

**THE PARENT'S
ASSISTANT; OR, STORIES
FOR CHILDREN. VOL. II**

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The parent's assistant; or, Stories for children. Vol. II by Maria Edgeworth

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MARIA EDGEWORTH

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THE BIRTH-DAY PRESENT.

“MAMMA,” said Rosamond, after a long silence, “do you know what I have been thinking of all this time?”

“No, my dear.—What?”

“Why, mamma, about my cousin Bell’s birth-day; do you know what day it is?”

“No, I don’t remember.”

“Dear mother! don’t you remember it’s the 22d of December; and her birth-day is the day after to-morrow?—Don’t you recollect now? But you never remember about birth-days, mamma: that was just what I was thinking of, that you never remember my sister Laura’s birth-day, or—or—or *mine*, mamma.”

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“What do you mean, my dear? I remember your birth-day perfectly well.”

“Indeed! but you never *keep* it, though.”

“What do you mean by keeping your birth-day?”

“Oh, mamma, you know very well—as Bell's birth-day is kept.—In the first place there is a great dinner.”

“And can Bell eat more upon her birth-day than upon any other day?”

“No; nor I should not mind about the dinner, except the mince pies. But Bell has a great many nice things; I don't mean nice eatable things, but nice new playthings given to her always on her birth-day; and every body drinks her health, and she's so happy!”

“But stay, Rosamond, how you jumble things together! Is it every

body's drinking her health, that makes her so happy; or the new playthings, or the nice mince pies? I can easily believe, that she is happy whilst she is eating a mince pie, or whilst she is playing; but how does every body's drinking her health at dinner make her happy?"

Rosamond paused, and then said she did not know. "But," added she, "the *nice new* playthings, mother!"

"But why the *nice new* playthings? Do you like them only because they are *new*?"

"Not *only*—I do not like playthings *only* because they are new, but Bell *does*, I believe—for that puts me in mind—Do you know, mother, she had a great drawer full of *old* playthings that she never used, and she said that they were good for nothing, because they were *old*; but

I thought many of them were good for a great deal more than the new ones.— Now you shall be judge, mamma ; I'll tell you all that was in the drawer."

"Nay, Rosamond, thank you, not just now ; I have not time to listen to you."

"Well, then, mamma, the day after to-morrow I can show you the drawer : I want you to be judge very much, because I am sure I was in the right.— And, mother," added Rosamond, stopping her as she was going out of the room, "will you—not now, but when you've time—will you tell me why you never keep my birth day—why you never make any difference between that day and any other day?"

"And will you, Rosamond—not now, but when you have time to think about it—tell me why I should make any dif-

ference between your birth-day and any other day?"

Rosamond thought—but she could not find out any reason: besides, she suddenly recollected, that she had not time to think any longer, for there was a certain work-basket to be finished, which she was making for her cousin Bell, as a present upon her birth-day. The work was at a stand for want of some filigree paper, and as her mother was going out she asked her to take her with her, that she might buy some. Her sister Laura went with them.

"Sister," said Rosamond, as they were walking along, "what have you done with your half-guinea?"

"I have it in my pocket."

"Dear! you will keep it for ever in your pocket: you know my godmother, when she gave it to you, said you would

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keep it longer than I should keep mine ; and I know what she thought by her look at the time. I heard her say something to my mother."

"Yes," said Laura, smiling, "she whispered so loud, that I could not help hearing her too: she said I was a little miser."

"But did not you hear her say that I was very *generous*? and she'll see that she was not mistaken. I hope she'll be by when I give my basket to Bell—won't it be beautiful?—there is to be a wreath of myrtle, you know, round the handle, and a frost ground, and then the medallions——"

"Stay," interrupted her sister; for Rosamond, anticipating the glories of her work-basket, talked and walked so fast, that she had passed, without perceiving it, the shop where the filigree

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paper was to be bought. They turned back. Now it happened that the shop was the corner house of a street, and one of the windows looked out into a narrow lane: a coach full of ladies stopped at the door just before they went in, so that no one had time immediately to think of Rosamond and her filigree paper, and she went to the window, where she saw, that her sister Laura was looking earnestly at something that was passing in the lane.

Opposite to the window, at the door of a poor-looking house, there was sitting a little girl weaving lace. Her bobbins moved as quick as lightning, and she never once looked up from her work.

“Is not she very industrious?” said Laura: “and very honest too,” added she in a minute afterwards; for just then,