

The Little Preacher and His Sunday Sermon.

It was Sunday afternoon. John Bowen's cottage was as clean as a new penny, and John and his tidy wife sat on either side of the fire, he puffing away his last bit of tobacco, she playing with her baby, and an older child rolling on the floor at their feet. They all looked and felt very comfortable, and John was wishing for nothing in the world just then but some more tobacco. Not that he was a very great smoker, but it was a treat to sit by his own fireside and pass the idle time away with his pipe. What else could he do with himself on his day of rest?

The last ash had been turned out of the pipe, when his son, a boy of seven or eight years old, came in from the Sunday school. "O, Johnny, my man," said his father, "before you hang up your cap, just run round the corner to Ball's shop and get me a bit of 'bacca; here's the money. And I dare say you've been a good boy at school, so you can bring a penn'orth of his nice little apples for you, and sister, and baby. Make haste now; there's a good lad."

Johnny's bright face clouded over in a moment at his father's words, and he hung back from taking the money. "Wouldn't it do to-morrow, father?" he asked very meekly. "Why, no; I want my 'bacca now; and don't you want an apple now? What's the matter with thee, lad?"

"Nothing, father—only—only—its Sunday, and we've been reading about the commandments, and the prophet wouldn't let the people buy and sell on the Sabbath day;" and by the time he got out the words, Johnny, with a very red face, had crept behind his mother's chair.

Mrs. Bowen felt that it was not for the boy to blush, and looked at her husband to see how he took it.

John Bowen, though what is called a kind man, was hasty too, and he did not choose to be contradicted. "So," said he, feeling that, right or wrong, he would have his own way, "you have been reading the commandments, have you? Well, when I was a lad there was one amongst 'em as used to say, "Honour thy father and mother;" is it there now, I wonder?"

"O yes, father, but—"

"But—you just do as your'e bid, then, in a moment, and that's honouring your father; else you'll find I can teach as well as Sunday school."

Johnny was puzzled, but he went and did as he was told; then modestly refusing the offered apple, he took out his little Testament, and began to look at his verses for the next Sunday, while the little sister ate her apple, and the father smoked in silence.

Now it is of no use to have a nice home, and a good wife, and an honest living; if a man has not something else that is better than all. These must pass away in time, and are no provision for eternity. The something else is the blessing of Almighty God on all his good gifts, and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as the soul's portion for eternal happiness. John Bowen thought himself a very good man, because he was better in many respects than some of his neighbours; but the truth was that he was living "without God in the world," taking no thought about his never-dying soul, or the way, the only way, that God has made in Jesus Christ for receiving sinners. He forgot that there are but two classes, in one or other of which every human being has his place—those who are saved by faith in the blood of the Lamb, or the lost who reject his redeeming love.

"I say, wife," said John, the first moment they were alone together, "if our children are to disobey us, and think themselves so wise by going to school, I'm for settling it they'd better not go there any more."

"Oh, dear husband, don't say so. I'll tell you what my turn of thinking takes upon it. Won't it be better for us just to see and do at home what they get taught at school? 'Cause you know there's only one right way after all, and that's the Bible way, I take it. No it's no use for us to contradict the Bible; is it, John?"

"Well, but it's contradicting Bible not to obey parents; ain't it?" persisted John.

"Certain sure, if parents order just the thing that the Bible says," replied Mrs. Bowen; but if not, it makes a jumble in the poor little heads to know what to do. It seems, John, that God is Father to you and me, and bids us obey him, same as we expect our children to obey us; but we