

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

THE HAND OF FAITH.

By A. C.

Faith, is the hand upheld
Emptied of worldly grasp;
God's is the Hand that gives,
Yielding His strength to clasp.

Hope, is the hand that waits,
Knowing that God will fill,
Sure that His time is best,
Ready to wait His will.

Trust, is the hand that bears,
Counting as gain all loss,
Marked with the strokes of pain,
Holding, through all, its cross.

Love, is the the hand that clings,
Casting on God all care,
Giving to Him its life,
Longing His Life to share.

Peace, is the hand that rests
Fast in God's hand of love;
Steady in joy or pain,
Held by the Strength above.

Joy, is the hand full-filled,
Free from earth's care and strife,
Bearing the victor's palm,
Led by the Lord of Life.

—Family Churchman.

BEN, THE GORDON BOY.

(Continued.)

CHAPTER II.—NED GETS INTO TROUBLE.

Ben looked up and down the street as if looking for somebody, then seemed to make up his mind, and set off in the direction of the 'Hunter's Arms.' He was not surprised to see his father standing outside, apparently the centre of a group of men. He had heard him go out while the children were eating their frugal breakfast, and it was not difficult to tell whither he was going. But Ben was evidently not thinking of him, in fact he took no notice of him, but walked briskly on. Turning down the next road, he nearly ran up against Ned. If he had not been so dreadfully hungry, he would have been too proud to ask him anything about his success as to the new coffee-house, but Ben was hungry to a degree.

'Well, Ned, any luck?' he asked.

'Not much,' said Ned. 'The lady was gone out, but we're going to try another day. They say as the likes boys, so maybe we'll stand a chance. Isn't it cold though? I am just about perished.'

'Don't I wish it would come down a good deep snowstorm, we'd soon get some money with our shovels and brooms. I was in rare luck last year when the snow came, the best of it was, just as people thought it was all over it began again. I only wish it would snow now.'

Ben looked up at the sky as he spoke, but bitterly cold as it was, there were no signs of the longed-for snow.

'I shall try some other sort of business soon if this sort of thing keeps on,' said Ned, with a knowing nod.

'What do yer mean?' asked Ben.

'You'd like to know, I dare say,' said Ned, giving Ben's face a searching look. 'Tom Hendley's up to a trick or two, I can tell you.'

Then he stopped short, perhaps something in Ben's round honest face made him feel he was scarcely the one to receive his confidence. Just then a feeble voice was heard calling to them, and, looking round, Ben saw old Mrs. Carter leaning on her stick as she stood at her door.

'Isn't your name Ben Collins?' she asked.

'Yes, ma'am,' answered Ben, brightly.

'I think you once went an errand for me. I wish you would go up to the post-office for me now, I can't go myself in this bitter cold wind.'

'I'll go ma'am, and glad; I've nothing to do.'

'What a pity,' said Mrs. Carter, looking at him from top to toe, 'a good strong lad like you ought to be at work.'

'And so I would if I'd only got it,' said poor Ben.

'Well, I hope you're not idle, that's all. Some o' you lads like play best. Well, now I'm going to trust you with half a crown. I want you to get a postal order, for I've nobody to get it for me. I want to send to my poor boy, who is lying ill at the Seamen's Hospital. I wouldn't have him thinking his old mother had forgotten him. It's his birthday, poor lad, to-morrow; dear me, it seems but the other day that he was a little lad like you. Now, there's the half crown, and a penny for the stamp. Come back quick, my boy, and I'll thank you.'

Ben had been to the post office and was back again in double quick time, and old Mrs. Carter was so pleased with his promptness that she invited him in to take a cup of hot coffee, as well as giving him a penny for his trouble. It did not take him long to decide how to expend his penny. Going into the first baker's that he came to he asked for a penny loaf, then ran gladly towards home. Finding Baby Nell was fast asleep, he left the loaf with his sister, telling her to be sure and see after the baby and then went on his way.

Except for the many pangs of hunger, Ben rather liked his life. It was a life of almost absolute freedom, his parents, even on their sober days, taking little heed of the boy; so that he was free to come and go as he liked unquestioned. He was always glad to earn a penny when it came in his way, and more than once he tried to get work. He now walked off towards the open field, making his way over a five barred gate towards a clump of large trees. This was by no means the first time he had visited them, and he knew that after a high wind he would have no difficulty in picking up a good bundle of sticks that would make a welcome fire for the children later in the day. Nor was he disappointed. No one had been before him, and his strong arms soon held as much as he could carry.

The village of Rengate is one of the suburbs on the northern side of London which is singularly behind the age. The tide of population has turned its steps eastwards, westwards and southwards, but the north is still picturesque and rural. Some of the inhabitants of Ben's village had a strong desire to keep up its rural character, and for many years even opposed the lighting of the roads, so that Rengate had been still in darkness while surrounding places had long ago had their asphalted paths and gas lighted roads. But at last these rural loving people had been obliged to give in, and lamp posts had been erected at suitable distances. Whether the boys of Rengate shared this love of rural simplicity cannot be told, but certain it is that the lamp posts came in for an unusual share of their mischief. Day after day fresh glasses were broken, nobody knew by whom, trying the patience of the rural police to an unusual extent.

As Ben, with his bundle of sticks, was walking along a narrow footpath that led to the village, he heard the crash of falling glass, and in another minute found himself collared by a policeman.

'So I've got you at last,' the constable said, giving him a threatening shake, 'after all the trouble you've given us, it will do you no harm to be locked up for a bit.'

Poor Ben was not a little startled, besides he had a fiery spirit which resented the wrongful

accusation, and for a moment he tried to shake himself free. But the constable was too much for him, and he was obliged to content himself with assurances that he was doing no harm, and had only been to yon field to gather a few sticks.

The pathway soon led out into the village road, but before the two reached the end they could hear voices in altercation, and in another minute they came in sight of another constable surrounded by a group of boys. One of the number he was holding fast, and Ben quickly saw that it was Ned.

'I've caught my young gentleman in the very act,' said the second constable. 'I'd seen them a grooping along, and knew they were up to no good, and it was this palefaced fellow that do liberately took up a stone and aimed at the lamp post. What do yer think of that for wantonly injuring other folks' property? You'll have to pay nicely for this, I can tell you.'

Ben had felt the constable's hold of his collar gradually slackening.

'I tell'd yer as it wasn't me,' he said, hotly.

'It was as like to be you as any of them,' retorted the constable. 'You'd better be careful, and see as it isn't you next time; you're a bad lot, all of yer. It's a pity as the state can't ship yer all off to Meriky or somewhere. You're just a set of young thieves, all the lot of you.'

Having come to the end of this speech, by which the constable relieved himself from the feeling of humiliation at having arrested the wrong boy, he quite relinquished his hold of Ben; and Ned was summarily marched off to the police station. The other boys, standing whispering together, congratulated themselves that Ned had happened to be the stone thrower on this unlucky occasion, and wondering what would be done with him.

Ben did not trouble himself much about them, but proceeded to make his way home with his bundle.

There was a chorus of young voices as he appeared at the door, and a pattering of little feet to meet him.

'Here's Ben, and what a jolly bundle of sticks; we'll soon have a fire now. Don't cry any more, Nell; we'll be as warm as can be,' said Bess cheerily.

But there seemed something more than usual the matter with Baby Nell that day. It was pitiful to hear her hoarse cry and the continual moan of pain.

'Has she been like this all the morning?' asked Ben, with an anxious look upon his boyish face.

'Yes, I can't do nothing with her,' said Bess hopelessly; 'and my arms does ache so.'

'Here, let me have her a bit,' and Ben took the baby in his strong boy's arms, where somehow the little one seemed singularly content.

CHAP. III.—BEN TURNS SPOKESMAN.

It was always a good thing for the children when the last penny of pension money was gone. It was wonderful to see how Collins' friends dropped their kind attentions when they could get nothing more out of him. The baker had a kind heart, and for the sake of the number of hungry little mouths would sometimes allow them a few loaves on credit, but the publican did not give Collins and his wife such a hearty welcome row that their pockets were empty.

He demanded ready-money, and it mattered little to him whether the children were hungry or not. Each man must look to his own, and his children at any rate must be fed and clothed on the best. So by the next day Mrs. Collins was to be found at home again, dragging about with the poor baby in her arms, complaining to her neighbors that she never saw such a child, she always seemed to be taking cold. Gradually she would come round to something of her better self, for as God had made her she