

THE JUVENILE CULPRITS

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The juvenile culprits by George Mogridge

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GEORGE MOGRIDGE

**THE JUVENILE
CULPRITS**

Personages.

MR. AND MRS. FAIRLAND.

CHARLES. | ELIZA.

ROBERT. | FANNY.

JOHN THE FOOTMAN.



*Mrs. Fairland, Charles, Robert, Eliza, and
Fanny, seated at the breakfast-table.*

Enter Mr. Fairland.

Mr. Fairland. **W**ELL, children, you look very happy, and, I hope, are enjoying your breakfast: when you have done, I have something to say to you.

Robert. I wonder what it can be! Charles, can you guess?

Charles. No, Robert: but perhaps papa has some new book to read, or means to give a lecture on the globes.

Robert. Pooh! nonsense! it is not *that*, I am sure; for papa looks rather droll, and has a smile at the corners of his mouth; and whenever I see that, I know it is something diverting that is coming. I think he means to give us a holiday, or to play at cricket with us on the lawn when school-hours are over.

Mr. Fairland. No, Robert, it is neither the one nor the other.

Mrs. Fairland. I cannot help thinking, children, that your papa looks very grave.

Robert. Yes, mamma, so he does; but then he looks as though he *tried* to be serious; and indeed, mamma, he had a smile at the corner of his mouth. I will make haste and finish my breakfast.

Mr. Fairland. You need not be in so great a hurry; for what I have to say may not be quite so pleasant as you imagine.

Eliza. Now, Robert, do you think that papa is not looking serious? I am afraid we have done something wrong, and he is going to talk to us.

Robert. Well, Eliza, if any one has been

doing wrong, it must be you, or Fanny, or my brother : *I* have done nothing wrong, *I* am sure.

Mr. Fairland. Robert, you generally talk enough for your brother and sisters, as well as yourself. It would be well, if, on the present occasion, you could prove yourself as innocent as you think you are : but, indeed, you are so sure of it, that perhaps I ought not to doubt it.

Fanny. I do not think Robert would do any thing really wrong, willingly ; but he is sometimes giddy enough ; and is, perhaps, as much to blame now as any of us are. We all love a joke ; but if we have offended papa, that will be but a poor joke, however much we may have laughed at it.

Charles. If, papa, you think we have been idle this morning, mamma will tell you that we were at our books early ; and we can all say our lessons. Robert trifled a little ; but he learns his lessons so quickly, that he is generally ready before us.

Mr. Fairland. No, Charles, I have no complaint to make on that score ; and must ac-

knowledge, that, usually, you give me great pleasure by your attention to your studies. You appear, all of you, to have finished your breakfast in a very short time. Well, I must now tell you what I have to say; and hope you will be enabled to make a proper defence to the heavy charges I have against you, or to acknowledge your error, and give me a promise of amendment.

Fanny. My dear papa would not be so grave, if we had not been very naughty.—Mamma, I am afraid of having done something very wrong, though I really do not know what it is.

Mrs. Fairland. Your papa is going to tell you what it is, Fanny. But, whatever it may be, I must plead for you all, as far as is reasonable; for I do not know when you were more attentive than this morning.

Mr. Fairland. I am glad to hear that: but we must not pass by errors merely because some duties have been well performed. That my children should have such complaints brought against them, by perfect strangers, must appear extraordinary. But, as Robert

says *he is sure* he has done nothing wrong, we must, of course, pass him by : we should not punish the innocent with the guilty.

Robert. I am not so sure of it now, papa. But when I thought you smiled, I did not remember having done any thing wrong, and felt sure I had not ; but I begin now to be afraid.

Mr. Fairland. Well, as the breakfast-things are removed, put your chairs a little further from the table ; for I expect some friends.

Eliza, (rather impatiently.) But please, papa, not to let any one come till you have told us what we have done. What will they think of us !

Robert. No, papa, please not. I am sure, if I have done wrong, I will say that I have : but do not let any one come in.

Mr. Fairland. Why, my children, I can have no pleasure in making known your errors to others. But, on the present occasion, I can hardly dispense with company ; for in the adjoining parlour are six gentlemen,—if I may call them so,—ready to prefer their complaints ; and, judging from the injuries