

## 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 8

#### The Country - Dr. Farnsworth's Visit - Bible Pictures

During Frank's stay at home, much of the time of the family was spent in entertaining company and returning visits. Mellie's time being thus employed, she ceased to annoy them with questions about her "Baptist Bible," as she always called it. Her mother permitted her to go with Frank to visit her aunts and cousins in the country; a trip which pleased her very much, and of which she had much to tell when she returned. She was greatly attracted by country life. She loved the trees and the flowers - loved to gather the fruits with her own hands. She delighted to ramble amid the groves, to watch the fishes in the gleeful brook, and to see the birds flitting about their nests and heeding the cries of their young.

The country seemed to Mellie a real paradise, compared with the hot and dusty town. She would entreat her mother to "persuade papa to move to the country where everything is so delightful." She wanted to feast her eyes upon the growing crops of cotton and corn, and the waving harvest, and to see the husbandmen tilling the ground and mowing the hay; and, then, there were the fruits, the melons, and many other attractions.

One day she said, "Mamma, you have always taught me that God made the whole world and everything that we see, but I can but wonder why He made so many things. It looks like there are more things in the world than are of any use."

"God has a purpose, my dear, in all that He has made, and He intends all for the good of His creatures. He is very kind to arrange everything to suit our wants, and we ought to be very thankful for it, and to love Him, and be obedient to Him, because of all these blessings."

"But God don't make the corn and the cotton; men work in the fields and make these things, don't they, mamma?"

"God has commanded us all to work. He does not want us to be idle, but to be always usefully employed. He has so arranged the laws of nature that if men do not cultivate the ground, the fields and gardens will not produce the needful crops; yet remember that we can't make a single stalk of corn grow. Men can sow the seeds and cultivate the ground, but unless God sends the sunshine and the rain, and causes the seasons to come in their order, there will be no crops. So if God did not help us, we would soon perish in spite of all the work we would do. God commands us to work, and when we obey Him, He blesses our labors, and rewards us with the harvest. Then, when we have

labored and procured enough of the good things of this world to satisfy our wants, we ought to thank God for it all, because it is only through His kindness and mercy that we have obtained it. Don't you understand this, Mellie?"

"Yes, mamma, I see how it is. God tells us just what He wants us to do, and if we obey Him, He rewards us with His blessings, but if we are lazy, and do not obey Him, He is displeased with us, and will let us suffer. I can't make a blade of grass grow, nor a grain of corn sprout - nor a pretty flower open, but I can do what God tells me to do and then trust Him for the balance. *That's the idea*; I see how it is. I remember that I have read in my Bible that God is angry with the wicked every day, and He don't like lazy people much better, for He says they shall beg in the harvest, and have nothing. I intend to be good, and to be industrious. I won't be wicked nor lazy."

Saying this, she bounded from the room and ran out into the yard to where there was a fuss among the ducks and chickens, and Mrs. Brown went about packing Frank's trunk, preparatory to his return to college. She regretted the returning necessity for Frank's absence, but she hoped that he would make a wise and useful man, and, therefore, she wanted him to have all the advantages that a good education would give him. She was willing to sacrifice the pleasure of his presence at home, while he should finish his course at college.

Early in the morning everything was in readiness, and with tearful eyes, Frank took his leave of the family, and hurried off to meet the train which was to carry him far away.

Dr. Farnsworth called at Col. Brown's that morning for the purpose of "consoling sister Brown upon the departure of her son," but with a secret purpose of checking, what he termed, "Mellie's heretical notions about baptism." After the usual congratulations and a few minutes spent in conversation of a general character, he remarked:

"I am very sorry to hear reports sister Brown, that are afloat in the community, to the effect that your little daughter is becoming an open defender of the Baptists. It is said that she boldly and publicly declares that the Bible is a Baptist book. She has a great influence over the children of the church, and, I am told, has actually made some of them believe that they have not been baptized, or, at least, that their baptism is not Scriptural. If she persists in this course, she will do our church an injury - and this I am far from believing will have your encouragement. I assure you that I do not express these fears without cause, and, as your pastor, your friend, and the friend of your child, I would willingly assist you in correcting her opinions before she gets beyond the reach of our influence. For if we do not get these notions out of her head now, they will become settled there, and she will grow up a confirmed Baptist, which, I am sure, would be no less mortifying to you than to myself."

"Dr. Farnsworth," said Mrs. Brown, "I am far from intentionally doing anything to injure my child, or to bring trouble upon the church, but Mellie has taken up these notions without any influence in that direction being exerted upon her, only as she formed conclusions from reading the Bible. I was much surprised at it at first, but regarded it as only a childish whim, and expecting that nothing *serious* would grow out of it, I have indulged her in it, not really so much for her gratification, as to see what impressions the

Bible would make on a mind free from all prejudice. I must confess that the result has surprised me truly, for the more she reads, the stronger she becomes in her first impressions. So I do not know what is to come of it *finally*."

This last sentence was spoken in a manner that showed but little concern if it should turn out even according to the pastor's fears.

Dr. Farnsworth remarked:

"But, sister Brown, (*ahem!*) I would not mention this to any one but yourself, but as your pastor, I must in kindness tell you that rumor says that you have not only indulged Mellie in these wild fancies, but that you have encouraged her in them. I hope, however, that this is a mistake. I have repeatedly taken upon myself the responsibility of contradicting the report, and said that such a thing could not be; that you were one of our best members, and surely could not do far forget your duty to the church as to sanction the course your child is pursuing."

"It is true," she said, "I have encouraged Mellie to read her Bible, but have said nothing to influence her conclusions in reference to baptism. I have been studiously guarded in this and have left her mind entirely free."

"There is where you have committed a grave error, sister Brown. Now, of course, we must not prevent our children from reading the Bible, yet we should keep a strict watch over them and try to keep their minds under such discipline as will insure them against the danger of imbibing false notions. And it would be well if Mellie could be influenced to let the Bible alone awhile. Let her read some of our denominational literature until her mind becomes more settled. Of course I would not say this publicly, nor would I, as a general thing, discourage a free reading of the Bible; but the reading of other works are needed as helps to understand it. See that she reads the Catechism, and other books in which our doctrines are set forth. Solomon said, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' If we just give our children the Bible without instructing them in its meaning, threefourths of them will come out Baptists in the end. So, if we want them to be Presbyterians, we must indoctrinate them in our faith while their minds are easily impressed; for, you know, that

'Education forms the common mind;  
As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined.'

Impressions made on the minds of children are seldom erased."

"Who would have thought it possible," said Mrs. Brown, "for a child of Mellie's age to have turned the world upsie down by a little reading of the Bible? It is something wonderful if her childish prattle about Baptism, and the Baptist Bible, is going to turn the heads of all the children in the town and make *crazy little Baptists of them*. But, Dr. Farnsworth, you insinuate that I have neglected my duty in not having Mellie more familiar with our church Catechism. Now, sir, *that's just what's the matter* - she knows too much about the Catechism. When she found the Bible differing from the teachings of her Catechism, she decided at once that her's was a Baptist Bible, and there is where

all this trouble started. When convinced that her Bible was the same as others, and that God was the author of the Bible, and man the author of the Catechism, she readily accepted the Bible and adhered to its teachings."

Mrs. Brown spoke in rather an animated spirit, and the doctor thought her tone was a little sharp. It was the first time she had ever heard her pastor insinuate that the doctrines of her church were in danger from a too free use of the Bible; and the suggestion that she should restrain her child from reading it, she regarded as indeed strange - coming from one who professed to take the Bible for his *rule* in both faith and practice.

Dr. Farnsworth was somewhat confused at the effect his remarks were seeming to have, but recovering his balance, he continued, "Sister Brown, I would by no means have you to understand me as wishing to dictate to you in this matter, but I see clearly that you do not conceive the extent of Mellie's influence, nor the danger there is of her leaving the church in which she was born and dedicated to God by baptism, as well as of leading astray so many other children. For, young as she is her opinions have great weight with the people. You know that I design no flattery to you, by saying that she is an extraordinary child, and manifests unusual knowledge for a person of her age, so much so, that many regard her as being almost supernatural. And *just the idea* that a child left unbiased to read the Scriptures, sees everything in favor of the Baptists, carries great force with it. It naturally creates the impression that the Bible is so plainly in favor of Baptist's peculiar views that every one would become a Baptist if they would read without prejudice."

Mrs. Brown was about to reply that if she thought such was the case, she would envy the Baptist's position, but Mellie entered the room at the time, and she thought it more prudent to suspend her remarks until another time.

Dr. Farnsworth looked at his watch and discovered that he had overstayed his time; asked to be excused, and promised to call another day. Turning to leave, he took a nicely bound little book from his pocket, saying: "Here, Mellie, you are fond of reading new books, and I have one that I will leave for you, and when I call again you must tell me how many nice things you have found in it."

"Thank you, Doctor," said Mellie, receiving the book with a smile that told how proud she felt for such a token of the Doctor's regard.

Dr. Farnsworth bid all a good-bye, patted Mellie on the head, telling her to be a good girl; to read her new book carefully, and then, mounting his horse, rode away.

As soon as Dr. Farnsworth had gone, Mellie said: "Mamma, I'll read this new book, but before I begin, I want you to tell me about the pictures in the Bible. Some Bibles have pictures and others have not; and if God made the pictures or had them put in the Bible, why are they not in all alike?"

"Pictures," said her mother, "are the inventions of man. God did not make them nor instruct man to put them in the Bible; therefore pictures representing men and things are

in some Bibles and in others they are not."

"Well, then," said Mellie, "Mrs. McFlimesy, the Methodist Sunday School teacher, tried to deceive me, and I don't think it was honest in her to do it. You see I told her that Christ was baptized in the river by immersion, and she said He was not, but that the water was poured on Him. I asked her to prove it by the Bible, and she went and got a Bible that had a picture of one man pouring water out of a horn on another man, and says she, 'Here is John the Baptist pouring water on Christ out of a horn, and you can't dispute it, for it is plain before your eyes, *in the Bible.*' The Sunday School children all believed it, but it was so different from the reading that I could not see how it could be true and have been greatly puzzled about it, and wanted you to tell me about it. I guess the reading don't suit some folks, and they make pictures in the Bible to try to make children believe things that are not taught therer. Well, I'm glad there are no pictures in my Bible, so I have nothing to hinder me from believing the truth just as God has told it."

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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