothed, and well treated; and he every day learned more of his business, in which at first he was rather awkward. He was mindful to do all that Mr. Gilbert required of him; and he was so obliging to all his fellow-servants that they could not help liking him. But there was one thing which was at first rather disagreeable to him: he was obliged to wear shoes and stockings, and they hurt his feet. Besides this, when he waited at dinner he made such a noise in walking that his fellow-servants laughed at him. He told his sister Mary of his distress, and she made for him, after many trials, a pair of cloth shoes, with soles of platted hemp.[3] In these he could walk without making the least noise; and as these shoes could not be worn out of doors, he was always sure to change them before he went out; and consequently he had always clean shoes to wear in the house.

It was soon remarked by the men-servants that he had left off clumping so heavily, and it was observed by the maids that he never dirtied the stairs or passages with his shoes. When he was praised for these things, he said it was his sister Mary who

3 The author has seen a pair of shoes, such as here described, made in a few hours.

should be thanked, and not he; and he showed the shoes which she had made for him.

Isabella's maid bespoke a pair immediately, and sent Mary a piece of pretty calico for the outside. The last-maker made a last for her, and over this Mary sewed the calico vamps tight. Her brother advised her to try platted packthread instead of hemp for the soles; and she found that this looked more neat than the hemp soles, and was likely to last longer. She platted the packthread together in strands of about half an inch thick, and these were served firmly together at the bottom of the shoe. When they were finished they fitted well, and the maid showed them to her mistress.

Isabella and Caroline were so well pleased with Mary's ingenuity and kindness to her brother, that they bespoke from her two dozen of these shoes, and gave her three yards of coloured fustian to make them of, and galloon for the binding. When the shoes were completed, Isabella and Caroline disposed of them for her amongst their acquaintance, and got three shillings a pair for them. The young ladies, as soon as they had collected the money, walked to the old castle, where they found everything neat and clean as usual. They had great pleasure in giving to this industrious girl the reward of her ingenuity, which she received with some surprise and more gratitude. They advised her to continue the shoemaking trade, as they found the shoes were liked, and they knew that they could have a sale for them at the Repository in Dublin.

Mary, encouraged by these kind friends, went on with her little manufacture with increased activity. Peggy and Anne platted the packthread, and basted the vamps and linings together ready for her. Edmund was allowed to come home for an hour every morning, provided he was back again before eight o'clock. It was summer time, and he got up early, because he liked to go home to see his sisters, and he took his share in the manufactory. It was his business to hammer the soles flat: and as soon as he came home every morning he performed his task with so much

cheerfulness and sang so merrily at his work, that the hour of his arrival was always an hour of joy to the family.

Mary had presently employment enough upon her hands. Orders came to her for shoes from many families in the neighbourhood, and she could not get them finished fast enough. She, however, in the midst of her hurry, found time to make a very pretty pair, with neat roses, as a present for her schoolmistress, who, now that she saw her pupil in a good way of business, consented to receive the amount of her old debt. Several of the children who went to her school were delighted with the sight of Mary's present, and went to the little manufactory at Rossmore Castle, to find out how these shoes were made. Some went from curiosity, others from idleness; but when they saw how happy the little shoemakers seemed whilst busy at work, they longed to take some share in what was going forward. One begged Mary to let her plat some packthread for the soles; another helped Peggy and Anne to baste in the linings; and all who could get employment were pleased, for the idle ones were shoved out of the way. It became a custom with the children of the village to resort to the old castle at their play hours; and it was surprising to see how much was done by ten or twelve of them, each doing but a little at a time.

One morning Edmund and the little manufacturers were assembled very early, and they were busy at their work, all sitting round the meal chest, which served them for a table.

"My hands must be washed," said George, a little boy who came running in; "I ran so fast that I might be in time, to go to work along with you all, that I tumbled down, and look how I have dirtied my hands. Most haste worst speed. My hands must be washed before I can do anything."

Whilst George was washing his hands, two other little children, who had just finished their morning's work, came to him to beg that he would blow some soap bubbles for them, and they were all three eagerly blowing bubbles, and watching them mount into the air, when suddenly they were startled by a noise as loud

as thunder. They were in a sort of outer court of the castle, next to the room in which all their companions were at work, and they ran precipitately into the room, exclaiming, "Did you hear that noise?"

"I thought I heard a clap of thunder," said Mary, "but why do you look so frightened?"

As she finished speaking, another and a louder noise, and the walls round about them shook. The children turned pale and stood motionless; but Edmund threw down his hammer, and ran out to see what was the matter. Mary followed him, and they saw that a great chimney of the old ruins at the farthest side of the castle had fallen down, and this was the cause of the prodigious noise.

The part of the castle in which they lived seemed, as Edmund said, to be perfectly safe; but the children of the village were terrified, and thinking that the whole would come tumbling down directly, they ran to their homes as fast as they could. Edmund, who was a courageous lad, and proud of showing his courage, laughed at their cowardice; but Mary, who was very prudent, persuaded her brother to ask an experienced mason, who was building at his master's, to come and give his opinion, whether their part of the castle was safe to live in or not. The mason came, and gave it as his opinion that the rooms they inhabited might last through the winter but that no part of the ruins could stand another year. Mary was sorry to leave a place of which she had grown fond, poor as it was, having lived in it in peace and contentment ever since her mother's death, which was now nearly four years; but she determined to look out for some other place to live in; and she had now money enough to pay the rent of a comfortable cabin. Without losing any time, she went to the village that was at the end of the avenue leading to the vicarage, for she wished to get a lodging in this village because it was so near to her brother, and to the ladies who had been so kind to her. She found that there was one newly built house in this village unoccupied; it belonged to Mr. Harvey, her landlord, who

was still in England; it was slated, and neatly fitted up inside; but the rent of it was six guineas a year, and this was far above what Mary could afford to pay. Three guineas a year she thought was the highest rent for which she could venture to engage. Besides, she heard that several proposals had been made to Mr. Harvey for this house, and she knew that Mr. Hopkins, the agent, was not her friend; therefore she despaired of getting it. There was no other to be had in this village. Her brother was still more vexed than she was, that she could not find a place near him. He offered to give a guinea yearly towards the rent out of his wages; and Mr. Gilbert spoke about it for him to the steward, and inquired whether, amongst any of those who had given in proposals, there might not be one who would be content with a part of the house, and who would join with Mary in paying the rent. None could be found but a woman, who was a great scold, and a man who was famous for going to law about every trifle with his neighbours. Mary did not choose to have anything to do with these people. She did not like to speak either to Miss Isabella or Caroline about it, because she was not of an encroaching temper; and when they had done so much for her, she would have been ashamed to beg for more. She returned home to the old castle, mortified that she had no good news to tell Anne and Peggy, who she knew expected to hear that she had found a nice house for them in the village near their brother.

"Bad news for you, Peggy," cried she, as soon as she got home. "And bad news for you, Mary," replied her sisters, who looked very sorrowful.

"What's the matter?"

"Your poor goat is dead," replied Peggy. "There she is, yonder, lying under the great corner stone; you can just see her leg. We cannot lift the stone from off her, it is so heavy. Betsy [one of the neighbour's girls] says she remembers, when she came to us to work early this morning, she saw the goat rubbing itself, and butting with its horns against that old tottering chimney."

"Many's the time," said Mary, "that I have driven the poor

thing away from that place; I was always afraid she would shake that great ugly stone down upon her at last."

The goat, who had long been the favourite of Mary and her sisters, was lamented by them all. When Edmund came, he helped them to move the great stone from off the poor animal, who was crushed so as to be a terrible sight. As they were moving away this stone in order to bury the goat, Anne found an odd-looking piece of money, which seemed neither like a halfpenny, nor a shilling, nor a guinea.

"Here are more, a great many more of them," cried Peggy; and upon searching amongst the rubbish, they discovered a small iron pot, which seemed as if it had been filled with these coins, as a vast number of them were found about the spot where it fell. On examining these coins, Edmund thought that several of them looked like gold, and the girls exclaimed with great joy—"Oh, Mary! Mary! this is come to us just in right time—now you can pay for the slated house. Never was anything so lucky!"

But Mary, though nothing could have pleased her better than to have been able to pay for the house, observed that they could not honestly touch any of this treasure, as it belonged to the owner of the castle. Edmund agreed with her, that they ought to carry it all immediately to Mr. Hopkins, the agent. Peggy and Anne were convinced by what Mary said, and they begged to go along with her and their brother, to take the coins to Mr. Hopkins. On their way they stopped at the vicarage, to show the treasure to Mr. Gilbert, who took it to the young ladies, Isabella and Caroline, and told them how it had been found.

It is not only by their superior riches, but it is yet more by their superior knowledge, that persons in the higher rank of life may assist those in a lower condition.

Isabella, who had some knowledge of chemistry, discovered, by touching the coins with nitric acid, that several of them were of gold, and consequently of great value. Caroline also found out that many of the coins were very valuable as curiosities. She recollected her father's having shown to her the prints of the coins

at the end of each king's reign, in "Rapin's History of England;" and upon comparing these impressions with the coins found by the orphans, she perceived that many of them were of the reign of Henry the Seventh, which, from their scarcity, were highly appreciated by numismatic collectors.

Isabella and Caroline, knowing something of the character of Mr. Hopkins, the agent, had the precaution to count the coins, and to mark each of them with a cross, so small that it was scarcely visible to the naked eye, though it was easily to be seen through a magnifying glass. They also begged that their father, who was well acquainted with Mr. Harvey, the gentleman to whom Rossmore Castle belonged, to write to him, and tell him how well these orphans had behaved about the treasure which they had found. The value of the coins was estimated at about thirty or forty guineas.

A few days after the fall of the chimney at Rossmore Castle, as Mary and her sisters were sitting at their work, there came hobbling in an old woman, leaning on a crab stick, that seemed to have been newly cut. She had a broken tobacco-pipe in her mouth; her head was wrapped up in two large red and blue handkerchiefs, with their crooked corners hanging far down over the back of her neck, no shoes on her broad feet, nor stockings on her many-coloured legs. Her petticoat was jagged at the bottom, and the skirt of her gown turned up over her shoulders, to serve instead of a cloak, which she had sold for whisky. This old woman was well known amongst the country people by the name of *Goody Grope*:[4] because she had, for many years, been in the habit of groping in old castles, and in moats,[5] and at the bottom of a round tower [6] in the neighbourhood, in search of treasure. In her youth she had heard someone talking, in a whisper, of an old prophecy, found in a bog, which said that before many "St. Patrick's days should

4 *Goody* is not a word used in Ireland. *Collyogh* is the Irish appellation of an old woman: but as *Collyogh* might sound strangely to English ears, we have translated it by the word Goody.

5 What are in Ireland called moats, are, in England, called Danish mounds, or barrows.

6 Near Kells, in Ireland, there is a round tower, which was in imminent danger of being pulled down by an old woman's rooting at its foundation, in hopes of finding treasure.

come about, There would be found a treasure under ground, by one within twenty miles round."

This prophecy made a deep impression upon her. She also dreamed of it three times: and as the dream, she thought, was a sure token that the prophecy was to come true, she, from that time forwards, gave up her spinning-wheel and her knitting, and could think of nothing but hunting for the treasure, that was to be found by one "within twenty miles round."

Year after year St. Patrick's day came about, without her ever finding a farthing by all her groping; and as she was always idle, she grew poorer and poorer. Besides, to comfort herself for her disappointments, and to give her spirits for fresh searches, she took to drinking. She sold all she had by degrees; but still she fancied that the lucky day would come sooner or later, *that would pay for all*.

Goody Grope, however, reached her sixtieth year, without ever seeing this lucky day; and now, in her old age, she was a beggar, without a house to shelter her, a bed to lie on, or food to put into her mouth, but what she begged from the charity of those who had trusted more than she had to industry and less to *luck*.

"Ah, Mary, honey! give me a potato and a sup of something, for the love o' mercy; for not a bit have I had all day, except half a glass of whisky and a halfpenny worth of tobacco!"

Mary immediately set before her some milk, and picked a good potato out of the bowl for her. She was sorry to see such an old woman in such a wretched condition. Goody Grope said she would rather have spirits of some kind or other than milk; but Mary had no spirits to give her; so she sat herself down close to the fire, and after she had sighed and groaned and smoked for some time, she said to Mary, "Well, and what have you done with the treasure you had the luck to find?" Mary told her that she had carried it to Mr. Hopkins, the agent.

"That's not what I would have done in your place," replied the old woman. "When good luck came to you, what a shame to turn your back upon it! But it is idle talking of what's done—