

## WILLIE'S PICTURE.

BY AUNT MAY.

"Be ye also perfect."



ONCE saw a picture of sunset, and it surprised me much the way in which the painter had caught the glory of the mellow lights, so as to be able to bring it all plainly forward, in order that other eyes which had not perhaps seen it as it had appeared to him, might joy in the sweet reality of the whole. There were blue hills in the distance tipped with crimson, above, the sky all gold and amber, while nearer still were labourers gathering in the harvest for which they had toiled day after day, and which after all had come to them as a fair, free gift from the God who gives us all we have. I don't know how it was, but the picture struck me just as did another of which I am about to tell you, if only you will open your eyes and your tender little hearts to take it in.

Willie was ten years old when first I knew him, full of health and spirits, a boy with a will of his own too, a will which people said would make him a great man some day. He was going to be a "painter," so he often said, and many a time was he punished for the figures and sketches with which he covered not only his own but the other boys' copy-books while at school. Poor Willie, and he meant no harm either! He meant no harm when he and Bobby Frost stayed behind the others one evening, just because Willie had made up his mind to sketch the schoolmaster, his wife, and little boy upon the clean whitewashed walls; but the master thought harm of it, and after punishing Willie severely, turned him away from the school. He was sorry then, and so were his father and mother, and from that time the boy gave up all thought of artist work. It was very hard for him though, and one day when I came upon him in the fields, he was crying bitterly, partly because of his disgrace and partly because he had promised to draw pictures no more. So I talked to the boy, and told him of the One Great Portrait we are all called upon to copy. I drew his mind to thinking what Jesus did when on earth, how He obeyed His parents,

how He always thought of others' feelings and pleasures before His own, and, lastly, how glorious the whole of His life was to behold, how noble the picture; and yet we, far as our actions and thoughts must ever be removed from His perfection, are plainly told to make our lives like His—a picture of lights and shadows, which the glory of eternity and God's love will render perfect at the last.

I saw Willie once when his picture was well-nigh finished, when the sunshine of heaven was glimmering over the borderland of earth, and already lighting it up, so as to appear somewhat like the picture of what that other life had been. "I am a painter," he whispered faintly, "I have mixed the colours and laid them on, and that not to please myself but others, and now God is giving beauty and radiance and Jesus says it is well done."

So Willie died, and I mused again of the picture of the harvest field; for the boy's little acts of unselfish obedience were the golden sheaves—his pure wishes and desires to please God and man the sweet sunset glow, and the angels, God's reapers, had borne the harvest home, while colours flashed brightly here and there, colours which had grown quickly during the short summer day of the boy's life.

Cannot you, dear children, like Willie, give up something for God and your parents—something which clings to you, something which you love, but which leads you into mischief? It was hard for Willie to give up his painting, but then God knew that he was to die early, and that therefore he would never need it. Had it been otherwise, doubtless God would have found a way to let his talent grow, for God, who is all wise, can do all things. Tread in duty's path, give up your will in all things wherein conscience whispers that it is right so to do. It may be hard, but remember, "even Jesus pleased not Himself," and you would like to be like Him, would you not? So life will grow beautiful; sweet colouring will appear daily for you and in you; God, who can see the end from the beginning, will act for you, and bless you; and by-and-by, like Willie, your picture will be complete.

## COME INSIDE.

RECENTLY, in illustrating the theme, "A man in Christ," Mr. Spurgeon told a story that is worth repeating. He said: Some Christians remind me of the little boys who go to bathe; all frightened and shivering they enter the water just a little—up to their ankles they wade and shiver again. But the man who is really in Christ is like the practised swimmer who plunges into the stream head first and finds water to swim in. He never shivers. It braces him: he rejoices in it. And see how at home he is in the river of grace. He has become his element. Now for him "to live is Christ." It has devoted himself, his substance, and all that he has to the glory of God. This is the man who understands the happiness of religion in a manner far beyond the conception of the half-and-half professor who has only religion enough to make him miserable. I sometimes illustrate this by a quaint American story. An American gentleman said to a friend, "I wish you would come down to my garden and taste my apples." He asked him about a dozen times, but the friend never did come, and at last the fruit-grower said, "I suppose you think my apples are good for nothing, so you won't come and try them." "Well, to tell the truth," said the friend, "I have tasted them. As I went along the road I picked up one that fell over the wall, and I never tasted anything so sour in all my life: and I do not particularly wish to have any more of your fruit." "Oh," said the owner of the garden, "I thought it must be so. Why, don't you know those apples around the outside are for the special benefit of the boys? I went fifty miles to select the sourest sorts to plant all around the orchard, so the boys might give them up as not worth stealing; but if you will come inside you will find that we grow a very different quality there, sweet as honey." Now, you will find that on the outskirts of religion there are a number of "Thou shalt nots," and "Thou shalt," and convictions, and alarms; but these are only the bitter fruits with which this wondrous Eden is guarded from thievish hypocrites. If you can pass by the exterior bitters and give yourself right up to Christ and live for Him, your peace shall be like the waves of the sea; and you shall find that the fruits of "this apple tree among the trees of the wood" are the most delicious fruit that can be enjoyed this side of our eternal home.