

NO TIME
LIKE THE PRESENT.

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BY MARY ELLIOTT.  
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NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT.

GEORGE and RICHARD were the best friends in the world. Both possessed good tempers and kind hearts; they did not quarrel with their playmates, nor tell falsehoods; their parents loved them dearly; their young friends always felt happy when they came to join them in play, and few boys were better spoken of than these merry little fellows.

But, though both were thus good, one was better than the other. Richard was kind and gentle as George; but he was not always so steady,—not always so ready to do his duty; for he was sometimes foolish enough to delay doing what his own good sense told him should be done at once.

This fault is a very great one, and is sure to lead to mischief, as Richard too often found; and at these times he was very sorry, very sorry indeed, and would say to himself, “I will try to conquer this bad habit;” but, although he did in truth mean to do

so, yet the good resolve did not last so long as it ought to have done ; and in a short time Richard would be again faulty, thinking that he might do what pleased him best to-day, for to-morrow would be time enough to do his duty.

Now, George, who was just as cheerful as Richard, would never indulge himself in play till he had done all his friends told or wished him to do ; and by this means he did not incur blame, as Richard did ; yet he had quite as much time to join his young friends in their sports, and to enjoy them, be-

cause he knew the time was all his own.

It grieved George very much that Richard did not act like himself, for he loved him as a brother, and felt a brother's grief when he was in disgrace.

This sad habit was almost the only one that Richard owned,—many tears it cost him; and once he was so vexed with himself, that he did try to get the better of it, and made up his mind to attend to all his duties before he would indulge in play; and, while he did so, no child could be more happy than Ri-

chard. George too felt great delight when he saw the change, and was sure his young friend would never do wrong again : but it is sad to say, that this change did not last very long ; for Richard, in a few days, forgot the praises of his friends, and the pleasant feelings which their praises caused him ; he forgot, also, the sweet smile of his friend, who used to rub his hands with glee, when he said his lesson at school without one mistake.

One fine day, when a half-holiday left him at leisure to follow his own plans, he called upon George to join

him in a ramble ; but George was learning a task for the next day, and told him he must complete it before taking a walk. Richard was vexed that he denied his request, and turned away a little angry with his prudent friend ; but he soon came back again with a new kite his uncle had given him, and, as he knew George had great skill in flying kites, he thought the sight of this fine painted one must tempt him to lay aside the spelling-book ; so he held it up to his view, and tried to cause him to change his mind.

“ Yes,” said George, “ I see your

kite, and shall be glad to try its strength of flight; but, as I told you, I must first learn this lesson, and I do hope, dear Richard, that you are perfect in yours; for you have been so good lately, that it would grieve me to find you are going to play, and mean to leave your task till to-morrow."

"Well! and to-morrow is time enough!" said testy Richard: "I am not a dunce; half an hour is all I shall need to learn thirty words of spelling:" so he snatched up his kite, and set off towards the fields.

George shook his head, and saw

him depart with real regret; for, though he loved his careless friend, he could not but think him to blame. Richard looked back once or twice, and felt he was acting wrong; but his heart was proud: so he still went on, till he met Old Robin, a poor man, who lived in the village.

Robin was an honest, kind creature, and had worked very hard all his life; and, by the labour of his hands, had brought up his children in virtue: he did not gain riches by his labour, nor did he covet them; his children were good, and, now he was old, worked to maintain him;

so that Robin thought God showed him great mercy, and he felt grateful for the same : these feelings made him always look happy, and his face was never without a smile. All the young people in the village were glad to meet and talk with Old Robin.

When Richard saw him coming, he stopped to show his kite, for he knew his old friend took pleasure in all boys' sports ; but he soon saw that Robin's face was full of care, and his step not so firm as usual ; so he took his hand gently, and asked him why he looked so sad ?

Robin told his short story, which gave the kind-hearted boy much pain, for he could feel for the distress of others.

Robin said, that his eldest son was sick in bed, and not able to work, to pay his rent; so Robin, finding the landlord would not wait, took upon himself to pay his son's debt, which he could only do by selling his best cow; this grieved him very much, but he was too honest to leave the rent unpaid, when he had the means to discharge it; but, just as he made the promise of doing so, the cow died, and Robin

was worse off than ever, had he not put his trust in God, who is the helper of the poor; so he bade his son be of good heart, and then he wrote a simple letter, telling of his troubles, and asking the landlord to wait a little longer. He was on his way to the landlord, when he met Richard, and had more than a mile to go. The day was warm, and Robin's feeble limbs were too weak to carry him so fast as he wished; and when Richard heard him lament this weakness, he looked at his own legs, and thought how much sooner he could reach the house of Farmer

Barnes than poor old Robin, and he quickly made an offer of taking the letter, and saving the good man a fatigue he was so ill able to bear.

Robin cheered up when the kind boy made this offer; and, giving him the letter, added many blessings as he saw him jump over a gate, and run through the meadows.

For a time Richard forgot his kite, in the hope of serving Robin but, when he reached the first milestone, he was stopped by a group of playmates, who were also going to fly a kite: it was much larger than his own; and James, to whom it

belonged, made great boast of its size, and laughed at the smallness of Richard's.

Richard was a little vexed, and told the boaster, that, if he could have spared time, he could soon convince him that his small kite was a better flyer than James's large one.

James made a joke of this; and, being a silly boy, tried to rouse Richard's anger.

Most of the boys present liked Richard, for he was a kinder and better boy than the other; they, therefore, took his part, and said

they were sure his kite would mount the higher of the two, and they urged him to the trial.

At first he would not listen to them, for he thought of his errand to Mr. Barnes ; but some, who made light of a promise, and others, who wished to humble James, tried to coax him out of his good intent, and all were certain that his lesson might be learned in the morning.

“ Very true,” said Richard ; “ and for that matter I might rise early tomorrow, and carry this letter ; for I know the farmer was at market to-

day, and, perhaps, he may not return home before night.”

All agreed that this must be the case, and Richard tried to believe it was so ; yet he did not feel it was so certain as they said, and the more he thought, the more doubtful he became.

“ Well,” cried James, “ I see how it is ; he spends so much of his time with George, that he is getting quite as stupid, always talking about to-day, as if there were but one day in the year : for my part, I think it is best to do a little to-day, and a little to-morrow ; and not work like a

slave one day, that I may be idle the next day.”

Richard did not like to hear his friend blamed, and was going to explain, and tell the truth, that George never was, or wished to be, idle: but, by this time, his kite was off his shoulder, and the eager boys were urging him to the trial.

It is very shocking that children, who know better, should be tempted to do what is wrong, because they have not courage to resist the idle and badly-disposed. This was Richard's fault; and we shall find,

before this story is ended, that he had cause to repent such conduct.

The sun was going down, before the kite trial was over : all said that Richard's small one had soared much higher than the large one of James, and each took his way home, well pleased with the sport.

Richard was in high spirits at his success ; neither the letter, nor the lesson, came into his thoughts as he skipped over the fields. He stopped at the church-porch to tie his shoe-string, and, while doing so, a poor woman, with a baby in her arms,

asked which was the nearest road to the house of the Justice?

The tears were streaming down her cheeks, and she seemed very tired. It was not in Richard's way home, but, as she looked very sad and weary, he could not find in his heart to let her go alone, so he said he would show her the way. The poor creature thanked him, and said, "his kind voice and manner made her think of her dear boy; adding to her grief." Richard did not wish to pry into her affairs, so he was silent; but, as they walked on, she told him the story of her woe.

“ I have a sweet boy,” said she, “ not quite so old as yourself, and he is good as child can be, and, indeed, my greatest comfort ; but, this morning, I sent him to the next village to pay a small debt, and he never came back again. I was at work in the fields all day, and tired enough, as you may see ; but when I reached my cottage, and found no Billy there, my heart was nigh breaking ; I ran about asking my neighbours if they had seen him ; all I could learn was, that a gang of gipsies were seen on the road which he had to pass ; and much I fear

those wicked people have robbed me of my child. It is said, they were coming towards this village; and Billy's schoolmaster has given me a letter to the Justice, begging him to stop the gipsies, if they do pass this way."

Here the weeping mother shed a fresh flood of tears. Richard felt his own begin to flow, and when he saw how slowly she dragged along, and heard her baby moan in its sleep, he thought it was a pity she should go any further; so he said, if she would trust him with the letter, he would take it to Justice Hall, and

she might return home, as night was fast coming on. "And be certain," added Richard, "that I will come to your cottage early to-morrow, and tell you if there be news of the gipsies."

"Thank you, thank you, my good boy," cried the poor woman, "the widow's blessing be upon you. I will leave you to go on my errand, and gladly return home; for my baby is fretful and sleepy, and I am weary every limb."

Richard took the letter, and having pointed out a path that would be a short road to her village, he

put the letter in his pocket, and ran all the way to Justice Hall's house, where he left it in charge of the footman, whom he knew, and then away he set off to his own home.

Most gladly did the tired boy eat his supper and go to bed, where he soon fell asleep, and did not open his eyes till half an hour past six o'clock the next day.

Richard knew by the sun that it was quite time to be up, so he rubbed his eyes, and jumping out of bed, quickly dressed himself.

“Well,” thought he, “now tomorrow has come, I must be busy ;

for it must not be an idle day with me. I must first learn my lesson ; but then there is poor Robin's errand, he thinks it is now done, and will be looking every moment for an answer to his letter, so I believe it will be best to go to Farmer Barnes the very first thing I do ; after which, I shall have time enough for my lesson before breakfast."

Richard was soon on the road, but the clock struck seven ere he was half way there ; and he began to think it would have been better, had he done more the day before, and left less to do on this day ; but,

wishing was of no use, when the time was past ; he could only hasten on and try to make up for the time lost. When he came in sight of Farmer Barnes' house he stopped, and took the letter from his pocket ; but great was his surprise and dismay, when, on reading the address, he found it was not the right one, but that which should have been left for Justice Hall.

Tears rushed into his eyes, as he thought of the mischief his folly had caused, and he stood for some moments, not knowing how to act, whether to go on and tell Mr. Barnes

of the mistake, or return to the village and change the letters.

The prudent George had no such regrets ; he had no lesson to learn, and, therefore, rose early, that he might enjoy a long and pleasant walk before breakfast. He had walked through Farmer Barnes' fields, and was just turning back again, when he saw Richard leaning on a gate, his eyes fixed on a letter, and full of tears. At first, he thought he was looking on a book, and guessed it might be to learn the lesson he had been so silly to neglect that he might fly his kite ; but he quickly saw

something very painful was passing in his mind, so he went up to him, and, in a gentle voice, asked—what was the matter?

Richard, at first, felt shame in meeting his friend at such a moment, but he had too much good sense not to seek advice when he so much needed it, and in a few words he told all that had passed, as well as the sorrow he now felt for his conduct.

George, who was always ready to assist his friends, of whom Richard was the dearest, tried to raise the spirits of the humbled boy. “Mat-

ters are not so bad," said he, "but they may be mended; do you make haste back to our village, and call at Justice Hall's, where you can show this letter, and explain the mistake. I will go to Farmer Barnes, and try what can be done for old Robin: make haste, dear Dick, for we have no time to lose."

In ten minutes Richard was at his journey's end; his hand shook as he pulled the office bell; it did not sound, and he was going to ring a second time, when the Justice, who was walking in his garden, called to him by name, for he knew his parents well.

Richard made his bow, and, when asked what had brought him there, could only stammer out a few words, and give the poor woman's letter.

While Justice Hall was reading it, Richard stood, with downcast eyes, waiting to hear him speak ; at length he said, in a kind tone, " I see how it is, little boy, you have made a blunder, and left a wrong letter for me last night, but I hope all will be right in the end. I sent that letter to Mr. Barnes, by five o'clock this morning ; and, for the gipsies, I had them stopped yesterday for stealing poultry ; they will be brought before

me at ten o'clock, and, if the child is with them, he shall be sent back to his friends ; so make yourself easy on his account."

Richard felt some relief on hearing this ; and, having thanked his worship, and made his best bow, went back to his father's cottage.

"No thanks to me !" said Richard, "but I am grateful that my neglect has not caused more mischief ; and it will, indeed, be wicked, should I again act in the same way, or forget that, if to-day is spent idly, to-morrow will make us repent it."

KIND-HEARTED KATE.

“DEAR uncle John,” said little Kate,
“Pray will you for one moment wait
To hear a tale of woe ?

This poor young girl with tearful eye
Besought me as I passed her by,
Some trifle to bestow.

“Her home was once a happy place,
Where pleasure smiled on every face,
And tuned each laughing voice ;
But now within a wretched cot,
A poor and miserable lot
Forbids her to rejoice.

“ And only see how pale and sad,
And in what wretched garments clad,
 This little girl appears ;
Though still in years so very young,
Yet sorrow dwells upon her tongue,
 And bathes her cheek with tears.

“ Dear uncle John, do suffer me
Her friend and comforter to be—
 You always help the poor ;
She says, perhaps one loaf of bread
Might raise her mother from her bed,
 And health and strength restore.”

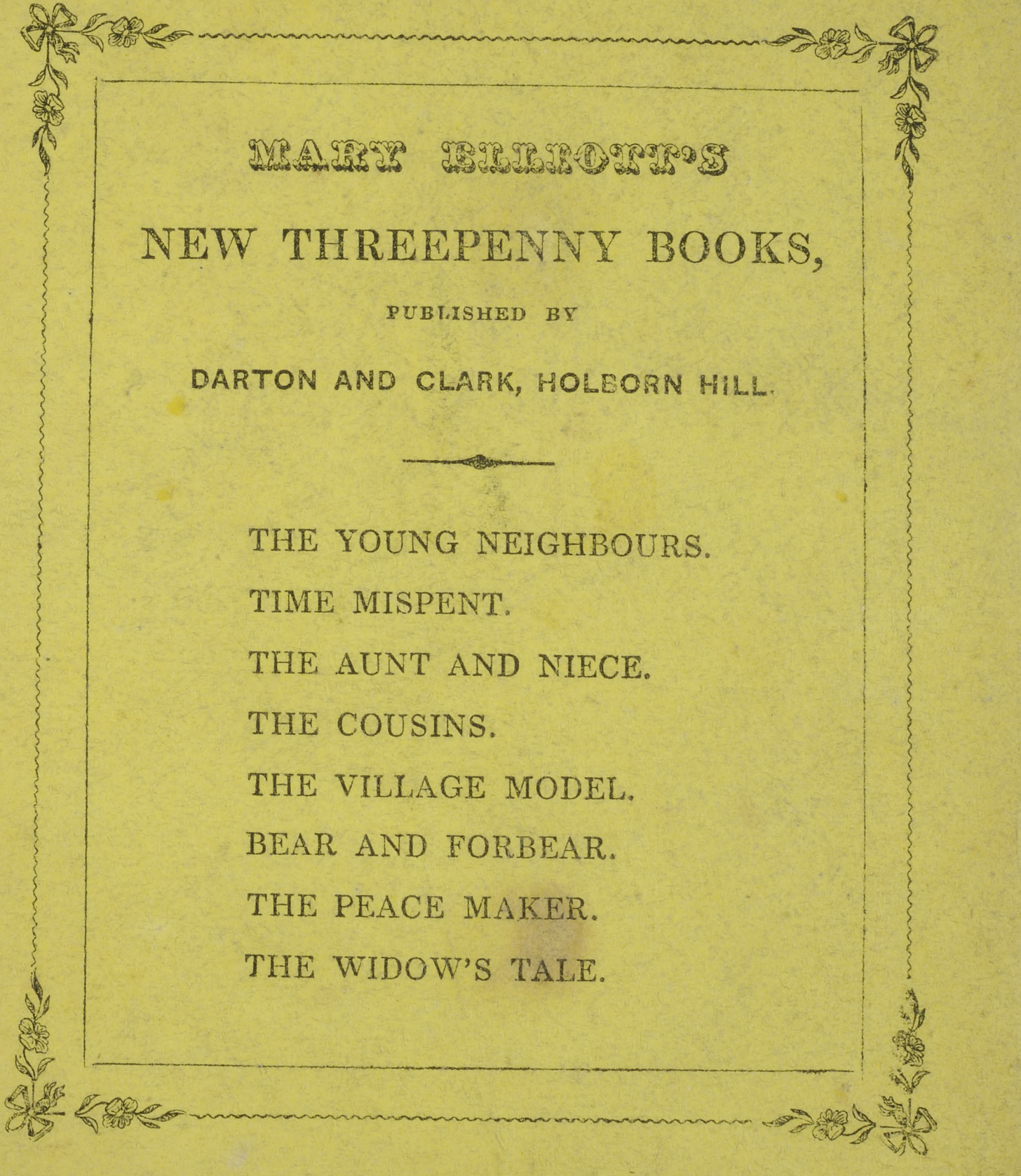
With ready hand and accents kind,
Did uncle John, whose heart and
 mind
Were bent on mercy mild,

His little Kate's petition grant,
And bade her to relieve the want
Of this poor orphan child.

But ah! it is not words can speak
The rapture that lit up *her* cheek,
When Kate beside her stood;
And gave a bright new silver crown,
Bidding her hasten to the town,
And buy her mother food.

“Poor little girl,” said Kate, as gay
She turned with uncle John away,
“Her mother now may live!
Oh! now, indeed, I do believe,
That it is truly ‘to receive
Less blessed than to give.’”

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