



THE

FIRST
FALSEHOOD.

T. NELSON AND SONS.

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[ca. 1860?]



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THE FIRST FALSEHOOD.

"Has my little Lucy been good?" he asked, as he took his youngest daughter in his arms, and kissed her.—Page 11.

THE FIRST FALSEHOOD.

CHAPTER I.

THE MOTHER AND SON.

“Do you not think father *may* get home to-night?” said Alfred Singleton to his mother, as he gave her his good-night kiss.

“No, my son,” said Mrs. Singleton; we have no reason to expect your father for a week at least; I shall be very glad if we see him next Saturday night at this time.”

“Well, I cannot help looking for him when Saturday night comes,” continued Alfred; “for Sunday does not seem to me like the Sabbath-day without him.”

“It is pleasant to us to listen to the preaching of your father, Alfred, because we love him; but we must be careful not to think more of him than of the truth which he tells us. When *any* of God’s servants are speaking to us, we should listen with reverence and godly fear, and pray that while hearing we may come to a knowledge of the truth.”

“But you cannot expect me to like to hear Mr. D— preach, as well as I do my father.”

“It is natural that you should prefer listening to your father, Alfred; but the blessed truths of the gospel should be received gladly and gratefully from any messenger. Suppose some one should now bring you some very good news—for instance, that your father was in sight, and would be at the door in a few moments, would you stop to think about the person that told us, whether he had a good voice, or a bad one? a handsome face, or a homely one? a new coat, or an old one? No: you would be so much interested in your father’s coming, that you would hardly notice by whom the news was brought. And yet you are not satisfied to hear the *good news of salvation* from any but the lips of a dear friend. Does not this show a want of interest in such news?”

“Perhaps it does, mother, and I will endeavour to be very attentive to Mr. D—to-morrow. I think he is very kind and affectionate, and we *ought* to love him, and to listen to him carefully.”

“*Take heed how ye hear*, is the impressive command of the Lord Jesus,” continued Mrs. Singleton; “and it is a solemn thought, that we must give an account of each sermon that we hear at the last day. All these religious privileges will then be remembered, and rise up against us if they have not been duly improved.”

Alfred again took up his lamp and set out to go to bed. “Good night, dear mother,” he said; “how fast the rain falls! I do hope the wind will not rise to-night, for I could hardly sleep last night while it stormed so hard, for I knew that father must be out in it all, and on the wide ocean too.”

“The God of the seas is with him, Alfred; you know

we committed him to his care when he went down upon the great waters. I acknowledge the sound of the roaring wind made me very anxious last night: like the fishermen of Galilee, I was troubled; but when, like them, I called upon the Lord, he seemed also to say to me, Why are ye fearful, O ye of *little* faith! He graciously answered my prayer, and gave me peace of mind, though the storm continued. Good night, my dear child; trust God entirely, and all will be *well* with your father, however it may appear to us."

CHAPTER II.

THE VILLAGE PASTOR.

MR. SINGLETON was a minister of the gospel, as my readers have discovered from the preceding conversation. His little country parish was made up of simple people, many of them Christians, and all loving their faithful pastor. The white steeple of his little church rose among their neat cottages, the token of mercy and peace, pointing upward to the peaceful heaven where the preacher hoped to meet the souls of his beloved flock in everlasting peace and blessedness.

The lines had fallen to him in pleasant places, and God had surrounded his path with many beauties as well as blessings. The little village in which he laboured was a scene of contentment and virtuous industry. The busy hum of worldly business was heard for six days; but at the close of the last day of the week no sound broke the sweet stillness but that of prayer

and praise to Him who “blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.”

A wife and five children composed the family circle of Mr. Singleton. Under the care of a Christian mother, these little ones were training for happiness here, and in another world. It was a sweet sight—the happy little group kneeling around their parents at the altar: every knee was bent, and every hand uplifted, from those of Alfred, the eldest child, to those of little Lucy, who was but three years old.

How much are parents doing for their children when they “teach them to pray!” What a refuge are they providing for them from the storms and troubles of life: Often do we see an affectionate father labouring early and late to procure the wealth of this world for his children, while he neglects to provide for them those enduring riches that are to last through eternity. The poor man who has taught his children to call upon the name of the Lord, leaves them a far better inheritance; for the blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and bringeth no sorrow with it. Such children can never be *orphans*: they have a father—a dear and tender father—ever at hand to listen to their petitions, to supply their wants, and to comfort them in their sorrows.

Learn then, dear children, to pray, before the days of sorrow come, when you will have no one but God to whom you can go. Go to him now, freely and affectionately, and secure his love in the hour of youth and happiness.

Go when the morning shineth,
Go when the moon is bright,
Go when the eve declineth,
Go in the hush of night—

Go with pure mind and feeling,
Fling earthly thoughts away,
And in thy chamber, kneeling,
Do thou in secret *pray*.

Remember all who love thee,
All who are loved by thee
Pray, too, for those that hate thee,
If any such there be.
Then for thyself, in meekness,
A blessing humbly claim,
And link with each petition
Thy great REDEEMER's name.

CHAPTER III.

RAIN.

SATURDAY! the long looked for Saturday at length came, but it came with dark clouds and fast falling rain.

"What a stormy day!" "How I wish it would stop raining!" were the exclamations of Mr. Singleton's children, as one after another they opened their eyes in the morning. "How I wish it would stop raining," they repeated, as they went down stairs to the breakfast-room. "Mother, do you not wish it would stop raining?" said Alfred.

"I am perfectly satisfied with the weather," replied Mrs. Singleton.

"Why, mother, how can you be? I am sure father cannot come in all this rain."

"I wish much to see your father, Alfred; but it will do no good to complain of the rain that detains him

from us. I fear while murmuring about the weather, you forget who orders it. Recollect that while expressing this dissatisfaction, you are complaining of the providence of God, who sends the rain and the sunshine each in its proper season, and in such a way as is best for the earth.

“Do you recollect what the shepherd of Salisbury plain said to the traveller who stopped to ask him what he thought the weather would be in the afternoon?”

“Oh yes, mother; he said, ‘It will be such weather as pleases me;’ and when the traveller looked surprized at his strange answer, he said, ‘It will be such weather as pleases God, and *that always pleases me.*’”

“Now, how happy we should be, Alfred, if we could feel like the good shepherd about all the great and little circumstances of life. To be willing to cast our care upon the Lord, and to be satisfied with *any* thing that pleases him, is the secret of happiness.—Now remember to-day, my boys, while you are affectionately expecting your father, not to murmur about the rain; but say to yourselves, ‘It is the weather that God sends us, and therefore must be good.’”

“Really, mother, you are always right,” said Alfred; “I think all you have said is very true, and I begin already to feel reconciled to those big drops of rain that are falling so fast from the roof of the house. But had we not better stay at home from school this morning? Father *may* come before afternoon, and I should be so sorry not to be at home when he arrives.”

“You can do as you please, Alfred; but I think you had better go to school. The time will appear much longer if you stay at home watching for your father;

and should he arrive unexpectedly, it will add to his happiness to find his children all engaged about their proper business."

"Well, then, we had better go, Edward. Come, let us be off at once, and then we shall be at home the earlier. Here is an umbrella and our cloaks: twelve o'clock will soon come, and then we will hasten home, and perhaps father may be here, sitting in this very chair, playing with Lucy."

The boys put on their cloaks and went to school: Mrs. Singleton calmly pursued her household duties: Caroline, her eldest daughter, being detained from school by the rain, sat down to her work and studies; while Maria, a little girl of five years, endeavoured to put her baby house in order, for her father to look at, and thought it very hard that her little sister, Lucy, would pull down the things as fast as she put them up.

CHAPTER IV.

SUNSHINE.

THE clock struck eleven. The rain had stopped, and the dark clouds were rolling away to the east. The air became clear and dry; and before noon the beautiful blue sky appeared, and the sun shone out delightfully. The eyes of the children brightened with the scene, and their young hearts danced with joyful anticipation.

"I am so glad it has cleared off, mother!" exclaimed Alfred and Edward, as they ran in, almost breathless, from school. "Now you cannot say you are not glad,

mother," said Alfred, "for this is God's weather as well as the rain."

"Yes, my son; and I am very glad and grateful that he has again given us the light and warmth of the sun. It will make your father's ride home much pleasanter; for the rain has settled the dust, and made the air cool and clear: so, you see, it has added to his comfort, as well as caused him some inconvenience."

As soon as dinner was over, the children formed themselves into a group around the window to listen for the sound of the carriage wheels, and to watch for its appearance. Alfred soon grew impatient, and thought the hands of the clock never went round so slowly.

"You may stay here," he said to his brothers and sisters, "and I will just run up the road a little way, and if I see anything of the stage I will wave my handkerchief, and you can all come out."

"But father will not wish to get out and meet us in the road," said Caroline, "and we shall not see him as soon as if we stayed in the house: besides, the ground is very damp, and I am afraid Lucy and Maria may take cold."

"That is true—that is very true: well, when I see the stage coming down the hill, I will run back, and wait at the door with you. How glad father will be to find us all alive and well."

Three o'clock—four o'clock—five o'clock struck, and there was no arrival! At length, the children, fatigued with watching, turned to their books and play. They were busily engaged, when Alfred's voice was heard—"He is coming! he is coming! the stage is just turning the corner; you will see him in two minutes."

"Mrs. Singleton joined her children, and the happy group fixed themselves on the steps. The stage stopped, and the husband and father stood in the midst of his rejoicing family. Months had passed since he left them, and here they were, all well and happy; no pain, sickness, or sorrow had entered the dwelling.

They assembled in the parlour, and Mr. Singleton, embracing each of them in turn, asked—"And what does mother say about my five children? have they been affectionate to each other, and obedient to her? Has Alfred tried to fill my place? and has my little Lucy been good?" he asked, as he took his youngest daughter in his arms, and kissed her.

"Lucy cried this afternoon, father, because she thought you were not coming home; but *I* think she has been very good: she has learned all her letters since you went away, and can say two verses of the hymn about Sunday,—

'This day belongs to God alone.'

"And can she tell me *who* has taken care of her, and of you all, these many days that I have been away from you?"

"God has taken care of us," lisped Lucy, "by night as well as by day; mother says so."

"And mother is right, my daughter; and we must not forget to thank God for his tender care. Caroline, will you call John and Nancy, and we will unite in a prayer of thanksgiving."

Lucy and Mary were put to bed after prayers, but Caroline, Alfred, and Edward, were allowed to sit up later than usual on this happy occasion. At the close

of the evening they joined their voices in singing the following hymn :—

Father, in thy radiant dwelling,
Deign to listen to our lays;
Hear our feeble accents, telling
Of thy love, in feeble praise.
Blessings thou art daily pouring
From thy mercy-seat above,
Absent ones to us restoring,
Guided by thy care and love.

Since that eye, which, never sleeping,
Watches o'er each shining sphere,
Us in safety hath been keeping,
We once more are gathered here,
All the well-known voices blending
In our simple household prayer,
And on wings of faith ascending
To the realms of upper air

Evermore, dear Lord, watch o'er us,
Keep us in the narrow way;
Send thy Spirit to restore us,
Should we ever go astray.
And at length, our heavenly Father,
When our journeying is o'er,
All this little flock re-gather,
And unite to part no more.

CHAPTER V.

WATCH AND PRAY.

ALFRED SINGLETON was what the world calls a *good* boy; but his watchful parents saw that he had many

faults to correct, and many sins to repent of, before he could be called *good* by his Father in heaven. He had one fault—a very great one—that caused his friends much sorrow and anxiety : he did not love the truth as he ought. I do not mean that he was in the habit of telling lies, but he was apt to forget and equivocate ; and when he was telling anything, he would add a little, or take away a little, and not keep close to the truth.

Do all my young readers know what I mean by this word, *truth* ? Some of them will smile at this question, and say, *everybody knows that* ; but I hope others will stop and think whether they know what truth is ; that holy truth that God loves, and which every little child loves when he begins to grow like God.

You have often read the story of Ananias and Sapphira, and often answered the question, “ Who were struck dead for lying ? ” but you do not see people struck dead now, and perhaps you think the sin of lying is not so displeasing to God as it once was : but you are mistaken. He is of “ purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” and he is the God of truth. It is true, perhaps, that people are not now *struck dead*, as they once were, in the act of sinning ; still they bring upon themselves the displeasure of God ; and if his “ *loving-kindness* is better than *life*,” then surely his anger is *worse than death*.

Those who knew Alfred slightly did not notice this habit, and often thought him very witty and amusing, and by their smiles and praises encouraged him in a sinful way. This gave his real friends much pain. He was warned faithfully of the sin of departing from the truth about the merest trifle. His father prayed for him and with

him, that he might have strength to resist temptation, and love the truth from his heart ; and Alfred would pray also ; but he did not *watch* as well as pray, and so he gained no conquest over his fault.

And now, while speaking of the duty of *watching*, I will tell you a beautiful anecdote that I heard from the lips of a minister not long ago.

He said, that when he was a boy, he knew an old negro man who lived a little way out of the city of Philadelphia. He used often to go and see him, and carry him presents from his parents. Old Peter was poor in this world's goods, and lived in a miserable little hovel ; but he was always cheerful, and said he was as rich and happy as a king. Old Peter was a Christian.

When this little boy grew up, and determined to be a minister, and before he left home to prepare himself, by a course of study, to preach, he went to bid his old friend good-bye. Peter was very glad to see him, and they had a long conversation together. When he arose to go, Peter said—" And so, master, you are going away to learn to be a minister ? "

" Yes," he replied.

" Well," said Peter, " I have but *three* words to say to you, and they are my Master's words—*Watch and pray !* "

" Of course, it will be of no use to *watch* without praying ; and if you pray ever so much, and *do not watch*, the devil will have you, after all : but *watch and pray*, and then your heart will be guarded by a two-edged sword, turning each way, and the devil cannot get in."

Now Alfred did not *watch*, and the devil, who is the

father of lies, often tempted him to turn aside from the straight and narrow way of truth. He knew it was wrong, for he was the child of Christian parents, and had been taught from his cradle that he must speak the truth *always*.

One day he read the following story, and it made him quite serious for a time. It is a true story, and told by one who is now a minister of the gospel.

“I had one of the kindest and best of fathers ; and when I was a little white-headed boy, about six years old, he used to carry me to school before him on his horse. He helped me in my little plans, and was always trying to make me happy ; and he never seemed so happy himself as when making me happy. When I was six years old, he came home one day very sick. My mother, too, was sick, and thus nobody but my two sisters could take care of my father.

“In a few days my father was worse ; then he became very sick indeed, and all the physicians in the neighbourhood were called to see him. The next Sabbath morning, as I went into the room, he stretched out his hand to me, and said, ‘My little boy, I am very sick. I wish you to take that paper on the stand, and run down to Mr. C——’s, and get me the medicine written on that paper.’

“I took the paper, and went to the apothecary’s shop, as I had often done before. It was about half a mile off ; but when I got there, I found it shut ; and as Mr. C—— lived a quarter of a mile further off, I concluded not to go and find him. I then set out for home. On my way back I contrived what to say. I knew how wicked it was to tell a lie, but one sin always leads to another.

“On going in to my father, I saw that he was in great pain; and though pale and weak, I could see great drops of sweat standing on his forehead, forced out by the pain. Oh, then I was sorry I had not gone and found the apothecary. At length he said to me, ‘My son has got the medicine, I hope; for I am in great pain.’

“I hung my head and muttered, for my conscience troubled me—‘No, sir; Mr. C—— says he has got none.’

“‘Has got none! Is this possible?’ He looked earnestly upon me, and seeing my head hung down, and probably suspecting my falsehood, he said, in the mildest, kindest tone, ‘*My little boy will see his father suffer great pain for want of the medicine.*’

“I went out of the room, and cried. I was soon called back.—My brothers had come, and were standing round his bed, and he was committing my poor mother to their care, and giving them his last advice. I was the youngest, and when he laid his hand on my head, and told me that in ‘a few hours I should have no father; that he would in a day or two be buried; that I must now make God my Father, love him, obey him, and always do right and *speak the truth*, because the eye of God is always upon me,’ it seemed as if I should sink; and when he laid his hand on my head again, and prayed for the blessing of God the Redeemer to rest upon me, ‘soon to be a fatherless child,’ I dared not look at him, I felt so guilty.

“Sobbing, I rushed from his bedside, and wished I could die. They soon told me he could not speak. Oh, how much I would have given to go in, and tell him

that I had told a lie, and ask him once more to lay his hand on my head and forgive me !

“ I crept into the room, and heard the minister pray for the ‘dying man.’ Oh, how my heart ached ! I caught up my hat, and ran to the apothecary’s house, and got the medicine. I ran home with all my might ; went in, and hastened up to my father’s bedside to confess my sin, crying out, ‘Oh here, father—’ but I was hushed ; and then I saw that he was pale, and that all in the room were weeping. *My dear father was dead !* and the last time I ever spoke to him was *to tell a lie !* I sobbed as if my heart would break ; for his kindnesses, his tender looks, and my own sin, all rushed upon my mind.

“ As I gazed upon his cold, pale face, and saw his eyes shut, and his lips closed, could I help thinking of his last words, ‘*My little boy will see his father suffer great pain for want of that medicine ?*’ I could not know but he died for the want of it. In a day or two he was put into the ground. There were several ministers at the funeral, and each spoke kindly to me, but none could comfort me.

“ My father was buried, and the children were all scattered abroad ; for my mother was too feeble to take care of them.

“ It was twelve years after this, while in college, that I went alone to the grave of my father. It took one a good while to find it ; but there it was, with its humble tombstone ; and as I stood over it, I seemed to go back to his bedside, to see his pale face, and hear his voice. Oh ! the thought of that great wickedness cut me to the heart. It seemed as if worlds would not

be too much to give, could I then only have *called loud enough* to have him hear me ask his forgiveness. But it was too late. He had been in the grave twelve years, and I must live and die weeping over that ungrateful falsehood. May God forgive me."

Alfred was much affected by this story. "How dreadful," he thought, "to have such a sin to think of after a parent is dead! I never will tell a lie to my father, for I never could forgive myself if he should die." Alfred forgot that the boy sinned against God as well as his father. He was too confident, also. He trusted in himself, and the next chapter will show how weak are resolutions not founded in better strength than our own.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DOUBLE FALSEHOOD.

IN Alfred's joy at seeing his father, he entirely forgot that he had a grammar lesson to learn on Saturday evening. He was an ambitious boy and an excellent scholar, and his lessons were always learned promptly and well. He had now held a high rank in school for several months, and to lose it before the next examination, would be a source of much pain and mortification. Monday morning came, and he *then* remembered that his lesson was unstudied. His class was called up to recite—Alfred was unprepared.

"Unless you have a good excuse, master Singleton," said the teacher, "you know the rules—you lose your rank for the month."

"I was not well, sir, on Saturday evening, and could not sit up to study my lesson."

"Very well," said Mr. Palmer, "you are excused."

Alfred was excused to his master, and retained his place in school, but he had committed a sin for which he could not excuse himself. He returned to his seat; was very diligent about his other studies; wrote with neatness, and did his sums with accuracy; but the approbation of his master did not give him the usual pleasure. He knew that God could not say *very well* to him. He felt that he deserved censure, and praise only made him more unhappy.

Thus it is that God mercifully orders that these great sins shall bring punishment with them; for unless a sinner is sadly hardened, the voice of conscience will make him more miserable than the blame of others, that he so much dreads.

Everything was pleasant at home for Alfred. Mr. Singleton gave his children a most interesting account of his travels, and described to them the beautiful country through which he had passed, and the many new and curious things he had seen in the cities which he had visited. But Alfred did not feel right, and something prevented him from enjoying his father's society as usual. What was that something? It was the voice of conscience, which is the voice of God, saying to him, "*You have told a lie.*"

When Alfred went to bed at night, he could not sleep. After lying awake some time, he got up and looked out of the window, and tried to forget his trouble. His mother whose chamber was next his, immediately got up, and came in to see what was the matter.

“O, nothing, mother,” he said; “I do not feel very well, and was a little restless; but I will try to go to sleep, and I dare say I shall be better in the morning.”

Mrs. Singleton went back, telling Alfred not to fail to call her if he felt any worse.

Here was Alfred's *second* falsehood, proceeding entirely from his first departure from the truth. He tried to excuse it to himself by the reflection that all he had said was true, for he certainly did not feel *well*; but there was an *intention to deceive*, and the sin is in *that*, not in the *words*.

At breakfast, the next morning, his father kindly asked him how he was, and expressed his gratification at seeing him look so well. Alfred felt very much ashamed, and half resolved to tell the whole truth at once; but false pride kept him back. He could not bear to let his father know that he had stooped to tell such a mean and pitiful lie. He hurried off to school, for the first time glad to escape from the kind words and looks of his indulgent parents.

CHAPTER VII.

EXPOSURE.

THE next afternoon, as Alfred was leaving school, Mr. Palmer said to him—“I have not seen your father since his return, Alfred; I will try to call this evening, if you think he will be at home.”

Alfred hesitated: he did not wish Mr. Palmer to see his father, for he feared he might, in speaking of his

arrival on Saturday evening, say something that would expose his first falsehood. How timid the sin of lying makes a boy! What does Alfred do? Again he breaks the command of God! Again he resorts to a lie? He told Mr. Palmer that his father was engaged, and would not be at home in the evening. Mr. Palmer then said he would take another opportunity to call.

Here was Alfred's *third* lie! But four days had passed since he told the first direct falsehood that passed his lips; and now, how wide the door of sin has opened? Truly has it been said by a Christian writer—"Let a child tell *one* lie, and he may thus begin a course of lying which will ruin him for this life and the next." A good man, speaking of his dear child then in the grave, says, "When he was about three years old, an aged female, at whose house he was staying for a day, informed me that William had told a falsehood. I was thunderstruck and almost distracted; for the information seemed to blast my most cherished hopes. *I am not sure that my agony on hearing of his death was much more intense than that which I then endured from an apprehension of his guilt.*"

You see how a good father abhors a single lie. Guard then, my beloved children, against the *FIRST* lie. Do not allow yourselves to *think* a lie. If you sometimes think that you can make a good story, or get yourself out of a difficulty, by departing a *little* from the truth, drive away the wicked suggestion, and go by yourself, and pray that the "*thought of your heart* may be forgiven."

You see how Alfred's first lie seemed like to make it *necessary* for him to tell two more; and we know not

how far in the career of sin it might have carried him, if God had not mercifully checked him.

A few evenings after, Mr. Palmer called to see Mr. Singleton, and was happy to find him at home, surrounded by his family. Mr. Palmer was always a welcome guest. He was an excellent man, and a Christian teacher. He remembered that his pupils had *hearts* as well as *heads* and that those hearts, as the "fountains of life," must be "kept with all diligence."

Mr. Palmer was very fond of Alfred and Edward Singleton. They were attentive and obedient scholars, and amiable and obliging friends. After they had retired, their teacher spoke of them, with much praise, to their parents, and expressed a hope that their conduct at home met equally the approbation of their friends.

When Mr. Palmer rose to go, he apologized for not having called to see his minister before. "I have been engaged every evening since you arrived," said he, "except Tuesday, and you know my school engrosses the hours of the day."

"I wish you had called on Tuesday evening," said Mr. Singleton; "Mr. S—— was here, and I should have been glad to have introduced you to him."

"I spoke of coming, but Alfred said you were engaged, and I therefore put it off. But good-night—I hope to call and see you often, now you are once more among us."

I am afraid this is one of Alfred's wicked deeds," said Mr. Singleton to his wife, after Mr. Palmer had gone.

"I do not understand it," replied Mrs. Singleton; "but I hope it can be explained. Perhaps Mr. Palmer misunderstood Alfred."

CHAPTER VIII.

CONFESSION.

THE next morning, at breakfast, Mr. Singleton said, "Do you know, Alfred, why Mr. Palmer has not called upon me before last evening! He is usually among the first of my friends to call upon me after an absence from home."

The blood rose in Alfred's cheeks, and he hesitated. Would another falsehood save him?—he was tempted to say "he did not know; but when he looked up, and met the searching eye of his father, he could not speak. He feared the eye of his earthly parents, but that of God had been disregarded—that all-seeing eye that is never closed, and to which the darkness and the light are both alike!

Mr. Singleton took him by the hand, and led him to his study. He there knelt with him, and asked the Lord to give him strength to explain this matter frankly and fully. "And now, my son, what is this you have done?" he said, affectionately. "Your blushes and confusion lead me to think there has been something wrong, and yet I cannot see what motive you can have had to deceive me. Recollect that you stand now in the presence of the God of truth, and that He cannot be deceived. If you have done wrong, confess it; do not increase the sin by concealing anything."

Alfred burst into a flood of tears—"Oh, father, you do not suspect all; I cannot tell you all; you will despise me, and it will break your heart."

“Speak, my son; may God strengthen me to bear all you have to say.”

Alfred confessed the whole—the *first* falsehood about the grammar lesson, and the distress and wakefulness it had caused: the *second* to his mother, when she inquired the cause of his restlessness at night; and the *third* to Mr. Palmer, which arose from the fear that his father would meet his teacher, and hear that he was quite well on Saturday evening.

Mr. Singleton bowed his head upon his hands. He did not speak, but remained in this position for some time. Alfred went to his chamber, and threw himself upon his bed in an agony of grief. To see his father, his dear father, suffering for his fault was more than he could bear. “What can I do? what can I do!” he exclaimed. “The falsehood has been told, and cannot be untold.” What does the blessed Bible say, Alfred? “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him *return unto the Lord*, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

With a heavy heart Alfred took up his books, and went to school; his eyes were red with weeping, and he looked very unhappy. His schoolfellows tried to make him play, but he would not; and he was hurrying away after school, when Mr. Palmer stopped him, and kindly asked what was the matter.

“Oh, do not ask me! do not ask me!” said Alfred, and he hurried off. He dreaded speaking, for he did not feel prepared to confess the whole to Mr. Palmer, and he feared he might again be tempted to depart from the truth.

At the dinner table no one spoke: Mr. Singleton looked extremely sad, and Alfred saw by his mother's countenance that she had been weeping. What a different scene from that of the Saturday evening before! And how miserably did Alfred feel, as he witnessed the sorrow he had caused.

"I can bear this no longer," he said to himself; and after dinner he followed his father into his study. "Oh father, my dear father, do forgive me!" he exclaimed: "only smile upon me once more, and I never, *never* will tell another lie. Can you not forgive me? I cannot bear to see you and mother looking so sorrowful."

"You have lost the smile of a kinder father, a better friend, than I am, Alfred. You broke the commandment of God some days since, and you must know that you are not receiving his approbation; for he has said, that 'lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.' I can punish you for this sin, but I have no power to make you better. God alone can do that. Your first offence is against him: obtain his forgiveness, and you will readily receive mine."

"I never will sin again in this way," said Alfred; "I will 'set a guard upon my lips, that I sin not with my tongue.'"

"You can promise this, Alfred, but you have not the power to keep your promise. Peter also promised. He *declared* that he would never deny his master: but he was depending upon himself—upon his poor human strength; and what was the result? 'Before the cock crew,' he thrice denied his blessed Lord. Like you, he feared man more than God."

"But, father, what am I to do? Will God hear me if I pray? I am almost afraid to appear before him."

"You were *afraid* to confess your fault to me, Alfred, and now you rejoice that you have done so. 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.' God is a more tender parent than I am. He is *waiting* to be gracious. Go to him, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and claim his promise, that whosoever cometh to the Father through him shall in no wise be cast out. If you really *feel* your sin, you will be willing to go, like the publican, and say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

"We spoke of Peter—you have read the story of his repentance, and how his affectionate Master again received him into his service. This account is given us for a warning and an encouragement, that we may see the effect of real repentance, and imitate his zeal and fidelity. You must seek the help that cometh from above, and then you too may regain the lost favour of God.

"You next owe a duty to Mr. Palmer. It was to him you told your first falsehood: go to him, and confess all you have done."

"Oh, father, I cannot tell Mr. Palmer. Why need he know anything about it? If I should tell him, I fear he would never respect me any more."

"This is a test of your humility, Alfred. If you are truly humbled in the sight of God for your fault, you will be ready to confess it to man. Mr. Palmer is a Christian, and he will hear you as a Christian, and add his prayers to ours, that you may be forgiven."

"Father, let me go now: I fear to put it off: let me go while I feel it is my duty."

Alfred left the room, and Mr. Singleton heard him go into his chamber, and shut the door. He was there some time, and when he came out, he went directly to the lodgings of Mr. Palmer. He found him alone, and made the same frank confession to him that he had to his father, and met with the same Christian sympathy.

Mr. Palmer was deeply grieved, but the confession did not send the same pang into his heart that it had sent into the heart of Mr. Singleton ; for it was not his *son* that had sinned, though it was a dearly beloved pupil.

“ And now, Mr. Palmer, my dear, kind teacher, what can I do to make up to you for that falsehood : I am ready to do anything you say.”

“ *One* price alone can pay for sins like these, Alfred ; and that your Saviour paid when he suffered and died for us. Pray that your soul may be washed in his most precious blood. The remembrance of this sin will soon fade from the memory of your friends. I shall not punish you. I love you still, and shall only pray that you may repent and be forgiven.”

Alfred was affected to tears by this kindness : he thanked Mr. Palmer for his solemn and affectionate counsels, and promised to think much of them.

CHAPTER IX.

CONTRITION.

I BELIEVE Alfred from this time resolved, in the fear of the Lord, to set a guard upon his lips. He certainly was very careful in all he said. He not only avoided

direct falsehood, but the appearance of it. He did not make *one* hour *three*, nor say that a person who was hurt a little, was *almost killed*; and that it took an *age* to do a thing that occupied half an hour. It is this careless habit of using language that often leads to the sin we have been considering; and if we would begin at the root of the matter, we must begin by correcting this habit.

Dr. Johnson, a great and very learned man who lived in England some years ago, was known to be so careful about speaking the truth, that in his common conversation, every circumstance was related *exactly* as it took place, in every particular. Of course, every one who listened to Dr. Johnson had perfect confidence in every thing he said. He gave the following advice to parents:—

“Accustom your children to pay the most strict regard to truth, even in the smallest things. If a thing happened at one window, and they, in relating it, say that it happened at another, do not let it pass, but instantly check them; you *do not know where deviation from truth will end*. It is more from *carelessness* about truth, than from intentional lying, that there is so much falsehood in the world.”

Mr. and Mrs. Singleton perceived the change in Alfred with much gratitude, but still they withheld from him that perfect confidence which he so dearly loved, and had so fully enjoyed before his first sad departure from truth. This Alfred perceived, and it excited him to increased watchfulness and care. As he sought strength from his Saviour, he was enabled daily to resist some temptation, and this helped him much; for, next to prayer, there is nothing that so much strengthens

us to overcome a fault, as habitual resistance in little things.

God seeth not as man seeth, and great and small lies are equally offensive to him. The command of Scripture is, "lie not one to another," and "he that offendeth in *one* point is guilty of *all*." If there is a willingness to deceive in the merest trifle, that willingness is as much a breach of God's law, as a lie that produces the most dreadful consequences. Ananias and Sapphira met with the same punishment, though Ananias only *withheld the truth*, while Sapphira told a direct lie. It was agreed by a body of the early Christians, that they would have all things in common. "Neither was there any among them that lacked ; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet ; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

It was expected, that after selling their possessions, each would bring *all* the money he received, and place it in the common treasury. Ananias kept a *part* of his property, and brought the remainder and laid it at the apostles' feet. He said nothing. You see he did not *lie with his lips*. The lie was unto God, and we all lie unto God when we withhold the truth. Sapphira told a lie with her mouth, but it does not appear that it was more offensive to the Almighty than that of her husband ; for their *punishment was equal*.

It is said of the ancient Persians, that from the age of five to twenty years, they instructed their children in only three things—to manage a horse ; to make use of the bow ; and to speak the truth. If heathen pa-

rents thus valued truth, how should Christian parents regard it. The Persians knew, that without it, no order, peace, or happiness could prevail on earth. *We* know this also ; but we also know that truth is the foundation of God's throne, and that whosoever "maketh a lie" is to be for ever excluded from the presence of God, and the blessed company of just men made perfect.

CHAPTER X.

SELF-CONQUEST.

THERE was to be an examination at Mr. Palmer's school. This was an interesting event to the young people. Every hand was busy in decorating the school-room, and in preparing for the eventful day. Rich garlands of evergreen surrounded the windows, among which were interspersed bouquets of brilliant flowers.

The faces of the younger children were full of animation as they took their seats, at an early hour, on Wednesday morning. There was an expression of anxiety on the countenances of the older scholars, who were to take a more important part in the exercises ; for they knew many would be present whom they respected and loved, and they felt anxious to obtain their approbation. The company assembled, and the exercises commenced. The classes in geography, grammar, history, and arithmetic, were examined in turn, and the scholars did credit to their teacher and themselves. The voices of Alfred and Edward Singleton were distinctly heard, and their

answers were always prompt and ready when a general question was proposed to the class.

Mr. Palmer read several pieces of composition which had been written by his pupils. There was usually a fictitious signature attached to them, or merely the initials of the author's name. There were many excellent pieces read, but there was one of remarkable merit, which was listened to with much interest and attention. When the teacher read the signature, "A. S." the eyes of the audience and scholars were turned upon Alfred Singleton, for every one supposed him to be the author.

Alfred was delighted for a moment, for he loved to do well and to be praised; but he was *not* the author of the piece; and though *not a word* had been said, he perceived that it was the general impression that he had written it. He said to himself—"Surely it cannot be wrong to let this pass; as soon as school is done, Mr. Palmer and the boys will know that I did not write the piece." But again he reflected that there were many there that would go away with a wrong impression if not undeceived. He could not feel satisfied: he loved the praise of man, but he had lately learned to desire still more the approbation of God.

Alfred was a timid boy, but the consciousness that he was doing right emboldened him; and during a pause in the exercises, he got up and said, "I did not write that piece of composition signed 'A. S.'" His face was covered with blushes as he hastily resumed his seat, and there was an expression of surprise on every countenance.

Mr. Singleton, at the request of the teacher, made a short address to the scholars, when the exercises were concluded. He spoke of their improvement; of the

pleasure it had given their friends to perceive it ; and of the high advantages they were enjoying. “ But after all, my young friends,” he continued, “ wisdom is the principal thing. In the words of the wise Solomon, let me say to you, ‘ Therefore get *wisdom*, and with all thy *getting* get understanding.’ The knowledge you are now acquiring will be of little use to you, unless you add to it *that* which ‘ maketh wise to salvation.’ Then try, whether you are at study or any other employment, to do all things to the glory of God ; to look up to him for his blessing on *every* thing you undertake.

“ The good Legh Richmond said to his daughters, ‘ Engage in no employment in which you cannot look up to God, and say, *Bless me in this, O my Father.*’

“ Let the Bible be your *first* study. ‘ The entrance of thy word giveth light ; it giveth understanding to the simple.’ These words are full of truth ; and you will all find, that as you increase in heavenly science, your minds will be enlarged and made capable of better understanding the various branches of human knowledge. Try to excel, that you may *please God*. Let his approbation be the *supreme* object of your desire. You will find him ever ready to bestow it, and your own hearts will tell you when you possess it.

“ And now,” concluded Mr. Singleton, “ as all our works, to be of any value, must be begun, continued, and ended with God, let us approach his throne of grace, and, thanking him for past mercies, implore his direction and blessing for the future.”

After prayer, the scholars united in singing the following hymn :—

“ Oh, in the morn of life, when youth,
With vital ardour glows,
And shines in all the fairest charms
That beauty can disclose,

“ Deep in thy soul, before its powers
Are yet by vice enslaved,
Be thy Creator's glorious name
And character, engraved.

“ Ere yet the shades of sorrow cloud
The sunshine of thy days;
And cares and toils, in endless round,
Encompass all thy ways:

“ Ere yet thy heart the woes of age,
With vain regret, deplore,
And sadly muse on former joys,
Gone to return no more.

True wisdom early sought, and gained
In age will give thee rest:
Oh, then, improve the morn of life,
To make its evening blest.”

CHAPTER XI.

“ BELIEVE, OBEY, AND BE HAPPY !”

AFTER the company had left the house, Mr. Palmer said to the scholars, “ You recollect that the author of the best piece of composition is entitled to a reward. When I offered it to you, it was to encourage you to *do well*; not to excel each other, but to *excel yourselves*.

The author of the composition signed ‘A. S.’ may rise and take this volume, which, while he receives it as the reward of successful effort, will teach him to ‘think lowly of himself,’ and to give all the praise to Him from whom he receives the capacity to do well.”

Mr. Palmer held in his hand a beautiful copy of the Holy Bible. On its morocco covers these words were inscribed “*Believe, obey, and be happy.*” No one advanced to receive it. The scholars looked at each other, and then at their teacher, who said, “There is but one scholar absent—Stephen Abbot: he must be the author of this piece: he is one of my most attentive boys, and I am surprised that he is not in his place: I fear he is sick. Alfred Singleton, you are his friend: you shall take his reward to him; I am sure it will give you pleasure, and he will be glad to receive it from your hand.”

Alfred took the volume, and with a light step proceeded to the house of his friend. The windows were all closed, and there was no sound in the little garden before the house. Stephen’s little dog, Carlo, was lying on the door-step, and did not, as usual, run to meet Alfred with his welcome bark.

Alfred opened the door, and meeting no one, went to Stephen’s room. He was not there, and he turned to the door of Mrs. Abbot’s room, and knocked. Stephen came to the door. “O, I am so glad to see you!” he exclaimed; “my dear mother has been very sick all night, and I have been up alone with her. The doctor left us at three o’clock this morning, and thought her comfortable, but still she is *very* sick. Come in softly, Alfred; she will be glad to see you.”

Mrs. Abbot held out her hand to Alfred! “ I am pleased that you have come,” she said ; you will tell my dear boy about the examination. My sickness has prevented him from attending, but he has expressed no disappointment. Now go by yourselves, and talk about the school : perhaps I shall fall asleep ; and should I wish for any thing, I will ring my little bell.”

Alfred and Stephen went out, and sat down together near the door of Mrs. Abbot’s room.—“ I hope you all did well to-day, Alfred,” said Stephen ; “ I have thought much of you, and asked God to bless you : I wished much to be at school, but I have been quite happy at home.”

“ We all did pretty well, I believe, Stephen ; but we missed you, particularly when no one appeared to receive the prize for the best composition. Do you know who wrote under the signature ‘ A. S.’ ?”

“ Why that was my piece, Alfred. I reversed the initials of my name for a signature ; but little did I think it would receive the prize. I am glad it was approved ; for the subject was a great and good one, namely, ‘ How are we to understand and keep the commandment—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart.’ I took my subject from the Holy Scriptures, and the same sacred pages directed me how to treat it.”

“ And a copy of those Scriptures is your reward, dear Stephen,” said Alfred, as he took the Bible from a paper. “ Mr. Palmer allowed me the pleasure of bringing it to you, and I am sure it will prove an acceptable gift. I am glad it has fallen into the hands of one who knows so well how to use it.”

“Oh, that *all* might know it, from the least to the greatest!” exclaimed Stephen. “This will gratify my dear mother; for she loves to have her child approved. How thoughtful it was in you to bring it to me so soon, Alfred; but I dare say it gave your kind heart almost as much pleasure, as it has me to receive it.”

“I have been thinking, Stephen, that it is even so. When the composition was read and approved, and the signature given, all eyes turned upon me, and for one moment I felt delighted at being supposed the author; but in a moment after, truth prevailed. I knew it was wrong to have a false impression rest upon the minds of the audience; for they would go away, and it could not be explained to them; so I gathered up courage, and got up and said that I did not write it. I felt awkward and very much confused; but I cannot tell you how glad I was when it was over. I have thought, since I came here, and have witnessed your happiness, that the pleasure was much greater than it would have been to have received the prize myself.”

“You are a generous friend, dear Alfred, and I rejoice that you have been able to make another conquest over what you call your besetting sin: you will find yourself strengthened by every such effort, and I trust God will finish the good work he seems to have begun in you.”

Stephen now returned to his mother, and after giving her some nourishment, showed her his Bible, and told her why he had received it. Her eye brightened, and her pale countenance was lightened with a smile. “I am glad that you received it, my dear child,” she said:

“the best of all *prizes*—a copy of the Holy Scriptures. May it be a lamp to your feet, and a light to your path.”

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

How different were the feelings of Alfred, as he laid himself down upon his bed the night after the examination, from those we have described on the day in which he told his *first falsehood* ! Then he dared not pray. As he knelt to perform his evening devotions, something kept him back, and he felt that he could not lay his gift upon God's altar. He could not sleep ; for God, who giveth his children rest, was looking on him with displeasure. Now, he knelt with a calm and peaceful mind beside his little bed ; and first thanking God for the strength he had given him that day, he humbly asked for a continuance of that grace which he now felt could alone keep him from falling. He then asked, in the Saviour's name, that he might be restored to the confidence of his parents, and hold the place in their esteem which he once possessed ; that they might perceive that he was striving for a new heart and a new spirit ; and that he might show them that he had no longer those “ lying lips ” that are an abomination to the Lord.

Alfred then laid down and slept quietly, and when the morning sun called him forth to his duties, he remembered Him who has promised to be with his children in their rising up and in their lying down. God heard

and helped him. He daily renewed his strength, and gave him power to overcome evil with good; and we trust his name is now written among those who are admitted to be *within* the gate of the blessed city "whose builder and maker is God."

AGAINST LYING.

Oh, 'tis a lovely thing for youth
To walk betimes in wisdom's way,—
To fear a lie, to speak the truth,
That we may trust to all they say !

But liars we can never trust,
Though they should speak the thing that's true;
And he that does one fault at first,
And lies to hide it, makes it two.

Have we not known, nor heard, nor read,
How God abhors deceit and wrong?
How Ananias was struck dead,
Caught with a lie upon his tongue?

So did his wife Sapphira die,
When she came in, and grew so bold
As to confirm the wicked lie
That just before her husband told.

The Lord delights in them that speak
The words of truth; but every liar
Must have his portion in the lake
That burns with brimstone and with fire.

Then let me always watch my lips,
Lest I be struck to death and hell;
Since God a book of reck'ning keeps
For every lie that children tell.

A SON OF SORROW.

THE youth of whom I am about to speak was the son of a sea-captain. His father had been absent from home on a long voyage. During his absence, his child had grown, from being an infant, into a rough and careless boy. He was becoming restive under his mother's control; her gentle voice no longer restrained him. He was often wilful, and sometimes disobedient. He thought it showed a manly superiority to be independent of a mother's influence.

About this time his father came home; and it was very fortunate that he did return. He soon perceived the spirit of disobedience that was stirring in his son. The boy saw that it displeased his father, although for a few days he said nothing about it.

One afternoon in October, a bright, golden day, the father told his son to get his hat and take a walk with him. They turned down an open field, a favourite playground for the children in the neighbourhood. After talking cheerfully on different topics for a while (said the boy, who gives this history of himself), my father asked me if I observed that great shadow thrown by a huge mass of rock that stood in the middle of the field. I replied that I did. "*My* father owned that land," said he; "it was my play-ground when a boy. The rock stood there then; to me it is a beacon, and whenever I look at it I recall a dark spot in my life,—an event

so painful to dwell upon, that, were it not as a warning to you, I should not speak of it. Listen, then, my dear boy, and learn wisdom from your father's experience.

"My father died when I was a mere child. I was the only son. My mother was a gentle, loving woman, devoted to her children, and beloved by everybody.

"I remember her pale, beautiful face,—her sweet, affectionate smile,—her kind and gentle voice. In my childhood I loved her sincerely. I was never happy apart from her; and she, fearing that I was becoming too much of a child, sent me to a school in the village.

"After associating for a time with rude, rough boys, I lost in a measure my fondness for home and my reverence for my mother; and it became more and more difficult for her to restrain my impetuous nature. I thought it indicated a want of manliness to yield to her control or to appear penitent, although I knew that my conduct pained her.

"The epithet I most feared was *girl-boy*. I could not bear to hear it said by my play-mates that I was 'tied to my mother's apron strings.'

"From a quiet, home-loving child, I became a wild, boisterous boy.

"My mother was very anxious to induce me to seek happiness within the precincts of home. She exerted herself to make our fireside attractive; and my sister, following her self-sacrificing example, sought to entice me by planning games and diversions for my amusement and entertainment. I saw all this, but did not heed it until it was too late.

“It was on an afternoon like this, as I was about leaving the dining-table to spend the interval between morning and evening school in the street, as usual, my mother laid her hand on my shoulder, and said, mildly but firmly, ‘My son, I wish you to come with me.’

“I would have rebelled, but something in her manner awed me.

“She put on her bonnet, and said to me, ‘We will take a little walk together.’ I followed her in silence; and as I was passing out of the door, I observed one of my rude companions skulking about the house, and I knew he was waiting for me. He sneered as I passed by him. My pride was wounded to the quick. He was a very bad boy, and, being some years older than myself, he exercised a great influence over me.

“I followed my mother, sulkily, till we reached the spot where we now stand, beneath the shadow of this huge rock.

“Oh, my boy, could that hour be blotted from my memory, which has cast a dark shadow over my whole life, gladly would I exchange all that the world can offer me for the quiet peace of mind I should enjoy! But no! like this huge, unsightly pile, stands the monument of my guilt for ever.

“My mother, being in feeble health, sat down, and beckoned me to sit down beside her. Her look, so full of tender sorrow, is present to me now.

“I would not sit, but still continued standing beside her.

“‘Alfred, my dear son,’ she said, ‘have you lost all your love for your mother?’

"I did not reply.

" 'I fear you have,' she continued; 'and may God help you to see your own heart, and me to do my duty!'

"She then talked to me of my misdeeds—of the dreadful consequences of the course I was pursuing. By tears, and entreaties, and prayers, she tried to make an impression upon me. She placed before me the lives and examples of great and good men. She sought to stimulate my ambition.

"I was moved, but too proud to show it, and remained standing in dogged silence beside her. I thought, 'What will my companions say if, after all my boasting, I should yield at last, and submit to be led by a woman!'

"What agony was in my mother's face when she saw that all she had said and suffered failed to move me!

"She rose to go home, and I followed at a distance. She spoke no more to me until we reached our own door.

" 'It is school time now,' she said; 'go, my son, and once more let me beseech you to think upon what I have said.'

" 'I shan't go to school!' said I.

"She looked astonished at my boldness, but replied, firmly—

" 'Certainly you will go, Alfred; I command you.'

" 'I will not,' said I, with a tone of defiance.

" 'One of two things you must do, Alfred. Either go to school this moment, or I will lock you up in your room, and keep you there until you are ready to promise obedience to my wishes.'

“ ‘I dare you to do it!’ said I; ‘you can’t get me up stairs.’

“ ‘Alfred, choose now,’ said my mother, who laid her hand on my arm. She trembled violently, and was deadly pale.

“ ‘If you touch me, I will kick you!’ said I, in a terrible rage.

“ ‘Will you go, Alfred?’

“ ‘No,’ replied I; but I quailed beneath her glance.

“ ‘Then follow me,’ said she, as she grasped my arm firmly.

“ ‘I raised my foot—oh, my boy, hear me!—I raised my foot, and kicked her—my sainted mother!’

“ ‘Oh, my head reels as the torrent of memory rushes over me! I kicked my mother—a feeble woman—*my mother!*

“ ‘She staggered back a few steps, and leaned against the wall. She did not look at me. I saw her heart beat against her breast!’

“ ‘Oh, heavenly Father,’ she cried, ‘forgive him; he knows not what he does!’

“ ‘The gardener just then passing the door, and seeing my mother pale, and almost unable to support herself, he stopped. She beckoned him in.

“ ‘Take this boy up stairs, and lock him in his own room,’ she said, and turned from me.

“ ‘Looking back as she was entering her room, she gave such a look!—it will for ever follow me. It was a look of agony, mingled with the deepest love. It was the last unutterable pang from a heart that was broken.

“ ‘Immediately I found myself a prisoner in my own

room. I thought, for a moment, I would fling myself out of the window, and dash my brains out; but I felt afraid to die. I was not penitent. At times my heart was subdued, but my stubborn pride rose in an instant and bade me not to yield. The pale face of my mother haunted me. I flung myself on my bed and fell asleep. I awoke at midnight, suffering with the damp night-air, and terrified with frightful dreams. I would have sought my mother at that moment, for I trembled with fear; but my door was fast.

“With the day light my terrors were dissipated, and I became bold in resisting all good impulses. The servant brought my meals, but I did not taste them. I thought the day would never end.

“Just at twilight I heard a light footstep approach the door. It was my sister, who called me by name.

“‘What may I tell mother for you?’ she asked.

“‘Nothing!’ I replied.

“‘Oh, Alfred, for my sake, and for all our sakes, say that you are sorry; she longs to forgive you.’

“‘I won’t be driven to school against my will,’ I replied.

“‘But you will go if mother wishes it, dear Alfred?’ my sister said, pleadingly.

“‘No I won’t,’ said I; ‘and you needn’t say another word about it.’

“‘Oh, brother, you will kill her! you will kill her! and then you can never have a happy moment!’

“I made no reply to this. My feelings were touched, but I still resisted their influence. My sister called me, but I would not answer. I heard her footsteps slowly retreating; and again I flung myself upon my bed, and

passed another wretched and fearful night. O God, how wretched, how fearful, I did not know !

“ Another footstep, slower and feebler than my sister’s, disturbed me. A voice called my name : it was my mother’s.

“ ‘ Alfred, my son, shall I come in ? Are you sorry for what you have done ! ’ she asked.

“ I cannot tell what influence operating at that time made me speak adverse to my feelings.

“ The gentle voice of my mother, that thrilled through me, melted the ice from my obdurate heart, and I longed to throw myself upon her neck ; but I did not. No, my boy, I did not ! But my words gave the lie to my heart, when I said I was not sorry.

“ I heard her withdraw. I heard her groan. I longed to call her back, but I did not.

“ I was awakened from an uneasy slumber by hearing my name called loudly, and my sister stood by my bedside.

“ ‘ Get up, Alfred ! oh, do not wait a moment ! Get up and come with me ; mother is dying ! ’

“ I thought I was dreaming, but I got up mechanically and followed my sister.

“ On the bed, pale and cold as marble, lay my mother. She had not undressed. She had thrown herself on the bed to rest. Rising to go again to me, she was seized with a palpitation of the heart, and borne senseless to her room.

“ I cannot tell you my agony as I looked upon her. My remorse was tenfold more bitter from the thought that she would never know it. I believed myself to be a murderer. I fell on the bed beside her. I could

not weep. My heart burned in my bosom ; my brain was all on fire. My sister threw her arms around me and wept in silence. Suddenly we saw a slight motion of mother's hand. Her eyes unclosed. She had recovered consciousness, but not speech. She looked at me, and moved her lips. I could not understand her words.

“ ‘ My mother,’ I shrieked, ‘ say only that you forgive me ! ’

“ She could not say it with her lips, but her hands pressed mine. She smiled upon me ; and, lifting her thin white hands, clasped my own within them, and cast her eyes upward. She moved her lips in prayer, and thus she died.

“ I remained still kneeling before that dear form till my gentle sister removed me. She comforted me, for she knew the heavy load of sorrow at my heart,—heavier than grief at the loss of a mother, for it was a load of sorrow for sin.

“ The joy of youth had left me for ever.”

My father ceased speaking, and buried his face in his hands. He saw and felt the bearing of his narrative upon my character and conduct.

I have never forgotten it ; and I would say to boys who spurn a mother's control, who are ashamed to own that they are wrong, who think it manly to resist her authority, or to yield to her influence—“ Beware ! Lay not up for yourselves bitter memories for your future years.”

That was a child of sorrow to his parent, to his sister, and to all around him. His disobedience made him such.

Let us look, now, at an example of an opposite character.

A SON OF COMFORT.

WILLIAM HALE was an obedient son. He was spending some time with his mother in the country, and had become acquainted with a number of boys of his own age there.

One day some half-dozen of the children were playing on the piazza, and one of them was heard exclaiming,—

“O yes, that’s capital! So we will; come on, now! Where’s William Hale? Come on, Will! We are going to have a sail in a boat. Come with us.”

“Yes, if my mother is willing,” said William. “I will run and ask her.”

“Ah, ah! so you must run and ask your *ma*!—great baby-boy!—run along to your *ma*! Ain’t you ashamed?”

“I don’t ask my mother,” said one.

“Neither do I,” said another.

“Neither do I,” said a third.

“Be a man, Will, and come along!” said the first boy. “if you don’t wish to be called a coward as long as you live; don’t you see we are all waiting?”

William was standing, with one foot advanced, and his hand firmly clenched, in the midst of the group. His brow was flushed, his eye was flashing, his lip was compressed, his cheek was changing—all showing how the epithet “coward” rankled in his bosom.

It was doubtful for a moment whether he would have the true bravery to be called a coward rather than to do

wrong ; but with a voice trembling with emotion, he replied,—

“I will not go unless I ask my mother ; and I am no coward either. I promised her I would not go from the house without her permission ; and I should be a base coward if I were to tell my mother a lie.”

When William returned to his mother, to ask her permission to go, and told her of what had taken place, she threw her arms around his neck and exclaimed,—

“God bless you, my dear child, and give you grace always to act in this way.”

Ah, dear reader, he was a Benjamin—a child of comfort to his mother ; and doubtless he grew up to be her support and comfort all her days.

