

## Youths' Department.

## THE BLOT OF INK.

"Who has made this blot of ink on my note-book?" said a school-master, as he came into the school room, and again took his seat at the desk, which he had left a few minutes before, in order to speak to the mother of one of the scholars.

A deep silence was the only answer to this question. "I ask," repeated Mr. Bernard, "who has made this blot of ink on my note-book?"

At the first summons, forty pairs of eyes were raised to the face of the master, and as quickly brought back to the slates; at the second all heads remained down, and nothing was to be heard but the sound of the pencils, which scratched the slates more than usual, as the figures of the different sums were being written down.

"When a master asks a question," said Mr. Bernard "it is the duty of the scholars to answer him; now there is one among you who is guilty, there is one who left his seat and came, most probably, to look for the answer to his sum in this key book; my pen, which had ink in it, must have slipped from his hand, and blotted the note-book as it fell. I now call upon the guilty one to stand up."

There was still the same silence all round.

The master sighed, for he loved his little scholars very much; it grieved him to punish them; but he knew that these young souls had been entrusted to his care by the Saviour to teach them his ways, and to guide them the path which leads to life; and while his heart was grieved at the thought that he must, at any cost find out the offender and punish him, especially as his obstinacy threw suspicion on his companions, the master, faithful to his duty, resolved not to act rashly.

He now slowly left his desk, and standing in front of the forms where the scholars were seated, he said, "I do not like tell tales; it is a proof of a very bad spirit when a boy discloses his school fellows' faults; but it is necessary for the good"—and he laid a stress on the word; "for the good of the offender, that I should know who he is. Now, I do not want you to say, it is such and such an one, but I desire you all beginning with the first division, to leave this room, and to go into the passage, with the exception of the one among you who is guilty."

They then began to file off. One, two, three forms were soon empty; the fourth class, which was composed of the youngest boys, went more slowly; the last child but one had gone—the one who remained seemed just about to rise, but, after a slight movement, he repeated himself.

Mr. Bernard shut the door of the room, and then came and sat down by the little boy, and taking both his hands in his, he said:

"So it was you, Paul, who went in this deceitful way to find out from my book whether your sum was correct? It was you who insulted your master by refusing to answer him; for, as you are the guilty one, it was to you that I spoke. You are right not to look me in the face; but tell me how you will look at your dear mother, when she calls you this evening to say your prayers to God before you go to bed? What will you say to the Lord, whom you have offended?" Two tears rolled down poor little Paul's cheeks. "My child," continued the master, "your conduct grieves me all the more, because, up to this time, I have observed your good conduct and love of truth."

Paul's cheeks became like crimson; he raised his head, and cried—"Sir, I did not lie."

"Do not try to excuse yourself, my boy," said Mr. Bernard, "if you did not tell a lie, at least you let your schoolfellows be suspected of a fault of which you alone was guilty, and that was not honest. However much it grieves me, I must punish you; to-day is Wednesday, so this evening and for the rest of the week I shall keep you in till eight o'clock in the evening; and each day, during the extra hours, you shall write out ten pages of grammar."

Mr. Bernard opened the door, and the time being up, he dismissed his scholars, telling Louis, Paul's brother, to explain to their mother the cause of his brother's absence. While he was speaking to him, all the other boys had left, and the master and the two brothers were alone in the school-room. Paul was sitting with downcast eyes, so that he did not see how pale and bewildered Louis looked when he heard his master's message. Louis was twelve months younger than his brother, who was in his eleventh year; the love of the two boys for each other was so great and

so strong, that it had often elicited the admiration of their school-fellows and of their master.

Mr. Bernard had stopped speaking some minutes, but Louis did not move; he seemed fixed to the spot, and his eyes were fixed on Paul, who did not look up. "Louis, my child, you must go; it is long past five o'clock. Paul, get your grammar and begin to copy."

Paul rose to get his book, but Louis threw his arms around his neck, sobbing aloud. "Oh, brother, brother!" he cried. He would have added more, but Paul kissed him affectionately, and tried all he could to comfort him. "Never mind, Louis; hush, hush; I will write fast, and I shall have finished before eight o'clock, and when I come home, I will explain it all to my mother; be quiet; there, run away; I wish you would go, Louis; I don't like to see you cry so; if you would only go." And Paul tried to get free from his brother; but Louis would not leave him.

"I will stay, too, I will stay," he cried; it is you who ought to go; I dare not go to my mother;" and his sobs increased.

At last Mr. Bernard took Louis's hand, and said—"My child, you must go! as your brother is guilty of a serious fault, you can understand that he must be punished."

But what was his astonishment when the little boy answered—"You are mistaken, sir, I am the guilty one."

"Louis!" cried Paul, seizing him by the arm, "you were punished enough without saying that." And the two brothers threw themselves into each other's arms.

Mr. Bernard watched them without knowing what to think. Was Louis really guilty, and not Paul? Had the latter done this in order to save his brother from punishment? And now, whom was he to punish? His perplexity was great.

The two brothers were standing there before him clasped in each other's arms, and their heads resting on each other's shoulder. The master's eyes filled with tears as he watched them, but after a few moments he drew them towards him, and said—

"Dear children, I like to see this great love between you, and never would I wish that you should love each other less; but while you have this brotherly love, you must also love each other as unto the Lord; when one of you commits a fault, the other must love you so much, as not only to wish to bear his punishment, but also to tell him frankly that he had done wrong. I know that it is more difficult for a loving heart. I now understand what happened this afternoon. In a moment of thoughtlessness Louis committed the first fault; his courage failed him when I asked the question; and as one sin generally leads to another, he had not the courage and frankness to confess himself guilty by remaining in his seat.—Was it not so, Louis?"

"Yes, sir," he answered, his eyes swimming with tears.

"Because, sir," said Paul, coloring, "I said to myself, 'My brother has done wrong, but as he will not confess it, I must take his place, because then our school-fellows will not be suspected any longer. That is the truth, sir; and now will you let my brother go home, and will you let me stay?'"

"No, no!" cried Louis, "it is I who ought to stay, and his tears began again.

"You see, dear boy," said Mr. Bernard, "how much wiser it is in youth, as well as in old age, to act with uprightness and perfect honesty. Solomon says—'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.' This is perfectly true, as everything is which the Bible teaches us; and if, as soon as I asked, 'Who has made a blot of ink on my note-book?' you had answered—'Sir, it was I; I had the curiosity to look into it, but I am sorry for it, and please to forgive me,' most probably I should have received your confession, with nothing more than a simple rebuke, and a warning never to do it again. Instead of that, you paid no attention to my repeated questions, your fault is the greater, and you have forced your brother, although he was innocent, to represent himself as the guilty one. As he has offered himself for you, he must bear the punishment, and you are free."

"No, no," continued Mr. Bernard, gently repelling Louis's entreaties, "I cannot unsay what I have said; it is Paul whom I punished; he must finish the task which he has undertaken out of love for his guilty brother; you, my child, I pardon, and I will love you just as much as I did before, and I am sure you are sorry for your sin, and in future you will try and show your gratitude to your brother for what he has done

for you, and you will avoid falling again into the same fault."

The good master was right; from that day, in which the innocent was punished for the guilty, Louis understood better than ever the great love that his brother had for him, and he never ceased trying to show by his conduct the gratitude he felt for that love.

And, now, my dear little friends, I must ask you one question—"Have you understood the moral of this tale? Does it not remind you of an important, a solemn fact, which refers to each of you personally? Yes, surely it must recall to your minds our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to pay the debt of all your sins, the sins of all those who believe on him. And as the good master forgave Louis, for his brother's sake, so our Heavenly Father forgives us our many sins for the sake of the blood of Jesus Christ which was shed for us. And what have we to do? A very simple thing for one who loves his Saviour; we must, like Louis, prove our gratitude by our conduct and by our love for him, by obeying the commands which he has given us."

## Selections.

HANDEL'S "MESSIAH."—Tradition says that Handel wept and trembled, when the subject was moving or awful which he improvised; but he seems to have held the work once done in slight reverence—"The Messiah" making a solitary exception. That amazing fruit of a few weeks' inspiration was dashed on paper, as its companions and predecessors had been; but its author seems from the first to have held it as something apart and superior, to which the sanctity of the theme gave a certain elevation in his eyes.—As was the habit of Handel, he reconsidered and recommended certain portions of it; but with a view to perfecting, rather than of popularising the gift that he laid on the altar: like one who knows that an immortal utterance has gone forth from him, with which he is not free to tamper or intermeddle. The respect which Handel showed to "The Messiah," his solicitude in devoting it from the first to the cause of charity, amounted to a prophetic conviction, unconscious it may be, but, if so, to be regarded with reverence for its very unconsciousness. The greatest musical work in existence, the highest in argument, the most pompous in structure, the most equally sustained from the first note to the final "Amen," was appreciated by its maker as his own best creation; as a thing not to be trifled with or torn up to suit the humors of the hour, but as a bequest to all who love the highest religious art, for ever and ever. Not at first, however, did "The Messiah" take this rank in the minds of men, or in the regard of the lovers of music. During many years Handel's war Oratorio, "Judas," produced after the Rebellion of 1745, seems to have been more frequently performed, and to have been a greater favorite. By degrees, however, the power and the glory of the "sacred Oratorio" began to shine more and more brightly abroad,—to touch more and more hearts, to attract more and more sympathies. It is not exaggeration, so much as history, to point to "The Messiah" as almost the only work of art in being, which for one hundred years has steadily gone on rising higher and higher in fame, drawing myriad after myriad to wonder and to tears,—untouched by time, unrivalled by progress:—to characterise it as a heritage derived from our fathers, which will go down, by its own intrinsic and increasing value, to our children's children,—a creation of mortal imagining, which has almost won the reality of an article of belief and the solemnity of an object of worship, by its power to adapt itself to all intelligences, to touch the lowliest, to raise the loftiest, to content the most fastidious.—*Schulcher's Life of Handel.*

THE ENGLISH BIBLE.—Anything in the nature of a new translation I take to be needless, harmful, and in effect nationally impossible. The English Bible is the very soil out of which our mind sucks its sap, the mother earth in which our oak is rooted; its vigorous Anglo-Saxon is a nature to us; and any thing like modernizing it, or touching it up with so-called literary gracefulness or scientific accuracy, would be worm-wood to popular taste. Again, consider the multitudes of Bibles in existence, not so much the tons of unsold stock and vast properties in stereotypes, as the sacred phalanx of family Bibles, heir-looms, and personal treasure, cown thick in every home. What a folly, what an evil, what a waste, what an impossibility would it be, even to attempt to make these obsolete.—*Dublin University Magazine.*