

The DANGERS of Ben-onies

by Richard Newton



Be a Benjamin.

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Preface

In 1856 a pastor of a congregation felt led to have services for boys and girls. They sat in the front of the building and a regular service was held for them. In this booklet are parts of one of the sermons that was preached to the boys and girls. Many adults attended the services and they wanted the sermons printed. The minister, Richard Newton, said in the preface of the book called, *Rills From the Fountain of Life; or Sermons to Children*, “that God and our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who ‘hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty,’ and whose sacred, standing injunction to ministers is ‘Feed my lambs,’ may graciously crown it with His blessing, and make it an humble instrument of good to some of His ‘little ones.’ ”

In reading this one message in the book I felt it would be good to reprint it for our boys and girls to read. I trust that God will help you to never forget the teachings and the lessons that others learned so you will not make the same mistakes and have to suffer. If you will profit by others’ mistakes you can keep out of a lot of trouble. I am sure that if you saw a boy or a girl jump off a steep cliff and break his arm that you would not jump off that same cliff. It is the same thing when you see boys and girls do wrong and get into awful trouble, you do not want to do as they have done. We can learn by the mistakes of others.

Pray much, boys and girls. You need Jesus to help you face life and keep out of trouble. Without Him you are sure to do wrong. Jesus will be your Friend and Helper in every time of need. He loves you and will forgive you of your sins, save you and make you His child. He will help you to be a Benjamin and do the right. You will be a blessing to your parents, your relatives, your friends and to the world. My prayer is that each of you will be a child of God and a “Benjamin.”

—Sis. A. Marie Miles

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Genesis 35:18: “She called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin.”

These words were spoken of Rachel, Jacob’s wife. Her youngest child had just been born: she was very sick, and was going to die. The little child was lying by her. She called to see it; she kissed it, and called his name Ben-oni. Ben-oni means “the son of my sorrow.” This child was about to occasion the death of his mother, and therefore she gave him this name. She was sorry to leave her husband, her family, and her friends; and this feeling of sorrow led her to call his name Ben-oni.

“But his father called him Benjamin.” Benjamin means, “The son of a right hand.” Our right hand is a great comfort and blessing to us. What could we do without a right hand?

Now, every child that is born into this world will be either a Ben-oni or a Benjamin. There is not much difference between these two names, but there is a great deal of difference between the natures which they represent. All these children, here assembled, are either Ben-onies, or Benjamins. These names refer to girls as well as to boys. You will all be children of sorrow, or children of help and comfort to your parents.

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Now, the great question for us to consider is, what are the marks of a Ben-oni, or of a Benjamin?

We shall mention four things which may always be considered as the marks of a Ben-oni; and the opposite of these, of course, will be the marks of a Benjamin.

Ill-Temper

The first mark of a Ben-oni—"a child of sorrow"—is ill-temper.

Suppose you had to walk four or five miles with a pebble in your shoe; or suppose you had to wear a coat or dress with a pin sticking in it; or suppose you had to lie all night in bed with a porcupine by your side, sticking you with his sharp-pointed quills: what an uncomfortable thing it would be! But none of these things are so uncomfortable as to be connected with an ill-temper. An ill-temper is the most uncomfortable thing in the world. We can protect ourselves against many uncomfortable things. Thus, we put roofs on our houses to keep the cold and wind out, which would be uncomfortable; we put doors and windows in our houses to keep the cold and wind out, which would be uncomfortable, but how are we to keep bad tempers out of our houses? All peevish, cross, ill-natured children are Ben-onies—children of sorrow to their parents, and the families where they dwell.

There were two little boys in a Southern city whose names were Augustus and Eugene. They were playing top, and had but one between them, which they spun alternately. At first they played very pleasantly, but soon became very angry and began to speak unkindly. Eugene said, "It's my turn to spin the top now."

"No, it's not; it's mine!" said Augustus.

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Then they grew very angry about it. Augustus then said to Eugene, "You lie!"

Then Eugene struck him, and Augustus struck him back again. They seized each other in great rage, and in the scuffle, Eugene took a long sharp knife from his pocket and stabbed Augustus, so that he died in a few moments. Augustus lost his life, and Eugene became a murderer, merely to decide whose turn it was to spin a top. There was ill-temper; and what a Ben-oni that ill-temper made him to his parents, and to the family to which he belonged.

There was a rich nobleman, in England, who had a little daughter, named Anne. They were very fond of her, for she was a fine little creature, very lively, and merry, and affectionate, and exceedingly beautiful. But she had a very ill-temper. When anything vexed her, she would fly into a rage, and turn and strike any one that provoked her. After every fit of anger she would be ashamed and sorry, and resolve never to do so again. But the next time she was provoked it was all forgotten, and she was as angry as ever. When she was between four and five years of age, her mother had a little son—a sweet little tender baby. Anne's nurse, who was thoughtless and wicked, loved to tease her, because she was so easily irritated; and so she told her that her father and mother would not care for her now, because all their love and pleasure would be in this little brother, and they would not mind her. Poor Anne burst into a flood of tears, and cried bitterly, saying, "You are a naughty woman to say so! Mamma will always love me; I know she will, and I'll go this very moment and ask her." And she ran out of the nursery and hastened to her mother's room. The servant called after her: "Come, miss, you needn't go to your mother's room; she won't see you now." Anne burst open the door, but was instantly caught hold of by a strange woman she had never

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seen before. "My dear," said the woman, "you cannot see your mother just now;" and she was going on to tell that it was because she was very sick and could not be disturbed. But she was too angry to listen; and she screamed and kicked at the woman, who was obliged to take her by force and carry her back to the nursery. When she put her down she gave the servant a charge not to let her go to her mother's room. This added to her rage. But the thoughtless, wicked servant, instead of trying to soothe and quiet her, burst out into a laugh, and said, "I told you that, miss. You see your mamma does not love you now." Then the poor child became mad with fury. She seized a smoothing-iron, and darting forward, threw it upon the baby's head, as it lay in the cradle. The child gave one struggle, and breathed no more.

Anne's mother died that night of grief. Anne grew up in the possession of great riches. She had every outward comfort about her that money could procure; but she was a very unhappy and miserable woman. She was never known to smile. The thought of the terrible consequences of that one outburst of passion pressed upon her like a heavy burden all her days. Ah! what a Ben-oni this girl became. She was a child of sorrow to her parents. Her ill-temper made her so. If you give way to such tempers, my dear young friends, you will certainly be Ben-onies; but if you strive and pray against such feelings and try to be gentle, kind, and pleasant to those around you, then you will be Benjamins—children of the right hand to your parents. See, now, how differently such children will act.

A gentleman was walking on the Battery in the city of New York one day, and as he passed a little girl, who was cheerfully rolling her hoop, he said to her, "You are a nice little girl;" to which she replied, patting her little brother on the head, "And

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Bobbie is a nice little brother, too.” Here was a good temper, which would make this dear child “a child of the right hand” to her parents, and cause her to be loved by all who were about her.

A mother who was in the habit of asking her children, before they retired at night, what they had done to make others happy, found her young twin daughters silent.

She spoke tenderly of habits and dispositions founded on the Golden Rule—“Do unto others as you would have them do to you.” Still, these bright little faces were bowed in silence. The question was repeated. “I cannot remember anything good all this day, dear Mother,” said one of the little girls; “only one of my classmates was happy, because she had gained the head of the class, and I smiled on her, and ran to kiss her. She said I was good. That is all, dear Mother.”

The other spoke still more tenderly: “A little girl who sat with me on the bench at school, lost a little brother; and I saw that, while she studied her lesson, she hid her face in the book and wept. I felt sorry, and laid my face on the same book, and wept with her. Then she looked up, and was comforted, and put her arms around my neck; but I do not know why she said I had done her good.”

These were children of good tempers—children whose pleasant dispositions would make them children of the right hand to their parents—real Benjamins indeed.

Idleness

The second mark of a Ben-oni is idleness.

Idle children love to lie in bed in the morning; they love to do nothing all day, if they can help it, but play.

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It is a great trouble to get them to study, to read, or to work. Now, idle children always make idle men; for the habits which children form while they are children will surely remain with them when they grow up to be men and women.

John Alsop was about fifteen years old when his father, who had just moved into a new settlement, was clearing land. One day the father and a neighbor were engaged in building a log fence, which was made of trunks of trees that were cleared off the lands. First, they laid the fence one log high, with the ends of each length passing a little way by each other. Notches were cut in the ends, and a block was laid crosswise, where the ends lapped, and then another tier was laid on the cross-pieces, till the fence was high enough. To roll up the top logs they would lay long poles, called skids, one end on the top of the logs, and the other on the ground, and roll up the logs on these. But, as the logs were very heavy, they were obliged to stop several times to rest, or to get a new hold; and it was John's business, when they stopped, to put a block under the log, to keep it from rolling back. Having given a hard lift, and tugging with all his might, the father called out, "There, Johnny! Put under your block! Quick!" Johnny started nimbly, and snatched up his block, when suddenly the chirp of a little squirrel struck his ear. Instantly, down went his block, and away he ran after the squirrel, leaving his father, and the other man, to hold the log till he came back. This anecdote gives you John's character. He was an idle boy. He had no fondness for work; he was not willing to follow any one object, or pursuit, long enough to accomplish anything. Thirty years after this, a gentleman, who had known him in his youthful days, inquired about him, of one of his neighbors, who related this anecdote, and added, "He has been running after squirrels ever since." He never was steady and persevering in the pursuit of anything. When he was a young man, he never could

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make up his mind decidedly what employment to follow. He had no industry; he would try one thing a little while, get tired of it, and then take up another; but followed no business long enough to get well acquainted with it. He has always been hunting the squirrel.

Now, we are to remember, dear children, that God is busy at all times, and almost everything that God has made is busy. Look at the sun; it is always at work, shining and shining and shining from one year's end to the other. In the daytime it is shining in our part of the world, and when it is night to us, it is shining in the opposite part of the world. And so it is with the moon—always shining, in one part of the world or the other. So it is with the sea; its waves are rising, and falling, and rolling, and flowing, continually. So it is with the rivers; they are continually running from the fountains where they spring, on to the ocean. And so it is with the little birds, and little fishes, and the bees, and the ants: none of these are idle.

Idleness always leads to ignorance and poverty and uselessness, dear children, and idle persons never do anything good, to themselves or to others. They never succeed in business; they never get on in life.

A gentleman in England had an estate which was worth about a thousand dollars a year. For a while he kept his farm in his own hands, but at length, found himself so much in debt that he was obliged to sell one-half of his place to pay up. The rest he let out to a farmer for several years. Towards the end of that time, the farmer, on coming to pay his rent, asked him whether he would sell his farm. The gentleman was surprised that the farmer should be able to make him an offer for his place. "Pray, tell me," said he, "how it happens that, while I could not live upon twice as much land, for which I paid no rent, you are regularly paying me five

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hundred dollars a year for the farm, and able in a few years to purchase it?" "The reason is plain," answered the farmer; "it lies in the difference between 'go' and 'come.' " "I mean," said the farmer, "that you sat still and said, 'Go'; I get up and say, 'Come.' You lie in bed, and enjoy your ease; I rise early in the morning, and attend to my business." In other words, this was an industrious man; there was no love of idleness about him, and this led to his success in life.

I remember another anecdote, which plainly shows the advantages of industry.

There was once a young man who was commencing life as a clerk. One day his employer said to him, "Now, tomorrow, that cargo of cotton must be got out, and weighed and we must have a regular account of it." He was an industrious young man—a man of great energy. This was the first time he had been entrusted with the superintendence of work like this. He made his arrangements the night before, spoke to the men about their carts and horses, and resolved to begin very early the next day. He instructed the laborers to be there at half-past four o'clock in the morning. They set to work, and the thing was done; and about ten or eleven o'clock the master came in and saw the young man sitting in the counting house, and looked very black at him, supposing his commands had not been executed. "I thought," said he, "you were instructed to get out that cargo this morning!" "It is all done, sir," said the young man, "and here is the account of it." This one act made that young man's fortune. It fixed his character. It gave his employer a confidence in him that was never shaken. He found him to be a man of industry, a man of promptness, and he very soon found that he was one that could not be spared; he was necessary to the concerns of that establishment and became one of

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the partners. He was a religious man, and went through a life of great benevolence, and at his deathbed was able to leave his children an ample fortune. His industry made him a Benjamin indeed.

And, just as idle boys will grow up to be idle men, so will idle girls grow to be idle women. They will be of no use to themselves, and of no use to anybody else. But those who form early habits of industry will certainly rise to honor, usefulness, and happiness.

Miss Rachel Cowe was the daughter of a wealthy man engaged in an extensive business. He lived in Aberdeen, Scotland. But in that country, the females of many families in the higher ranks of life, as well as those in middling circumstances, were instructed in some branch of business suited to their strength and capacity. An excellent custom; for whatever may be our circumstances today, we know not what they may be tomorrow; riches are no sure dependence, for they often “take to themselves wings and fly away.”

Rachel Cowe was early put to learn a branch of the millinery business. This she industriously acquired, though she knew not that she should ever need it. But, after a while, her father’s business began to decline, and at length failed. He gave up to his creditors everything but their wearing apparel, and a few books. Both her parents were left with no means of support, in their old age. There was no one now but herself, on whom they could depend. When Rachel saw the decline of her father’s business, she obtained his consent to set up her own. She had a small sum of money, and she borrowed a little more, of a friend, to begin with. She began her business, praying that God would prosper it, and keep her from the new temptations to which she would be exposed. She was successful. In a few short months she was able to pay what she had

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borrowed, and to furnish a house for herself. When her father's business completely failed, and her parents were thrown upon the world, destitute of the means of support, she was prepared to receive them into her own house. She supported them by her labors; she nursed them, with the utmost tenderness, in their illness; she attended them in their last sickness, and saw them die in the hope of glory. What a child of comfort was this industrious girl to her parents! And this is not all. While they lived, she would listen to no proposals of marriage; but after their death, she became the wife of preacher Milne, and accompanied him on his mission to China, where she was a great solace and comfort to him, and a helper to him in his labors. Thus, the industrious girl became the industrious woman; and I would have you all, my dear girls to follow her example.

Yes; idleness is the second mark of a Ben-oni.

Pride

The third mark of a Ben-oni is pride.

Some children are proud of their clothes. This is very silly indeed; for the butterflies have much more beautiful clothes than we, and yet they are never proud of their dress. Some children are proud of their families. This, also, is very silly, for we have all sprung, at first, from one father. Some children are proud about their houses. This, too, is very silly, for by and by they will all crumble into the dust from which they have been taken, while the grave is the one house to which we must all come at last.

Proud children feel and think themselves better than others, and are often unwilling to engage in honest and honorable employments.

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Listen to what I am going to tell you.

Chief Justice Marshall was a great man; but great men are never proud. He was not too proud to wait upon himself. He was in the habit of going to market himself and carrying home his purchases. Often he would be seen returning, at sunrise, with poultry in one hand, vegetables in the other. On one of these occasions, a fashionable young man from the North who had moved to Richmond was swearing violently because he could find no one to carry home his turkey. Judge Marshall stepped up, and asked him where he lived. When he heard, he said, "That is in my way, and I will take your turkey home for you." When they came to the house the young man inquired, "What shall I pay you?" "Oh, nothing," said the Judge; "you are welcome; it was all in the way, and it was no trouble to me." "Who is that polite old gentleman who brought home my turkey for me?" asked the young man of a by-stander. "Oh," said he, "That was Judge Marshall, Chief Justice of the United States." "Why did he bring home my turkey?" "He did it," said the by-stander, "to give you a rebuke, and teach you to attend to your own business."

True greatness never feels above doing anything that is useful; but especially the truly great man will never feel above helping himself; his own independence of character depends upon his being able to help himself. The great Dr. Franklin, when he first established himself in business, in Philadelphia, wheeled home the paper, which he purchased for his printing office, in a wheelbarrow with his own hands.

Pride, then, bear in mind, children, is the third mark of a Ben-oni.

Disobedience

The fourth and only other mark that we shall speak of is disobedience.

There is nothing on which the comfort and happiness of parents and families depend more, than on the obedience of children.

My dear children, if you want to plant thorns on the pillows of your parents and plunge daggers into their bosoms, be disobedient. If you want to make them as uncomfortable as they possibly can be in this world, then be disobedient. This is the chief mark of a Ben-oni.

I remember reading, not long ago, of a gentleman in England who had two sons. He was a kind, excellent, pious man, and did everything for the comfort of his children, that he thought it right to do. But sometimes the boys were anxious to do things which their parents were not willing that they should do. One Sunday, the oldest boy went to his father and asked permission to take the carriage and go riding in the afternoon, instead of going to church.

His father told him he could not. The boy was very much displeased because his father would not let him go riding, as some of the boys in the neighborhood had been allowed by their parents to do. He was so wicked about this that he determined no longer to stay at home because his father would not let him do just what he wanted. So, the next day, he persuaded his brother to go with him, and they went down to Portsmouth, a town by the seaside, intending to go to sea.

Before going, however, they called on the Mr. Griffin, to assist them to get a situation, on board a man-of-war. This good man perceiving that they were not accustomed to the mode of life

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in which they were about to enter, inquired of them their object in going to sea. The eldest boy frankly told him they were going in order to spite their parents! Then he told him the story of what had taken place at home—of his father's unwillingness to allow him to ride on Sunday instead of going to church, and said he was going to sea in order to make his father feel sorry for refusing to gratify him. The good clergyman tried to show them the guilt and folly of the course they were about to pursue, and to set before them the unavoidable consequences that would result from it. The younger son was impressed by the counsels and advice of the clergyman and went home, but the older son resolved to go on in his evil course.

Some twelve or fifteen years after this had taken place, the same clergyman was called to the prison in the town of Portsmouth, to see a sailor who was condemned to be executed, and who was going to be hanged in a few days.

When he entered the cell of the prison he saw a wretched, miserable, squalid-looking creature, sitting by a table in the cell, who looked up to him as he entered and said, "Do you not remember me, sir?" "No," said the clergyman; "I do not recollect that I ever saw you before." Then the poor man recalled to him the story of the boy who went from home in order to spite his parents. "And are you the miserable man," said the clergyman, "who did this?" "Yes," said the poor culprit; "I followed out my own plan; I went on the course which I had chosen, contrary to your advice, and to my own convictions; I plunged into all sorts of wickedness and sin, and finally became involved in a robbery and murder, for which I am now about to suffer the penalty. And all this, in consequence of my disobedience to my parents!" The clergyman wrote to the father of this unhappy man, who came to visit his son

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in his last hours, and who had the unspeakable anguish of standing by and seeing him suffer the penalty of the law, and reap the bitter fruits of his disobedience.

What a Ben-oni that son was to his father!

I have another story to tell you, of a disobedient son, in order to illustrate the point on which we are now speaking.

The youth, of whom I am about to speak, was the son of a sea captain. His father had been absent from home on a long voyage. During his absence his child had grown, from being an infant, into a rough and careless boy. He was becoming restive, under his mother's control; her gentle voice no longer restrained him. He was often willful, and sometimes disobedient. He thought it showed a manly superiority to be independent of a mother's influence.

About this time, his father came home; and it was very fortunate that he did return. He soon perceived the spirit of disobedience that was stirring in his son. The boy saw that it displeased his father, although for a few days he said nothing about it.

One afternoon, in October, a bright, golden day, the father told his son to get his hat and take a walk with him. They turned down an open field, a favorite playground for the children in the neighborhood. After talking cheerfully on different topics for a while (said the boy, who gives this history of himself), my father asked me if I observed that great shadow thrown by a huge mass of rock that stood in the middle of the field. I replied that I did. "My father owned that land," said he. "It was my playground when a boy. The rock stood there then; to me it is a beacon, and, whenever I look at it, I recall a dark spot in my life—an event so painful to

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dwell upon, that, were it not as a warning to you, I should not speak of it. Listen, then, my dear boy, and learn wisdom from your father's experience.

"My father died when I was a mere child. I was the only son. My mother was a gentle, loving woman, devoted to her children, and beloved by everybody.

"I remember her pale, beautiful face, her sweet, affectionate smile, her kind and gentle voice. In my childhood I loved her sincerely. I was never happy apart from her; and she, fearing that I was becoming too much of a child, sent me to a high school in the village.

"After associating for a time with rude, rough boys, I lost, in a measure, my fondness for home, and my reverence for my mother; and it became more and more difficult for her to restrain my impetuous nature. I thought it indicated a want of manliness to yield to her control, or to appear penitent, although I knew that my conduct pained her.

"The epithet I most feared was girl-boy. I could not bear to hear it said, by my playmates, that I was 'tied to my mother's apron-strings'.

"From a quiet, home-loving child, I became a wild, boisterous boy.

"My mother was very anxious to induce me to seek happiness within the precincts of home. She exerted herself to make our fireside attractive; and my sister, following her self-sacrificing example, sought to entice me, by planning games, and diversions, for my amusement and entertainment. I saw all this, but did not heed it, until it was too late.

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“She put on her bonnet and said to me, ‘We will take a little walk together.’ I followed her in silence, and, as I was passing out of the door, I observed one of my rude companions, skulking about the house, and I knew he was waiting for me. He sneered as I passed by him. My pride was wounded to the quick. He was a very bad boy, and, being some years older than myself, he exercised a great influence over me.

“I followed my mother, sulkily, till we reached the spot where we now stand, beneath the shadow of this huge rock.

“Oh, my boy, could that hour be blotted from my memory, which has cast a dark shadow over my whole life, gladly would I exchange all that the world can offer me for the quiet peace of mind I should enjoy! But no! Like this huge, unsightly pile, stands the monument of my guilt forever.

“My mother, being in feeble health, sat down, and beckoned me to sit down beside her. Her look, so full of tender sorrow, is present to me now.

“I would not sit, but still continued standing beside her.

“ ‘Alfred, my dear son,’ she said, ‘have you lost all your love for your mother?’

“I did not reply.

“ ‘I fear you have,’ she continued, ‘and may God help you to see your own heart, and me to do my duty!’

“She then talked to me of my misdeeds—of the dreadful consequences of the course I was pursuing. By tears, and entreaties, and prayers, she tried to make an impression upon me. She placed before me the lives and examples of great and good men. She so sought to stimulate my ambition.

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“I was moved, but too proud to show it, and remained standing in dogged silence beside her. I thought. ‘What will my companions say if, after all my boasting, I should yield at last, and submit to be led by a woman?’

“What agony was in my mother’s face when she saw that all she had said, and suffered, failed to move me!

“She rose to go home, and I followed at a distance. She spoke no more to me until we reached our own door.

“ ‘It is school time now,’ she said. ‘Go, my son, and once more let me beseech you to think upon what I have said.’

“ ‘I shan’t go to school,’ said I.

“She looked astonished at my boldness, but replied, firmly, ‘Certainly you will go, Alfred; I command you.’

“ ‘I will not,’ said I, with a tone of defiance.

“ ‘One of two things you must do, Alfred. Either go to school this moment, or I will lock you up in your room, and keep you there until you are ready to promise obedience to my wishes.’

“ ‘I dare you to do it,’ said I; ‘you can’t get me upstairs.’

“ ‘Alfred, choose now,’ said my mother, who laid her hand on my arm. She trembled violently, and was deadly pale.

“ ‘If you touch me I will kick you!’ said I, in a terrible rage.

“ ‘Will you go, Alfred?’

“ ‘No,’ replied I, but quailed beneath her glance.

“ ‘Then follow me,’ said she, as she grasped my arm firmly.

“I raised my foot—oh, my boy, hear me!—I raised my foot, and kicked her, my sainted mother!

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“ ‘O, heavenly Father,’ she cried, ‘forgive him! He knows not what he does!’

“The gardener just then passing the door, and seeing my mother pale, and almost unable to support herself, he stopped. She beckoned him in.

“ ‘Take this boy upstairs, and lock him in his own room,’ she said, and turned from me.

“Looking back as she was entering her own room, she gave me such a look!—it will forever follow me. It was a look of agony, mingled with the deepest love. It was the last unutterable pang from a heart that was broken.

“In a moment I found myself a prisoner in my own room. I thought, for a moment, I would fling myself out of the window and dash my brains out; but I felt afraid to die. I was not penitent. At times my heart was subdued, but my stubborn pride rose in an instant and bade me not to yield. The pale face of my mother haunted me. I flung myself on my bed and fell asleep. I awoke at midnight, suffering with the damp night air, and terrified with frightful dreams. I would have sought my mother at that moment, for I trembled with fear; but my door was fast.

“With the daylight my terrors were dissipated, and I became bold in resisting all good impulses. The servant brought my meals, but I did not taste them. I thought the day would never end.

“Just at twilight I heard a light footstep approach my door. It was my sister, who called me by name.

“ ‘What may I tell Mother for you?’ she asked.

“ ‘Nothing,’ I replied.

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“ ‘Oh, Alfred, for my sake, and for all our sakes, say that you are sorry; she longs to forgive you.’

“ ‘I won’t be driven to school against my will,’ I replied.

“ ‘But you will go if Mother wishes it, dear Alfred.’ my sister said, pleadingly.

“ ‘No, I won’t,’ said I; ‘and you needn’t say another word about it.’

“ ‘Oh, brother, you kill her! you will kill her! and then, you can never have a happy moment!’

“I made no reply to this. My feelings were touched, but I still resisted their influence. My sister called me, but I would not answer. I heard her footsteps slowly retreating, and again I flung myself upon my bed, and passed another wretched and fearful night. O God, how wretched—how fearful—I did not know.

“Another footstep, slower and feebler than my sister’s disturbed me. A voice called my name. It was my mother’s.

“ ‘Alfred, my son, shall I come in? Are you sorry for what you have done?’ she asked.

“I cannot tell what influence, operating at that time, made me speak adverse to my feelings.

“The gentle voice of my mother, that thrilled through me melted the ice from my obdurate heart, and I longed to throw myself upon her neck; but I did not. No, my boy, I did not! But my words gave the lie to my heart, when I said I was not sorry.

“I heard her withdraw. I heard her groan. I longed to call her back, but I did not.

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“I was awakened, from an uneasy slumber, by hearing my name called loudly, and my sister stood by my bedside.

“ ‘Get up, Alfred; oh, do not wait a moment! Get up and come with me; mother is dying!’

“I thought I was dreaming, but I got up mechanically, and followed my sister.

“On the bed, pale and cold as marble, lay my mother. She had not undressed. She had thrown herself on the bed to rest. Rising to go again to me, she was seized with a palpitation of the heart, and borne senseless to her room.

“I cannot tell you my agony, as I looked upon her. My remorse was tenfold more bitter from the thought that she would never know it. I believed myself to be a murderer. I fell on the bed beside her. I could not weep. My heart burned in my bosom; my brain was all on fire. My sister threw her arms around me and wept in silence. Suddenly, we saw a slight motion of mother’s hand. Her eyes unclosed. She had recovered consciousness, but not speech. She looked at me, and moved her lips; I could not understand her words.

“ ‘My mother,’ I shrieked, ‘say only that you forgive me!’

“She could not say it with her lips, but her hands pressed mine. She smiled upon me; and, lifting her thin white hand, clasped my own within them, and cast her eyes upward. She moved her lips in prayer and thus she died.

“I remained still kneeling before that dear form till my gentle sister removed me. She comforted me, for she knew the heavy load of sorrow at my heart—heavier than grief at the loss of a mother, for it was a load of sorrow for sin.

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“The joy of youth had left me forever.”

My father ceased speaking, and buried his face in his hands. He saw, and felt, the bearing of his narrative upon my character and conduct.

I have never forgotten it; and I would say to boys who spurn a mother’s control, who are ashamed to own that they are wrong, who think it manly to resist her authority, or to yield to her influences: “Beware! Lay not up for yourselves bitter memories for your future years.”

That was a Ben-oni indeed—a child of sorrow to his parents, to his sister, and to all around him. His disobedience made him such.

Marks of a Benjamin

Let us look now, at one or two examples of an opposite character.

William Hale was an obedient son. He was spending some time with his mother at the Saratoga Springs, and had become acquainted with a number of boys of his own age there.

One day some half-dozen of the children were playing on the piazza, and one of them heard exclaiming—“Oh, yes, that’s capital! So we will; come on, now! Where’s William Hale? Come on, Will! We are going to have a ride on the circular railroad. Come with us.”

“Yes, if my mother is willing,” said William. “I will run and ask her.”

“Ah, ah! so you must run and ask your ma!—great baby boy!—run along to your ma! Ain’t you ashamed?”

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“I don’t ask my mother,” said one.

“Neither do I,” said another.

“Neither do I,” said a third.

“Be a man, Will, and come along,” said the first boy, “if you don’t wish to be called a coward as long as you live; don’t you see we are all waiting?”

William was standing, with one foot advanced and his hand firmly clenched, in the midst of the group. His brow was flushed, his eye was flashing, his lip was compressed, his cheek was changing—all showing how the epithet, “coward,” rankled in his bosom.

“I will not go without asking my mother; and I am no coward, either. I promised her I would not go from the house without her permission; and I should be a base coward if I were to tell my mother a lie.”

When William returned to his mother, to ask her permission to go, and told her of what had taken place, she threw her arms around his neck and exclaimed, “God bless you, my dear child, and give you grace always to act in this way.”

Ah, my dear children, he was a Benjamin, a child of comfort, to his dear mother.

After the surrender of Cornwallis, and the victory achieved by the American arms, George Washington, when the war was over, returned in triumph to his mother’s home. Everybody was honoring him, and praising him, as the saviour of his country and the greatest man of the age. When he reached the place of his mother’s abode, a large concourse of the people had met to greet him and welcome him to his home. In the center of the assembled

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crowd stood his mother; and, pushing his way through the crowd around him, he hastened to pay her his respects; and, as she threw her arms around his neck, and kissed him, she said to some who were congratulating her upon having so noble a son.

“George always was an obedient child.”

He was indeed a Benjamin, a son of comfort, to his mother, and a blessing to the country, and to the world; and the spirit of obedience, early learned, and early practiced, was that which went to make him what he was.

And now, in conclusion, my dear children, let me ask you, Which of these two, do you desire to be? Will you be Ben-onies—children of sorrow and grief—to your parents? or, will you be Benjamins—children of joy and comfort and blessing to them? If you would be the latter, Benjamins indeed, then you must watch, and strive, and pray against all the evils of which we have been speaking. Watch against these four marks of a Ben-oni;—watch against ill-temper, watch against idleness, watch against pride, watch against disobedience; and pray God to enable you each to overcome all these evils—to erase these marks of a Ben-oni as they are beginning to fasten themselves on your character, and to earn for yourself the character of a Benjamin indeed.

—Richard Newton

