



Richard Baxter.
Richard Baxter.

BAXTER.

BY

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BAXTER.

TELL me a story," said a little girl to me one day.

"Yes," I said; and I took from a box a picture. "I will tell you about this good man."

The little girl looked at the picture some time. Her lip rolled up, her nose rolled down,

and her little black eyes rolled every way.

“I don’t want to hear about *him*,” she said.

“Why not?” I asked.

“Oh, ’cause; he looks so sober and so prim, and he wears a night-cap. I dare say he has the earache,” replied this queer little girl.

“If that is the case, I will tell you the story of a boy named Dick,” I said.

BAXTER.

7

“Oh, that will be nice!”
cried the little girl.

“But, in the course of my
story, Dick grows to be a
man.”

“I’d just as lief that he’d
grow.”

“And a good man.”

“Yes, I’d like him to be
good. I am fond of good peo-
ple, and I hate hearing about
bad folks.”

So, since this was all set-

ted, I put away the picture, and began :

Once upon a time there was a boy, and his name was Dick. His other name was Baxter. He had a father and a mother, some brothers and sisters, and he was a noisy, jolly little fellow, given to losing his pencils, wearing out his shoes and tearing his clothes. When he tore his clothes very badly, his mother reproved him, and be-

BAXTER.

9

gan by saying, "Son Richard," but most generally he was Dick.

Little Samuel, as you will remember, was lent to the Lord from the time he was a child. Dick, on the contrary, was lent to his grandfather. The old man was lonely, and wanted some company, so Dick was lent to him.

Dick stayed with the grandfather until the old man died.

10

BAXTER.

Then Dick was ten years old, and he went home to live with his parents again. It had been rather dull for the little boy at his grandfather's, and Dick was glad to be with his brothers and sisters.

Dick was a very smart boy; he loved his books, and at school he always knew his lessons. This made him a favorite with his teachers. It is good to approve and encourage

BAXTER.

11

a child in doing well, but it is very bad to flatter and praise him. Dick's teachers were so foolish that they made him vain. He began to think that little Dick Baxter knew more than all the rest of the world put together. This was unfortunate, and still the trouble grew, for the more he was flattered the more Dick learned, and yet grew vainer all the time.

All we know of Dick when he was a boy is what he wrote of himself when he was a man. By that time he had got over his vanity, and he does not try to make himself out better than he was.

His father and mother were pious people, and desired to live so as to please God, and to train up their boys and girls to be good. The folks who lived all about them in

Eaton were careless and wicked, fond of card-playing, strong drink and breaking the Sabbath.

The Bible tells us that “Evil communications corrupt good manners,” and the manners and morals of our friend Dick were much corrupted by the wickedness about him in spite of his father’s care.

They had no preacher to give them good sermons on

Sabbath, but they went to the church in the morning of Sunday, and a man, called a "Reader," read off something from a book in a careless tone. When this was over all went home.

Mr. Baxter's house was a good one, and fronted the village green, or public square; and on this green each Sunday afternoon the idle people collected to joke and dance, and

BAXTER.

15

toss weights and run races. They had a man to play for them on a violin or on pipes, and thus they spent the time until dark.

Mr. Baxter's was the only family that stayed in the house Sunday and tried to serve God. The father would teach his children, and give them the Bible to read. That they might like what they read, he would give them those

chapters which tell of Samuel and Joseph, of Moses and David and King Josiah. Dick liked this reading, but he sometimes felt that he would enjoy being on the green at play with the rest of the village people. Now, I must tell you that he did very wrong, and one or two Sundays he slipped out of the house and ran away to join the group of dancers and players.

BAXTER.

17

Did he enjoy himself? No; and I will tell you why. The rude boys cried out, "Oh, here is Dick Baxter! He is not such a Puritan as his father! His father is a hypocrite, but Dick is as gay as a lark!"

When Dick heard this he hung his head for shame. He could not bear to hear his dear father abused. He knew his father was a holy man, much better than these neighbors;

he knew he was far from being as good as that kind father, so he stole back into the house, his face burning with anger and shame, and this cured him of running away on Sunday.

Sometimes good ministers from neighboring towns came to visit Mr. Baxter, and then Dick heard a great deal of good talk, and could see how much better and wiser pious

BAXTER.

19

people were than careless sinners.

Did you ever hear of any one that was greedy—a glutton, as folks say? It is very disagreeable. Dick tells us that he was greedy, was overfond of pears and plums; and even when he had enough at home to satisfy any reasonable boy, he would go with wild lads and rob orchards to get more.

20

BAXTER.

Says the Bible, “The way of transgressors is hard.” Dick found it so, for when he had been so wicked as to steal fruit he was in great terror of being found out; he feared to die, and dared not say his prayers; and moreover eating so much fruit made him ill often; and when he was a man—and indeed until he was old—he suffered from sickness brought on by his childish

BAXTER.

21

greed. Little folks should be careful to do what is right. They may suffer far more than they know if they do wrong.

Dick tells us that he never dared to swear; he could not take God's great name in vain, but as he often stood about with wicked boys, he learned much of their bad talk, and so was often foolish and idle in his words.

Said King David, "Blessed

is the man that standeth not in the way of sinners.” Let every boy remember that.

Said Jesus, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Let us all try and keep from evil thoughts that our hearts may be pure.

Dick’s parents saw his faults and tried to correct them. Dick loved his parents, but was apt to be bold and sometimes disobedient.

Did all these faults make Dick happier? No; he tells us, “These were my sins when I was a child, and they gave me great grief of heart, and it took me a long time to be rid of them.”

Dick would read his Bible and pray, and wish he were a true child of God; then he would grow careless and fall into sin.

There was a poor man in

the town who mended shoes, and when Dick was about fifteen years old he went one day to get some work done. There was a torn book lying on a shelf, and Dick took it down to look at.

“Take it home, son Dick-on,” said the cobbler, “and may it do your soul good, as it did mine.”

Dick put the book in his pocket and went home. Sun-

day he went into the garden and climbed into a pear tree. It was spring, and the tree was full of sweet blossoms. At first, Dick thought of the pears he would eat in the fall, then he thought of the book in his pocket, and he began to read.

The book was called “Bunny’s Resolutions.” Bunny, let me tell you, was not a little rabbit, with pink eyes, but a

good man, who resolved, by God's help, to live a holy life and get to heaven. His "Resolutions" were against sin and for holiness.

From this day a change came over Dick. He tried harder than ever to do right, because it is pleasing to God; and he more than ever hated sin, because it is hateful to God.

About this time a poor ped-

dler came one day to Mr. Baxter's door and took down his pack.

“Let me sell you a book,” he said.

Dick had been very fond of novels and plays, but he did not care for them now; he loved books, but not wicked books.

“I have good books here,” said the peddler to Mr. Baxter; “they help us to be good men.

See here," and he held out some of his books.

One of them was called "The Bruised Reed." It told about a heart sore and sorry for sin being made glad and well by the love of Jesus.

Mr. Baxter had seen Dick trying to be a better boy, and it had made him very glad. He wanted to help him along, so he bought this book, thinking it would do him good.

“Thus,” said Dick, years after, “by no other means but good books was I brought to know God and Jesus my Saviour.”

As you may suppose, our friend Dick set a high value on good books, and you will not be surprised to learn that when he grew to be a man he spent much of his time in writing books that should teach other people about Je-

sus, and show them the way to heaven.

When the Holy Spirit of God comes into a boy's heart it makes a great change in him, and turns him from the evil ways he has loved. A great change came to Dick. He was no longer proud. Instead of being vain, he became meek and lowly. He saw Dick Baxter a foolish sinner, and not the wisest person in the



Baxter Arrested.

Richard Baxter.

See page 44.

world, as he had once supposed. When Dick thought of the greatness and holiness of God, it made him humble.

A Christian will deny himself; he does not live to please himself, but to do good; and though Dick had once been greedy, both of money and of good things to eat, he became generous, liberal and self-denying. Very few men are so ready to give and ask so little

for themselves as this once greedy Dick.

To his parents our young friend became the best of sons. "Honor thy father and thy mother," is the fifth commandment of the law, and love and honor were given by Dick Baxter to his parents.

As he grew up, Dick's thoughts turned toward being a minister. His parents were much pleased, and he studied

hard to be fit for that position. People no longer called him Dick, because he was getting to be a grown-up man. They called him Mr. Baxter, or Richard. We will call him both, but Richard most generally. After all, I think Richard is much prettier than Dick, don't you?

While Richard was busy studying, one of his old teachers came to see him, and tried

to coax him to think no more of being a minister.

“It is a dull life,” said this man. “Come to the court at London, and I will get you a place from the king, where you can live at your ease.”

He said so much that Richard at last agreed to go to court, “for,” said this friend, “you can serve God as well there as anywhere.”

They two went to the court,

where Richard Baxter stayed a month. By that time he saw it was no place for a man of God. Says he,

“I had quickly enough of the court. When I saw that there sin was the fashion, and on Sunday they had a stage play instead of a sermon, I was glad to be gone. I begged God to forgive me that I had turned my back on the gospel, and I would go home again.

At this time my dear mother fell ill, and I gave up my place at court and went home."

He traveled home on horseback, and had got nearly to his father's house by Christmas day. The road was narrow, and a heavily-loaded wagon came along. Richard's horse slipped, and he fell in the road just before the wagon wheels. No one had time to do anything, but at once

the horses stood still and Richard was saved. He felt that God had evidently saved his life, and felt also that he was more than ever bound to love and serve God.

The May after this Christmas, Richard's mother died. Her last words bade her son serve the Lord, and he soon became a minister and began to preach.

“There, now,” you say, “the

BAXTER.

39

story is ended. He'll preach and preach and preach until he dies, and that's all."

But not so fast, my boy or girl. The days when Richard Baxter lived were days when preaching was not such quiet work as now. Those were days when men lost their books, their houses, their money, their very beds, for preaching the truth, and when many a good man went to jail

like a thief because he spoke as his Bible bade him.

All this loss and cruelty and trial came to Richard Baxter's share, and through it all God blessed and preserved him and made him useful.

And now I will divide the rest of what I have to tell you in this way: I will tell you what he suffered for Jesus; next how he bore his sufferings; then what good work he

did for God, and, last, how in great straits God saved him from his foes.

When Baxter first began to preach he had a church at Kidderminster. At this place the people spent most of their time weaving; and as they could both read and weave at once, they read many good books that Richard got for them, and were a quiet, industrious people; and their new

minister loved them dearly and wanted to spend his life among them. But this was not to be. A change in the government of the country put some bad men in power, and they turned Baxter out of his church and would not allow him to preach there. He was then forbidden to preach at all, and because he did speak to some who came to hear him he was fined and finally driven

BAXTER.

43

from his home. For fear his enemies would take his books, Richard hired a room in a town some way off, and locked up his books there.

“This was a trial,” he says, “for I did dearly love my books, and for ten years I could not so much as look at them, but must pay a great price for a room to keep them in.”

He now went to live at a

town called Acton, and there people came and begged him to read, talk and pray with them. He could not refuse this, and for doing it he was taken like a robber to court, tried and put in jail.

At another time, officers came and carried off all his clothes and whatever was in his house. Again, when he was very ill, they dragged him out of bed and into the street,

BAXTER.

45

when a good judge came to his aid and put him back in his house, saying he would die if he were not let alone.

Once, when he was ill, they took his bed from under him because he had let two or three poor people come in while he had prayers.

He wrote a book that some bad men did not like, and he was taken to court and called names and abused, and at last

46

BAXTER.

sent to prison for two years, and all his money taken away. Indeed, his whole life was tried and tormented in this way. And now, how do you think he bore it?

He was brave, for he would not promise to do wrong to save himself. He was gentle, for he gave no hard word and never tried to hurt those who hurt him, and was known to help those who had done their

BAXTER.

47

best to harm him. The love of Jesus had taught Richard Baxter, who as a boy had been quarrelsome and proud, to be gentle and forgiving, like Jesus, who when on the cross prayed for his murderers.

Of his long stay in the jail, Richard said, very mildly, “It gave me time to blame myself that there was in me so much sin; it gave me time also to wonder at those who did most

48

BAXTER.

dearly love me for my Master's sake. I found time and will to pray for my foes and for my friends, and I saw plainly that my trials were not so great as those of better men, for I had in my jail food and fire, also a roof to my head, and my friends came to see me." Was he not patient?

When all his own goods were taken from him, Baxter would not borrow lest his friends

BAXTER.

49

should lose by him their property, and at last his dear books were all gone. He said, "I have the Bible, and that ought to be enough." He was no longer greedy Dick, was he?

I have already told you how Baxter was saved from being killed before a loaded wagon on the highway. I will now tell you of other times when God saved him from great danger.

One day Richard was preaching in an old church when part of the tower began to fall down. The people ran and cried out, and there was a great noise. Richard kept calm and quiet, and so escaped being hurt, as many others were.

Once a mob of bad men and boys, most of them drunk, determined to kill Baxter. They got pikes and poles and ran

BAXTER.

51

to his house. If they had found him, they would have killed him, because he would not pray to the Virgin Mary. Where was Richard? He had gone out in the country for a walk, and he went on praying and thinking, and did not get home until dark, when all the people had got quiet and had given up their bad intention.

Another time, Baxter was preaching over a market-house.

The floor began to crack. The people got out as best they could; and next day, when they took up the flooring to see what was the matter, they found the beams very nearly broken in two, and if the folks had not got out as they did, the building would have all come down, like that temple strong Samson pulled down upon the heads of the Philistines.

At one time Baxter had said he would go with a friend into the country to stay a long time. They were to go by stage. At night Richard fell ill, and sent word that he could not go.

Just at this time some wicked men were laying a plan against this man of God. They said, "He is at home. Just before morning we will go to his house, drag him from

his bed, hurry him off to jail, and he shall never get out. No one will know where he is.”

One heard them speak—that one was God, and God meant to destroy their plans.

About the time Baxter was going to bed some one knocked at the door. It was the stage-driver. He said,

“Come, I want you to go with us. I will take you for

BAXTER.

55

nothing. I know you are a good man, and I see you are ill.”

There was another knock. Baxter's friend came in. He said, “I shall not go without you. Come on now. It will make you well to go in the country. I feel very anxious to have you.”

Then there was another knock. An old minister came in. He said,

“Richard, go out with the stage. I feel troubled about you. I don’t know why, but I want you to go in the country. Here now, I will do up your clothes in a bag; and here is some money for you; and you shall go in that stage if I have to carry you to it.”

So these three friends put up Richard’s clothes and put him in the stage about the middle of the night, and away

BAXTER.

57

he went safely. Two hours later, the bad men I told you of went to his house, broke open the door, went to his room, and there the bed was empty and Baxter was gone!

Thus God delivered this holy man from the hands of those that hated him. If the Lord is on our side, we need not fear what man can do unto us.

I will tell you of but one

more escape among many that our friend Richard had.

Preaching in his house was called a crime, for which he might be put in jail, the same as if he had stolen a sheep or a dozen of spoons. Baxter would preach in the house, but those who came to hear would not tell the judges of it. A bad woman thought she would go as if she loved God and wanted to hear Baxter preach

and pray, and when he had done so she would go and have him put in prison. She came in her carriage, with her sons and daughters, all full of hate, but she knocked a long time, and went off thinking no one was at home, because all in the house were listening so carefully to the preaching and praying that her knocks were not heard.

Baxter lived to be quite old,

and died very happily. He said, when asked how he was as his end drew nigh, “Almost well.” Yes, he was then almost well, for as soon as his soul was loosed from his body he was quite well. He then went to be with his Lord, whom he had loved and served so well and faithfully while here on earth, and to get his reward for that love and service—the crown of glory which is prom-

BAXTER.

61

ised to all who live a holy and godly life, and who walk in the fear of the Lord and keep his commandments.

Try, dear children, to be upright and true in all your actions, and then you too will receive that reward — that “crown of glory,” more honorable to wear than that of any earthly king.

During his life he wrote a great many books, which have

done much good. “Baxter’s Call to the Unconverted” is one of them. It has led many to resolve to follow Christ. His “Saints’ Rest,” too, has been printed in many lands and read by thousands and thousands of people, and comforted them greatly and done them great good.

He also preached a great deal, and taught the poor, and was the means of turning many

hearts from the ways of sin to God.

I dare say Baxter was very glad to get to heaven, and that he found there many souls whom he had taught the way of life.

You will most likely find some of his books in your father's bookcase.

And now I will tell you a secret. This very Dick whom I have told this story about

was the REV. RICHARD BAXTER, whose picture did not please that little black-eyed girl, and of whom she did not want to hear. She liked the story of "Dick" very well, and said she hoped I'd tell her another.