

Willie.

A SKETCH FOR SUNDAY-SCHOOL
TEACHERS.

(By Mrs. Eugenie Loba Beckwith.)

Having experienced many of the discouragements that beset the work of a teacher, it will be a compensation if, in this sketch, I may, 'speak a word in season to him that is weary.'

I shall never hear the name of Willie, but it will present to me the pictures of my little friend as I saw him first and last.

During my vacation, he had been brought into the primary department, so I had the pleasure of enjoying only the rehearsal of his very evident surprise and delight at the entirely new world into which he had been introduced. But I noted at once, on that third Sunday, the intense interest and concentration with which he gave himself to the business in hand, a certain joyful intentness which was an inspiration to us all.

After the class, the church visitor came into the room, and gave me some points about new scholars.

'What an earnest, yet merry, little soul the new boy is!' said the teacher.

Then came the explanation from the visitor that this little German boy had never before been in a Sunday-school. A lady had one day come to her, saying, 'There are some little foreign children who play in our street, and in their ignorance they have picked up the very worst street talk. The boys are terribly profane. Something should be done to bring them under good influences.'

Their busy mother was ready to abet this scheme, and the next Sunday a trio of curious, questioning children took a great step in life, — a step fraught with so much importance in its after effect upon many lives, that one wonders that so many angels are kept out of Paradise simply for lack of a friendly hand to lead them to the threshold.

What a revelation that first Sunday was to smiling, dimpling Willie, no one would ever have guessed from the jumbled ideas he carried away.

On the homeward walk, the visitor, who had the three in loving charge, asked Willie what he had learned that day.

Promptly, and with all sincerity, came the answer:

'About God—and Sullivan.'

Suffice it to say that the lesson had been 'Solomon's Temple.'

The description of the royal glory may have confused Willie; but God came first in the retrospect.

Though having a long distance to come, almost every Sunday found Willie in his place, eager to pass the papers and leaflets, beaming over the penny-dropping, radiant when there was a birthday, and counting ahead with proud anticipation to the time when one should occur for himself, or his brother or sister.

He was such a gay little fellow, so full of fun and activity, that we did not realize how fast he was absorbing truth. But there came a day, only a few weeks after his admission to the class, when we felt humbled in the presence of this teachable spirit. In the neighborhood where Willie lived, someone who had noticed the improvement in the speech of these children, who through ignorance had offended Christian ears, overheard an oath from the little brother, and the quick, sharp retort from Willie.

'Stop that right off! You can't talk like

that about God now. You've been to the Sunday-school, and you know better.'

Brave little champion! When we heard of that noble defence, there flashed upon us the message, 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' Then followed self-searching from the two teachers, who, strong in their convictions that goodness should be taught from the side of goodness, could not remember having called attention particularly to the sin of profanity.

In reciting the Commandments, the principal had pointed out the 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,' and had dwelt a moment on 'false witness,' but it had not seemed well to lay too great stress upon these prohibitions before such young children.

Willie's teacher said, with tears in her eyes, 'Where could that dear child have got it from? I certainly never talked to him about swearing, yet I feel reproved that it was not my privilege to have been the one to help him in this.'

It was simply an instance of good seed in waiting soil. We had taught and Willie had put into practice,

'My heart is God's little garden,
And the fruit I shall bear each day,
Are the things He shall see me doing,
And the words he shall hear me say.'

When we were practicing for Easter and Children's Day, Willie was bubbling over with delight, and could not get enough of the two songs, 'Jesus loves the little children,' and 'Day by day the glorious sun.'

The time came when it was very hard for us to sing those songs with Willie's jubilant voice and happy face lacking; but the little sister always called for them, and one cannot disappoint a child just to spare one's own feelings.

Later, strength and gladness came to us when, in the third verse of Willie's favorite, we sang, with the children:

'By and by, for those that love him,
He will come some happy day,
Lead them to the pleasant pastures
Of the land not far away.
Oh! the safe and happy children
In the land not far away.'

Willie had attained unto the joy of having his ninth birthday celebrated in Sunday-school. He could not help calling attention to his neat new suit and shining boots. He felt so manly that he wanted very much to be promoted into the upper school on the next Sunday.

But he had had so short a training, and was so happy in the primary department, that it seemed like robbing him of his childhood to let him go. It certainly would be a loss to us. The blackboard lesson was about 'bread,' and the teacher took the occasion to speak of physical food and physical growth, spiritual food and spiritual growth.

With this beginning it was easy to add, 'One of our boys here thinks he would like to be promoted next Sunday, but we want him to grow a little more before he leaves us.' The new suit, the bright face, the nearness of the boy, or some hidden inner impulse, led the principal to rest her hand a moment on Willie's curly head.

The next day a note from the visitor brought this news:

'Little Willie was drowned this afternoon. It would be a comfort to his mother if you went to her.'

So we mingled our tears, and strove to comfort one another in reviewing that brief

sunshiny life. The mother spoke of his pleasure in the Sunday-school songs, his going about the house always singing them, and urging his parents to learn them too. They would so like to have one of his favorites sung at the last service.

Again I saw the new suit, the curly head, and the beautiful, smiling mouth, as if at the very last moment Willie had known of his promotion.

I sat between the weeping father and mother, and through the open window saw the yard full of Willie's little friends and playmates. They were whispering to each other kind words about his ways and words at school.

Then the gentle voice of the pastor was heard in comforting sentences full of gratitude for the lesson of a life that had been so joyous, and had, with a beautiful simplicity, tried to do the thing God would have him do.

Three verses of Willie's hymn were sung by a rich voice, made more mellow by tears. Then came a fourth, which was like a message from the dear boy. I had not seen that stanza nor heard it till then, and it fell upon my heart with wonderful, moving power. Such a faithful message for those little friends outside to hear.

'Who shall go to that bright land?
All who love the Lord,
All who follow his command,
All who keep his word,
Come, children, come, and join the
band
Journeying to that happy land.'

Nearly a year later the principal of Willie's school asked, 'Are there any birthdays to-day?' Then little Max raised his hand. Said the teacher, 'Have you not made a mistake, Max? Your birthday came only a little while ago, I think.'

'Yes, but this is for Willie's birthday.'

It was something more than ten pennies that dropped into the birthday bank that day, as with wet eyes we kept Willie's anniversary, and told the children of his year in heaven, and his happy way of obeying, and doing the right thing as far as he knew it.—'S.S. Times.'

A Smiling Face.

Does anyone like a drizzling rain
As well as a sunny sky?

Does anyone turn to a frowning face
If a pleasant one is nigh?

Oh, give us all the look that springs
From a kindly nature's grace!
We do not care if he's dark or fair—
The boy with a smiling face.

Does anyone like a lowering cloud
As well as the shining light?
Does a peevish word have power to please
Like a laugh that is sweet and bright?

Oh, the girl that is gloomy with fretful
scowls,

Though she dresses in silk and lace,
Hath never such art to charm the heart.
As the girl with a smiling face.

Dear boys and girls, remember this—
You are apt to meet with loss,
No matter what thing you undertake,
When you're sullen, and sour, and cross.

Dear boys and girls, I would say it thrice,
'Twill help you in every case;
If you'd win success and the world would
bless,

You must wear a smiling face,
—'Silver Link.'