

A GOOD YOUNG PRINCE.

"As the twig is bent the tree is inclined."

THE Duchess of C——, a lady as distinguished for her mental qualities as for her goodness of heart, was celebrating her birthday in the palace of a small German capital, where she had resided since she was left a widow, and laboured so lovingly in the relief of the poor and afflicted, that a clever English nobleman said, and said truly, of her, "Benevolence is her synonyme."

The court of congratulation was just over. Exhausted by this tedious and troublesome ceremony, the lady had retired from the reception-room to her boudoir, when she heard light, hurried footsteps coming up the stairs.

"Ah! ah!" she said to herself, "those are my grandsons coming to congratulate me."

So it was. Two healthy growing lads of ten and eleven years of age came in, whom we will distinguish by the names of Albert and Ernest. After affectionately kissing the duchess's hand, Ernest repeated the stereotyped phrases—

"Many happy returns of the day, and I wish you all happiness. May Heaven give you health, and let you love us all the same, dear grandmamma!"

"Well," the duchess replied, "that will depend chiefly on yourselves. If you are good, kind, obedient boys, I shall always love you just the same. Now tell me how you have behaved since this day last year when you congratulated me? Have you been industrious and good?"

"Oh, yes, dear grandma," Ernest replied, and began telling her all he had learned since then, while Albert modestly held his tongue.

"Very good," the duchess interrupted him; "but better than all this is a kind heart, which may Heaven ever bestow on you! Now, how do matters stand with your purse? How have you employed the sum I gave you last year?"

Ernest accurately explained how he had laid it out, but Albert hesitated a little. The duchess, however, did not appear to notice his embarrassment, but gave each of her grandsons the customary present of ten louis d'or, and dismissed them with the following warning:—

"There was, once on a time, an Emperor of Rome, who was wont to say that no one should go away sorrowfully from an interview with a prince. He was indefatigable in doing good and caring for the welfare of his country; and when, one evening at supper, he remembered, to his alarm, that he had not done a kindness to any one during that day, he exclaimed, with an outburst of deep and genuine sorrow, 'My friends, I have lost a day!' Take this emperor as a model, and live in a princely way like him."

The boys bounded down the stairs happy and delighted. When they reached the palace gates, an old woman, bowed down by grief and wretchedness, accosted them.

"Ah! my dear young gracious gentlemen," the old woman said, "will you not bestow a trifle of charity on a poor aged creature? My cottage is going to be sold for debts, and I shall not know then where to lay my head. Besides, this very morning, my goat, the only means of support I have, was seized because I could not pay the taxes. Now I do not know how to gain a livelihood. Be charitable to me."

Ernest assured her that he had no small change, and hastened on. The tears had stood in Albert's eyes on hearing the old woman's affecting statement. He seemed to hesitate for a moment, but then, after remembering his grandmothers'

Roman emperor, he quickly thrust his hand into his pocket, gave the woman his ten louis d'or, and ran off, happy in the thought of having done a good deed.

When the old woman opened her hand, and saw the gold coin sparkling, she was terribly alarmed. She went at once to the porter and told him all that had happened, and he sent for the chamberlain. After the old woman had repeated the story to the chamberlain, he took the gold from her and carried it to the duchess with the necessary explanation. The lady sent for the old woman, inquired more fully into her story, praised her honesty, and gave her two more louis d'or in addition to the ten. With tears of joy at the thought that she could now release her cottage and her goat, the old woman left the much-affected princess with the heartfelt words of thanks, "May God requite it to you!"

A year quickly passed away, and the duchess again kept her birthday. Once again the court was over, and her two grandsons ran up to congratulate her.

"Well," said the Duchess, after the two boys had made their little speech, each in his way, "how did you expend your last year's present?"

Ernest very rapidly narrated everything he had bought with it. At the head stood a small marionette theatre, and an harmonica which represented the orchestra. After these came a barrel organ for private concerts, and a crossbow.

"And you," the duchess said to Albert, who maintained an embarrassed silence, "how did you get rid of your money?"

"I—I am—I——" Albert stammered, but not a word more could he bring out.

"I am aware," the duchess interrupted, "that you are not so careful an accountant as your brother, and hence are unable to mention all the items; still you can surely remember some one thing you have to show for the money. Reflect, or else I shall be compelled to hold back your usual present this year."

Albert, turning very red, looked down on the ground, rubbed his hands in ever-increasing embarrassment, and at last kissed his grandmother, as if asking pardon for a fault, while his eyes filled with tears.

"Come, come, calm yourself, my dear Albert," the duchess said; and tears stood in her eyes, too. "I have known for a year past how you disposed of your money. You employed it very well—better than your brother—in a truly princely way, for you dried the tears of misery with it. Your conduct to-day imparts the real value to your charitable action. 'The left hand must never know what the right hand doeth,' the great Friend of men and children has told us in the Gospel, and you have acted faithfully in accordance with His word. For that reason you will receive twenty louis d'or to-day. You, however, Ernest, will receive nothing; but if you will come to me to-morrow, at the same hour, I will repeat to you explicitly the story of the Roman emperor which I told you last year. Albert does not require it, for he has acted fully in his spirit."

And so it happened. The duchess told her grandson the story of the Emperor Titus fully, with the necessary application and moral, and did so with such a good result, that, on the next birthday, he was also deemed worthy to receive twenty louis d'or. He has since become a truly charitable prince, and is sincerely beloved by his subjects, so true it is that example proves the best teacher.

I think I need hardly explain to my readers who the good prince was, or how his memory smells sweet and blossoms in the dust among us. The only consolation we have for his loss is that he retained the title he acquired in his youth to the last, and will be known by it—the proudest a prince can attain—to all succeeding generations.