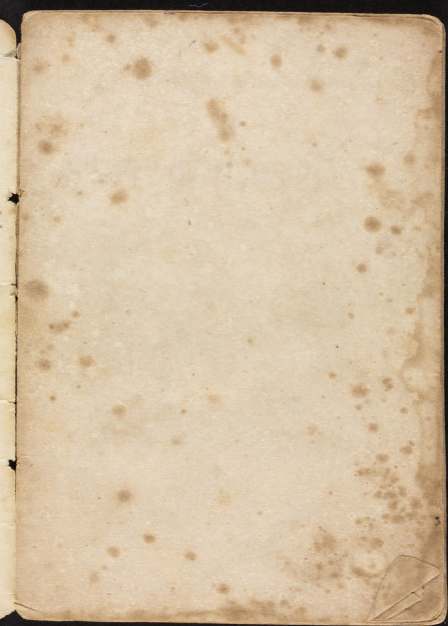
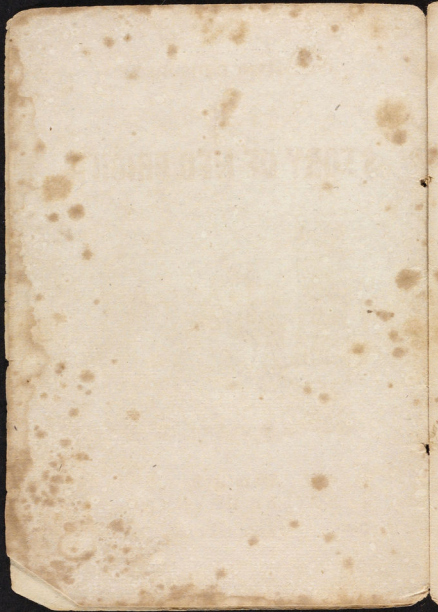


Jack and the
bean-stalk





CONSCIENCE DISOBEYED,

OR

STORY OF NED BRIGHT.



Hamilton:
BUTLER MAYNARD.

EATON STREET.



NED BRIGHT.

THE house which you see in the cut is the one in which Ned Bright lived. It is



not a very splendid house as you perceive, but the inhabitants were once happy because they were good. No matter how mean a house is, if people are good, they

can live very happily in it, but the wicked cannot be happy any where. If they live in a gilded palace, and are surrounded by all the luxuries in the world, still they are miserable. Ned's father was a farmer, a kind and generous man, who was always careful to do right himself, but, though he took great pains to teach his son that it was wrong to lie, swear, steal or break any of God's holy commandments, yet he did not with sufficient care impress upon his mind the importance of obeying his conscience. Perhaps some of my little readers may not know exactly what I mean by conscience. Well I will tell you. Do you not recollect some instance in which you have disobeyed a kind and affectionate mother? and did you not feel unhappy when you had done it? Well it was conscience that made you feel so. Have you ever had a piece of money which was all your own,

and with which you intended to buy candy, and have you afterwards given it to a poor blind man who was in want, because you pitied and wished to relieve him? If you have, you felt far happier than you would have done in eating the candy. Now it was conscience that told you, you ought to give the money to the poor man, and which made you happy because you had done it. Conscience then is that faculty which leads us to do right, and to refrain from doing wrong, and which makes us feel happy when we have done right, and unhappy when we have done wrong. But as I was saying, though Ned meant to be a very good boy, yet he did not know exactly how important it is always to obey conscience. For the first few years of his life he was a very innocent happy boy, remarkable for his frankness of manner, and moreover he was a fine scholar. You may



see him now sitting on a bench and getting a lesson with his school mate. The teacher used to declare that Ned Bright was the finest boy in school, and that he would yet be the President of the United States. Perhaps he might have been if he had never disobeyed his conscience, but when a person has once done wrong, he is in the condition of a stone that is set a rolling down hill, which you know cannot stop of itself, much less get back to the place where it started from. Ned Bright had a great

many friends while he was a good boy; and if any one had told him that he would ever be a poor miserable vagabond, without a friend in the world, because he ventured to do wrong once, he would not have believed it. He thought he could stop doing wrong at any time, just as a drunkard thinks he can stop drinking at any time, till he becomes so besotted that he perishes in the ditch. I will relate to you the circumstances which I think formed the turning point in the moral character of Ned Bright. They may appear trifling to you, but nothing is really trifling that in any way effects the character. Ned's mother had observed that he was very fond of going to the orchard and eating green apples, and she tried to devise some means to induce him to refrain from eating them till they should get ripe, because she knew that in their present state they were very injurious to his health.

Now the best way would have been for her to have told him all the reasons why she did not wish he should eat them, and to have explained to him that the pain he would most probably bring upon himself by doing so, would far exceed the pleasure he could derive from gratifying his appetite; and as Ned was a very reasonable boy, it is quite likely he would have felt the force of her arguments. But Mrs. Bright, though a kind and excellent woman, was not one of the most judicious of mothers, for she did not reflect that it was far more important to preserve the health of the moral than of the physical constitution of her son. One day Ned entered the room where his father and mother were sitting by a table. When his mother said to him, "my son I am very much afraid you will be ill in consequence of eating so many unripe apples, and if you will promise me that you will not eat an-



other in a month, your father will present you with a new penknife at the end of that time. His father nodded assent, and Ned, who did not reflect how hard it would be for him to keep such a promise, but thought only of the delight he should experience in being the owner of a penknife, said, "O! I will not eat another one mother, I will promise you I certainly will not." Ned kept away from the orchard for several days, so that he might not be tempted to break his promise, but at length he thought

there could be no harm in visiting again his favorite trees, so long as he did not eat the apples, and he really did not intend to eat any when he went there. But when he saw them they looked so tempting, that he began to think a month was a very long time to deny himself, yet he could not give up the idea of the penknife. What do you think he did? some boys would have eaten the apples, and then denied it to their mother, but Ned would have shuddered at the thought of telling a lie, and yet he actually did that which was much worse, in order to secure both objects. He thought within himself, that as he had promised his mother he would not eat another apple, he might nevertheless eat as many parts of apples as he chose, without breaking his promise. His conscience was not quite satisfied by this reasoning, and yet he resolved to act upon the plan which he formed while stand-



ing as you see under that tree. Every day he would go to the orchard, take an apple, eat half of it, and throw the rest away, and so continue to do till he had satisfied his appetite. At the end of the month he went to his mother and told her he had not eaten an apple during the whole time. Mrs. Bright had always been accustomed to place confidence in the words of her son, and forthwith the knife was presented. But do you think that Ned experienced any pleasure on receiving it? No, the posses-

sion gave him any thing but pleasure, because he was conscious of not deserving it. He knew how his mother understood him; he knew he had deceived her, and more than once he resolved to go to her and confess the whole truth, and ask her forgiveness. Conscience told him he ought to do it, and if he had obeyed its voice, he would probably have saved himself a great deal of misery. But he had been using means to pervert his conscience, and he was not so much disposed to obey it as before. This is always the effect of doing wrong. Every single transgression hardens the heart and makes sin appear less criminal. He was ashamed to acknowledge that he had been guilty of a great sin, and he did not know the consequences of concealing his guilt. His parents, however soon observed a change in his appearance for which they could not account. He did not delight in

their society as formerly, and was evidently restless and uneasy in their presence. This led him to wonder away from home, where he was exposed to still greater temptations to do wrong, while his disposition to do right was constantly growing less. Still he meant to be a good man, and did not seem to understand at all that the char-



acter he was then forming would go with him to the grave. Do you see him pushing

out that boat from the shore? and can you believe he is doing this on Sunday? Well it is even so. He does not intend to be a Sabbath breaker, because he knows that no Sabbath breaker can be a respectable man. But he thought he could indulge himself this once, and nobody would ever know it. He forgot that the eye of God is in every place, beholding the evil and the good. He had not proceeded far, however, before a breeze arose that carried his boat out into the lake faster than he wished it to go. but all his efforts to prevent it were unavailing. Presently, the sun disappeared and the sky grew black, and Ned's heart beat quick with apprehensions of coming danger, when he saw how far he was from the shore. As he was rowing for his life to reach the opposite bank, a sudden gust of wind upset the boat, and plunged him into the water. He seized the boat with both

hands, and though he could not get into it again, he managed to keep his head above water, while it floated with him towards the shore; yet, as the waves frequently washed over his head he was in very great danger of being drowned; and when at length he scrambled upon the dry land, exhausted from fatigue and terror, he secretly resolved that he would never again break one of God's commandments. But alas! how vain are the resolutions of those who have spoiled their conscience. He was obliged to go home with his clothes all wet upon him, and one of two things he must do, either confess the fact of going out in the boat or conceal it by a direct falsehood. Had any one told Ned, previous to that fatal day when he resolved to deceive his mother, that he would ever be guilty of a falsehood, he would have scorned the thought. "Me, tell an untruth!" he would have said in-

dignantly, "there is no character in the world I despise so much as a base liar, and I am sure that will never be my character." And yet he actually did tell his mother on this occasion that he saw a poor duck entangled in some brush a short distance from the shore, and that in attempting to walk out upon a log, to assist her in extricating herself, he had fallen into the water. So you see how one guilty action leads to another. Ned was no longer the happy cheerful being he once was. He could not look any one in the face like an honest boy, and a circumstance occurred one day, that almost led him to suppose, that the brute animals were acquainted with his wickedness, and wished to punish him; for as he was walking leisurely among some trees that grew in the neighborhood of the lake, and sighing for that peace of mind which he had lost, and which he now felt to be more



valuable than any other possession, a huge snake pursued him, coiled round one of his legs, and he was in danger of being crushed to death beneath its cruel fold. But a laborer who happened to be passing that way came to his relief, and he escaped unhurt. Yet all this did not lead him to ask God's forgiveness for the wrong he had done, in deceiving his mother, breaking the sabbath and telling a lie. He was sure that

no human being but himself knew how wicked he was; but this did not prevent him from being wretched. He felt that all his school fellows would despise him if they knew his real character; and every mark of affection from his kind parents only served to make him more miserable. Every word and look from his friends seemed to reproach him, and the idea at length occurred to him that he could be happy among strangers. He knew it would be wrong to leave his kind parents, without their permission, when they have done so much for him, and were entitled to his services till he was a man, yet he did not seem to understand that, by doing one wrong thing after another, he was making his condition worse and worse, and laying deeper and broader the foundation of his misery. With the vain expectation of flying from the stings of a guilty conscience, he rose with the

dawn of day, before any one was awake in the house, made a snug bundle of his little wardrobe, entered the sleeping apartment of his parents, gazed upon them awhile as they lay wrapt in slumber, dreaming perhaps of the future happiness and respectability of their son, took a five dollar bill from his fathers vest pocket, and departed in a stage coach, in which he had taken a passage to a village about forty or fifty miles distant. But who can describe his feelings when he thought of the anguish of his parents, and the gloom his absence would spread over their once happy family circle; and though he endeavored to quiet the reproaches of conscience, by picturing to himself visions of future wealth & splendor which he hoped would be his when he had made his fortune in the world; still he found that he could not escape the cruel lashes of the stern monitor within. He

arrived at the village, late in the evening, took lodgings at an inn, and soon laid his weary aching head upon a pillow, but it was very long before he could close his eyes in sleep, and when at length drowsiness overpowered him, and he began to grow insensible to external impressions, the image of his mother, wringing her hands in an agony of grief, and crying, O! my son, my son, would arise before his dreaming fancy, and he would start and awake. He rose early in the morning unrefreshed by slumber, and went out to look for employment. Ned Bright was a very active lad, and by nature as well as by name he was bright, and he found gentlemen enough who would have been glad to have employed just such a boy, if he had only had an open, honest expression of countenance; but they saw at once, by looking him full in the face, that he had not always done right,

and they were afraid to trust him. He wandered about all day without any success, and when night came, as his money was all gone, and he was ashamed to ask any body to keep him all night, he crept into a barn, and slept upon the straw. And now you can see him, as he wandered



about next morning begging for his breakfast. Every one who saw Ned, thought there must be something wrong about him, or he would not, while in the vigour of health, be reduced to the necessity

of begging his bread, and consequently they were not disposed to give him any thing. Poor Ned began to think he should certainly starve, and he would have given the world at this time, if he could have thrown himself on his knees before his parents, confessed all his faults, and begged their forgiveness. And yet I fear he did not regret the course he had pursued so much, on account of its being wrong, as on account of the trouble it occasioned him, for if he had really repented of his wickedness, he would not have been capable of the conduct I am about to relate. He entered a room which he supposed from its appearance was a Lawyer's office. The Lawyer had stepped out for a moment, and the office was left alone. Ned saw a pocket-book laying on a desk, and as if hurried on by an invisible hand, without a moments reflection he seized it, slipped it into

his pocket and hurried away. His first halt was made at the barn where he had slept, in which, in order to escape detection, he buried himself completely in the straw. Lucky for him, however, he happened to hit upon a hen's nest, the contents of which, satisfied in a measure, the cravings of his appetite. And now methinks I hear the little reader enquire if this can be the once good and happy Ned Bright, now a liar, a Sabbath breaker and a thief too, smothering under a heap of straw for fear of being detected and brought to punishment. This is indeed his condition, and it is what every one has reason to fear, who allows himself once to enter upon a deliberate plan for deception. As soon as night had shrouded the earth in her sable curtain, and Ned supposed the whole village was buried in profound slumber, he scrambled out from his hiding place, took a horse

from the stable, and set off at the top of his speed. He rode some time after day



light, when afraid of being found with the horse in his possession, he left it and pursued his way on foot. And now for the first time he ventured to open his pocket book to ascertain the extent of his stolen treasure. It contained some papers and fifty dollars in money. This was more money than he ever owned before, but do you think he felt either rich or happy in the possession? No. When he had made

market for his pullets, which he had fed with his own hands, and received a few shillings in payment for them, which he knew were honestly his own, he experienced a pleasure which thousands of dollars dishonestly acquired could not have afforded him. Every breeze and every rustling leaf caused him to start and look back to see if he was not pursued. Stung almost to madness by remorse and shame, he pursued his solitary way till he came to a small village where there was one tavern and a few stores, but no church. Ned thought they must be a wicked people or they would have some place to worship God; but this did not prevent him from wishing to take up his abode amongst them, for he had become wicked himself, and therefore the society of wicked people were more in accordance with his taste than any other. He entered the bar-room of the inn where he

found several lads of his own age who were very merry, and apparently happy. Ned endeavored to participate in their mirth, but a load of guilt weighed down his spirits, his heart was heavy and he could not join in the laugh. He soon discovered that the high spirits of his companions were occasioned by their frequent draughts from the intoxicating cup. Degraded as Ned already was, he would have scorned the idea of becoming a loathsome drunkard. Yet he resolved for once, though he did not ever intend to do it again, to exhilarate his depressed spirits, and loose in a manner, the painful sense of his own degradation, by tasting the poisonous beverage. There he is represented in the cut, sitting by a stand with his glasses about him, his hat half off from his head, a most pitiable object to behold. He did not intend to become intoxicated, but when he began to



drink he did not know when to stop. After he had succeeded in drowning his trouble, he reeled into the room where he had left his jovial companions, and now he was as full of jokes, and could laugh as loud and long as any of them. But, O! the anguish he experienced when he again came to his senses. "How would my dear mother feel," he exclaimed, "if she knew her once loved Ned had come to this." The thought was more than he could endure; he rose and hastily walked the room, and en-

deavored to banish the painful remembrance from his mind, but his efforts were in vain. The only means he saw by which he could erase his burning thoughts, was to go again to the bar, and this he did as often as his recollections became insupportable. When he was partially intoxicated he was very free in treating his companions, and the consequence was that his fifty dollars were soon expended. But the landlord had found him so good a customer that he did not wish him to leave his house, so he agreed with him to perform certain services, for which he was to receive his board and a little money, which the landlord well knew would come back into his own hands. If you wish to know how Ned Bright appeared in the character he had assumed, as servant at an inn, you may observe him as he is represented in the picture, returning from the well with a mug of water. Oh! how



different from what he might have been if he had never decided to do wrong. Shortly after this Ned observed a notice put up in the bar room of a pocket book, and horse that had been stolen, and probably both by the same person, as they were both missed nearly the same time, and twenty-five dollars reward was promised to the person who would discover and arrest the thief. The guilt and agitation he discovered on reading this notice fastened suspicion upon him, and an individual present, wishing to obtain the reward, had him arrested immediately, and lodged in jail. In short, when

he came to trial, circumstances were developed that clearly proved the charge against him, and he was sentenced to ten years confinement in the State's Prison, shut up alone in a gloomy cell, with no companions but his own guilty thoughts, which stung him like so many scorpions. Day after day he was compelled to work from morning till night without hearing the sound of a human voice, except when occasionally he uttered a groan that was echoed back from the dismal walls. He preferred death to this condition, and more than once did he attempt to put an end to his life. He did not seem to reflect that by thus hurrying himself into the presence of his maker, he would only exchange the pangs of a guilty conscience for the torments of the worm that never dies.

And now do you enquire who is that old man in the picture hobbling along with his



cane? I will tell you, it is Ned Bright. He is not really so old as he appears, but he is broken down by intemperance and dissipation, the vigor of manhood is gone, and he walks with tottering steps, just able to place one foot before the other. The house which he sees at a distance is the home of his childhood, and you can imagine that thousands of painfully pleasing recollections crowd his brain as he approaches it. But alas! when he comes there he will find no kind mother to greet

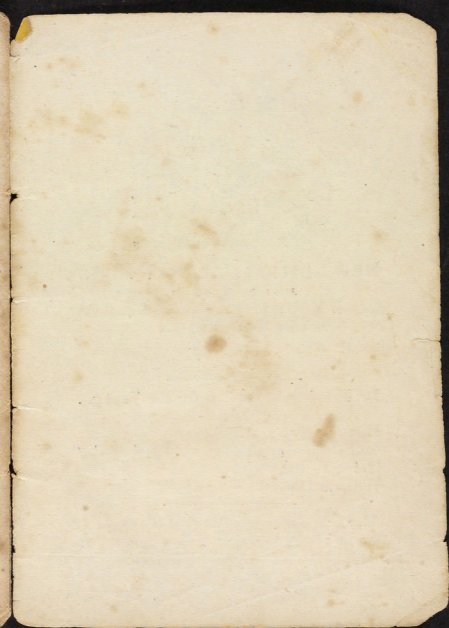
him with the voice of love, nor father to welcome the wanderer to his home. He has brought their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, and both are now sleeping beneath the clods of the valley. For a while they mourned their son as dead, and the first they heard with certainty respecting his fate, they learned from a newspaper containing an account of his trial, and imprisonment. The anguish occasioned by a knowledge of his guilt was more than they could bear, and they sank beneath the load of grief that overwhelmed them. The home to which Ned is so eagerly bending his steps is now occupied by strangers, who will probably spurn him from their door.

I think Ned Bright may trace all his guilt and consequent misery, to that fatal resolution to deceive his mother which he formed while standing under that apple tree. If he had decided then that it was better to

do without apples and pen knives and every thing else, than to do a thing which he knew to be wrong, he would have found it much easier the next time to do right, for the more we obey conscience the easier it is to obey it. The probability is that he would now be a virtuous, respectable and happy man. No advantage can possibly be so great as to compensate you for the injury you will suffer from disobeying your conscience.

Reader, if you would form that noble, manly character, which will make every one respect and esteem you, you must be perfectly honest and candid in every thing you do and say. Never indulge in any sly tricks, nor form any little plans to deceive. Remember you may be guilty of falsehood, while you utter nothing but what is actually true, if you utter it in such a manner as to make a false impression. Do not be

tempted to do wrong because you think nobody will ever know it. God will know it; you will know it yourself; it will make you wretched, it will spoil your conscience, and perhaps be the means of sinking you into the lowest depths of sin and misery.





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