



1870
Lepidoptera
Common
School



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WILLY GRAHAM,

BY

THE DISOBEDIENT BOY

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WILLY GRAHAM;

OR,

THE DISOBEDIENT BOY.

MR. and MRS. GRAHAM lived in a beautiful village, on the bank of the very prettiest lake I ever saw. The water of this lake was as clear as crystal, and so deep that it was a very rare thing for it to freeze over; but as the winter of which I am going to tell you was unusually cold, there was more ice on the lake than had been seen

there for many years. There were a great many young men and boys in this village, as there was a college there and several schools. Willy Graham was the only child left to his parents out of a family of five, and of course they cherished him with peculiar care, and his mother was always anxious and uneasy if he was long out of her sight.

One morning Willy came running in to his mother, wrapped up in his coat and tippet and mittens, and his warm fur cap on his head, his handsome face all in a glow; and almost breathless with running, he cried out, "Oh, mother, will you not let me go down on the ice this morning? The lake is covered with

thick ice, for half a mile out, and the students and all the boys in the village are down there skating and sliding."

"No, my son," said his mother, "I cannot let you go. I do not know whether the ice is safe or not, and your father charged me, before he left home, not to allow you to go on the lake at all. Wait till he comes home, and he will go with you and show you where there is ice that is safe. There are plenty of ponds where you can enjoy yourself quite as much as on the lake; besides, Willy, you know you have no skates yet."

"Oh! but mother, I can take my sled down, and the big boys often

take hold of the little boys' sleds and skate with them, and they go like lightning. Come, mother, do let me go."

"No, my son," I know your father would not consent to it; so say no more about it. Once for all, I say you cannot go on the ice, but take your sled and amuse yourself near home."

I am sorry to say that Willy went away looking very cross and muttering to himself; but as his mother had never known him to disobey her, she sat at her sewing perfectly easy about him.

And Willy had no intention of disobeying his mother when he left the house; but he had some

WILLY GRAHAM.

very wicked, sinful thoughts in his heart; and he was angry at his mother, and felt as if she was not so indulgent to him as the parents of the other boys were to their sons. He did not know, and he would then have been shocked to hear, that some little boys were down on the ice without the knowledge, and against the express commands of their parents.

He took his sled and began to ride down a little hill by the side of his father's house, but he soon grew tired of sliding there alone, and he wandered outside the gate, and up the street on the bank of the lake, which was high above the water, dragging his sled after him.

And here he stood and watched the boys who were skating and sliding, and as he heard their merry shouts he wished himself among them, and again he thought it was very hard that he was not allowed to go.

Soon he came to an easy path leading down to the shore of the lake, and he thought he would just go down and take a nearer view of their sports. When he got down there, he stood on the shore so near the ice that he could touch it with his foot, and he thought to himself, "it looks just as firm as the ground I stand on, and why might I not as well be there enjoying myself as standing here alone and looking on."

Just then a group of boys came along very near the shore, some on skates and some on sleds, which the larger boys were drawing after them, and as they came near where Willy was standing, they called out,

"Come, Willy Graham! why do you not come on the ice? Oh, it does go so fine."

"Oh, I do not know," answered Willy, with an air of indifference.

"He is afraid," said one boy.

"No, I am not afraid," answered Willy.

"Why do you not come then?" said a large, good-natured boy. "Here, give me hold of your rope. Willy, and we will be over there at the store-house in no time."

"No," said Willy, putting his hands in his pockets, "I guess I will not go on the ice this morning." Still afraid of disobeying his mother, and yet disobeying her in his heart all the time, for he was wishing very much to go.

"I know, now," said an ugly-looking boy, "what is the matter with him; he is afraid of his mother. Before I would be afraid of what a woman says!—What do women know about ice? Is it not just as safe here as where you are? But go home, baby, do; and tie yourself to mother's apron-strings. Had not some one better carry you, for you might fall down, and then mother would cry!"

The boys all set up a shout of laughter at this foolish attempt at wit, and Willy's feeble resolution gave way before the voice of ridicule. He reddened up, and stepped boldly on to the ice. And here, in the excitement of the scene, he soon forgot how very wickedly he was acting; or if for a moment the thought of his mother crossed his mind, he would drive it away by saying to himself, "Well, if mother was only here, she would see how perfectly safe it is."

And here we will leave Willy on the ice, while we stop for a few minutes and reflect on his conduct, and follow him in his course of disobedience.

Willy was blessed with kind, good parents, who were always willing to indulge him in any innocent gratification. Indeed, so fond were they of this—their only and darling boy—that they would deny themselves any pleasure for the sake of his happiness, and were always laying plans for his amusement. He had been well instructed in his duty, and had been taught many lessons on the sin of disobedience. Besides, he knew very well that his parents never refused him any thing without having just and wise reasons for doing so, and that they always had his good in view, in every thing they did in regard to him.

You see Willy's first step in disobedience was taken when he rebelled in his heart against his mother's commands, and, instead of trying to see how reasonable they were, he made himself believe they were unjust, and that his mother was very unkind to him. Then when he walked along the bank of the lake, he might have known, if he had stopped to reflect, that if he went down to the shore, the temptation to go on the ice would be stronger, and harder to resist, than if he remained high on the bank where the other boys would not perceive him, or if they did, they could not speak to him.

But he took his second step in

disobedience when he descended the hill ; and this only prepared the way for the third, for his resolution was so weakened by yielding so far as it had done, that he could not resist the laughter of a few wicked boys.

And here I would say to children, never be afraid to stand up for the right. It is a noble sight to see a child or a man speak out boldly for the side of truth, in the presence of those who are trying to cast contempt upon it. You will be respected and loved the more for it among the good. Yes, and you will be honoured the more even among the wicked, though they may laugh at you, and try, by ridicule, to draw

you from the path of duty. Yet those very persons will take your word and your advice, if you always take your stand on the side of truth and right, while they will shun the counsel of those who have gone hand and hand with them, in sin.

Mrs. Graham sat at her sewing for an hour or two, never dreaming of her little boy's disobedience, but ever mindful of his happiness; she was wondering what his father would bring him on his return home.

At length she began to think it was time for Willy to come in, and as one half hour after another went by and he did not come, she soon began to feel uneasy, for it was very

unusual for him to stay away from home so long at a time.

Presently the door opened, and in ran Willy as pale as death, and threw himself on his knees before his mother. "Oh, mother, dear mother," said he, "I have disobeyed you, I have been on the ice;" and as he saw the amazed and grieved expression of his mother's face, and that she was about to speak, he cried, "Do not speak to me, mother, do not say one word, please, till I tell you all, and then you may punish me just as severely as you like."

Willy then told in a hasty manner, and without attempting to conceal or excuse any part of his fault, the whole story of his disobedience.

“But, oh, dear mother,” said he, “you were right about the ice, as you always are about every thing; and I have seen the most dreadful sight! Oh, I shall never, never forget it. As we were all sliding about, I noticed that two of the students went far out beyond the rest, and so far, that it seemed as if they were skating on the smooth water, the ice was so perfectly clear; one of them was a kind, pleasant-looking young gentleman, who had been drawing my sled for me part of the time.

“Well, after a while they started to come in, and I did not notice them any more till I heard—oh, such dreadful screams! and looking

at the place where they had been, one of the young men had disappeared, while the other was shouting and waving his cap, and the boys in all directions were hurrying to the spot. The boy who was drawing my sled started and ran there too, dragging me after him; and when we got near the place, we saw the same young man, who I told you had been drawing me, struggling in the water and trying to climb up on the ice. Oh, mother, what a sight it was! The ice about him was very thin, and as he pressed his hands upon the edge it crumbled away, and none of the young men could get near *enough to take hold of him, for the*

ice was cracking under their feet. Some of them lay down and threw him one end of their handkerchiefs, and at last he managed to stand up on the ice; then the boys all gave a great shout, for they thought he was safe, but he broke through again in a minute, and, mother, I shall never forget the look of his face as he went down that last time. I suppose he was so cold and stiff that he could not do much to save himself that time, for he soon sunk back and went down slowly in the cold water.

“Some of the young men ran to the shore for assistance, and all the time they were gone we could see him through the clear ice and

water, lying there stiff and cold. One of his friends tried to dive under the ice for him, but the water was so cold he could not stay in it, and his clothes were frozen stiff on him as soon as he came out. Some people came out from the shore with a boat and some grappling-hooks, and they pushed the boat into the water, and soon brought up the poor young man's body. They took off their over-coats and wrapped him up in them, and brought him in, and took him into Mr. White's, and the doctors are there now trying to bring him to life; but he was stone, stone dead, long ago." And Willy laid his head in his mother's

lap, and sobbed as if his heart would break.

His mother laid her hand on his head, but she did not speak, for her own heart was full, and she thought she would leave Willy to his own reflections for a while.

At last he raised his head, and said, "Mother, I think I should have told you how wicked I had been in disobeying you, even if this had not happened, for I should never have felt easy till you knew all and had forgiven me."

His mother stooped down and kissed his forehead, and said, "I do forgive you, my son, because I believe you are sincerely sorry for your fault. But there is another

against whom you have sinned, and who has spared your life in the midst of danger, and while you were breaking one of his commandments, which tells you to honour and obey your parents. Let us kneel, my son, and pray to God to forgive you, too." And while they prayed, Willy made the resolution that, with God's help, he would never behave so wickedly again.

"And now, mother," said he, "please promise me one thing; do not tell father about this, when he comes home. Pray, say you will not."

"I am very sorry, Willy," his mother began, "that you wish to conceal this from your father."

"Oh, mother," interrupted Willy. "I did not mean that. I do not wish to conceal it from father; but I want to tell him all about it myself; for it almost breaks my heart to have you forgive me so kindly, when I have been such a very wicked boy."

"I forgive you, my son, because I thought you were heartily sorry for your sin, and because I thought the circumstances of it were so impressed upon your mind by the solemn and awful scene you have witnessed to-day, that you would never forget it."

The parents of the unfortunate young man who was drowned lived in a town about twenty miles from

the place where the accident happened, and the next morning, at ten o'clock, the college-bell tolled, and the procession started which was *to convey his remains to his distressed family.* The students followed, walking two and two with crape on their arms, all looking sad and serious; and in this manner, they accompanied the body of their deceased friend some distance from the village.

Willy stood at the window, by his mother, and watched the mournful procession as it slowly passed, and, with the tears streaming down his cheeks, he said, "I can scarcely believe, mother, that I saw the young man so full of life and health

on the ice yesterday morning, at this time."

"And," said his mother, "it is probable that he no more supposed then that in an hour's time his soul would be in eternity, than you now anticipate the same sudden end for yourself. Truly, 'in the midst of life we are in death,' and how foolish are those who put off the day of repentance to a more 'convenient season;' when they 'know not what a day, or an hour may bring forth,' for the thread of life is so brittle that it may be snapped asunder at any moment."

That evening Willy's father came home, and as his trunks were brought into the house, he said to

the man who brought them, "Take care of that box! There are some things in it that I have brought with great care, and if they should be broken my little Willy here would feel very badly. But what is the matter, my boy? Are you not well, or not glad to see me, or what is it troubles my son?"

"Oh, father," said Willy, "I have got something to tell you that will make you feel very sad. I do not deserve any presents. I deserve only punishment, for I have been a wicked, disobedient boy."

"This is sad news, my son, but come to me and let me hear all about it."

Mrs. Graham left the room, and

Willy told his father the whole story, just as he had told it to his mother. When he got through, his father said, "I cannot say, my dear boy, that I am not deeply grieved to hear of your misconduct. And oh! I shudder to think in what danger my darling boy has been. Think, my son, what if that young man had gone down to his watery grave while holding the rope of your sled, and had drawn you with him! What tidings for your poor father to hear, on his return home, that his little boy had died such a dreadful death; and how much more severe the trial would have been, if he had been told that it was while that son was engaged in

an act of direct disobedience to the commands of his mother. But I will punish you no more, my boy; for I think you have suffered enough, but hoping that this will be the very last act of disobedience of your life, I will forgive it."

"Oh! but I can never forget these two days, dear father, as long as I live," sobbed Willy. "It seems as if I should always see before me the face of that poor young man, and hear those dreadful screams. And whenever I think of them, I remember how it was that I happened to be there, and I know that if ever, in the course of my life, I am tempted to disobey you or mother again, I shall think of that

dreadful scene. And I shall feel as if your commands were right and just, even though I may not understand your reasons."

"You remind me, Willy," said his father, "of an ungrateful man I once knew. Listen while I tell you his story. He ought to have been a happy and a grateful man, for he was surrounded with comforts; prospered in all his worldly undertakings; had an affectionate wife and lovely children, and was one whom his neighbours envied as having all that heart could wish. But he gave not God the glory, nor looked to him as the author of his mercies; but day and night he was busy making plans for acquiring

more wealth, and he lay down and rose up without one word of prayer or thanksgiving to his Maker.

“At last death entered his family and his lovely little ones were taken from him one by one, until he had followed four of them to the grave. But his heart rebelled, and was filled with wicked and ungrateful thoughts, and he said within himself that God was unjust to him, and had no right to take his children from him.

“Then the Lord laid his hand upon his wealth, and it seemed to ‘take to itself wings and fly away,’ and the man murmured still more, and felt as if he were most cruelly and unjustly treated. At last God

saw fit to prostrate him with distressing sickness, and day and night, for weeks and weeks, he suffered agonizing pain.

“At length one day, as he was recovering but was still weak and petulant, he began to remember what he had heard about the story of Job, and to think that his afflictions were equal to those of that sorely tried man. And he called for a Bible, and finding the book of Job, he read of his many and grievous afflictions, and he could not but admit that his own were light in comparison. And reading on, he was amazed at the man’s patience and submission, when he saw that in the midst of his deepest

trials he exclaimed, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in him.' He was led at last to humble himself in the dust, and to feel that God gave his blessings, and that he had a perfect right to take them away, at any time, and in any manner he saw fit. He mourned over his ingratitude and rebellion, and felt that he had not suffered half he deserved; and that if all his other earthly comforts were to be taken from him at a stroke, it would become him to bow submissively to the hand that smote him.

"It pleased the Lord to restore him to health, and again to prosper him in his worldly business, and his wife and one darling son are

left him ; and oh," said Mr. Graham, throwing his arms around Willy, "his dearest hope is that that son may become a good and useful man ; and he would esteem it the hardest of all his trials, if he should grow up to be wicked and disobedient."

"Father," said Willy, looking up in his face, "you have been telling me about yourself!"

"Yes, my son, I have, and I feel towards my heavenly Father as you said a little while since you felt towards your earthly parents. I know that whatever he orders for me is just and right, whether he condescends to show me the reasons for it or not ; and that no matter

how painful the trials he may yet see fit to send upon me may be, it will be my part to bow in submission, and say, 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.'"



