

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

CONFIRMATION.]

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"Give to God your heart's devotion,
Give Him love both warm and true;
For each task that He appointeth
Let your strength be ever new.

In the power of the Messiah
I would bid you onward go;
In whole-hearted consecration,
Serving none but Christ below.

In whole-hearted consecration—
Yes, I say it once again—
Lest by keeping back a portion
Then your offering be in vain.

Give you all. O! give it freely,
For the gain is all your own;
In the King's all-glorious mansion
You will reap what here you've sown.

Plant your golden seeds of service
On the banks of time's wide shore,
And amid redemption-splendour
They will bloom for evermore."

—Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette.

BEN, THE GORDON BOY.

CHAP. VIII.—CONTINUED.

'What are you boys wanting?' asked the lodge keeper, running out.

'Please we wants to see the gentleman,' said Tom innocently.

'I don't know as Mr. Ingram will see you,' she said, looking at them very doubtfully; 'but you can go up to the back door and ask.'

'I was afraid as she was going to turn us back,' said Tom, in a relieved voice, 'but we're a respectable party. Now, lads, keep up your hearts, and put a good face on it.'

CHAP. IX.—CAUGHT.

Mr. Ingram was an early man, and having just finished his breakfast was sitting reading his morning paper as the servant entered.

'Please, sir, there are some boys asking to see you.'

'Who are they, and what do they want?'

They did not say what they wanted, sir; they are dressed something like soldiers, but I don't know who they are.'

'Boys dressed like soldiers? well, ask them into the library, I will see them there.'

As Mr. Ingram spoke he rose and walked across the hall to the library.

In another minute the boys were ushered in, headed by Tom. Ben came last, for he was feeling heartily ashamed of his share in the escapade.

'And what do you boys want with me?' asked Mr. Ingram, looking up and scanning their faces. He could not quite make them out. They were evidently not regular soldiers, and yet they looked much like them.

'Please sir,' said Tom, putting a bold face on it; 'we belong to the Gordon Boys' Home, and we ran away yesterday afternoon.'

'Ran away?' said Mr. Ingram sharply; 'what do you mean by doing that?'

'Indeed we're very sorry, sir,' said Tom in a penitent voice; 'we all feel as it was very wrong, and we came to ask if you'd be so kind as to help us to get back again.'

'Ran away, did you? and now you are very sorry for it. I should think you were and ought to be.'

The boys hung down their heads, and still did not know how Mr. Ingram would treat them. They all stood looking very abject and penitent.

'When did you leave the Home?'

'Yesterday afternoon, sir.'

'And where have you been since?'

'We walked as far as here last night, sir; and we slept in the barn near your lodge gates last night.'

'Well, you're a nice set of young fellows, to come to me this morning and coolly tell me that you took possession of my barn last night, and I suppose you are very hungry now if the truth was out.'

'Yes, sir,' said Tom meekly.

'But you haven't told me yet why you run away. Why was it? Didn't you get enough to eat?'

'Oh yes, sir, we had plenty of good food,' said Tom heartily, thinking how much he would like to sit down to one of the plentiful good meals at that very moment.

'Plenty of good food? Then why was it?'

'We didn't like the lessons, sir.'

'Oh! I see, you got idle and lazy, and wanted to try freedom, and you don't find it quite as pleasant as you expected. So now you want to go back, and you have come to me to help you.'

'Yes, sir, please,' said Tom.

Mr. Ingram rang the bell, and gave orders that the boys should be taken to the kitchen and have a good breakfast.

'Then, boys, I will speak to you again,' he added, turning to the runaways.

Mrs. Ingram came into the room at the moment and soon heard their story.

'Boys will be boys, my dear,' said Mr. Ingram; 'they just got tired of school, as many of us have done before them.'

'Yes, I dare say, but that is no reason why they should run away. I have been all over the Gordon Home, and am quite sure that they are well cared for. The boys ought to be thankful for the training which fits them so well for their after life.'

'We don't see that side of it when we are youngsters,' said Mr. Ingram. 'The boys must be dreadfully hungry. I don't think they have had anything to eat since dinner time yesterday. A good meal wouldn't hurt them.'

'You are incorrigible,' said Mrs. Ingram, laughing. 'Well I must go, and leave you and the boys to settle it between you.'

The cook at Mr. Ingram's was a kind-hearted soul, akin to her master in that respect, and the boys would not soon forget the good things she placed before them. They looked much less abject when they were once more summoned into Mr. Ingram's presence.

'Boys,' he said speaking in as severe a voice as he could command, 'I wish you to understand that I thoroughly disapprove of your conduct in running away from the Home. It would have been much more manly to have stuck to your work bravely; but I hope this will be a lesson to you never to dream of running away from duty again. As you tell me you are really sorry for what you have done, I should like to help you to go back to the Home as soon as possible, so here is a shilling each to pay your railway journey.'

'Good morn, sir, and thank you,' said the boys, as they disappeared one after another, trying to hide their very red faces behind their very red faces behind their Scotch caps.

They did not venture to say much till they were fairly outside the gates, then they looked at one another and burst out laughing.

'Well, he's the kindest old chap as ever I had to do with,' said one boy.

'And wasn't the breakfast good? and we've got something to go on with too' said Tom, pointing to his pockets. 'You fellows are not half up to things, you'd never a thought of carrying away nothing if I hadn't a put yer up to it. Now then, let's make our way to the high road.'

The boys followed Tom, and before long reached the broad high road. Tom looked up at the sign post, but seemingly it did not satisfy him.

'What stupids we were not to ask which was the nearest railway station,' said Ben.

'We don't want no railway station,' said Tom, 'we'll tramp it and save our shillings till we get hungry again. Come on, I am sure this will be the way.'

'We had much better get back as soon as we can,' said Ben, who did not much like the thought of appearing before the commandant after such a misdemeanor.

Tom burst out laughing.

'You surely don't really think of going back to the Home! Of course we'll go to London.'

He had scarcely said the words when he was startled with a stern voice behind him. It was a policeman whose beat had taken him across a field, and he was now getting over the stile into the high road. Unseen by them, he had heard a little of their conversation.

'Hulloa, you youngsters, what are you up to?' he asked.

'We're Gordon Boys, and we're on our way to the Home,' said Tom boldly.

'Not a bit of it! I know better than that. You're on your way to London, that's what you're up to.'

Tom tried to repeat his assurances that they were going to the Home, but the police constable was obdurate.

'When people place you in such a Home as that,' he said, 'the least you can do is to be thankful for it, and make the best use of your time while you are there. What wouldn't I have given for such a start in life when I was a boy! Now you'll just come along with me, and I'll see about your getting back to the Home.'

Tom's countenance had fallen visibly, and indeed all the boys looked crestfallen.

The going back was not pleasant anyway; but to return in charge of a police constable made it ten thousand times worse. But there was no help for it now. A light cart was soon made ready, the boys were safely stowed in, and in a short time were driving along the pleasant lanes that lead towards Chobham.

CHAP. X.—THE FIELD DAY.

At the Home considerable consternation was felt at the disappearance of five boys, and various efforts were being made to trace them. The Commandant, who took the keenest interest in the boys' welfare, was well pleased to hear later in the day that the culprits had come back. They were summoned to his presence, looking very different to what they had done a few hours earlier, as they left Mr. Ingram's. He listened to their story, then said—

'Turn out your pockets, there is something that makes them stick out more than usual.'

With fear and trembling they began to disgorge, and a curious array of all sorts of good things soon lay upon the table.

'Turn out every pocket,' was the order.

At last out came the shillings.

It was not difficult to trace Tom Whelen's action in the whole matter. Doubtless he had been the ringleader, and on him must fall the heaviest portion of the punishment. To Ben and the others, the Commandant was most lenient. On lying or theft he came down most uncompromisingly, but he did not feel that running away from distasteful lessons was such a heinous offence. He rather let the boys feel that for the present he could not trust them. They must not go beyond the grounds again till they had proved themselves worthy of his confidence. They must also forfeit for a month their usual weekly pocket money, which was looked forward to by the boys as a special boon.

When at length the boys were permitted to go, each of them, and Ben especially, felt thoroughly ashamed of himself. During the long drive back to the Home, Ben had had time to think. The presence of the police constable had sufficiently awed the boys to make them