

THE
IMAGE BOYS.



LONDON :
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY ;
SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER
ROW, AND 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD ;
AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

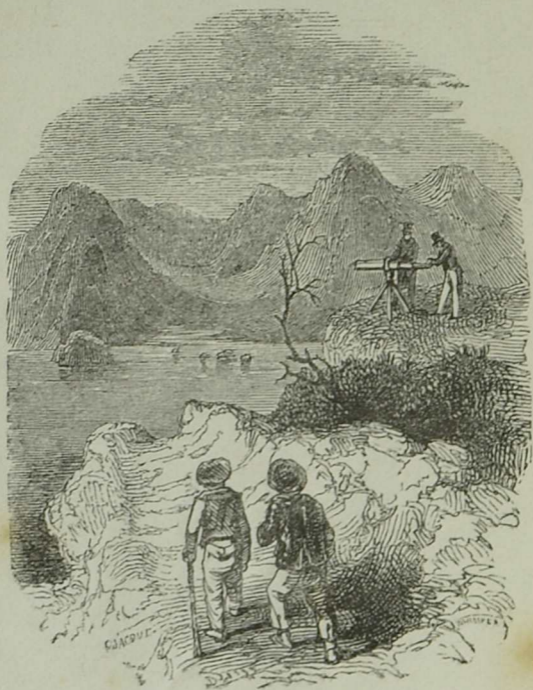
No. 224.

THE
MACK BOYS

THE MACK BOYS
BY
THE MACK BOYS



37131 039 910 450



THE
IMAGE BOYS.

TRANSLATED FROM "LES PETITS MARCHANDS DES
FIGURES EN PLATRE," BY THE REV. DR. MALAN.

—CO—

ON a fine day in the month of June, we ascended to the top of the Tranchees, (a terrace, near the lake of Geneva,) to try a telescope. We were looking at several distant objects, when two children, from eight to ten years of age, attracted by the sight of the instrument which we were using, came near, and beheld us with much curiosity.

"If you knew," said the tallest to his companion, "how to look through it, that," pointing to a distant object, "would appear quite near."

"I should like to see it," said the other child in a low tone, "but I dare not ask."

I said, "My boy, would you like to look through this glass?"

"Yes, sir, if you please. You will do us a great kindness."

I then put the telescope to the proper

height for these little curious boys : and enabled them to see several boats which were sailing upon the lake, and other objects which amused them very much ; and I was convinced that these children were not wanting in intelligence.

When they had satisfied their curiosity, I said to them, "Do you go to school, my boys?"

"No, sir," said the oldest, "we sell plaster figures. We have been carrying some to Coligny."

"But, my child, don't you learn to read and write?"

"We have no time. We are obliged to work in order to get bread. We should be very glad," added the youngest, "to go to school. We should like it very much; but we cannot, therefore we must be content."

"Can nobody at home teach you?"

"They have too much to do, sir. We are at work from morning to night."

"And your religion, my boys, how do you learn that?"

"Oh, we go to mass, and sometimes to a sermon."

"What do you learn at the mass?"

“O, sir, we do not understand the mass, because it is in Latin; and we do not understand Latin; but when the curate preaches it is French.”

“Very well, my boy; and then what do you learn from the sermon? Do you know that there is another life after this?”

“Yes, sir, we have been told that there is a heaven for the righteous, and a hell for the wicked.”

“Nothing more true, my lad; but have they told you whether you will go to heaven or to hell?”

“Ah! my faith, sir—”

“Don’t say, ‘My faith,’ or use any other careless or naughty words: it is a very bad habit.”

“Indeed, to speak truly, I do not know.”

“But, my boy, what must you be, in order to go to heaven?”

“Ah! sir, I must be good; that is, I must do my duty.”

“Yes,” said the other boy, “we must be wise, and obedient to our father and mother.”

“This is very good, my children;

but there is something else. What must you do in respect to God?"

"O, we must obey him, and pray to him."

"You have answered very well. But how can we do this? Tell me, my boy, do you know how? Do you always obey your father and mother? Are you wise all the day long? For example, are you never idle, never angry, or in a bad humour with your brother, have you never told a lie; and, above all, do you act as God would have you? Are you truly religious, and do you always pray as you ought?"

"Ah, sir, it is very certain we have not done every thing as we ought."

"And do you know, my child, what that is called, when we do not perform our duty?"

"It is called sin," replied the youngest.

"Just so; and will sin lead us to heaven?"

"Certainly not."

"Then, my dear boy, if this night, in going to your father's house, I should find you laid upon a bed, all pale, trem-

bling, and just dying; and I should say to you, 'Where is thy soul going?' what answer would you give me?"

The elder of the two boys, casting his eye upon the ground with pensive look, and rubbing the grass with his foot, replied, "I do not know."

"What! you do not know where your soul would go to! Poor boy! And can you be easy, without knowing what would become of you from one hour to another, when the slightest accident might kill you? And without being able to say, whether you would ascend to heaven, or sink down into hell? Know, my child, that I pity you from my heart."

"No one has ever taught us all this."

"But if I should now tell you the way to get to heaven, would you be glad?"

"O, yes, sir," they both said together, "it would give us great pleasure."

"Well then, listen to me; I am going to tell you, and you will see how easy it is. You told me, that in order to get to heaven, you must be good, which is very true. But you have not

told me how we must become good ; tell me, then, do you know it? Do you understand how we must become good, wise, and pious ?”

“ I don't know much about it, sir.”

“ But perhaps you know what must be done to a tree which bears bad fruit, and which we want to produce good fruit ?”

“ Yes ; the gardener must cut off the branches, and graft into the stock a branch of another tree which is good.”

“ Right, my little friend ; that is to say, the sap of the bad tree must be changed, that the juice which produces the fruit may become good.”

“ Yes, sir ; because then instead of crabs, there would be good apples.”

“ Well, then, if you are a sinner, and you know very well that you are, it is from your heart that this evil springs ; it is the desire of your hearts which is bad ; and which is like bad juice or sap, which produces lies, swearing, idleness, gluttony, and all other bad words and actions. Now what must be done to this heart, that it may bring forth good fruit ?”

“I think that the desire must be changed.”

“Well said, my child; but do you suppose that a piece of cloth, which is dirtied, can wash itself clean?”

“Certainly not: somebody must wash it?”

“Just so, my boy, must our hearts be washed and cleansed. But can you do it? Tell me; can you cleanse your heart?”

“No,” said the child, looking steadfastly at me, “it is quite impossible that I can cleanse my heart.”

“Who then can do it? Who can change the heart of man?”

“It is God, sir.”

“You are right: it is so. Yes; it is the gracious God who changes the heart. But do you know how, and with what God cleanses and purifies the heart which is polluted with sin?”

“No, sir; I have never heard.”

“It is by his Spirit, my child. It is the Holy Spirit which cleanses and purifies our heart. What must we do then to have a better heart, that is to say, to become good? What must we ask of God?”

“That he will cleanse our heart by his Holy Spirit.”

“That is quite right, my boy : but will God do this ? Do all men receive the Holy Spirit on asking for it ?”

“Perhaps, sir, they do.”

“Tell me, when you are hungry, and it is dinner time, and there is bread in the house, does your father give you any if you ask him.”

“Yes, sir, when there is some ; but there is not always bread for us.”

“I am sorry to hear it ; but however when there is, he gives it you. Well, who is the best ? your father, or the gracious God ?”

“The great God is better than my father.”

“Well, since your father, who is not so good as God, (however good he may be,) gives you bread when you ask it of him ; do not you believe that God will give you the Holy Spirit, if you desire it as much as you do bread when you are hungry ; and if you ask him as earnestly ?”

“I hope so, sir.”

“Certainly, my boy, God will give it

you, if you ask him as you ought; but do you know how to ask him?"

"I say my prayers, sir, every night and morning."

"So much the better, my child; but how do you pray? Tell me, what prayers do you use?"

"I say the Lord's Prayer and the Belief in Latin."

"My boy, what would your father say, if you should ask him for bread without understanding what you said to him? Do you know what you say when you repeat these prayers?"

"No, sir; but this is the way I have been taught."

"But, my little fellow, when you ask something of any one, is it necessary that you learn before-hand your request by heart; and then come to him and repeat it like a parrot?"

"No, sir; I then say what comes uppermost in my mind."

"Well: cannot you do the same thing, when you address your heavenly Father? Cannot you say to Him what arises in your heart and mind, what you feel you are in need of; and then

add to your prayers what you have already told me, and which begins with 'Our Father,'—only say it in a language that you understand?"

"It is very true, sir."

"Without doubt it is true; and you must plainly perceive that until now you have prayed badly; that is, without thinking about what you asked for; and therefore be assured that God, who is very holy, will never listen to what a child says to Him, who does not desire to know Him; who does not seek to love Him; and who is every day disobeying Him. For my part, I do not believe that he will."

At these words, the boy hung down his head with a sorrowful air, as if he felt his state of condemnation before God. I then said to him, "Is there not some one who pleads with God for such poor sinners as you and me?"

"They tell us, sir, that the angels and saints pray for us."

"What do you say? The angels adore God and serve Him. Never forget that there is only one Advocate who

pleads our cause with God; and that is Jesus Christ."

"He is our God."

"Yes, my child; He is our God and our Saviour. It is He who came upon earth to open the gates of heaven to all those who are willing to follow him, and to take him for their Saviour."

"Yes, sir, He died for us."

"He did, and I rejoice to find that you know this. But perhaps you do not know what is meant by Jesus Christ dying for us?"

"It is that he was crucified."

"True; but why was He crucified?"

The younger said, "It was to die for us."

"Very well, my child: yes,—Jesus Christ died for us; He was judged, condemned, and punished in our stead; He bore all the penalty of our wicked actions; He was made a curse, to the end we might escape everlasting death. He gave his own life, that we might not perish, and that on leaving this world we might enter into the paradise above. And at this moment I am now speaking, He is in glory, at the right

hand of his Eternal Father, and there He intercedes for you, if you truly desire his intercession."

"I am sure, sir, that I do desire it."

"If you are sincere, my child, and feel in your heart that you have a desire that Jesus Christ should become your Saviour, you may rest assured, that all your prayers will be heard by the Almighty. What, then, have you now to do, in order to become holy and go to heaven?"

"You have told me, sir, that my heart must be changed by the Holy Spirit."

"And how must you get this blessed Spirit?"

"I must ask this gift of God, with my whole heart, in the name, and for the sake of Jesus Christ my Saviour."

"Well, my dear child, I will only put to you one question more. Do you indeed wish to become good and wise, and go to heaven? Is it your heart's desire?"

"Indeed, sir, I do feel a great desire after it."

"Then pray to the Almighty God,

not only every morning and evening, but as often as you possibly can; for example, in going out and coming in;



when you carry your little plaster figures to sell, and even when you are at work. You may be sure that God, who is everywhere present, on the road as well as in the church, if you pray to Him with all your heart, and in the name of his beloved Son Jesus Christ, will hear you and bless you."

"Many thanks, sir. But we must

now go," said he to his brother. "Come, let us make haste. You know our father told us to be quick back again."

"Lose no time then, my dear children. Think of me; and, above all, remember what I have said to you."

The boys went cheerfully along. I followed them some time with the eye. They discoursed together as they walked.

For our part, we made this reflection, that the Lord, whose ways are all directed to the happiness of his creatures, was pleased to over-rule the curiosity of these two lads, that they might hear the way of salvation, by Jesus Christ. And we exhorted each other never to let an opportunity escape of spreading abroad this sweet and peaceful light, which causes the joy of every soul who knows it; and which is generally received with so much pleasure and profit, when it is offered with love and simplicity of heart.

God grant that these poor children may beg of God to give them his Holy Spirit, in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ?



LIFE A DAY.

AND what is our life but a day !
A short one that soon will be o'er !
It presently passes away,
And will not return any more.

To-morrow may never arise,
And yesterday's over and gone ;
To-day we must use as it flies,
'Tis all we can reckon upon.