

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

HOPE.

When the heart is sad and weary,
Burdened by a load of care,
And the future all looks dreary,
And the past has not been fair.

When each loving friend we trusted
Has been taken from our side,
Or the link of friendship rusted,
Snatched in twain by foolish pride:

What, then, lifts the sinking spirit
From the depths of dark despair?
Hope, that ministering angel,
Calms our souls and soothes our care.

When a father or a mother
Or a sister, whom we love,
Leaves this world to join another
Land of peace and joy above,

Human nature makes us mourn them,
And our hearts are sorely vexed,
But to hopeful earnest Christians,
There's no cause to be perplexed.

We have God's own holy promise
That, if faithful, we will meet
All our loved ones up in heaven:
Then our joy will be complete.

Little children love the Saviour,
He will aid you in the fight
'Gainst the world, and sin, and Satan,
And will save you by His might.

Then, when all the earthly struggles
Of this sinful life are o'er,
Sweet the hope to join the angels,
Praising God for evermore.

Belfast, Aug., 1888. JAMES WILLIAMSON,
—In *Irish Eccle. Gazette*.

LED BY A CHILD.

A TRUE STORY.

It was in my class at the Sunday-school that I first saw Willie B—. The superintendent pointed him out, saying his face would probably be strange to me, "as he lived a long way off," and seldom came to school. This was further explained when I learned how frequently the lad was suffering. I cannot say whether he was what would generally be called a good-looking boy, but he had the most beautiful brown eyes that it has ever been my lot to see—eyes which kindled with pleasure if he gave a right answer, and which had a peculiarly reverent expression when he listened to the story of his Saviour's love. Perhaps you may think it strange to write about a country lad who only lived to the age of twelve. It was just because his life was so short and sweet and simple that I want to tell you about it, that you may feel more sure than ever that—

"There's not a child so small and weak
But has his little cross to take,
His little work of love and praise,
That he may do for Jesus' sake."

Willie loved play and laughter like other boys, and I think he loved hard lessons just as little as most other boys. He was conscientious, but not a remarkably good scholar. He lived with his parents in a small cottage on the borders of our scattered parish. Round about his home he often heard bad language, and saw lads behaving roughly and doing what was wrong, but it seemed as if his natural goodness and gentleness made it impossible for him to join in such things; indeed, he often spoke a word for the right, and the boys took "what our Will said" more kindly than if it had been spoken by another. He was such a generous, loving-hearted little fellow that he could not help

gaining the love of others. If his warnings or entreaties did not seem to have any effect on the evil-doers, he would go back to his father's cottage, sit down in his favorite place by the fireside, and look so sad, that his mother would soon find out what his trouble was.

One bright Sunday, when the summer was at its height, there was to be a flower-service at the parish church, and young and old crowded there to bring offerings from garden and field to bear their message of love to the sick and dying in hospitals, and in the hot stifling alleys or towns in the Black Country. Flower-services are generally popular. They call out much good feeling, and touch hearts which have grown hard with the wear and tear of life, and which, perhaps, for many a day, have not known what it is to sorrow for another's woe.

And the children who are too young to fully understand what sickness and suffering mean, catch something of the spirit of the service as they sing their hymns and carry their posies to the altar-rails, though some may become restless before the service is over, and others may cast glances at the posy of a friend to see whether it outrivals their own.

At our Sunday-schools the children had been told about the meaning of the service, and how the worth of the offering lay in its being brought as a gift to Christ in the person of His sick brethren; and, just as in other schools, some boys and girls had listened and taken in the teaching, and others thought more of the pleasure of bringing their flowers.

Among those who had listened and understood was my little friend Willie. He wanted to give pleasure to his Saviour and to some suffering little one—he hoped his flower would go to a "little un;" but the boy had set his heart on carrying roses, as being the sweetest, and roses are worth money, and little Will had none. In his trouble he went to his mother, who always found it hard to refuse any wish of his.

"Mother," he said, "canna I have soom roses out of the garding—soom of them foine red uns?"

"It's the best flowers I have thee wants, lad, and they can be sold for money at the market."

"Ah, but, mother, it's for the sick little uns," he said, "and, maybe, mother, they'd know it was from me,—anyway the angels, will know."

"Thee knows how to ask, Will," as she went away smiling to fetch a pair of scissors to cut off her finest roses. On her return Willie kept close to her side whilst she snipped and snipped and wound the spoil from her bushes into a posy, then he touched her arm, and raising his soft brown eyes to her face asked—

"Wunna thee coom, too, mother? I does love to see thee in church. I allus looks out from my seat with the school to see if thee's a coming, an I'se that glad if I sees thee."

"Well, I canna coom to-day, Will; p'raps another time, my lad," and Mrs. B. shook her head, and tried to look decided, though, as she said afterwards, "twere hard to cross him." But afternoon church was not much in her line, and flower-services were new since she was a girl. And she had her way that day, and Willie went off alone to make his offering.

God called our Willie home before the time for another flower-service came round. It was one autumn Sunday that I first missed the little face I had learned to love, from my class. I had been away from home, and on inquiry was told that the child had been ill for a fortnight. The following day I went to B.'s cottage, and found my little friend sitting by the fire, clad in the holland jacket I knew so well, and looking wan and hollow-eyed, though he greeted me with the old sweet smile. We talked of many things, and I promised to come again and bring some pictures for him to make a scrap-book; there were to be soldiers and roses and all kinds of fine things. His mother followed me to the gate to say that he had had the rheumatic fever before, and that a second at-

tack was threatening. I went again in a few days. Willie was in bed, and the doctor had pronounced his heart to be much affected; but he beamed at me as brightly as before, and we planned how the pictures I had brought should be placed in the book accompanying them. One small oleograph represented a troubled sea and a lighthouse, and we talked of the Light of the World, our sure Refuge as we cross the rough sea of life. Then once more I bade farewell, promising to return in two days with the grapes and other trifles that Willie fancied. I kept my promise, but I came not to find "little Will," but only a broken-hearted mother and a home where God's messenger had entered to "take the flower away." The call had come that morning. All night Willie's breathing had become more and more labored, and he had beckoned his parents to him and joined their hands in love, and had asked for his little brother Jack, and kissed him, and bidden him to come and meet him by-and-bye; and then to the gentle spirit had been borne away into the arms of his Saviour.

The child's death had been all peace, but when he was gone his mother was well-nigh beside herself with grief, and only grew quiet when we had knelt and prayed together for comfort for her in sorrow.

Afterwards at different times she told me much about "little Will," and his gentleness and goodness. Before he was very ill he had said to her that when he was at his work or going on an errand he would pray to CHRIST and say:

"Oh, wash me in Thy precious blood,
And take my sins away."

He seemed to know no fear, but looked on death as going home. Only towards the last, when his mind wandered from weakness, he murmured something about their being a stile over which he could not get to heaven. We fancied his thoughts had gone back to a certain awkward stile which stood in the way by which he went to school. His mother, however, was able to reassure him by comforting words and the promise that when he came to the place he would find there was a gate open wide.

Within a week the simple funeral took place. It was very hard to tell my other scholars on the following Sunday that "little Will had left us." I asked for a half-holiday for them to go to the funeral, and they kept the promise well which they had made me of being quiet and reverent, and the head of the class carried a wreath of pure white flowers.

Time has gone by, and the grass is green on the little lad's grave, but Willie's name is dear to many still, and Willie's influence has not lost its power.

Both our vicar and, in his absence, another kind clergyman, have helped and counselled Willie's mother and she who, when her boy was with her, seemed to find no time for going to church, has been confirmed, and has become a regular communicant, drawn more and more to think of such things by the example of "little Will." This very day she told me it was hard at first, and many persons jeered and tried to laugh her out of it. At times she felt as if she must give in, but now she "would not have it different for any thing." "I tell my husband," she says, "I know our lad was taken to draw us up, for before we were leading careless, God-forgetting lives." And her husband is being drawn gradually to follow her, though mates may taunt and scoff and ask "what is the good of it all?"

Since Willie left us we have had another flower-service. This time his mother found time to come, and brought her offering with Jack at her side. Some days before she told me Jack might have some flowers for himself, but those which she carried must be "for the sake of little Will."

I was present at the service, and, whilst the congregation sang that beautiful hymn—