

The Little Baptist

By J.M. Martin

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15

Chapter 5

Doing Good For Evil.

One morning Mr. Hamilton opened school by reading the twelfth chapter of Romans. During the reading Mollie marked several places she desired to have explained, but she preserved silence until the last verse was read: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," when she asked Mr. Hamilton to explain it, saying: "Mamma talked to me once about doing good for evil, and about forgiving persons who offended me: and I read in my Bible that God said, if we forgive not each other's trespasses, He will not forgive us when we sin against Him. I think this is the meaning of it, and I thought that this text might mean that by being good to others we could make them better."

Although reserved in giving opinions on any subject that might have sectarian bearing, in this instance Mr. Hamilton felt no such restraints. He was, indeed, glad of the opportunity of enforcing this text on the minds of his pupils. So after giving his sanction to Mellie's conclusions, he addressed the school as follows:

"We can have no stronger evidence of a firm and well founded Christian principle in a person than to see them capable of forgiving injuries and returning good for evil. The Saviour taught us to love our enemies; do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us, that we may be the children of our Father in Heaven, who maketh His sun to shine on the evil and good, and sendeth the rain on the just and on the unjust. He tells us to be perfect, even as our Father in Heaven is perfect. Paul tells us to let love be without dissimulation, that is without false pretension or hypocrisy; to abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good; to be kindly affectioned one toward another. Again, he says, bless them that persecute you: bless, and curse not, for vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore we should never return evil for evil, but if our enemy hunger, we should feed him, and if he thirst, we should give him drink; for in so doing we heap coals of fire on his head. In this way we may overcome evil with good. Now, for instance, if any of the girls were to mistreat one of you by calling you ill names, or otherwise abuse you, and you were to get angry and treat them in the same way, that would not be like our Heavenly Father treats those who sin against Him. He ever remains kind to all, and His mercy is over all continually. But if, when you are mistreated, you render kindness in return, and show that you are above doing so low a thing as to treat them in like manner, still manifesting a kind regard for them, you thereby disarm them of malice, and conquer their evil dispositions. This is about what the apostle means by 'heaping coals of fire on their heads.'"

"O, yes, I see now," said Mellie, "how that is; I thought he could not mean putting burning coals on them, because that might make them angry again. I think now that I

can understand it all. It's when one does another a great wrong, and gets kind treatment in return, it makes that person so ashamed and so sorry that the sufferings of the heart are as burning coals of fire on the head. O, I do wish I could understand all that the Bible means, and I intend to keep trying. I'll read it carefully, and I will get you and mamma to tell me what I can't understand and when I get larger I will know more about it."

The conversation now had to give way to other duties, but as they repaired to their lessons, a marked difference was manifest in the countenances of the pupils. Mellie's cheerful spirit shone out through her eyes, and lit up her whole countenance with almost angelic brightness. She felt that she had done her duty, and her conscience was at ease. But with Laura Thompson, and several others, the feeling was different. Their sad and downcast looks betrayed an uneasy conscience. They were experiencing something of the effects of "coals of fire on their heads." Their remorse was increased by the belief that their teacher knew of their treatment to Mellie, and intended a personal application of his remarks. The young ladies were not heartless and unkind, but they were gay and thoughtless. Like many of my young readers, they were impulsive and hasty.

Thoughtlessness, however, is a great evil, and often leads to follies whose fruit is a long and bitter repentance. The indulgence of envious and malicious dispositions is seldom followed by pleasant results. But the girls were fairly conquered by kindness; they formed the just and sensible resolution that they would rise by their own exertions, and stand on their own merits, and that they would never again be guilty of an act so dishonorable as trying to injure the good name of a meritorious little school-mate - they would never again attempt to rise by the downfall of another.

At recess several of the girls went to Mellie with confession of sorrow, and told her that "her kind treatment, together with Mr. Hamilton's lecture, had made them feel so badly that they could not study their lessons, without first confessing their faults and asking her forgiveness.

Mellie threw back her flowing hair, that now hung in tresses over her face, and with large tear-drops chasing each other from her full blue eyes, threw her arms around each in turn, and pressed upon them a warm kiss of true affection and forgiveness. Not a word did she utter. Her heart was so full she could not speak. But so magical was the effect upon the others, that they were forced to give vent to their feelings in sobs and tears.

Mr. Hamilton came in just in time to learn the situation, and said that it seemed that his remarks in the morning must have been providentially directed, as he himself was at the time ignorant of what had previously passed among his pupils. From this time forward the most perfect harmony prevailed in the school. Jealousy, that hideous monster, that had crept in, was now effectually killed, and Peace was restored to its rightful possession. Each now seemed to vie with the other as to who could do her own part best. They were all kind to each other. They no longer sought to detract anything from little Mellie, hence she was again the general favorite of the school. With pride Mr. Hamilton often boasted of his well disciplined, orderly and harmonious school; and had

but little trouble, either from the indolence or other misconduct, of his pupils.

Mellie continued at school three years, making rapid progress all the time. For brilliancy and vigor of mind, she had no equal. The gratuitous titles conferred on her, of "Little Inquisitive" and "Little Baptist," if not deserved, were accepted by her with marked approval. Especially the latter, by which she became widely known, was appreciated as a most agreeable distinction. When teased by her companions for being a "Little Baptist," she would reply: "If I do become a Baptist, it will be because the Bible makes me a Baptist. If the Bible does make me a Baptist, why, then, I'll be a Baptist - *that's all*." Thus she would reason, feeling fully conscious that no blame could be attached to her for following the teachings of the Bible, notwithstanding she might go contrary to the wishes of her dearest friends.

Without presuming to present her conclusions as infallible, yet she is a most worthy example, in that she takes the Bible for her teacher, and resolved to be led by its instructions, regardless of the opinions of her church or people. She exhibits a child-like simplicity and confidence that should actuate all God's intelligent creatures. Like the little Samuel of old, she was ready to say, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." She fully recognized that it is God's province to command, and each individual's duty to obey.

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