

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 9

Reflections - Conversations - Visitors

The pastor's remarks weighed heavily with Mrs. Brown. Reflections and misgivings were aroused that had never before entered her mind. She could only interpret certain expressions to mean that a too free use of the Bible was dangerous to certain tenets of her church. She had been a church member twenty years, and such a thought had never before entered her mind. She had not even allowed herself to doubt that the Bible was the reliance of her church for the defense of its practice. These reflections gave her great trouble. Had she been all her life mistaken? Instead of following God's truth, had she been only following the creeds of men? Was Mellie's conclusion indeed correct, that the Bible is a Baptist book? Such questions as these passed hastily through her mind. She here resolved to study the Bible more thoroughly than she had heretofore done, and by God's assistance to follow its teachings.

Like thousands of others, she had trusted the opinions of fallible men, instead of going directly to the fountain of all truth to learn her duty. Mellie's argument had paved the way for this decision, yet it might never have been fully reached had not her pastor's visit resulted in a further shaking of her faith in the creed of her church.

The little book that Dr. Farnsworth gave Mellie, proved, on examination, to be a defense of the practice of the Pedobaptists, and was considered as a masterly argument, both for the infant rite and for sprinkling and pouring as the action of baptism. Mellie devoted all her spare time to the book until she had reached the end. But, while reading it, she kept her little Bible by her side, and would turn and read all the references given, so that when she had gone through comparing the teachings of one with the other, she had also learned much in the Bible, and the result was that her confidence in it as a Baptist book was not in the least shaken. Her mother said but little to her concerning the new book, because she thought that as Mellie was so quick to observe every expression in the Bible, favoring the Baptist ground, if this work was conclusive against it, her quick perception would enable her to discern it. But one day Mellie said: "Mamma, what do you think Dr. Farnsworth gave me this book for? I've read it all, over and over, and it talks all the time about baptisms, covenants, dedications and sealing ordinances, and I *can't see the point.*"

"Why, my dear," answered Mrs. Brown, "I thought that you had been studying the subject until you could understand all about baptism."

"Yes, yes, mamma, I can understand it in my Bible - it's so plain there. It's not mixed up with all these things about circumcision, covenants and sealing ordinances - and a

dozen things that nobody can see any reason in. I believe that the man who made this book did it just to confuse people's minds, so as to keep them from understanding the Bible. Mamma, I don't want to believe anything that needs so much explanation and *mystification*. So I will just believe my Bible for I can understand a good deal of it now, and I'll keep on trying to learn more about it. The Bible is God's book, and all He has put into it is right; and if Dr. Farnsworth meant what he said when he preached about the duty of people to do as God commands them, why don't he want them to learn from God's book, and not be giving them books that some man has made so mysterious that they can't understand them? I don't like a book that tries to explain away the plain words of my Bible. I guess that God knows just what He wants us to do, and tells us so plainly that we can understand it." Mrs. Brown suggested to Mellie that, perhaps, she was too young to understand all these things correctly, and advised her to let the subject rest until she was older, and to employ her time on her school books, telling her that it would not be long until she must go off to school. When school was mentioned, Mellie replied:

"That will just suit me, mamma,; papa said I must stay at home one year, and then I should go to school two years. I guess it is nearly time for me to go. I wish papa would let me go to the country to school. I love to stay in the country where I can see the trees and the birds, and the pretty wild flowers; and where I can gather berries and fruits, like I did when Buddie and I went to Aunt Julia's last summer. O it would be so nice! Won't you persuade papa to let me go to the country to school?"

The entrance of Laura Thompson and her mother put a stop to the conversation, and while Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Thompson engaged in a regular chat, Mellie and Laura took a walk, first into the garden, then to see the young chickens, and finally back into the library. In looking around the room, Laura soon discovered Mellie's new book on baptism, and began to turn the leaves and to examine its contents. Mellie told her all about Dr. Farnsworth giving it to her, and the opinion she had formed of it, and her determination to stick to her Bible.

"Well, I declare, Mell," said Laura, "here's that little 'Baptist Bible' that you used to read in at school. I hope it will make a little Baptist of you someday, sure enough. You know that we girls treated you rudely about your little Baptist Bible, as you called it, but we were all ashamed of it afterwards. But, Mellie, I believe it turned out to make me a better girl after all. I really never knew how mean I was until that day Mr. Hamilton gave us that lecture about doing good for evil, and heaping coals of fire on the heads of our enemies. It seemed like every word went to my heart; and when I reflected about my treating you so badly, and how kind you were to me in return, it was indeed coals of fire on my head, or something worse about my heart."

"Well, but our hearts melted and ran together, you remember, and we made it all up, and never cared for it any more," said Mellie, laughingly.

"Yes, we made it all up," said Laura, "but then, I felt so mean about it that I could not rest. I felt so unworthy that I didn't want anybody to see me. I went home and read my Bible, and prayed God to forgive me. I couldn't study my lessons in school, and when out of school I felt worse and worse. I was so justly condemned that I thought it would be right should God refuse His mercy to me, for I was such a sinner. But I just

determined to pray as long as I lived, and if God sent me to torment, I would go praying. I then realized that I had nothing to depend on but the Saviour, and when I let go all other hopes and put my trust in Him, my burden of guilt seemed all at once to roll off, and I felt so happy that I could not help praising the Lord. All was then so quiet; and I experienced for myself the great peace there is in believing in Christ."

"And that's what made you be baptized, was it?" said Mellie. "I saw you, and you did look so happy. I told mamma I guessed that it was because you were obeying the Saviour that made you feel so good."

"Yes, Mellie," said Laura; "I found peace in believing on Him, and I find comfort and joy in obeying Him. Since He was so good as to save me, I want to serve Him all my life, and do all that I can for His cause."

"And you intend to do just what the Bible tells you, don't you?" asked Mellie.

"Yes," said Laura; "the Bible is the place for us to learn our duty. But, Mellie, I want you to be religious, and to be a follower of Christ too. You have always been a good girl - much better than myself - yet you cannot go where Jesus and the angels are unless you have a new heart. You must be born again. You have read in your little Bible that you must repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out."

"I always try to be good, and I'm going to continue trying," said Mellie.

"Yes," said Laura, "I know that you do try to be good and to do right, but you must seek for God's grace to enable you to be good, and to prepare you for happiness, both here and hereafter. Don't you remember the lesson we had in school one day about the Publican and the Pharisee?"

"O, yes," said Mellie, "I remember how Mr. Hamilton explained it. He told us not to be like the Pharisee, and think that we were better than others, like the poor Publican. I remember, too, that the Saviour said: 'He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased.' I will try to do all that the Bible tells me, Laura, and if I do that, that is all that is required, is it not?"

"Yes, that will do," said Laura, "but you must remember that the first duty enjoined upon you is to repent of your sins. If you are saved it must be by 'repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ.' Take care, Mellie, that you do not become a little Pharisee, depending on your own goodness to save you. Remember you must deny yourself and trust in Christ. You must rely upon His merits, and not your own. It is because we cannot be saved by the Law, which requires a holy life, and perfect obedience, that Christ came to save us."

Mellie did not *feel* the truth of these things, yet she did not treat them lightly, nor forget them. Impressions were made on her mind that were never erased. Laura had sown seeds of truth into good ground that in process of time brought forth the desired fruit.
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