

HOUSEHOLD.

Is Willie Saved?

(Mrs. McVean-Adams, in 'Union Signal.')

It was a lovely afternoon in early June, and I had to spend most of it with Mrs. Crawford, president of our auxiliary, for our public thank-offering service would occur in less than a month, and she and I were committee on programme.

There was always a little feeling of pleased expectancy in my mind when going to Mrs. Crawford's. She was sure to interest me in some new subject or to present an old theme in some new light. She gave me something to think of—not that she was unusual in any way except that she seemed to be thinking always in a way to idealize common living and lift every day matters into new and sacred value.

That day she sat ready, with pencil and paper lying on her work-basket, her little boys of four and a half and two years both playing about the room.

'Now, Willie,' said Mrs. Crawford, 'we are going to do some planning and writing to help some poor little people who never heard about Jesus, and I want you to be good and amuse the baby.'

'O tell us about Jesus first, won't you?' said Willie.

'Not now, dear; mamma hasn't time. By and by when you are older you will learn about him. Go and play now, like a good boy.'

'Are they older—the little people who don't know, mamma? Are they older?' asked Willie.

'Some of them, I guess,—there,—that will do,' answered his mother. 'Strange, isn't it, that all little children seem to love to hear about Jesus and have no such distaste for the subject of religion as girls and boys show when they grow a few years older?'

'That is so,' I said; 'it always seems to make the older children ill at ease and anxious to get away, while the little ones, mere babies, delight in hearing of God and heaven and the coming of Jesus.'

'It must be,' said Mrs. Crawford, 'that the very little ones have not yet become sinners, not having reached the age of accountability. They are still those of whom Christ said, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven," and "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom." They are saved, under the general atonement, not having known good or evil, or believed on Christ, as sinners must.'

Again I assented to her words.

'And those who do know good and evil, and sometimes choose the wrong, are not yet confirmed sinners, with enmity to God in their hearts. They love to hear about Jesus and are easily won to love and to trust him. Why do we neglect just this one point? Why do not our churches gather in the babies as soon as they are old enough to exercise saving faith? And, above all, why do not fathers and mothers see to it that the little tender hearts are given to Christ in gratitude, love and belief, before the children fall into grievous sins and become indifferent to the claims of their Saviour and their God?'

'All you say is true,' I said, scarcely less moved than she, and in my heart I made a vow that my very next bedtime talk should be devoted to the sacred duty of leading my six-year-old boy to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

We began our programme and made very good progress, having our opening exercises assigned to leading members of our auxiliary and putting next an address by our pastor, stating the object of the thank-offering service. A little diversion was made by the coming of the maid to carry the baby away to his afternoon sleep.

'What comes next on the programme?' asked Mrs. Crawford, shaking the whittling of her pencil into the wastebasket, tucking the pencil behind her ear, and rising to place her penknife on the end of

the upright piano, out of reach of baby fingers.

'Let us put Miss Stella's solo next,' said I; 'the audience will be tired and need a change.'

'Wouldn't it be better, then, to have some rousing congregational singing, and have everybody stand up?' said she. 'No, no, Willie—Mamma's knife is sharp,—it would cut your fingers'—this added hastily, in a different tone, caused me to look up from my papers just in time to see Willie tiptoe upon the arm of the sofa, with the gleaming penknife in his hand, his laughing blue eyes dancing and seeming to send out sparks of light. Turning swiftly, as if to replace the knife on the piano, his foot slipped, and down came the keen blade.

Instantly we were both at his side, and there stood the little knife upright, the pearl handle still vibrating, stuck into the little boy's leg above the knee, as he sat upon the sofa where he had fallen. Before we could touch him, Willie pulled the knife out of his thigh. It was followed fast by little spurts of bright arterial blood. The little blade had penetrated—perhaps severed—the grand artery of his leg. Death from loss of blood was imminent. So swiftly had the wings of the death angel swooped down to cast its dark shadow over this bright home!

Instantly the mother bared the little chubby leg, the baby dimples hovering about the knee. As she did so, she said to me, 'If you faint at blood, leave the room quickly.' Her words were quietly spoken, but I felt that here was a tigress fighting for her young, even against death, and that all obstacles must be swept aside.

For answer, I pressed my right thumb firmly upon the little cut, from which the blood was spurting in little jets. Mrs. Crawford's foot was already upon the electric bell under the table, while her hands were busy drawing from her work-basket a large handkerchief of soft silk in which a gay initial was half embroidered. The maid appeared at the door, and to her Mrs. Crawford spoke, all the time going on with the operation of tying the handkerchief above the wound on Willie's leg and twisting it into a tight ligature by means of the lead-pencil in her hand.

To the maid she said, 'Go to the telephone and call up Dr. Root, No. 708. Say "Case of life or death—John Crawford's, No. 79 Elm ave.—bring surgical instruments." Then come back to me.'

When the girl returned, Mrs. Crawford said: 'Did you get an answer?' 'Yes,' replied the maid, 'but I could not hear just what was said, except "All right."'

'Go now,' said Mrs. Crawford, 'and telephone to Mr. Crawford and say this: "An accident to Willie. Bring surgeon." That will make it safe,' she added. 'If Dr. Root is delayed, my husband will bring some one else.'

By this time the white lids were drooping over Willie's eyes like April snow over violets. Would death get there first? this pretty watch, with Willie's face in the cover? Detaching the timepiece, she pressed the spring and held it toward him. 'O yes, mamma,' and the blue eyes were opened eagerly.

'O I must talk with him, if only five minutes,' moaned the mother. 'How can I stimulate him?'

Afraid to speak lest I should lose my own self-control, and thus my usefulness, I could only silently watch her agony, while my thoughts swiftly flew to the long bed-time hours in which mother and her child had held merry frolic and sweetest communion, and now—his life hung in the balance—he was of the age of accountability, therefore capable of saving belief, and the mother was fighting off mortal weakness long enough to say, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' Would the little brain have blood enough, have consciousness enough, to grasp eternal life?

Lowering the boy's head still more over the soft edge of the sofa, she knelt and took the cold little hands, from which the watch had now slipped. 'Willie, shall I sing "Jesus loves me, this I know?"'

'Yes,' smiled the boy.

'You know he does love you, don't you, Willie?'

'Yes.'

'Can you remember and tell mamma the golden text for Sunday, that you taught the baby this morning?'

'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' said Willie.

'And do you know what it is to be saved, Willie?'

'Don't you know, you told us—to go to Heaven to live with God?'

'Do you want to go, sometime, Willie?'

'Yes, when mamma does.'

The mother's voice failed for a moment, but she went on, 'And do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, Willie?'

'Why, of course I do, so does the baby, I told him to.'

'What do you believe about Jesus, Willie?'

'Why, you know; Jesus loves us and he will take care of us. I feel so queer, dear mamma—kind of tired.'

'Go to sleep if you want to, sweetheart,' and the mother turned aside her face lest the swift tears of relief and joy should startle the fainting baby.

Voices in the hall soon came to our ears, and the extreme nerve tension began to relax.

'Um—yes, yes,' said Dr. Root, placing his little case on the table and rubbing his large white hands together. 'Good afternoon, ladies. My dear Mrs. Crawford, no cause for alarm, here has been prompt action, I see—foot elevated—good, um—head lowered, good, good—and a ligature above the wound. Couldn't have done better myself. Please remove your thumb, madam—entirely needless, I assure you. Little one in a faint, I see—not dangerous—no occasion for alarm—partly due to fright, I dare say. I will administer an anaesthetic and keep him still. Please raise the shades the entire length—yes—let the maid bring some warm water and—some old cotton, my good girl, if you please. There, now, we are comfortable.' And, spreading a piece of oil silk from his case over the carpet, the garrulous surgeon laid Willie where the sunshine streamed right through the western window and he deftly took up and tied the severed artery. Then with skilful touches, he helped the mother to remove the clothing and replace it by the white night-dress. A bed was prepared, with a pillow on which to keep the little foot elevated and just as Dr. Root had laid the little one in it, the blue eyes opened, tired and wistful, but lighted with joy as they rested on his mother's tranquil face. Their lips met, and he whispered, with one pale hand on her cheek, 'Jesus will take care of me, mamma—I believe.'

Voices and hurrying footsteps, and both breathless and pale John Crawford flung himself into the room and gasped, 'Mary—my boy—is he safe?' 'Yes, John, he is saved,' and only I knew that she meant saved indeed, body and soul.

Soon after the doctor had bowed and talked himself out, I went home. It was several days before I again visited my neighbor, Mrs. Crawford, to gather up that unfinished programme, but I heard from her every day.

When I, as secretary, placed the neatly written programme on the pulpit, before Mrs. Crawford, president, on the evening when she presided at the long expected public meeting of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society, she smiled into my eyes and said: 'We shall not be likely to forget the afternoon when we made that programme.'

'O no,' I answered, 'that was a long half hour—and I have learned its lesson well.'

Our thank offerings that day were something of a surprise to some more wealthy members of our auxiliary, but the reason was known to us, and to God.

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