

Sedgwick, Catharine Maria. "Saturday Night," in *Stories for Young Persons*, 146-52, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1840.

## SATURDAY NIGHT.

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Ellen and Charles, two good and happy children, had just been undressed, and were jumping into bed, when their mother came into the room where they were. "Oh, come, mother," they both cried in the same breath, "and lie down by us, and tell us a story."

"Lie my side," said Ellen.

"Oh no, lie my side," said Charles.

"I cannot do both," said their mother.

"Then come between us," said Ellen; "that is the fairest way."

"Yes, that is the fairest way," said Charles; and both the children moved, and left a good place for their mother between them.

"Do, mother," said Ellen, "tell us a fairy story—you know I delight in fairies—now dancing over the flowers, without even bending their slender stems; and now hiding away in acorn cups. Oh! I wish I had lived in fairy-land. I should so have liked to have had a magic lamp, or a ring for a talisman, that would have pinched my finger when I did wrong."

"Pooh, Ellen!" exclaimed Charles, "you know there is no such place in reality, as fairy-land—is there mother?"

"I know that, as well as you do, Charles; but

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then there is no harm in talking of it, as if there were. That you call one of the pleasures of the imagination—don't you mother?"

Ellen's mother smiled, and said, "yes my dear; but when you are wishing for such a fairy gift as the wonderful ring you spoke of, do not forget that God has given you some thing much more wonderful, to you when you do right, and when you do wrong."

"You mean my conscience, mother," said Ellen; for her mother had so often spoken to her of conscience, that she very well knew what she meant.

"Now Ellen," said Charles, in a beseeching tone, "don't interrupt mother again; and do, mother tell me a story of a lion or a panther, or a faithful dog. A faithful dog, like that you read about in your Natural History, Ellen, is worth a sea full of fairies."

"Fairies live in the green wood, Charles, and not in the sea," said Ellen, a little hurt at Charles' contempt for her favourites.

"To-night I shall not tell you about either beasts, or fairies," said their mother.

"Oh it is Saturday night!" exclaimed Ellen; "I had forgotten that. A Bible story then—I am sure I think the story about Joseph, or that about Isaac, or the Prodigal Son, or Lazarus and his sisters, as interesting as a fairy story."

"They are a hundred times more interesting," said Charles.

Ellen's mother was glad to find that the true and instructive histories to find that the true and instructive histories from the good book interested her children as much as those stories were contrived to delight them. "My dear chil-

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ren," she said "I shall not tell you a story from the Bible, to-night; but relate an anecdote (which, you know, means a short story,) of some little children of our acquaintance.

“There are two children, who have a great and kind Friend, who is always taking care of them, whether they are awake, or asleep.”

“I suppose you mean their mother,” said little Charley, who was always impatient to get at the story.

“No, my love. This Friend gave them their father and their mother.”

“Oh you mean God!” whispered Ellen.

Her mother did not reply to her, but proceeded—“This bountiful Friend has given to them, the most beautiful and wonderful gems in the world; worth as Charles would say, a whole sea full of diamonds.”

“Gems, what are gems, mother?” asked Charles.

“Precious jewels, my dear. Those I am speaking of are very small, but so curiously formed, that as soon as the casket which contains them is opened, there is immediately painted on them a beautiful picture of all the objects towards which they are turned. If a landscape, like that you see every morning from your chamber window, there appear on the gems those beautiful mountains, that rise one above and beyond another; the mist that curls up their sides, as if, Ellen, to hide troops of your tiny fairies behind its silvery curtain; the bright lake which glitters in the depth of the valley, and which you call the mountain mirror, Ellen; the large orchards, with their trees, gracefully

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bending with their ruddy and golden fruit; the neat house opposite us, with its pretty curtain of vines hanging over the door, and rose bushes clustering about the windows.”

“What, mother!” exclaimed Charles, “all these things painted on a little gem?”

“Yes, Charles, all. The high mountain, and the rose-bushes, every leaf and bud of them; and then, if the gems are turned towards the inside of the house, the landscape

disappears, and all the furniture is painted on them, and the perfect pictures of their friends: not such pictures, as you see done by painters, looking grave and motionless; but smiling, speaking, and moving.”

“Oh, mother, mother!” exclaims Ellen, this is a fairy story after all.”

“Are there, in reality, any such gems?” asked Charles; who did not like that the story should turn out a fairy story.

“There are, my dear Charles;” and the same Friend, who gave the children these gems, has given to them, many other gifts, as wonderful. He has given to them an instrument, by which they can hear the music of the birds, the voices of their friends, and all other sounds; and another, by which, they enjoy the delicious perfume of the flowers; the fragrance you so often spoke of, Ellen, when the fruit-trees were in blossom; and the locust trees in flower, and the clover in bloom.”

“Oh what a generous Friend that must be,” said Charles, “to give such valuable presents, and so many of them! Are there any more, mother?”

“Yes, Charles, more than I could describe to you, if I were to talk till to-morrow morning;

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there is a very curious instrument, by which, they can find out the taste of every thing that is to be eaten; and another, that by just stretching out their fingers, they can tell whether a thing is smooth or rough, hard or soft.”

“Why, I can tell that with my fingers!” exclaimed Charles.

“Yes, my dear,” said his mother, “and cannot you taste, by putting food in your mouth? And is there not an instrument set in your head, by which, you can hear?”

“My ear, mother?” asked Charles.

“Yes, my child, your ear.”

And do you mean the eyes, by those wonderful gems?” asked Ellen.

“Yes.”

But, I am sure there is no painting in the eyes.”

“Yes, Ellen, every object you behold, is painted upon the part of the eye, called the retina; but that you cannot understand now; and you must let me go on with my anecdote of the two children. When they arose in the morning, they found that their Friend had taken such good care of them, when they slept, that they felt no pain; that their limbs were all active; and they could every moment receive pleasure from the precious gems, and instruments I have mentioned. They, both looked out of the window, and exclaimed “What a beautiful morning!” The little girl turned her gems towards her multiflora, now full of roses, and glistening with dew-drops, and she clapped her hands, and asked her brother, if he ever saw anything so beautiful; and he turned his gems to a  
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pair of humming-birds, that were fluttering over the honeysuckle, and thrusting their tiny pumps into the necks of the flowers, and as their bright images shone on his gems, he shouted, “Did you ever see anything so handsome?”

“You mean, mother,” said Charles, “that he *looked* at the humming birds, when you say he *turned his gems*?”

“Yes, my dear; and when he heard the pleasant humming they make with their wings, it was by the instrument set in the head, which you call the ear. There was not a moment of the day, but the children enjoyed some good thing, their Friend had given to them. They learned their lessons, by using the memories He had given to them; the books they read, delighted them, because their Friend had given to them minds by which they

understood them. They loved their parents, and relations, and companions, because their Friend had given them affections.”

“It seems to me,” interrupted Charley, “that Friend gave them every thing. It must be God, you mean, mother; for I know he gives us every thing we have.”

“Yes, my dear Charley; and I am sorry to say, these two children neglected their Friend. They had often been told by their mother never to get in bed without first kneeling and thanking him for all his gifts; but they did not think of him. They used and enjoyed the gifts, but they sometimes forgot the Giver.”

Ellen laid her head on her mother’s bosom. “Mother,” she said, “you mean us.”

“My dear Ellen,” replied her mother, “your

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conscience is like the ring, in the fairy tale. Yes, I did mean you and Charles. I was sorry, when I came into the room, to-night, to see you getting into bed, without saying your prayers. God has given you a voice, to speak my children. Your dog, Stumah, Charles, cannot speak, to thank God for anything he receives, but you can.”

“And I will,” said the good little boy; ashamed that he had been ungrateful and thoughtless. “Come, Ellen; we’ll jump up, and say our prayers; and,” he added, in a whisper; “we’ll speak for Stumah, too.”\*

\* This reply of the child is true.