

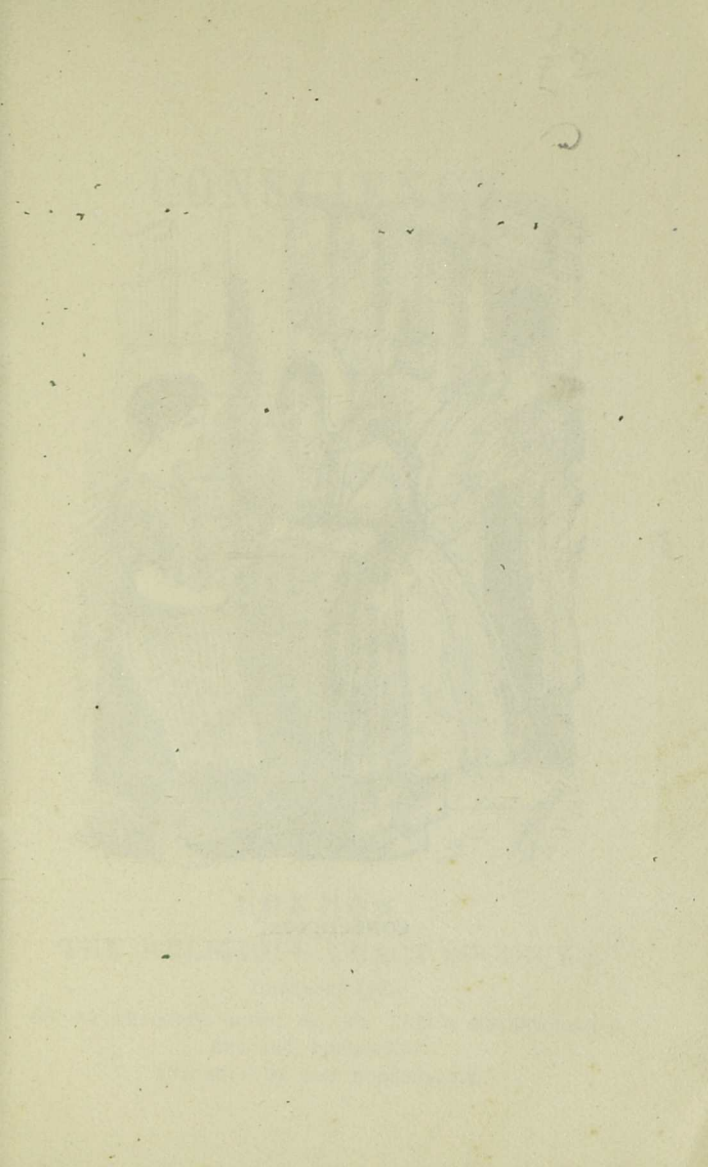
[388

CONSCIENCE.



LONDON:

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S
CHURCHYARD; AND 164, PICCADILLY.





CONSCIENCE.

CONSCIENCE.



LONDON.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY ;

Instituted 1799.

56, PATERNOSTER ROW ; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD ;
AND 164, PICCADILLY.

AND SOLD BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

CONSCIENCE.

WHO loves to hear a story? "I do," says Jane: "I do," says Mary; and does not little Edward often say, "Will you tell me a little story, please mamma?"

Come then, dear children, all of you, here is a story about little Ellen, which you may read for yourselves when perhaps mamma may be too busy to tell you one.

When you are told about good

children, it is that you may follow their example and be good like them ; and when you hear of those who do wrong, and learn that sorrow follows sin, you should take warning from them and avoid their faults.

Sometimes punishment and sorrow directly follow sin. You have read in the Bible of those young men who mocked the holy man Elisha, and were torn to pieces by two bears which God sent out of the wood to destroy them, 2 Kings ii. 23, 24 ; and of Gehazi, who told a lie, and was

struck with a leprosy which could never be cured, 2 Kings v. 27. And no doubt you can remember many cases of yourselves or your playfellows doing wrong and suffering for it immediately. But it is not always so; it may be that you have sometimes done wrong and no one has found you out, and so you have escaped the punishment you would have received if your fault had been known; but then, have you felt happy? No, your own conscience has punished you; something within has been constantly reminding you of your fault; you

have been afraid to meet your parents, or friends, or teachers; perhaps even your own shadow has frightened you, and you have longed to unburden your mind by confessing your fault: this was conscience. The Bible says, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth," Prov. xxviii. 1; it is their conscience that makes them afraid. You know that Judas Iscariot, who professed to love Jesus Christ, went and betrayed him to those wicked men who crucified him, and they gave him some money for it, but his conscience troubled him so that he

could not enjoy the money; he took it back to those who had given it him, and went and hanged himself.

Well now, the story I am going to tell you is about conscience, and I hope you will be able to learn some useful lesson from it.

Little Ellen was not generally a naughty child, and when she was good no little girl could be happier. She had a kind mother and aunt who took care of her and supplied all her wants, and were glad to do all they could

to make her comfortable and happy.

Ellen had not a great deal of pocket-money; now and then her mother gave her a penny for weeding a bed in the garden, or doing some other little thing for her; and often she had a little present from some lady or gentleman who called at the house to see her mother, and who would say, "Here, Ellen, is something to buy you some cakes." But Ellen never bought cakes; her kind mother had taught her that was not the best use of her

money: sweatmeats eaten at improper times might make her ill; she had plenty of nice wholesome food to eat, and therefore it would have been waste to buy more; and besides, the pleasure of eating something because it was nice would last no longer than while it was in her mouth. Shall I tell you what Ellen did with her money? When she bought anything it was a book, or a doll, a picture, or a paint-box, something that would give her pleasure for many a day. Then sometimes she put a penny into the missionary box, or gave

one to some poor person who was very much in want; and if she had more than she wanted to use just then, she would give it to her mother to take care of for her till she was older.

But Ellen was not always good, and I am going to tell you of one time when she did very, very wrong.

Ellen could do little errands very nicely; she remembered the messages that were given her, and very seldom loitered by the way; if she were sent to a shop

to get anything, she carried it carefully and brought back the change quite right.

One day her aunt desired her to go to the stationer's and get a black lead pencil; she gave her sixpence, and told her that was what it would cost. When Ellen had taken the pencil, she put the sixpence on the counter and was going away, but the man who had served her cried, "Stop, stop, my little maid, 'tis only a penny, I must give you five-pence out." "My aunt told me it would cost sixpence," said

Ellen, but the man put the change into her hand, saying, "that is quite right," and before Ellen could say any more he had turned round to serve another customer; so Ellen went away wondering how it was, and thinking her aunt would be pleased that the pencil was so much cheaper than she had expected.

So far all was right, and the very thought of doing wrong had not come into her head; but temptation was near.

A few doors from the stationer's

was a grocer's shop, and in the window were some French plums. Ellen was very fond of French plums, and she thought she should very much like to have some of these; and then the naughty thought came that if she used the five-pence to buy some, her aunt would not know but that she had given all the money for the pencil.

Before this time when Ellen had been tempted to do wrong, she remembered these verses:—

“Almighty God, thy piercing eye
Strikes through the shades of night,

And our most secret actions lie
All open to thy sight.

“There’s not a sin that we commit,
Nor wicked word we say,
But in thy dreadful book ’tis writ
Against the judgment day.”

If she had thought of these lines, I believe she would not have done wrong; but Ellen *did not stay to consider*; almost as soon as she saw the plums she was in the shop and had asked for some of them.

I have told you before that Ellen was not in the habit of buying sweetmeats, and I am

sure she would not have thought of laying out five-pence on plums if she had earned it, or if it had been given her. But money that is not rightly obtained is seldom if ever well spent.

The plums cost only two-pence halfpenny, and the woman offered to return the change, for Ellen had given her all the money. Ellen was afraid to have it, she knew it was not rightly hers, and she feared if she carried it home it might lead to the discovery of her guilt, so she hastily said to the woman, “No, I do

not want it, you may keep it;" and she ran away lest the woman should make her take it. Here was conscience at work you know. It was just as if Ellen had pilfered her aunt's money, and conscience told her so.

Before Ellen had got half way home she wished she could get rid of the plums, for she was again afraid of being found out. Presently she met a little girl in poor-looking clothes and without a bonnet; she thought she would give the plums to her, so she stopped her and said, "Here are

some plums, they are for you." The little girl was very much surprised, and said, "For me! are you sure?" "Yes," Ellen repeated, "they are for you, take them," and she ran away as fast as she could, that the little girl might not ask her any questions. You see Ellen's conscience would not let her enjoy the plums; and then her conscience told her that she had tried to deceive the little girl whom she gave them to, and so had not spoken the truth.

Ellen soon reached home; her aunt met her at the door, and

taking the pencil from her, stroked her head and said, "There's a good girl, thank you, now go to play again." She went to play, but she felt that she did not deserve to be called a good girl, and she was very unhappy; she longed to tell the whole truth, for she knew that would be the best thing she could do now, but she could not take courage to do so, she was so very much ashamed of herself.

The next day, as Ellen was going home from school, she passed by the grocer's shop

where she had bought the plums, and there she saw the little girl whom she had given them to, and heard her say, "There is the little girl that gave me the plums." This frightened Ellen very much; she went along as quickly as she could, and it was a long while before she ventured to go along that street again.

For many days Ellen continued to be very unhappy, and often made up her mind that she would tell her mother all about it the next day; but when the next day came instead of it

being easier, she found it was harder than ever, and now she vainly wished she had confessed at first.

A few weeks after this had happened, Ellen was sent to a boarding school. There everything was new to her, and for awhile she thought less about her sin, but still the recollection of it would often return, and many a time it made her weep after she had gone to bed. She still longed to tell her dear mother and ask her forgiveness, and sometimes she thought she would

write it all in a letter; but then her governess always read her letters before they were sent home, and Ellen could not bear that she should know how naughty she had been.

One thing that kept Ellen from telling of her fault was this—she loved her dear mother very much, and she thought something like this: “It would sadly distress my dear mother to know how wicked I have been, and she never need know unless I tell her, and then I never shall do such a thing again, so I cannot

exactly see that it would do any good to tell." But Ellen was very much mistaken; it would indeed have grieved her mother to know that she had acted so sinfully, but it would have distressed her much more if she could have known that Ellen was concealing her sin; indeed she would have rejoiced in Ellen's frank confession, while she grieved over her fault. She was mistaken too in thinking that it would not do any good to tell; confessing a fault where there is real sorrow for it, is one of the most likely means to prevent our

committing it again; and the Bible says, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy," while "he that covereth his sins shall not prosper," Prov. xxviii. 13.

It was a very long time before Ellen confessed her fault at all, but at last she did confess it before God, and prayed that he would forgive her for Jesus Christ's sake, who died upon the cross to save us from our sins, and she trusts that God has heard and answered her prayer. It was a very great mercy that

Ellen's conscience was not hardened by her concealment of her sin.

Ellen is living now, though she is *little* Ellen no longer, for many years have passed since what I have been telling you about happened, and this is the message that Ellen sends you:—"Dear children, keep your conscience tender; listen to it when it speaks with a still small voice; at once obey it; if you have done wrong, and conscience begs you to confess, oh, listen to it then; do not fear the punishment and shame

that may follow confession ; no earthly punishment can be half so dreadful as a hardened conscience ; this may be your punishment if you refuse to attend to it. But you may ask — will conscience always be right ? Perhaps not, though there is very little danger indeed of its ever telling you wrong who are taught so well ; still as this is possible, go to the Bible, that will always tell you right ; and let conscience be guided by it. Conscience, and God's holy word too, tell you that you deserve his anger, and call on you to go to Jesus, who died

to save sinners, that you may be pardoned, saved, and made happy. Will you not go to him at once before it be too late? Confess to him your sins, ask him to wash you in his precious blood, that you may be forgiven and made holy, that you may be lambs in his flock, and by and by be with him in glory. “To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

It was Ellen's privilege to have a kind and pious mother who early trained her in the truth of the Bible and the ways of piety,

and so her conscience was enlightened. Dear children, if this is the case with you, be very thankful, and take care that you do not slight your advantages.

When a foolish thought within
Tries to take us in a snare,
Conscience tells us, "It is sin,"
And entreats us to beware.

If in something we transgress,
And are tempted to deny ;
Conscience says, "Your fault confess,
Do not dare to tell a lie."

In the morning when we rise,
And would fain omit to pray,
“Child, consider,” Conscience cries,
“Should not God be sought to-day?”

When, within his holy walls,
Far abroad our thoughts we send,
Conscience often loudly calls,
And entreats us to attend.

When our angry passions rise,
Tempting to revenge an ill,
“Now subdue it,” Conscience cries,
“Do command your temper still.”

Thus, without our will or choice,
This good monitor within,
With a secret gentle voice,
Warns us to beware of sin.

But if we should disregard,
While this friendly voice would call,
Conscience soon will grow so hard
That it will not speak at all.



37131039910112

