

# Sunday-School Advocate.

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## IT'S ONLY A LITTLE SIN.

WHILE two boys named Rodney and Melville were reading to each other in the porch of their cottage-home one evening a gentleman walked leisurely past them.

"Good evening, boys!" said he, smiling and taking a pinch of snuff as he spoke.

"Good evening, Mr. Churchill," replied the boys, who knew him to be the register of deeds for their town and county.

Just after he passed the boys Mr. Churchill, who was a good man with a bad habit, pulled out his handkerchief to wipe the dirty snuff from his nose. In doing so a small object came out of his pocket with the handkerchief and fell to the ground. The boys ran to see what it was. They were not noticed by Mr. Churchill, for he was full of thought, and by turning round a sharp bend in the lane had already passed out of sight.

"Just what I wanted!" said Melville in a half whisper as he held up the piece of India rubber which had dropped from Mr. Churchill's pocket.

"But it isn't yours," replied Rodney.

"I mean to keep it, anyhow," rejoined Melville.

"That would be stealing," said Rodney.

"Stealing! Pooh! what a ninny you are, Rod. *Finding* a thing isn't *stealing*. Besides, if it were, it would be only a little sin to steal a bit of rubber which you can buy at the store for a cent or two. I don't believe Mr. Churchill will care anything about it. In fact, I guess he won't miss it at all. Anyway, I'm going to keep it."

"I wouldn't," replied Rodney; "it is stealing, because you know the rubber belongs to Mr. Churchill and you keep it without asking his consent. As to its being a little sin I don't believe it. My pa says there are no little sins, and he says too that a boy who begins by stealing the value of a cent will end by stealing dollars. And now I tell you plainly, Master Melville, if you don't carry that rubber to Mr. Churchill I won't play with you any more. I won't keep company with a thief."

"A thief! You call me a thief! I—"

What Melville was going to say you may guess, but he did not say it. A strong hand grasping his shoulder made him pause and look round. Then he blushed, for he saw himself in the hands of Mr. Churchill. That gentleman had missed his rubber, and turning back had heard from behind the bushes which grew at the bend in the road most of what the boys had said. Looking very gravely into Melville's face, he said:

"Your friend Rodney is right. There are no little sins. A boy who keeps that which he knows to be another's property has the spirit of a thief—is, in truth, a thief. Now I don't value the rubber, but I do value right character in a boy. I'm afraid of you, Melville. I admire you, Rodney. If you, Melville, go through life in your present spirit you will find yourself ruined at the last; while if you, my Rodney, live as you have talked and acted this evening you

will be honored in this life, and the God you fear and love will take you to himself hereafter. That you may not be a thief in fact, Melville, I give you the rubber. Good evening, boys!"

Mr. Churchill walked away. Melville blushed, stood silent a while, and then ran home. Rodney went home too. The next time the boys met, Melville gave the rubber to his friend and said:

"Here, Rodney, take this rubber! You were right. I see it now. I had the spirit of a thief. I'm ashamed. I've been to Mr. Churchill about it. He and I are all right. I'll never be a thief again. Let us be friends."

Thus Melville was right at last, though wrong at first. I hope he asked God to forgive him as well as Mr. Churchill, and I hope also that my readers will begin, go on, and die in the spirit of the noble Rodney. What say you, children? Ah, I know. You resolve to be Rodney's every one of you. All right! May God help you!

## OUR COUNCIL-CHAMBER.

My good corporal, how are you to-day? Hot, eh? Wonderful that you should be hot when the thermometer is over 90 in the shade, isn't it? But what queer-looking creature is that you have brought with you? It is almost all head, and so thin I can see through it. Then what makes it squat up in the corner so? Is it afraid? What is it?

"What is it, indeed!" replies the corporal. "What is it? I'll tell you what it is. It's my

**Q** in a corner. Q is queer, and being giving to quizzing often sees some queer and quizzical things. Q has been in some corners of late from which portions of our Advocate family could be seen by him, and he is here to report."

A listener, eh? I don't know about having an eavesdropper in our council-chamber, my dear corporal.

"Q isn't a common listener, Mr. Editor. If he were I'd drum him out of our ranks. He listens for a good purpose. He gives no names. He reports actions only, not persons. He thinks if you will allow him to draw a few pictures of what he has seen and may see, the guilty ones will know themselves. You can give an opinion of their conduct and so, perchance, lead them to reform."

That's a good idea, corporal? You are quite remarkable for good ideas. Proceed, Mr. Q-in-the-corner!

Q's voice is thin and squeakish, but it is distinct. He says:

"I was walking along a certain street—I won't say where—the other day, when I heard a well-dressed, good-looking boy—I think his eyes were nearly black—say some very wicked words while at play with some boys who were rude and dirty. I was shocked, for if I am only a Q I have quite a regard for the divine Name. I wondered if that boy swore at home. I wondered if he belonged to our Advocate family. Feeling desirous to settle these points, I waited and followed him to his home. He lived in a nice house. When he went in I slipped in too, and creeping into a corner behind a big ottoman, I kept my ears and eyes open.—Did anybody ever see my eye shut, eh?—I soon found out that he belonged to our family, for I saw his little brother show him the Advocate and heard him ask about the pictures. He was very pleasant to his brother; he spoke to his mother in soft and gentle tones, and, although I watched him for hours, I neither saw nor heard anything that I could find fault with. He did not act like the boy I had seen him to be in the street. I could have easily thought him to be a Christian boy if I had not heard him swear just before. I thought he ought to be reported to you, sir, and that you ought to give your opinion of him."

Your thoughts were worthy of you, Mr. Q-in-the-corner. I pronounce that boy a sham.

"By sham you mean a HYPOCRITE, I suppose?" inquires Mr. Forrester.

That's it exactly, Mr. Forrester. He is wicked. Bad boys have corrupted him. He is ashamed or afraid to let his father, mother, or teachers know how wicked he is, so he puts on a mask when he is at home. He appears good when he is bad. He is a sham, and that is the worst kind of a wicked boy. I request Q-in-the-corner to return to his house, learn more about him, and report at our next meeting.

"Q will do it," replies the corporal; "but I must open my puzzle-bag now. Here is the answer to the Biblical enigma in our last:

"(1.) Lot, Gen. xix, 15-22. (2.) On, Numbers xvi, 1. (3.) Kittim, Gen. x, 1-4. (4.) Moses. (5.) Cana, John ii, 1-11. (6.) Amalek, 1 Sam. xv, 1-3. (7.) Felix, Acts xxiv, 25. The sentence—Fools make a mock at sin.

"Now hear what S. R. Z., of Monroe, Ohio, says:

"I intend to be a minister and do some good in the world. I must tell you whether I am a good boy or not. I will not answer the question myself, but you must judge from my statements. I never forget to pay tribute to my Saviour every night before I retire to rest. I read and study his glorious works and give myself into his care. I always try to be good to everybody. You must excuse me for poor writing and spelling. I have not been to school very much on account of ill convenience. I am but nine years old, and now I would like to join your Try Company if the corporal will accept me."

Well, corporal, what is your opinion? Is S. R. Z. a good boy?

"I incline to think he is. His love for Jesus, his habit of prayer and trust, are good signs. If his life bears the fruit of obedience to God and man he is through Christ's grace a good boy. Whether he will ever be a minister or not God only knoweth. He must await the call of the Spirit."

And study meanwhile, Mr. Corporal, with all his might. Grace and study are both needful to make good boys into good ministers. Let S. R. Z. stick to his books!

"MARY E. B., of Unity, Iowa, writes:

"I am a little orphan girl. My mother went to heaven a few months ago. I live with two dear Christian ladies who are teaching me to do right. I live way out on the prairie, so far I cannot go to Church or Sunday-school. But the ladies read a sermon from Beecher out of the Independent, and I have one of Floy's books and learn my lesson and a text of Scripture. I got my first Sunday-school paper the other day and they told me about the Try Company. If you will admit the orphan Mary, I will, God helping me, keep all your rules."

The "orphan Mary" is admitted both to the heart and army of the corporal. He thinks so grateful a child will hardly fail of becoming a good soldier of Jesus.

"Here is a line from my little friend SOPHIA K., of Perysburgh. She says:

"I am a little German girl. I can read both of the little papers—German and English. My little sister and brother go to three Sunday-schools every Sunday. It keeps us busy from nine o'clock until four in the afternoon. I have often wondered who Corporal Try and Francis Forrester, Esq., were, but I rather think I have found out the secret. I think that you three are one, for you said that if one was sick, lame, or lazy, the other was too. You send us so many pretty pictures in the little papers, and why don't you send us yours? You need not think that you are homely, for you are so good that we will not think you are homely. We like Aunt Julia's stories very much. I guess that she is some relation to you. The best story you ever put in your paper was about Philip and Patience. Philip, I suppose, is gone to rest, but what has become of Patience? I wish that you would write more about her, for we are so anxious to hear from her. Will you admit my sister, brother, and myself in your Try Company?"

Pretty good! My Ohio friend, with her brother and sister, shall certainly be set down among the members of our famous Try Company. My picture can be had by sending Carlton & Porter fifteen cents. The Pilgrimage of Philip and Patience will be published in a book one of these days. As to the secret about the corporal I have nothing to say, except that if Sophia had been a Yankee born in Connecticut she could not have made a wiser guess. Whether she is right or not the corporal must decide. Read on, corporal!

"M. L. H., of Mount Carmel, Ill., says:

"I have never seen a letter in your interesting little 'Budget' from our village in Southern Illinois, I concluded to give you a short description of the same. It is a pleasant little school, embracing upward of a hundred scholars, with a competence of officers and teachers. Quite a number of copies of the little Advocate are taken by the scholars, and are most heartily welcomed every two weeks by them. But I want to tell you more particularly about my little class, for you must know that I am only a youthful teacher, having only been engaged in this department of the Sunday-school about two months, although I have always been a member. My class consists of six little girls who are constant attendants upon our morning sessions. They wish to be personally recommended to the famous 'Corporal Try' as volunteers for his company. Their names are Fannie Reis, Fannie Ridgway, Helen Knight, Emma Kosee, Grace and Lizzie Manck. They promise to observe the rules laid down as the by-laws of that renowned association, to be good scholars, and never cause the corporal to blush for his members. Hoping to see their names enrolled among those of the more veteran soldiers, as well as that of their unworthy teacher, I am very respectfully yours,

"MARY L. HABBERTON."