

Children's Department.

DICK AND HIS FRIENDS.

(Written for The Church Guardian.)

(CONCLUDED.)

WHAT a long desolate winter that would have been for the poor widow, after her son's death, had not Dick been with her. It seemed, indeed, as Willie had said, as though God had sent him to be her comfort. The promise they had made to the dying boy bound them very closely together, and in their affection for each other they knew that his earnest, tender wish was being fulfilled. Those last loving words of his could never be forgotten, either by the childless widow or the orphan boy, who was henceforward to be as her son. From the hour of Willie's death Dick had shown Mrs. Burton all the thoughtful care of a dutiful child.

When Spring came round once more the green mound over Willie's grave was fair with early flowers; the sweet, pure snow-drops first, then primroses and violets, and a bright tuft of early crocuses. Dick was saving up money now to put a little stone cross at the head. He had consulted Miss Montfort about it, and she had shown him some designs, and promised to order the stone and see that it was properly placed. Willie asked the young lady to choose a text to be engraved upon it, and they spoke of several, but Miss Montfort said she would like Dick to choose the words himself—she liked to think of the whole thing as coming from Dick. So when he had earned the necessary sum he took it to Miss Montfort, and with it a slip of paper with the words, "He shall gather the lambs with His arm."

A few weeks later a small, Latin cross of granite marked Willie's resting-place, with his name and age and those lovely, comforting words engraved beneath.

Dick had now worked for and accomplished two cherished plans. First, he had written to Mr. Selkirk, telling him how good God had been to him, and giving a short account of all that had happened since the day when he had parted from the clergyman at the gates of the Bolton Cemetery. And in this, the first letter which Dick had ever written, were enclosed his first savings, in the form of a post office order in payment of the small sum Mr. Selkirk had lent him, and with which poor Dick had purchased his escape from his drunken persecutors at the village ale-house. The money had lain in readiness for months past, but Dick's penmanship had not warranted his attempting such a letter as he was desirous of writing. Without poor Willie's help and encouragement it seemed so much more difficult to get on, and learning by himself seemed so lonely. But Miss Montfort, who had been deeply touched and interested in Willie's labor of love, and by Dick's efforts to improve himself, would not allow so brave a beginning to end in failure. "You must not give up," she said to Dick one evening when she called at the cottage soon after Willie's funeral. "Don't disappoint me. I want to see you do credit to the dear boy that we have lost. Come up to me once a week and let me see how you are getting on, and I will help you." So Dick had thrown off his discouragement and gave

a good part of every evening to his lessons. And in the early Spring he had written his letter to Mr. Selkirk—a letter which occasioned as much pleasure and surprise to the person who received it as it had caused the writer anxiety.

Dick's honest, down-cast face was still fresh in the clergyman's remembrance, and he had not forgotten him in his prayers. He now wrote the boy an affectionate, earnest letter, full of pleasure at his success and encouragement for the future. I need not say how happy it made Dick to receive it. This was the beginning of a correspondence which became an influence, like that of Miss Montfort, for Dick's whole life, suggesting good resolves and worthy aims, and helping, and encouraging him to carry them out. The boy might well be deeply thankful, and remembering the godlessness of his former life, he could not but feel the strong desire that others like himself might be brought under the pure and blessed influences of the Church of Christ.

Time went on, taking Dick's childhood with it, and bearing him on to youth and manhood. He had long since been confirmed, and a communicant, and from that time Miss Montfort had felt a great degree of hopeful confidence in him. Working faithfully with his hands and head, he had gained the liking and esteem of Mr. Montfort, who had advanced him from being the gardener's boy, step by step to the charge of a large outlying farm, of which at last he became the tenant. And here Dick put in practice the life-lessons he had learned—a kind and thoughtful master to the laborers on the farm, he set them the example of industry, sobriety, and beyond all else of a humble faith in Christ. No poor boy asking for work ever met with the rebuff he had himself received from the surly farmer, but ever found with our friend Dick a helping hand and warm heart. Here Willie's mother lived with him as his own, and her last days were soothed and comforted by the love of her adopted son, and his kind and good wife—for by this time Dick himself had married—showed her the affection of a daughter.

My little story of Dick and his Friends must end here, but I must not forget to say, that among the very happiest days of his life were those when his first friend, Mr. Selkirk, came to pay him a visit in the pretty and happy home, the fruit of an honest, earnest life which God had blessed.

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