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# Ripe Strawberries,

AND OTHER STORIES.




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## Ripe Strawberries.

OW glad I am that summer is come again, mother, and that I can run about the garden as much as I like without any danger of getting cold," said little Mary to her mother. "I think I should like to live always in a garden, as Adam and Eve did. I suppose they had plenty of fruit and beautiful flowers."

“Yes,” answered her mother; “you know that the Lord God made to grow there every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.”

“How foolish it was of Eve, to be tempted to eat the forbidden fruit.”

“It was, my dear. Do you not think, Mary, it would have been better for her not to have gone near that part of the garden and to have kept out of the way of being tempted?”

“No, mother; I think it would be far better to be able to see

what tempts us, without giving way to it."

"Oh, Mary, you are quite wrong; you forget that the Lord Jesus himself teaches us to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation.'"

"Well, mother, while you are from home I hope I shall keep out of the way of it, and pass my play-hours in this pretty garden, weeding and watering my own little flower-beds, so that on my birthday I shall have a nosegay of nice flowers for dear uncle when he comes."

“I hope so, my child; this is a safe place for you to run about in, and you may enjoy it as much as you please, except the part enclosed by that laurel hedge I wish you not to go into that part of the garden till my return.”

“Why so, mother?” Mary asked.

“I do not wish at present to tell you why. My little girl ought to be quite sure that when I hinder her doing anything she would like to do, I have a proper reason for it, and she should be satisfied.”

Mary was sorry to part from her mother: but she comforted herself by thinking that it was only for a few days, and that then it would be her birthday.

There was a pleasant arbor in the shrubbery, with seats all round it, and a table in the middle; and here her mother had settled that she should have a little feast for her friends, to which Mary looked forward with great pleasure. She soon set to work, weeding her flowerbeds, to have them in nice order for this occasion. But she stop-

ped in her work, and began to play with a kitten, near the laurel hedge. "What reason can mother have had for telling me not to go in that part of the garden?" thought Mary.

This curiosity was wrong; children should never wish to know anything that their kind parents do not choose to tell them. One wrong thing always leads to another; and if little Mary had now struggled against what was rising in her mind, and thought of what her mother so lately pointed out, that the

Saviour has taught us to pray that we should be kept out of the way of temptation, she would have been spared some trouble. There was an arch cut in the laurel hedge for an entrance into the fruit garden. Mary went to it, and peeped in, but could not see anything that accounted for her mother's order.

“How strange!” she said. “Surely it can be no harm for me to take one run round this place, and the moment I find out the reason of what mother said I will come back.”

She now went in. The gooseberries and currants were still hard and green; so were the cherries and other wall fruit. Mary was more curious than ever. She came to the strawberry bank. "Everything here is hard and green also," she cried. But just then she arrived at a very sunny part of the bank, and she saw, peeping from under the leaves, a ripe, red strawberry, then another, and a good many that would be ripe in a day or two. She stood for a while, looking at them.



“Ah,” said she, “I know now what mother meant. Could she not leave these in my care? I would not have touched them; it would have been a breach of trust, which mother told me was very wrong. However I do not think it any harm to eat one or two now; mother did not forbid me.”

Mary had an uneasy feeling as she stooped and took the strawberry in her fingers. She thought she would get up and hasten away, but the strawberry looked so red, and felt so soft,

that she thought it would have melted away before her mother's return, and thus be lost, and that it was better for her to eat it.

The first step in sin is always the most difficult. Mary did not find it so hard to take another strawberry, then another and another, till she had eaten all that were ripe. When she went to bed that night she felt very unhappy; she knew that she had broken one of God's commandments, and disobeyed her mother.

How could she ask God to take care of her through the night after acting so badly? She had been taught that blessed truth, that "if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" and if she had asked God to forgive her for his dear Son's sake, and by his Holy Spirit to help her from committing the sin again, he would surely have done so. Instead of this, she covered up her face with the bed-clothes, just as if she could hide herself from that

eye which is in every place, beholding the evil and the good; and resolving, in her own strength, not to pass the laurel again, she fell asleep.

Next morning Mary went to the flower-garden, but was not long there when she visited the strawberry bank, just to see, as she thought, whether any had ripened since yesterday. We may guess what followed—she ate the few that were ripe. She came again the next morning, and the next, and sometimes in the evening. At last her moth-

er came home, and when Mary ran to meet her, she did not feel at all so happy as was usual with her on such occasions.

“Well, my child,” said her mother, soon after she arrived, “to-morrow will, you know, be your birth-day, and uncle and cousins will be here early, and are bringing you some pretty little presents. That you may be quite happy, father has sent to school for your dear brothers, so your arbor will be full of those you love.”

Mary skipped about with de-

light. "But it is time to prepare for all these visitors," said her mother. "Come to the garden, and bring this basket. Last year your uncle gave me some plants of a good and early kind of strawberry, telling me how to treat them; 'be sure,' he said, 'to take such care of them that I shall have a leaf of them when we go, next summer, to keep darling Mary's birthday.' They were nearly ripe when I left home, and must be quite so now. The reason I desired you not to go beyond the laurel hedge, was

that you should not have the temptation of seeing them; so now, come help me to pull them."

But Mary, sobbing as if her heart would break, threw herself on her knees, and, as well as she could speak, confessed everything. She had been at the bank that morning, and not one ripe one was left. Her mother was silent, and when at last Mary looked up in her face, she saw that it was wet with tears. "Oh!" she cried, "I have made my dearest mother unhappy; this is the worst of all."

“You have, indeed,” said her mother, “and your kind uncle will be unhappy when he hears of it.”

Mary wept bitterly. “Oh! what shall I do?” she cried. ‘How can I appear before them all after such behavior?’”

“You cannot,” replied her mother; “and as you deserve punishment, — remain in your room to-morrow. I shall have the very sad task of telling the cause of your absence, and am certain that it will spoil the pleasure of the day to your com-



pany as much as to yourself. But, Mary, neither that nor even having grieved your mother is, as you said just now, the worst of it. You have displeased our Heavenly Father. I hope and trust you will spend your lonesome birthday in seeking the forgiveness of God, and in asking him to change your sinful nature, so that, if spared to see another birthday, it may find you a wiser and better child."

## Coloring Truth.

**M**OTHER," cried a little girl, rushing into the room where a lady sat reading, "John struck me in the face with all his might! Oh dear! oh dear! It hurts so!"

And the child pressed her hand against her cheek, and threw her head backwards and forwards, as if she were in great pain.





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The lady's face reddened instantly, and the book fell from her hand to the floor. Starting up, she went hurriedly from the room. There was anger in her heart against John, and in the blindness of her sudden indignation, she resolved to punish him with a severe chastisement. But ere she reached the apartment in which her child had been playing, she paused suddenly, and stood still. A timely thought glancing through her mind had arrested her steps.

“This will not do. I must

control myself," she said, speaking half-aloud. Then, after a resolute strife with her angry feelings, the mother went back to the room where she had left her weeping child, and sitting down in her old place, said, with as calm and steady a voice as she could assume —

“Agnes, let me see your cheek.”

“Oh, dear! How it hurts!” sobbed Agnes, as she came to her mother’s side, her hand still pressed to her face.

The lady gently removed her

hand, and examined the little girl's cheek. There was a red mark as if a blow had been received; but no evidence of a bruise.

“Agnes,” said the mother, now speaking very calmly and gently, yet with a firmness that at once subdued the excitement of her child's mind, “I want you to stop crying, and tell me all about this trouble with John.”

The child's tears ceased to flow; and she looked up into her mother's face.

“Agnes, who gave the first

provocation in this matter, you or John?"

"John struck me in the face," replied the child, evincing a great deal of angry feeling towards her brother.

"Why did he strike you?"

Agnes was silent.

"Who saw the trouble between you and John?" inquired the mother.

"Why, Mary saw it. She'll tell you that John struck me in the face with all his might."

"Tell Mary that I wish to see her."



Agnes went for her sister. When they returned, the mother said —

“Now, Mary, tell me about this trouble, with John and Agnes.”

“You saw him strike me, didn't you, Mary?” said Agnes, with the eagerness of resentment.

“I will question Mary,” said the mother, “and while I am doing so, you, Agnes, must have nothing to say. After Mary has finished then you can correct her statement, if you wish to do so. Now, Mary, say on.”

“Well, mother, I’ll tell you just how it was,” said Mary. Agnes was teasing John, and John got angry.”

“And struck his sister?” There was a tone of severity in the mother’s voice.

“I think the blow was accidental,” said Mary. “John declared that it was, and did his best to comfort Agnes; even promising to give her his pet kitten if she would stop crying, and not make any trouble by telling you. But she was angry, and would not listen to him.”

· Tell me just what occurred, Mary, and then I shall know exactly how far both were to blame.”

“ Well, John and I,” answered Mary, “ were playing checkers, and Agnes would, every now and then, steal up behind John, and push his elbow when he was making a move. It worried him, and he asked her over and over again not to do so. But she didn't mind what he said. At last John pushed the board from him and would'nt play any longer. He was angry. Still Ag-

nes seemed bent on annoying him. John got a book and sat down near the window to read. He had not been there long, before Agnes stole up behind him, whipped the book out of his hand, and ran away. John ran after her, and they had a struggle for the book, in which Agnes got a blow upon the face. I was looking at them, and I think the blow was accidental. It seemed so to me at the time, and John declares that he did not mean to strike her. That is all, mother."

“Call your brother,” said the lady in a subdued voice. John entered the room in a few moments. He was pale and looked troubled.

“My son,” said the mother, speaking without apparent excitement, yet with a touch of sorrow in her voice, “did you strike Agnes on purpose?”

The boy’s lips quivered, but no answer came through them. He looked into his mother’s eyes for a moment or two, until tears blinded him, and then he laid his face down upon her bosom and

sobbed. With love's tender instinct, the mother drew her arm tightly around her boy, and then there was silence for the space of nearly a minute.

"It was an accident, I am sure?" whispered the mother, placing her lips close to the ear of her boy.

"Indeed, it was!" John answered back with earnestness. "My hand slipped as I tried to get my book away from her, and it struck her in the face. I was so sorry!"

What less could the mother do

than kiss with ardor the fair brow of her boy, against whom, under the influence of anger, she had passed a hasty judgment. She almost shuddered as she thought of the unjust punishment she had come nigh inflicting.



## Rose and her Troubles.

**R**OSE MILTON lived with her mother in a little house. Her mother was a widow, and the house in which she lived had only three rooms. It stood at the end of a long, narrow court. Mrs. Milton kept a mangle, and did any other kind of work she could get ; and as she was a civil, honest person, she found as



much employment as she could attend to.

Rose was an only child, and her mother loved her dearly.— She indulged her as much as she could, and often denied herself something, that she might buy her child a new frock, or make her a cake, or a small pie for Sunday. She did not care how hard she toiled, if Rose were only the better for it.

Rose was a quiet, gentle little girl, and rather thoughtful for her years, but with a sweet smile that was always ready for

anybody who wanted it. She was grateful for her mother's kindness, and rarely, if ever, tried to have her own way in anything. And her mother had often said, when she was left in great distress and trouble by the sudden death of her husband, that Rose was her only earthly comfort. Rose fully returned her mother's love.

Rose was naturally loving; but she was more than that; she was a child who had learned to love the Saviour, and to try to please him; a little lamb

gathered into his peaceful fold. Rose went to a Sunday school. She had heard one of the neighbor's little girls describe what they did and what they heard there; and she was so interested in the account, that she asked her mother to let her become a scholar too. And soon the truths she was taught were, through the blessing of the Holy Spirit, brought home to her young heart. She sought Christ early by faith, and found him. His ways were, to her, ways of pleasantness, and all his paths

were paths of peace. Happy child, to be early brought to trust in Jesus, and to give him her young heart and life !

Rose was a happy little girl ; but she had, like all children, a few troubles to bear ; and it is about one of these troubles that you shall now hear. It was a very small one — so small, that you will hardly think it worth any notice — but it seemed rather large to Rose ; and we want you to know how she got rid of it, and what happened through it.

The court in which Rose lived was called "Primrose Gardens;" but there were no signs of there ever having been any gardens or primroses there; in this place there was a front garret, which was the abode of an old woman and her grandson. It was this grandson who was Rose's trouble. He was a wild, rough-looking boy, whose face was always dirty, and whose hair was rough and ragged. He was often to be seen, both when it was fine and when it rained, idle and lying about, either in the court

or at his own doorway, having nothing to do, and ready for any mischief. Now, this boy, for some reason or another, or for no reason at all, had taken it into his head, whenever he saw Rose, to tease her. He would make all sorts of strange noises to startle her as she went past; he would sometimes snatch at her bonnet or her cape, and try to pull them off; or he would knock her basket, or whatever she was carrying, out of her hand, and then stand and laugh at her distress. In short, he

did all that a rude boy could do to annoy a timid little girl; for Rose was very timid, and soon put to fright. Besides, she was a great deal less than he was, and quite unable to contend with him. At last, she became so afraid of him that she almost dreaded going in and out of the court, and she used to run very fast to get out of his way, before he should see her.

Why did not Rose complain of him to her mother? She did not like to do so, for no other little girl in the court seemed to

mind him, and she was rather ashamed to own that she cared for him. But one day, when he was worse than usual, she told her mother about it, and Mrs. Milton spoke very sharply to old Bridget about her grandson's conduct. Indeed, they had some angry words about it, which, however, did poor Rose no good; for the next time she met Maurice, he teased her as much as ever, and called her a tell-tale. So Rose bore with him in future as well as she could.



One Saturday afternoon, Rose went to fetch some milk for her mother. Her jug was very full, so she walked along with care, that she might not spill it. She had just turned the corner, when a loud shout behind her made her hurry on; but she had not gone many steps when there came a violent tug at her shawl, which shook her arm, and sent some of the milk over her frock, and some on the ground. Flurried and vexed at what was done, Rose's soft voice was raised to it's highest pitch in

telling Maurice of his bad behaviour; but he only told her, with a loud laugh, to make haste home, and not waste any more of her milk. It really was too bad of him; and so Rose said, as, with a flushed and tearful face, she hurried in-doors, and, half out of breath, told her mother what Maurice had done. Her mother was very angry that anybody should dare to meddle with her child, and to cause the loss of the milk. She declared she would speak again to the boy's grandmother. "And

if she will not make him leave off these tricks, why, *I* will find out the way to do it, that's all. So never mind, Rose."

Rose's mother did not forget her promise, but she was too busy all the rest of the day to go into old Bridget's.

The next day was Sunday, and Rose went as usual to her much-loved school. It was so, that texts of Scripture for that morning's lesson were out of fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. These were the words: "But I say unto you,

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matt. v. 44, 45. Rose said them very correctly, for her lessons were always well said, and she listened to the meaning which her teacher gave of them. And, as she did

so, she was a little surprised at herself, that she had not before better known what they meant; for she had fancied that they were only for grown-up people, not for little children, and for great quarrels, not for small ones; but now, when her teacher showed how boys and girls were to guide their actions by these rules, as well as men and women, and pointed out some ways in which they might be carried out, there flashed all at once into Rose's mind the thoughts of her old troubler, Maurice.

“ Well,” thought little Rose to herself, “ I suppose, then, I ought to love Maurice, and be kind to him. But I don’t think I *can* love such a boy ! And yet, if Jesus says so, I must try to do what he says. I *will* try ; only I am afraid it won’t be very easy just at first. But Jesus says, too, that I am to pray for his grace, and he will enable me to do what is right.”

So that evening Rose brought Maurice into her prayers. She asked that he might become a better boy ; that he might love

Jesus; and that he might not wish to tease her any more. And after that, every morning and evening, as she knelt down to pray, the dirty and ragged boy was prayed for by little Rose. As she prayed, she found that her feelings towards Maurice were very much softened, and that she really pittied him, and would do anything she could to make him better and happier. "I must be kind to him, and then perhaps he will leave off his bad ways," thought Rose again; "but I don't know

what there is I can do that he would like. I must wait and see. I will always look on him kindly, and speak gently to him."

Rose got one of her brightest smiles just ready, each time that she had occasion to go in or out of the court; but only once, when he was too busy quarrelling with another boy about some marbles to notice her, was Maurice to be seen all the rest of the week. What could have become of him? She was a little disappointed



that she could not put into practice that beautiful text about loving her enemies.

Well, Saturday came round again, and Rose was sent as before for some milk. When she came back, she said, as she set the jug down on the table, "It's all there this time, mother! for Maurice was not in the court; I cannot think where he is, for I have not seen him but once all the week."

"So much the better," said her mother; "and I do not know whether you will be likely

to see him again, Rose, for he is very ill in bed. He has been very bad, but he is a little better now, only the doctor does not give much hopes of him; he thinks he will go off in a decline, like his father did."

Just then, a woman came in about some mangling, so Rose went up stairs to think over what she had just heard. It was like a sudden blow to her. She was beginning to feel a deep interest in Maurice, and she had a plan to win him round, by such gentle and kind ways; but now

this was all stopped. Besides this, Maurice was ill, and might die; and Rose did not think that he was prepared to die; and there was no one, she feared, who would talk to him about his soul, or tell him of the Saviour. It made her feel sad — very sad; and her prayers for him were more earnest than before. But Rose did more than pray.

On the Sunday, at dinner-time, there was a nice rice-pudding, and Rose had a good share of it on her plate. But when she had eaten a little bit, she left

off, and sat looking at it, and playing with her spoon.

“What is' it, Rose?” said her mother; “do you not like it?”

“O, yes, mother, very much; but I do not want to eat it all; I should like to give this away.”

“Give it away, Rose! — to whom?”

“To poor Maurice, mother. I'm sure his grandmother does not make anything so nice; and now he is so poorly and cannot eat much, I think it is just what he would fancy.”

“No doubt of it, child; but

what made such an idea come into your head? Do you not know what a plague he has been to you ever since they came to live here?"

"O, yes, mother," said Rose; "but I learned on Sunday about loving our enemies and doing them good; and Maurice has been a sort of enemy to me; at least, he has not treated me kindly; I should like to show him that I am not unforgiving. May I not carry him this pudding, mother?"

"Why, Rose, I made it for

you, and you must eat it. But if you have really set your heart on giving that boy some, you shall have the rest that is in the dish.”

Rose made haste to finish her dinner, that she might carry Maurice his piece, before it was cold. Her mother put it in a warm basin for her, and covered it over with a little plate, and told Rose to bring them back with her.

With a happy heart, Rose set off on her kind errand. She was told that Bridget was gone out

for more medicine ; but the woman of the house said she would find Maurice sitting in a chair if she went up. So up Rose went and knocked very gently at the door. At first there was no answer ; but when she knocked again, Maurice called out, in rather a rough tone, " Who's there ? "

" It's me, Rose Milton," said she, as she opened the door and went in.

Maurice stared, as well he might ; and before he could say anything, his little visitor added,

quickly, "We have had such a nice pudding for dinner to-day, and I thought you would like a bit of it, so I have brought you some; mother said I might."

Instead of thanking her, however, Maurice half turned away, and said, touchily, "You need not have brought it; I do not want any."

Whether Maurice was ashamed of his rudeness, or whether the tempting sight and smell took his fancy, we do not know; but he was easily prevailed upon to sit up and taste the nice food. . And



when he had once tasted it, he did not stop till it was all gone.

As he laid down the spoon, he looked in a curious, strange way at Rose, and said, "Why did not you keep this and eat it yourself? I reckon *I* should."

"I am sure you need it more than I do," said Rose: "you are so ill; besides, I wanted to be kind to you."

"What for? because I used to run after you, and frighten you?"

"Yes," said Rose, simply; "that is just what Jesus tells us to do; it is in the Bible, you know, Maurice."

No, Maurice did not know ; he had never heard of it before ; so Rose gladly told him, not only that, but several other things about the Saviour which she herself had been taught.

Rose did not stay very long, because of her school, but she offered to come again soon, and bring a tract with her to read to Maurice. The sick boy willingly agreed, and as Rose bade him good bye, he said, in his blunt way, " Good bye, Rose ! thank you for the pudding ; and I won't tease you never no more ! "

And Maurice kept his word. He never teased her again. When he got well, which was in the course of a few weeks, he was one of the best friends Rose had in the court. Not a boy, nor even a dog, dared to molest her, when Maurice was at hand. And better still than that, she spoke to her teacher about him, and the teacher called at his house; and from that time he went to the Sunday-school. There he learned to know more of that Saviour, whose wise and loving words had made little Rose so forbearing

and forgiving; and there he was brought, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to repentance, and to believe in Him whose precious blood cleanseth from all sin.

Young reader, have you been made truly sorry for sin? Have you sought Jesus as your Saviour?



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