LITTLE WILLIE.

I SAW them first in the crowd coming out of the church in Westland after early Mass—the father tall, gaunt, with hollow cheeks and weary eyes; the child with a little pale sweet face, in which youth and sickness were struggling for mastery, and sickness was, alas, too clearly winning the day. He walked on crutches and clung to his father's side; and the father adapted his long steps to those of the little helpless feet, and bent over his child as if to protect it from all the world.

The next time I met them was in a tramcar, in the far corner of which—his crutches by his side—the boy sat watching with wistful eyes the healthy laughing children who bounded in and out. I noticed that now and then he turned longing glances to where I sat in the opposite corner; for I had been to Killiney that day, and had come back laden with country flowers, and, seeing how they pleased him, I at last said:

"I am sure you are fond of flowers; take these."

He eagerly stretched out his hands, such poor little thin hands! and his face grew radiant as he bent over the blossoms, touching them with his lips, and laying them against his cheek as tenderly as if they were alive and could feel his caresses.

"They remind him of his mother; she too, love flowers," said the boy's father; and the voice started me, it was so heavy and sad, and I thought I heard in it echoes of pain and sorrow, and perhaps remorse.

Presently the car stopped, and we all alighted. As I did so, a man brushed by me so roughly that he almost knocked me down, and as I am old and was weary with my long journey, the shock made me feel faint and bewildered. Then I heard the crippled boy's father saying:

"It is getting dark; will you allow us to go with you as far as your home?"

I thanked him, and we walked some time in silence. "I fear," said he at last, "that we are delaying you; but the child can walk no faster; as you see, he is a cripple."

"Ah, poor little fellow!" I answered; "an accident, perhaps?"

"No," said the man, in a hard stern voice, "not an accident! I did it; I crippled my own child!"

"Don't speak about it, father; don't speak about it," pleaded the boy.

"But I must speak of it; I will speak of it," cried the man, excitedly.

"Not now, father, dear."

"But I tell you I must. It is my punishment. People pity me—I can see they do—and she ought rather to hate and scorn me."

"No, no!" cried the boy; and then, as his voice failed, he added: "I must sit down; carry me."

The man stooped down at once, and lifted the child in his arms, and resting for a moment against the railings, kissed his white face a hundred times, while the child clung with his thin arms about his neck, and whispered words of love and comfort in his ear.

"Will you [illegible]?"

"[illegible]," he answered, in a [illegible] voice, "[illegible]."

[illegible]

[illegible] Willie Cleary and his father [illegible] a single word, nearly [illegible] Willie [illegible] only [illegible] [illegible] law papers. [illegible] books [illegible] and toys, and other [illegible] was below, and we [illegible] [illegible]. But Cleary would never [illegible] I knew his story, the outline [illegible] which it seemed to look as if [illegible] and this is what we found [illegible].

"I [illegible] always as poor as you see me, [illegible] such as this. At the age of twenty [illegible] was considered by my mother and [illegible] and when I brought home [illegible] it seemed to me that no [illegible] so happy as I. She was a country girl, a sweet pretty creature, [illegible] and fond as [illegible] as the leaves to her mother's teach. How happy we were [illegible] by our cosy fireside, or rambling in summer and autumn [illegible] lanes! and when little Willie came I thought there was nothing on earth for us to wish for.

"It went on for three years—three happy years!—and then, as ill luck would have it, I met some friends of my bachelor days. I had been a favorite among them, for I could sing a good song, and tell a story in a way that made people laugh; and they urged me to join them in a merry-making they were going to have that evening.

"I said no; but they persisted, and when I still refused they began to ridicule me."

'Don't ask him, poor fellow!' said one: 'can't you see he hasn't his wife's permission? Who can tell how he would be punished if he stayed out without leave?'

'Besides,' said another, 'he must go home and rock the cradle. To think that's all he's good for now!'

"These silly jokes made me feel ashamed of my love for my wife and child, and at last I reluctantly yielded.

"Having gone once, I went again and again; my songs were encored, my sayings applauded, and I began to crave for this nightly excitement of drink and flattery, till at last I could not do without it. An evening at home now seemed terribly long and dull; my wife, too, was growing pale and silent, and had lost her old gay spirits, and I could not bear to witness this change of my own making. Once, even—thank God, only once!—I struck her. After that I was steady for a month, and the very first night I rejoined my companions I sprained my ankle, coming home tipsy. It seemed as God were sending me these warnings to stop me on the road to ruin, for I lay in bed a fortnight; and as I watched my Mary, so patient and loving, and as I saw, too, how her old bright looks were coming back, I resolved, over and over again, never more to yield to the demon of Drink. I was almost well, though still obliged to lie down, when one of my friends, or rather enemies, came to see me. He was a good-natured, kind-hearted man, whom drink was destroying, and he seemed really sorry at my accident.

"'Cheer up, old boy,' he said; 'you'll be all right in a day or two; and see, I have brought this to keep up your courage;' and so saying he produced a bottle of whisky from under his coat, and called to my wife to bring us glasses.

"She came in, looking as pale as death, and I could hear the glasses clicking as she carried them on the tray.

"'What!' cried my visitor, 'only two glasses! Surely, Mrs. Cleary, you'll drink with us to your husband's recovery!'

"Poor Mary's cheek crimsoned, and she left the room without answering. The end of it was that we finished the bottle between us; and then he left, declaring it had done me a world of good, and promised to return in a day or two.

"But the spirits I had taken only made me crave for more, and I told my wife to fetch some more whisky from the public-house. At first she tried to reason with me, then implored me to resist the temptation, and at last declared she would not go.

"'If you will not go,' I cried, in a rage, 'Willie shall!'

"The little fellow, who was only four, came running in at my call; but when he saw my face, purple and distorted with passion, he grew frightened, and ran crying into the farthest corner of the room.

"In vain I bid him come to me, in vain threatened; the more angry I became the faster he retreated, and, at last, I leaned out of the bed and raised a lath. God knows I must have been mad with drink, and pain, and rage, for I seized him by the neck—my boy whom I love!—and flung him from me with all my strength. He struck against the bed; I heard the dull thud of his fall, but no cries followed; he lay where he fell, silent and motionless; and Mary lifted him in her arms, and carried him away without a word, but at the door she turned to look at me, and for the first time I saw hate and contempt in her eyes.

"The doctor who was attending to my foot came soon after and took the child with him to the hospital (he carried it was his only chance of recovery), and at the end of two months [illegible] was [illegible] bring him home. Not cured! Oh no, he never left his room [illegible] they had done all [illegible] over him, and so it was best we should send him away. It was a [illegible] sad all the [illegible] but may listening [illegible] glad to see my boy, [illegible] the room [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] Dyes

[illegible] Diamond Dyes [illegible] for.

[illegible] Diamond Dyes [illegible] Dyes is [illegible]

[illegible] Dyes [illegible] Soap [illegible] Dyes [illegible]

[illegible] Diamond Dyes [illegible] Dyes [illegible]

[illegible] Dyes [illegible] Dyes [illegible]

[illegible] Dyes [illegible] Dyes [illegible]

[illegible]