

THE YOUNG
SABBATH-BREAKERS.



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Collection

THE YOUNG SABBATH-BREAKERS.



THE village of B—— stands on the bank of a lovely lake. There are a great many beautiful houses on the principal street of this village, and the gardens slope down the hill to the water's edge. Many

of these gardens, too, are filled with choice fruit of every kind.

But there was at one time a set of very bad boys in this village, who strolled about on Sunday; and, when the houses were shut up, and the people that lived there were all at church, these boys would come along the shore of the lake, and go up into the gardens, and carry off all the ripe fruit.

There is a beautiful cottage on the bank of this lake, in which lived an old lady whose name was Williams. Her daughter lived with her, and in their garden they had very fine peaches and pears and plums. They were very kind people too, and were always in the habit of sending fruit to sick peo-

ple, and to their neighbours who had none. Now, this old lady's two sons came home from college to visit her one Saturday afternoon, and they had not been long in the house before they said,

“Well, mother, I suppose you have got plenty of nice fruit for us. We have been talking about your fine peaches all the way home.”

But the old lady told them that she might as well have no garden at all, as to live in the way she did. Her fruit was all stolen before it was ripe, “and,” said she, “I have not had a ripe peach for myself, or my neighbours, this summer.” She told them that it was usually on Sunday afternoon that the trees were stripped: “but,” said she, “it

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does no good for either myself or your sister to stay at home, for if we tell them to go away, they take no notice of us, knowing that we have no men about the house.”

The old lady's sons were very angry at this, and determined to stay at home the next afternoon, and watch for the boys; and they said, they should take up the very first that they found stealing fruit from the garden, and have them sent to jail as a warning to others.

There was a boy in this village whose name was Robert Ward. His parents were thought to be very good people, and they tried, as they said, to bring up their children well. They were very proud too, and they would not have had

one of their children do a mean act for the world ; but they were not in all things as careful as they should have been of the conduct of Robert ; for, upon his urging it very much, they allowed him to sit in the gallery at church, on Sunday ; and, as their pew was directly under the side of the gallery where the boys sat, his parents never could be sure whether he was at church or not, nor how he behaved when he was there. Robert became acquainted in some way with a very bad set of boys, and was very fond of their society.

Now, on the Sunday of which I speak, as he was hanging about the church door, and waiting till the last minute, before he would go in,

two or three of these bad boys came along, and said to him,

“Bob, what a fool you are, to go and sit in church this warm afternoon. Come, go with us, and take a pleasant walk on the bank of the lake.”

Robert hesitated a moment. He wanted very much to go with the boys, but he knew his father would be very angry if he should hear that his son had been seen walking with such boys, especially on Sunday afternoon; but he thought, it would never be found out. And then he was afraid the boys would laugh at him if he went to church, instead of going with them; so he joined them, and they walked

along together by the shore of the lake.

At last, they sat down under a tree at the foot of Mrs. Williams' garden to rest, and they heard the bells of the churches tolling, and then the village was all quiet.

The fact was, these other boys came on purpose to take the peaches and pears from this garden ; but they did not venture to tell Robert so at first, for fear he would not join them ; but they knew, that if they could once get him away from church, and induce him to do what he knew to be wrong, they could easily lead him on to do whatever else they wished.

So, after a little while, one of

them said, "Bob, do you know what nice peaches and pears there are up in this garden?"

"Yes," said Robert, "I know Mrs. Williams has very fine fruit. She has often sent some of it to my mother."

"Well," said one of the boys, "the old lady and her daughter are at church; what is there to hinder us from going up into the garden, and picking up a few of those same fine peaches?"

"Why," said Robert, "*do you steal fruit?*"

"Who calls it stealing?" said one of the boys. "I dare say they have plenty of fruit for themselves, and what objection can they have to our taking a little of it? I can

tell you, I have picked up peaches many a time in a garden, and yet I do not call myself a thief, by any means.”

Robert knew that he was a thief, whatever he might call himself, and he knew that it was very wicked to go up and take the peaches; but he had not the courage to say so. So, when the other boys started to go up the hill, he went along with them.

The old lady's two sons, James and Henry Williams, were lying behind some bushes, and heard the conversation of these boys. They waited quietly till they came up, and finding no fruit on the ground, they began to shake the trees. As soon as they began to pick up the

peaches, the young men sprang out upon them. The boys scampered off down the hill, as fast as they could go, and the young men after them. They did not mean to arrest them on Sunday, but wanted to see their faces, that they might know them, and bring them up for trial the next day. They succeeded in stopping them all, till they could see their faces plainly, but held one little boy fast. The little fellow was almost frightened to death, and trembled and turned pale. James Williams said to him,

“Do you want to go into court, sir, and be tried, and sent to jail?”

“Oh sir,” said the little boy, “please let me go; I shall lose my good place, and father will beat me

so. Please let me go, and I never will come into this part of the village again."

"Well," said James, "we will let you off if you will tell us the names of those three large boys who were stealing peaches in the garden."

"One of them is named Dick Handy. He works in Mr. Franklin's shoe-shop."

"And the next?"

"His name is Robert Ward; he lives with his father, and goes to the Academy."

"And the third?"

"Oh, sir, I don't like to tell."

"Very well," said the young men, "take your choice; tell us, or tell the court to-morrow."

The little boy looked down and hesitated, and then bursting into tears he said, "Oh, sir, that was my brother, but I did not want to tell of him."

"What is his name, and where does he live?"

"Charles Curtis is his name, and he works in Mr. Brown's carpenter shop."

They then let the little boy go, and he went home, crying all the way. The next morning the young men took out a warrant, and sent a constable after these boys. They were soon found, and brought into court, tried, and sent to the county jail for thirty days. And how do you think Robert felt on his way to jail, for stealing on the *Sabbath-day*?

He thought of the disgrace he had brought upon his parents and friends. He thought that no decent boys would ever associate with him again. He thought he never should dare to go back to school, or show his face among his old companions.

Poor Robert had to stay for thirty days in jail ; and his companions all this time were the vilest of boys and men. He heard every thing good sneered at, and ridiculed ; while they boasted of their exploits in cheating and stealing, and all other crimes. And do you think he came out no worse than he was when he went in ?

Robert's time is but just out ; so that I cannot tell you what the effect

of this punishment will be. It may be that it will keep him from ever committing a like fault again ; but is it not to be feared, that, finding himself disgraced in the eyes of the good and decent, he may begin to practise those crimes that he heard of among his vile companions in the jail, and may end his days in a prison ?

Children, beware of having any thing to do with bad boys ; for you cannot tell where you may be led, if you once join them. Robert's sin began by his acquaintance with wicked boys. This led him to leave the house of God and go off for amusement on Sunday. And now I want you to try and think how many of the commandments of

God Robert broke, that afternoon. I can think of at least four. He disobeyed his parents. It was on the Sabbath. He wished for what did not belong to him, and at last, he took it. Here are the fourth, fifth, eighth, and tenth commandments broken; his parents and family brought to sorrow and disgrace; his own soul loaded with sin, and he sent to jail; all because he had not courage enough to refuse to go with these wicked boys. You see how sin brings misery upon us even in this life. But oh, when we think of that prison of despair to which those are sent who die in their sins, and from which there is no escape! who will not be persuaded to shun wicked company

as they would the plague? Never, never, let them persuade you to leave your Sunday-school or church; for depend upon it, if they can induce you to commit one sin, they will soon lead you into others. Learn these words of Solomon, the wisest of men, and never forget them: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. Walk not in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it—pass not by it—turn from it,—and pass away."

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