FENWICK ELIZA

THE BAD FAMILY & OTHER STORIES

Eliza Fenwick
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Содержание

E. Fenwick
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Introduction

Mrs. Fenwick, like Mrs. Turner (some of whose Cautionary Stories have already been published in this series), lived and wrote at the beginning of this century. Mrs. Turner practised verse, Mrs. Fenwick prose. I can tell nothing of Mrs. Fenwick's life, except that among her books were *Infantine Stories*, the *Life of Carlo*, *Mary and her Cat*, *Presents for Good Boys and Girls*, *Rays from the Rainbow* (an easy system of teaching grammar), and *Lessons for Children; or, Rudiments of Good Manners, Morals, and Humanity*. It is from the last-named book that the first ten of the following stories have been taken. It was a favourite work in its day, and not only was it often reprinted in England, but was translated into French: for little French children, it seems, need lessons too.

As for these *Rudiments*, although it was Mrs. Fenwick's purpose that they should lead to good conduct, it would satisfy their present editor to know that they had amused. That is why they are printed here, and also to show the kind of reading

prepared for the childhood of our great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers. In those days exaggeration was rather in favour with story-tellers; and we therefore need not believe that there was ever a family quite so bad as the Bad Family in this book, or a Good Family so good; or that Mrs. Loft (in 'The Basket of Plumbs') would have bought fruit from a household down with fever; or that a boy of ten could write so well as the hero of 'The Journal.' But after making allowances for exaggeration, we may take everything else as truth. As I said, these stories are included in this series chiefly to provide entertainment; but if they also have the use Mrs. Fenwick wished – if the misadventures of Frank Lawless keep us from robbing orchards, and 'The Broken Crutch' leads to the befriending of weary and wooden-legged sailors – why, so much the better.

The last two stories in this book, 'Limby Lumpy' and 'The Oyster Patties,' were not written by Mrs. Fenwick; but they seem to fit in here rather well.

E. V. LUCAS.
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The Bad Family

There is a certain street in a certain town (no matter for its name) in which there are two handsome houses of equal size. The owners of these houses have each six children, and the neighbours have named one the Bad Family, and the other the Good Family.

In the Bad Family there are three boys and three girls; and the servants, who are always much teased and vexed when they live where there are naughty children, speak of them thus: – the eldest they call Fighting Harry, the second Greedy George, and the youngest Idle Richard; the eldest girl is nicknamed Careless Fanny, the next Lying Lucy, and the youngest Selfish Sarah.

Master Henry indeed well deserves his title, for he thinks it a mighty fine thing to be a great boxer, and takes great pride and pleasure in having a black eye or a bloody nose. This does not proceed from courage; no, no: courage never seeks quarrels, and is only active to repel insult, protect the injured, and conquer danger; but Harry would be one of the first to fly from real danger, or to leave the helpless to shift for themselves. He knows that he is very strong, and that few boys of his age can match him, so he picks quarrels on purpose to fight, because his great strength and his constant practice make him almost sure to conquer. All his schoolfellows hate him, for such a boy can neither have a good temper, a good heart, nor good manners.

It is a pity he should be sent to school, for learning is thrown away upon him; he will be fit only to live with men that sweep the streets or drive carts and waggons, for with such coarse and vulgar habits, gentlemen will not endure him in their company.

George, the second boy, is always thinking of eating and drinking. He follows the cook from place to place to know what nice things she has got in her pantry. When there is any dainty on the dinner-table, his greedy eyes are fixed on it from the moment he sits down till he is helped, and then he grudges every morsel that any one else puts in his mouth. In his eagerness to get more than his proper share, he crams great pieces into his mouth until he is almost choked and the tears are forced from his eyes. He will get slily into the store-room and steal honey, sugar, or raisins; and in the pantry he picks the edges of the tarts and pies, and does a number of other mean tricks. When there is company at dinner, he watches the parlour-door till they leave it, and before the servants have time to clear the table, he sips up all the drops of wine that are left in the glasses, and will even eat the parings of apples and pears that lie on the dessert plates. If he has an orange or a cake, he runs into some dirty hole to eat it, for fear his brothers and sisters should ask for a piece. If he has any money given him, he spends it all at once, and crams and eats till he can scarcely move.

This greedy boy is always watched and suspected. No one will trust him in a garden, for he would eat till he made himself sick, or tear down the branches of the trees to get at the fruit. Nor can

he be allowed to pay any visits, for the manners of a glutton give great offence to all well-bred people. He has a sallow, ugly look, and is always peeping and prying about, like a beast watching for its prey.

Idle Richard, the third son of the Bad Family, is a great dunce. Yet he is very capable of learning well, if he chose to take the trouble, but he is fond of idleness and of nothing else. In the morning when he is called, though he knows it is time to get up, he will lie still, and after he has been called again and again, he is never ready in time for breakfast. At his meals he lolls upon the table, or against the back of his chair, and is just as slow and drawling in his manner of eating as in his learning. When he is sent to school, instead of looking at his book, he is gazing all round the room, or cutting bits of stick with his knife; sometimes he lays his head down on the desk and falls asleep, and then pretends to have the headache to excuse his idleness. His master is obliged often to punish him, and then for an hour or two he will learn very well, but next day he gets back to all his idle tricks, and does nothing; so that he is far below many boys that are much younger than himself. When other children go to play, he sits still or lies down upon the ground; he can take no pleasure, for he hates the trouble of moving, and there he sits yawning and pining for want of something to do. When he walks, he drags his feet along as if they were too heavy to lift up. His clothes are always dirty, for he will not brush them; his eyes are dull and heavy; he looks like a clown and speaks like a blockhead. Idle Richard is a

burthen to himself, and scorned by everybody.

Miss Fanny has got the title of Careless, because she minds no one thing that she ought. If she goes out to walk, she is sure to lose one of her gloves, or lets her bonnet blow off into the mud, or steps into the middle of some filthy puddle, because she is staring about and not minding which way she goes. At home, when she should go to work, her needle-book, or her thimble, or her scissors cannot be found; though she has a work-basket to put these things in, they are never in the right place.

At dinner she does not observe how her plate stands on the table, and perhaps her meat and all the gravy tumble into her lap. If she has a glass of wine, she spills it on her frock; if she hands a plate of bread and butter to any one, she is sure either to drop the plate, or to let the bread and butter fall upon the carpet. She wears very coarse clothes, for she cannot be trusted with good ones. At night when she undresses to go to bed, she throws her frock on a chair or the ground, instead of folding it neatly up, so that it is tumbled and not fit to put on the next morning. If she writes, she throws the ink about her clothes; if she tears a hole in her frock, she does not take a needle and thread to mend it directly, but pins it up; then perhaps the pin pricks her half a dozen times in an hour, and tears three or four more holes in the frock. If she has a book lent to her, she will let it fall in the dirt, or drop the grease of the candle upon the leaves. She is always a slattern and always dirty; she is a disgrace to herself and a burthen to her friends.

What a shocking name the next is – Lying Lucy! It is dreadful

to think that any one should deserve to be so called, but this wicked little girl deserves it, for she has no sense of honour, and seldom speaks the truth. Even when she does say what is true, on account of her having told falsehoods so long, people know not how to believe her, for who can depend upon the word of a Liar? If she would forbear for a whole month to tell a lie, there would be hopes of her amendment, and then her word might be taken. But till she leaves off this shameful practice, she must expect to be shunned and pointed at with scorn wherever she goes.

Selfish Sarah loves no one but herself, and no one loves her. She will not let her brothers or sisters or any other child play with her toys, even if she is not using them. She hoards up her playthings, and cannot amuse herself with them, for fear another should touch them. If she has more sweet cake or fruit than she can eat, she puts it by, and lets it spoil and get mouldy rather than give it away; or if she sees a poor child begging in the streets, without shoes, stockings, or clothes to cover him, she will not part with a halfpenny to buy him a bit of bread, though she is told that he is starving with hunger. She never assists any one, nor is ever thankful or grateful for what is done for her. She covets everything she sees, yet takes no real pleasure in anything.

The parents of these odious children never look happy, nor enjoy comfort. The brothers and sisters never meet but to quarrel, so that the house is always in an uproar. All abuse each other's vices, yet take no pains to cure their own faults. The servants hate them, the neighbours despise them, and the house is shunned as

though it had some dreadful distemper within. They live without friends; for no prudent persons will suffer their children to visit where they can learn nothing but wickedness and ill manners.

The Good Family

What a different picture the other house presents to our view! The parents of the Good Family are always cheerful and happy; the children love each other and agree together; the servants are content and eager to oblige, and visitors delight to come to the house, because they pass their time there with both pleasure and profit.

Manly Edward, the eldest son, is a fine youth, who makes himself the friend and protector of his younger brothers and sisters. Edward has true courage, for he will meet danger to help the helpless, to rescue the oppressed, or in defence of the injured; yet he tries to avoid all quarrels, and is very often the peacemaker among those who are engaged in a dispute. His manners are gentle and graceful. He shuns the company of the rude vulgar boys, yet insults no one by seeming to hold them in contempt. It is not fine clothes or money that he pays respect to, it is virtue and good manners; and if the poorest boy in the school has the most of these good qualities, he gains the most of Manly Edward's love and esteem.

Studious Arthur, the second son of the Good Family, does not learn quickly, but what he wants of that power he makes up by diligence. As he finds he cannot get his task by heart as fast as some other boys, he therefore fixes his whole thoughts on his book; and no calls to go to play, nor any sort of thing, can

draw him from his lesson till he has learned it perfectly. Arthur is seldom seen without a book in his hand; and if he goes out to walk, he puts one in his pocket, to be ready if he should chance to have a few minutes to himself. He never wastes any time, and by that means he gains a great deal of knowledge. He is so attentive that he never forgets what he reads and learns. Arthur will, no doubt, become a very wise man, and already he often finds the knowledge he has gained of great use to him. His parents commend him, his friends admire him, and his schoolfellows respect him.

Well-bred Charles, the third son, is also a charming boy. He is greatly remarked for his perfect good manners. He never forgets to behave with politeness wherever he is. In the company of his parents and their friends he is attentive to supply the wants of every one. He listens to the discourse, and when he is spoken to he answers at once in a lively, ready, and pleasant manner, but is never forward and talkative. When he has a party of playfellows, his mirth is not noisy and boisterous. He does not think, as some rude children do, that all play consists in screaming, shouting, tearing clothes, and knocking things to pieces, but finds plenty of sport for his little visitors without doing any of these things, and makes them as merry as possible. When cakes or fruit are sent into the playroom, he helps his guests all round before he touches any himself. He places them in the seats nearest the fire, or, in fine weather, where they can see the most pleasant prospect. As good manners always arise from a good temper and

a kind heart which desires to make others happy, so they are sure to promote good-humour and happiness. The play-parties of Charles, therefore, are never spoilt by disputes and quarrels. His visitors come with delight, and leave him with regret.

Well-Bred Charles is constantly attentive to the ease and comfort of those about him. He pays great respect and deference to people who are old. He never uses coarse words nor bad language, and always speaks civilly to servants. He does not enter the parlour with dirty hands and face, nor ever greases his clothes, for he knows that dirty habits are offensive, disgusting things, and therefore he carefully avoids them.

Some children put on their good manners with their best clothes, and think they need behave well only before company; but the politeness of such children is stiff, awkward, and troublesome, and they always forget themselves, and return to some of their vulgar habits, before they leave the company. It is the constant practice of good manners, at all times and in all places, that renders them easy, becoming, sweet and natural, like those of Well-bred Charles.

The daughters of this good and happy family are no less worthy of praise than the sons. The eldest girl, whom we may call Patient Emma, has the misfortune to suffer from illness. Sometimes she has severe pain, yet she bears it with patience and fortitude. She even tries to hide what she feels, that she may not afflict her kind parents; and the instant she has a little ease she becomes as cheerful as any one. She submits without

a murmur to take what medicines the doctors prescribe for the cure of her illness. She is not so foolish as to expect to find a pleasant taste in physic, but she expects that it will be of service to her; and she would rather have a bitter taste in her mouth for a few moments, than endure days, weeks, and months of pain and sickness. As peevish, fretful tempers often bring disease on the body, so a patient, even temper not only lessens all suffering, but helps to cure the diseases of the body; Miss Emma, therefore, will perhaps in a short time regain her health, and should such an event happen, what joy it will give to all who know, pity, and admire this excellent little girl!

Generous Susan thinks all day long how she can add to the happiness of others. It is her greatest pleasure to relieve distress, to do good, and to promote the comforts of all around her. She watches the looks of her parents, that she may fly to oblige them. If they are going out to ride in the coach, and there is not room enough for all the children, she will give up her place, that one of her brothers or sisters may go. She will at all times leave play, or decline paying a visit, to attend on Emma, her sick sister. She sits whole hours by her bed-side to watch her while she sleeps, and is careful to stir neither hand or foot, lest she should disturb her slumbers. When awake, she reads to her, talks to her, or sings to her, if that seems most to amuse her. She would gladly bear the pain herself, if it were possible so to relieve poor Emma.

When Susan has any money given to her, she does not treat herself with sweetmeats or toys, but buys something that will

be useful to her brothers or sisters. At other times she will buy a pair of shoes for a poor child that goes bare-footed, or purchase a book for some little boy or girl to learn to read in. Her mamma often gives her old frocks and gowns to bestow on some distressed family, and then Susan works with all her might for several days, to mend and make them up in the most useful manner: for she has been told that a poor woman who has two or three children to take care of, and goes out to daily labour, has not time to work with her needle, and perhaps does not know how to do it properly. When Susan has mended or made three or four little frocks, and sees the children neatly dressed in them, she feels more delight and pleasure than if she had twenty dolls of her own, clothed in silks and satins. Generous Susan has the blessing of the poor and the love of all her family.

Merry Agnes, the youngest child of the whole, is a fine, healthy, lively, sprightly, laughing little girl, who feels no pain, and has no cause for sorrow. She is a kind of plaything for her elder brothers and sisters, who all delight in her good-humour. They never tease, torment, and try to put her out of temper, as some children do to those who are younger than themselves, but they commend her goodness and strive to improve her. When they tell her not to do anything, she obeys them at once: for she sees that they are all gay, smiling, happy children, because they do what is right. If she wants to have what is not proper for her, she can bear to be denied, and skips away just as merry as before. This little girl will become very clever, for her brothers

and sisters take pleasure in teaching her what they have been taught, and she attends to their lessons, and improves by their advice. She knows that they are all good, and she wishes to be like them.

It is a fine sight to see this Good Family all together: for among them there are no sour looks or rude words, no murmurs, no complaints, or quarrels. No: all is kindness, peace, and happiness.

Foolish Fears

Mary Charlotte had a silly habit of screaming when she saw a spider, an earwig, a beetle, a moth, or any kind of insect; and the sound of a mouse behind the wainscot of the room made her suppose she should die with fright. The persons with whom she lived used to pity her for being afraid, and that made her fond of the silly trick, so that she became worse daily, and kept the house in a constant tumult and uproar: for she would make as much noise about the approach of a poor insect not much larger than the head of a pin, as if she had seen half a dozen hungry wolves coming with open jaws to devour her.

Mary Charlotte was once asked by Mrs. Wilson, a very good lady, to go with her into the country, and Mary was much pleased at the thought of going to a house where there was a charming garden and plenty of nice fruit. But the country is a sad place for people who encourage such foolish fears, because one cannot walk in a garden or field without seeing numbers of harmless insects.

Mrs. Wilson, with her coach full of guests, arrived at her country-house just before dinner, and as soon as that meal was over, Mary begged leave to go out into the shrubbery. It was a charming place, and Mary was quite delighted with the clusters of roses and all the sweet-smelling shrubs and flowers that seemed to perfume the air. But as she was tripping along, behold

on a sudden a frog hopped across the path. It was out of sight in a moment, yet Mary could go no farther; she stood still and shrieked with terror. At the same instant she saw a slug creeping upon her frock, and she now screamed in such a frantic manner that her cries reached the house. The company rushed out of the dining parlour, and the servants out of the kitchen. Mrs. Wilson was foremost, and in her haste to see what was the matter, she stumbled over a stone, and fell with such violence against a tree, that it cut her head dreadfully; she was covered with a stream of blood, and was taken up for dead.

It was soon known that the sight of a frog and a slug was all that ailed Miss Mary, and then how angrily and scornfully did every one look at her, to think that her folly had been the cause of such a terrible disaster. Mary Charlotte had not a bad heart, and when she heard Mrs. Wilson's groans of pain while the doctors were dressing her wounds, she wept bitterly, and sorely repented her silly unmeaning fears.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.