

broken the law of his God. Let none of my readers deem his fault a small one, or think that little harm could come from a hungry boy's eating a single cake that had rolled to his feet. Ben's enjoyment was quickly over; what had pleased his taste had but whetted his hunger, and it seemed as if with that stolen morsel evil had entered into the boy. Every time that we yield to temptation we have less power to resist it in future. Many sinful thoughts came into the mind of Ben as he lounged through the streets. Never before had he so envied the rich, those who could feast every day upon dainties. With a careless eye he gazed into shops filled with good things which he could not buy. With a repining, discontented spirit he thought of his own hard lot. Why had his mother been taken from him? why had he been left to sorrow and want?

Then, in this dangerous state of mind, Ben began to consider how he could find means of supplying his need. He did not think now of prayer; he did not think of asking his heavenly Father to open some course before him by which he might honestly earn his bread. Ben remembered how that sharp lad, Dennis O'Wiley, had told him that he knew ways and means by which a lad could push himself on in the world. When Ben had repeated these words to his mother she had warned him against Dennis O'Wiley; she had said that he feared neither God nor man, and would end his days in a prison. Ben had resolved, in obedience to his parent, never to keep company with the lad; but, since stealing that pink sugared cake, Ben found his resolution beginning to waver. He could see no great harm in Dennis, as good-natured a fellow as ever was born; why should he not ask a bit of advice from a chap who seemed always to find out some way of getting whatever he wanted?

Alas, poor Ben! he had been like one standing at a spot where two roads branch off: the straight one leading to life, the broad one leading to destruction—his first theft was like his first step in the fatal downward road. But for a little incident which I am going to relate the widow's son might have gone from evil to evil, from sinful thoughts to wicked deeds, till his heart had grown hard and his conscience dead, and he had led a life of guilt and of shame to close in misery and ruin.

As Ben was sauntering down a street, half resolved to seek Dennis O'Wiley, his ear caught the sound of music. It came from an open door leading into an infant school. Ben, who dearly loved music, drew near and listened to the childish voices singing a well-known hymn. Very heavy grew the heart of the boy, and his eyes were dimmed with tears, for he heard the familiar words:

"O that will be joyful
When we meet to part no more!"

Ben's lips quivered as he murmured to himself, "That is the hymn my mother taught me."

What seeming trifles will sometimes change the whole current of our thoughts. The sound of that music brought vividly before the mind of poor Ben his mother's face as she lay on her sick-bed; the touch of her hand, her fond look of love, her dying words of advice to her son. It was as if she had come back to earth to stop her poor boy on his downward way. His thoughts were recalled to God and heaven, to that bright home to which he felt that his mother had gone, and where he hoped one day to join her—the blessed mansions prepared by the Saviour for those who love and obey him.

"Holy children will be there
Who have sought the Lord by prayer."

Ben turned away with almost a bursting heart. Heaven is not for the unholy, the disobedient, the covetous, for those who take what is not their own! If he went on in the fatal course on which he had entered that day he would never again meet his mother, he would never be "joyful" in heaven! Was it too late to turn back? Might he not ask God's forgiveness, and pray for grace to lead a new life?

"Yes," thought the penitent child, "I will never forget my mother's wishes, I will follow my mother's ways! With the very first money that I get, I will pay for the cake that I stole."

The strength of Ben's resolution was very soon put to the test. Scarcely had he made this silent promise when a carriage with a lady inside it was driven up to the school, and as there was no footman with it, and the coachman could not leave the box, Ben ran forward to open the door, and guard the lady's dress from the wheel. The lady smiled kindly on the child, and taking a penny from her bag, dropped it into his hand.

Here was a penny honestly earned; a penny that would buy two stale rolls to satisfy the hunger of Ben. Could it be wrong thus to spend it? Had he received it one hour before, Ben would have run to a baker's shop and laid out the money in bread; but conscience now whispered to Ben that he had a debt to discharge, that that penny by right was Betty's, and that his first duty was to pay for the cake which he had wrongfully taken.

"But I'm so hungry!" thought Ben, as he looked on the copper in his hand: "I will buy what I need with this penny, and pay my debt with the next. But yet," thus went on the struggle between self-will and conscience, "my mother taught me that to put off doing what is right is actually doing what is wrong. Often have I heard her say, when conscience points out a difficult duty, don't wait in hopes that it will grow easy." Ben turned in the direction of High-street, but before he had taken two steps on his way pride offered another temptation. "I can't bear to go up to Betty," thought Ben, "and tell her that I stole her cake!" He stopped short as the thought crossed his mind. "But can't I walk by her stall, and just drop the penny on it as I pass, and say nothing to bring myself shame?" A little reflection showed Ben that this could not be done. "She'd be a crying out again, 'Get away with ye,' she'd think I was fingering her cakes. Besides," here conscience spoke strongly once more, "does not the Bible tell us to confess our faults one to another? Is it not the brave—the right way to go straight to the persons we've wronged and tell them we're sorry for the past?"

It was a hard struggle for Ben, and when with a short, silent prayer for help he walked on again toward High-street, the child was more of a true hero than many who have earned medals and fame. He was conquering Satan, he was conquering self, he was bearing hunger and daring shame, that he might be honest and truthful.

Ben soon came in sight of Betty and her stall; it seemed to the boy that the wrinkled old face looked more cross and peevish than ever. A sailor was standing beside the woman buying some gingerbread. "Now or never," thought Ben, who did not trust himself to delay, now that his mind was made up. His face flushed to the roots of his hair with the effort that he was making; the child walked straight up to the stall, laid his penny upon it and said, "I took one of your cakes to-day—I'm sorry—there is the money for it!"

"Well, Ben Madden!" exclaimed the old woman in surprise, "you're an honest lad than I took you for—you mind what your mother taught you."

"Ben Madden!" cried the sailor, looking hard at the orphan boy, "that's a name I know well. Can this be the son of the sister whom I've not set eyes on these seven long years?"

"His mother was the widow of big Ben the glazier," said Betty, "who died by a fall from a window."

"The very same!" cried the sailor, grasping the hand of his nephew and giving it a hearty shake. "What a lucky chance that we met! And where's your mother, my boy?"

Tears gushed into poor Ben's eyes as in a low voice he answered, "In heaven."

The seaman's rough, hearty manner instantly changed; he turned away his head, and was silent for several minutes, as if struggling with feelings to

which he was ashamed to give way. Then, laying his brown hand on the shoulder of his nephew, he said in a kindly tone, "So you've neither father nor mother, poor child; you're all alone in the world! I'll be a father to you for the sake of poor dear Alice."

Fervently did poor little Ben thank God who had thus provided for him a friend when he most needed one and least expected to find! With wonder the orphan silently traced the steps by which his heavenly Father had led him. What a mercy it was that he had passed near the school—that he had heard the hymn, that he had resolved to be honest, and that his resolution had brought him to the cake woman's stall when the sailor was standing beside it! Had Ben delayed but for ten minutes he would never have met his uncle! Yes, in future life the orphan frequently owned that all his earthly comforts had sprung from the decision which he had been strengthened to make when, at the turning-point of his course, he had stood at the door of the infant school, listening with a penitent heart to the hymn which his mother had taught him!



THE YOUNG ROBINS.

Is a soft warm nest in a shady tree,
With bright little eyes and wings,
Sat a fine old bird with his children three,
Such tiny, sweet-tempered things!
And the old bird said to the dear little birds,
"I want you to learn to fly;"
And the little ones merrily chirped the words,
"Dear father, we'll try."

Now a little boy had a sum to-day,
And was told to go quickly through it;
But he pouted and cried, and was heard to say,
"He was sure that he could not do it."
Do you think that this boy was half as good
As the birdies that learned to fly?
He'd wiser have been—don't you think he would?
If he'd said, "I'll try, I'll try!"

TEN RULES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.

1. NEVER put off till to-morrow what can be done to-day.
2. Never trouble others to do what you can do yourself.
3. Never spend your money before you have it.
4. Never buy what you do not want because it is cheap.
5. Pride costs as much as hunger, thirst, and cold.
6. We never repent of eating too little.
7. Nothing is troublesome that we do willingly.
8. How much pain those evils cost us that never happen!
9. Take things by their smooth handle.
10. When angry, always count ten before you speak.

FAITH is the trust of the mind, for the blessing of justification, upon the obedience and death of the Son of God; and the ground of this trust is the excellence of the Saviour's obedience, and the worth and glory of Him who suffered.