



A Prince of the Realm.

LESSONS FROM THE
LIFE OF REV. W. C. WILLING, D. D.

BY

J. FOWLER WILLING



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He being dead, yet speaketh.—PAUL.

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LIFE OF REV. W. C. WILLING, D. D.

BY

J. FOWLER WILLING,

AUTHOR OF "DIAMOND DUST," "FROM FIFTEEN TO TWENTY-FIVE,"
"THE LITTLE-BOOK MAN," ETC.

He being dead, yet speaketh.—PAUL.

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A PRINCE OF THE REALM.

I.

WHY?

THE botanist cares most for the flower, rare and delicate, that supplies a missing link in his system. A life made fleckless and sweet by the precious blood and tender discipline of Christ, is too choice to lose. It helps our faith more than creed or dogma could.

One of the strongest men in the Church wrote of W. C. Willing: "He was more to me than any other man. He had the very highest honor and integrity. He did his work with a strong, steady, brave hand. I drift amid the *débris* of shattered craft—leaky, water-logged, engineless craft—on the high seas of life. They clog the commerce of heaven. He was stanch. There were no worm-eaten timbers in his hull. He stayed me in times of doubt. In him grace produced the peaceable fruits of righteousness. His was a grand life."

Such as he are too conscientious, in too deadly earnest for the Lord's glory, to do much personal exploitation. It is easy enough to be "brilliant" when one gets the knack of saying bright things. The crowds never note nice developments of character. Few who carry about their small measuring-rods, can tiptoe up to discern the height of such stature as that of this Prince of the Realm. The truly great are they who learn of the Lowly One of Galilee. Their eternity of blessing is beyond our bravest thought. It is written of them, "They shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

This grand, silent life has passed out of mortal sight. Its lessons are priceless. They can be sketched only by the one who knew him best, and loved him most. The work may be poorly done, "with so much gone." But here it is, with the prayer that each of his brethren, whom he loved so well, may learn as he did of Him who is "meek and lowly in heart," and find rest. The secret of that magnificent life was given in a letter that he wrote four or five hours before the chariot swung low for him: "Be all right at any cost. Everything is cheap in contrast with God's indorsement."

One bright day, years ago, we were talking,

he and I, about literary work. He said: "I wish you would write a book for preachers. They are a noble lot. I love them. I'm glad I'm counted worthy of a place among them. It seems to me that in our itinerant years we've learned some things that might help them, especially the younger ones. Our Church is the output of the sacrifice and service of the old knights, who rode into the lists for Christ and his full salvation. Can't we tell the story so as to stir anew the heroic spirit of those superb days?"

We did not think then that the book would be struck from my heart while it lay broken on "God's hard anvil." The Lord make its lessons clear and plain! What would please him now, is not to have his brethren know who he was, and what he did while he was with them in the fight; but how abundant and all-sufficient was, and ever will be, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II.

THE BOY.

GOOD boys usually make good men. They who are in despair over their children's badness, may cling to the "wild-oats" heresy; but right

character, like musical education, must be begun in childhood.

"Will was always good," said his mother, "and such a help in keeping the others straight."

It is hardly necessary to say that this good boy had the right sort of mother. In a plain little farm-house in Western New York, that strong, patient woman trained her ten children to fear God and work righteousness. Her husband, a man of the finest sensibilities and honor, was the son of a rich Englishman, who lost his fortune too late to teach his children how to earn their own living. His health was very poor; so the burden of the family fell on his wife and their oldest son, William. As soon as the boy could stand steadily on his feet, he had to go to work to help support the rest. Hard as that seemed, it gave him a kindly unselfishness that stood him in good stead in all his later service.

His mother taught her children the principles of honesty and integrity. She made them ambitious to do good. She showed them the sacredness of a promise. As they grew up she was specially emphatic about their "love affairs." I think she would have shut the door in the face of one of her own boys, if she had thought him guilty of a "flirtation." During his fifteen years

in the presiding eldership, a "breach of promise" would send one of Dr. Willing's young preachers to the rear more quickly than almost any other offense.

Will was five years old before he was baptized. His mother said: "You are God's boy now, Willie. Never forget that. You must never do or say anything that the Heavenly Father would not like."

Once, when he was at the age when boys have a man's sense of personal rights without a man's self-control, he and his father had a falling out. The spirited lad had will enough to stock a dozen ordinary people. He declared his independence, and started for the house. While he was getting his little effects ready for a "runaway," his mother laid her hand on his shoulder, and the tear in her loving eye conquered him.

William's father had been an Episcopalian, but he joined the Presbyterian Church with his wife. Later he was drawn to a little Methodist meeting. William, then a lad of twelve, went with him, and was led to make his first confession of faith in Christ. That was the beginning of his active Christian life; though he used to say that he could not tell within ten years just when he was converted. Even then he believed

that he ought to preach the gospel; but timidity, self-distrust, and the wish to help his mother, made him hide the thought in his heart.

When he was nineteen, the family moved to Illinois. He worked hard at farming, summers, and taught school, winters, to help along.

He grew to be a fine, handsome fellow, neat in his dress, tall, large, with shoulders shaped for the epaulet, and a magnificent, well-poised head. His commanding form and bearing always made him a marked man wherever he went.

He was passionately fond of books, devouring romance, history, philosophy, poetry—everything that was good—and with an exquisite, natural taste that knew instinctively the best. He was quick at a turn of wit, and made and enjoyed his full share of merriment, especially in the home.

When he was about twenty-two, he espied a shy little maiden in the singers' gallery of the Congregational Church, of which they were both members; and till his great heart ceased to beat, he gave her as deep and strong a love as ever man gave woman.

III.

ITINERANT.

THE spring before they were married, there was a gracious outpouring of the Spirit on the village in which he was teaching school, and reading law. He was quickened in soul, and his call to the ministry became clear. Unflinchingly he faced the question of a change in his profession. A battle that some allow to drag along till it is too late for them to do their best work, he fought out alone in a single day. He was nearly ready to begin the practice of law, for which he had a great liking, and in which he was specially qualified to succeed. His ambitions held tenaciously at that point. If he preached, he must preach Arminian doctrine; he could not be a Calvinist. That would separate him ecclesiastically from all his relatives, not one of whom was a Methodist. He was engaged to be married to a frail little body, whose strong-brained mother would hardly give her only daughter up to the wear and tear of the itinerancy. No matter about the right hand or eye, God's will must be done, because it is right, all right, always right. The young hero settled the matter

on that basis before he reported even to the one who was the light of his eyes. An unswerving choice of the Divine will was the mainspring of his life. He never tried to get around a duty. He faced it fairly and squarely, and was ready to die for it, if need were. Of such stuff the noble army of martyrs are made.

As soon as the matter was settled, he went to tell his mother. When the boys and girls had all gone to bed, they two sat down for one of their confidential chats. She rejoiced in his decision.

"Just what I have been praying for, for years," she said.

"But, mother, I can not preach the doctrines of your dear old Church. I will have to be a Methodist."

"No matter, Will, if only you are faithful to God." That lifted a load from his heart.

Mothers reap as they sow. Years after, when the youngest brother, who staid on the farm with the parents, married a Methodist girl, and wanted to join her Church, Mr. Willing advised them to join the Congregational Church, and remain in it as long as the father and mother lived. In her widowed old age, when his mother was a member of his household in Chicago, some one

was always detailed to take her to a Presbyterian Church, where she might worship after the manner of her parents.

In a month or so, after our young lawyer decided to preach, he started East to join Genesee Conference, toward which his steps were Providentially directed. While he waited for the fall session, he took a little charge on Grand Island, in Niagara River. He worked as faithfully there as if his small parish were the center of the universe.

That autumn he joined Genesee Conference, and was stationed at Centerville, a little village among the Alleghany hills. Then he ran back to Illinois, claimed his bride, and the twain joined hands for the long, itinerant journeyings.

IV.

THE FIRST CHARGE.

THE salary was two hundred dollars, and the young itinerants had to learn at once poor Robbie Burns's problem of making two guineas do the work of five. There had been the wedding journey to Illinois and back, the circuit outfit to buy—

horse, buggy, books, and all—and the living of two people for a year, to be paid for out of that little two hundred dollars. He had a horror of debt. He knew that the borrower is the servant of the lender. He could wear patched clothes, and live on plain food; but he could not be in bondage to some one who had “accommodated” him with money to stave off, and so increase, a need. In spite of the most rigid economy, debts did accumulate during the first three years, and the twain did not swing clear of them till they had begun to give by rule, putting into the Lord’s treasury one-tenth of the gross income. I may say, in passing, that they kept that up till the Lord sent enough for them to let their giving outrun the tenth.

That year a serious affair happened on his charge. News of it came to him while he was at camp-meeting. It shook him fearfully. They on whom he leaned, had gone astray. He sat in the tent with his face in his hands, the picture of dejection. In walked a queer, little Dutch saint, known as “Happy Jake.” Coming up to the discouraged young pastor, and reaching out his long arms, he emphasized his broken words with a thin index-finger: “Praise de Lord, Brud-der Weelin’, and de debbil ’ll run away!”

Years after, when Dr. Willing was working a hard district, he was greatly helped by the same principle in Scriptural form. He repeated David's words, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth," till even the children in the parsonages knew the presiding elder's text. That resolute thanksgiving gave him strength to resist the devil and make him flee.

When Mr. Willing joined the Methodist Church his attention was called to the doctrine of sanctification; but he had quite indefinite notions of what it meant. He made up his mind, however, that the Atonement provided for a state of grace, in which the believer loves God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself. He could not find the metes and bounds of regeneration, adoption, justification, sanctification, the fullness of the Spirit; he knew very few whose lives set forth

"Our calling's glorious hope
Of inward holiness;"

but he concluded, from reading Wesley, Fletcher, and the rest, that heart-purity is possible, and he must seek it at once; so he set himself at it with all his soul.

He floundered about awhile in gloom and uncertainty, till the Holy Spirit helped him out of his mystical murkiness by touching his common sense. He said to himself: "I believe in the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection. By whatever name it goes, I believe that such a state of grace is provided in the Atonement, and promised in the Bible. I do n't know just how it will affect me, what my feelings will be when I get it; but I do know that if I put myself in the Lord's hands, without conscious reservation, he will do in my soul the work he would have done, and that is all I want." Standing there in the drizzle and darkness, he made the surrender, honestly, thoroughly, for time and eternity, trusting his loving, mighty Lord to take what he offered. No sight, no sound, no sign followed that declaration; but he walked homeward, setting his foot more firmly at every step on the solid rock of the Divine reliability. In after years he looked upon that as the time when his submission to God and his trust for full redemption were complete.

His ideal was high, and his self-distrust abnormal. So it was always hard for him to say that the blood of Jesus Christ cleansed him from all sin; but when he did, the Spirit of God set to

his seal that the witness was true. His heart was "strangely warmed," and his word had special power; his life tallied with his talk.

He had some ups and downs in following the Lord wholly. The saddest of all came from a controversy in Genesee Conference on "Christian holiness." It was most unfortunate and damaging to all concerned. The doctrine of heart-purity was thrown aside as fanatical and dangerous. The experience became rare. Evil speaking abounded. In the storm our young preacher looked away from Christ, began to dwell on the faults of others, and lost his perfect love.

When one lets a high state of grace slip, he is never at rest again till it is restored. Mr. Willing continued to preach the high possibilities of Christian life; but he did not regain the fullness of love for years. That was a time of great trial, not only from Conference trouble, but from severe physical suffering. He was ill with typhoid fever, erysipelas, and other diseases that come from nerve exhaustion. Having let go his faith-oar in the storm, he labored so hard to get on with the works-oar, that he was constantly giving out. His powerful will held him to a quiet, princely bearing, in spite of the days and nights of pain. His clear, wide forehead was

always smooth. His voice never lost its strength or gentleness. His strong eyes were always kind. His self-control was perfect. He would sit and talk with a friend, without a shadow on his face, though every nerve was on the rack. He would listen to the dreariest egotisms with kindly patience by the hour.

“How could you stand it?” “O, I thought the Lord would give me a chance to help the poor fellow before he got through.” He usually did. After all, it was years before he learned again to let Christ be all the world to him.

V.

GLEAMS OF VICTORY.

HIS next pastorate was one of the dark places of the Conference. No one could remember more than one conversion for many years in the Methodist church in Spencerport. But if one goes to work with a hearty faith, he can find always a chink to let in some rays of God's sunlight.

One Sabbath evening, after the dingy old church had been renovated, and things were

brightening somewhat, a young Englishman dropped into the prayer-meeting in the parsonage. He was asked if he was a Christian. "I am not." "Do you want to be?" "Yes, I do." "Will you stay and let us pray for you?" "I will be glad to do so."

The young pastor and his wife prayed with the penitent till nearly midnight. Once in a while his steady praying for himself was interrupted by the question: "Does the Lord forgive your sins?" "No, sir; but he will." At last the answer came: "Yes, sir. Thank God!" A soul converted in that place seemed too great a joy to receive. The next evening, when the young man passed the parsonage, he replied to an inquiry about what sort of a day he had had: "The best day of my life, sir."

Shortly after, he brought in his cousin for prayer; and later, they brought in a brother of the first one. All were clearly saved.

"My mother had sanctification," said the first convert, "and I must have it as soon as I can get it." While they were praying for his brother he was heard to say, in his quiet, even way: "Thank God! I feel as if my heart was all clean now."

The pastor and his wife had been "battering

the gates of heaven with storms of prayer ;” but their eyes were so full of the faults of those who professed heart-purity, that they failed to see Jesus waiting to save them to the uttermost, though that month-old babe in Christ did so receive him then and there.

The three young converts went from cottage to cottage with their Bibles, and the result was a revival that turned a new tide of prosperity on the church.

That steady-eyed young pastor did not think that it was the business of the Church simply to keep itself going. It must bring something to pass that would hasten the coming of the kingdom. The plan was usually given him in prayer; and he worked it out most carefully and industriously.

His year in Scottsville was a heavy, up-grade pull; the first in Warsaw, heavier and harder. A beautiful place, elegant church—an enviable position for a young man—but the membership would not take the courage and faith for success; and he did his best to get away at the end of the year.

The second winter he began a series of revival services; but he had no confidence in his own ability for such work. It was not uncom-

mon for him to ride all night, after an evening service, to get a preacher for the next meeting. After about two months, in which there had been a number of conversions, the officary made up their minds that the meetings must be closed. He could not convince them that the best was yet to come. He threw himself on the Lord. He could never tell just how; but within twenty-four hours the town was upside down. Hundreds were brought to God in a few days.

One year at Pike and one in Olean were harder than any that went before them, on account of the trouble in the Conference. Weary with the strife, he was transferred to Rock River Conference in Northern Illinois, and stationed at Mendota. That was in 1860. The first year was a great success, as the world counts; but he reckoned it one of the poorest. There was so little fruit to remain for the Lord.

After two years of typhoid fever, two were spent in Princeton, in which a beautiful new church was built, given, as they believed, in answer to prayer, as certainly as if it had been passed down out of the clouds, steeples and all. It seemed impossible to build; but he thought as Mrs. Stowe said about the writing of "Uncle Tom's Cabin:" "When a thing needs to be done,

God will do it, if we trust him." Again and again, when the enterprise was threatened with failure, he would ask the women, who met every week for prayer, to pray through the difficulty; and they did.

During three good years in Freeport, the church was rebuilt, and the congregation doubled and divided, those who went off putting up a fine edifice, and becoming an earnest and aggressive church. The whole city was launched upon a tide of church improvement and revival.

VI.

AT REST AGAIN.

MR. WILLING began again to pray in his deep, silent way for a clean heart. One Monday morning he was met with the question: "Do you enjoy perfect love?"

"Well, just what do you mean by that?"

"What you preached yesterday when you said that we might be saved from all bad tempers and evil tendencies."

"That 's the gospel," he said. "I would n't dare preach that Christ was divine unless he

could do that. But I don't see many people who are so saved. Very few come up to my standard of Christian holiness." It was suggested that it might be well for him to get down off his theological stilts, and get something that he could tell people was attainable, or else stop crowding them to seek what they could never reach. He saw the good sense of the suggestion, and with his usual loyalty to a conviction, he asked: "What shall I do to get the grace?"

"First, surrender without reserve or conditions."

"I do that," he said. "I would n't dare do less; but it does n't bring the result."

"That is only a platform on which you stand while you reach for the proffered grace. The main thing is to believe that, when you do your part, God does his."

"Yes, I've preached that often enough; but just how shall I do it?"

"When one gives all into God's hands, and asks God to cleanse him from all sin, he must say with John: 'This is the confidence that I have in him: if I ask anything according to his will, he heareth me; and if he hear me, I have the petition that I desired of him.'"

"That is simple enough," he said; "but does

one feel the power of the Spirit in his soul when he does that?"

"We must pay no attention to our feelings. The just live by faith. Take no notice of how you feel. When you do your part, be sure God has done his."

"That is sound," he said, "and I'll go about it. I can think of nothing more important."

He gave the forenoon to the solution of that faith problem; and when he came in at noon he was met with the question: "Does the blood of Jesus Christ cleanse you from all sin?" "Y-e-s," was the reply; "but I don't feel any different."

"Do you believe differently?"

"Yes, I do, though I am ashamed to say that it has taken all the forenoon to bring me to it. I am bound to believe that the work is done, since I have met the conditions the best I know how."

Without flinching or dallying, he confessed the grace at once. In the afternoon meeting he said that he had surrendered fully to the Lord, and he believed that he was fully received and saved, though he had no feeling that the work was done. He believed that the Lord had cleansed his heart from all sin. Through that confession of faith the glory came into his soul

in floods that nearly carried him off his feet, staid and stanch as he was. From that day he confessed Christ as his Savior from all sin; and no one who knew his life doubted the genuineness of the work. There was little change in his outward living, which was always royally blameless. But his soul was at rest, and his power to help others was greatly increased.

In Aurora, his next charge, he cleared the way for the new church to be built, and established another on the opposite side of the river. The story of one of the special answers to prayer, of those days, may show how much he did by faith in God.

The Freedmen's Aid Society agent came for the annual collection. It was thirty dollars the year before, but the Official Board said it would have to be less that year. He asked the agent how much would support a teacher in the field. "Three hundred dollars a year." Then the twain went away, and asked the Lord to make the people give that amount. When the subscription was called for, the first pledge was fifty dollars. In as short a time as it could well be done, the three hundred were raised, and twenty-five offered toward the support of another teacher.

The Sabbath-school of a thousand members

wanted to send a hundred dollars to Chicago to buy a new library. "Hardly a morsel apiece!" was his comment when the parsonage door was shut. Special prayer for four hundred more, a sermon, a subscription, and a committee started to Chicago with five hundred dollars for books.

VII.

THE FIRST DISTRICT.

AFTER Aurora came Rockford District. Mr. Willing had often said that presiding elders should be taken from among those who were equal to the best work; the bravest and truest; men of broad thought, tenderly unselfish, and clear-eyed enough to see a principle of right, and strong to stand for it under any pressure. That was fine sentiment; yet when the lightning struck him, he suffered intensely. Under forty, full of hope and ambition for wide usefulness, each appointment better than the last, the best in the Conference within reach, could he take that dray-horse drudgery, and lose his habits of study, becoming a mental fossil? The beautiful home-life, the thousand pleasures, spiritual and intellectual, pure and sweet, that were

doubled by being shared,—these would be broken up by the long absences. There were three months of mourning over the matter by two as sorrowful hearts as ever trudged over the itinerant road, till one morning the Lord flashed in a little common-sense daylight. They were going to a tedious old train that was to take the presiding elder to Poplar Grove Circuit. While they walked along, as gloomy as possible under the cross, it occurred to her to say: "I'm thinking, my dear, that if it were the episcopacy that separates us, there would be less crying in this family. I do n't believe the Lord likes to have us go on in this way. Here is one that is going to stop straight off. You have a grand chance to mold the spiritual life of the Church. Now, let us make the most of it." They never liked his being presiding elder; but there was little more ado about it.

His District work showed that he was nearer his ideal than he dreamed. A Chicago pastor writes: "At one of my first quarterly meetings, Dr. Willing and I were entertained together. At family worship he read and commented on the first chapter of First Corinthians in a way that was very encouraging to me. In our room he told me that, by being diligent in my duties as

pastor and preacher, pleasant and social, I could get along well, have a nice time, and do good; but by giving myself utterly to the Lord, living for him in all things, aiming always at the spiritual good of those to whom I ministered, though I might not have as smooth a way, I would please God, and have souls for my hire, the real joy of the minister. Years after, at Desplaines camp-meeting, he emphasized, especially to his younger brethren, the necessity of loving God with all the heart. I sought and found the fullness of blessing, which meant everything to me. Since then I have been used of God in a revival each year, except one when I was ill. We have just closed the fourth such year on this charge. Over forty have professed conversion."

The over-pastor has gone to his reward; but the men whose lives he was used to shape are winning their thousands.

Those who are entirely given to God are often most severely disciplined; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. Every branch in him that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

While Mr. Willing was on Rockford District he had sharp schooling. He loved his brethren.

He could not bear to have them think ill of him. He did not understand that a consecrated reputation must not be worried over. Given into God's hand, it must be left for him to take care of. One must believe that he is able to keep that which is committed to him.

There was trouble in one of the Churches; and when the Conference convened, the presiding elder found himself under a charge of maladministration. It was useless to tell him that the most that could come of it, was a censure of his judicial judgment. He could not bear the thought that he, who had always been without fear and without reproach, would be called before his brethren to answer to any sort of a charge. There is no use in trying to argue one out of the chastenings of the Lord. The lesson must be learned; and then they will vanish as they came, no one can tell just how.

Days were spent in humiliation and prayer; and other days in legal study. Conference convened, and a committee was appointed to try the case. Some of the ablest men were retained as counsel on both sides. A smoldering jealousy about appointments made the strife bitter and general, greatly to the distress of his peace-loving nature. He was on the rack; yet he

made most careful preparation for his defense.

At family prayer, the morning of the day set for the trial, he staid on his knees in silence a few moments after they had both prayed aloud. At length he looked up with the glow of heaven in his face. "The Comforter has come," he said, in his quiet, happy way. The lesson was learned, the discipline at an end. He went to the committee-room with a heart as light as a bird, and as sweet as that of a child. His Conference standing was in the hands of the Blessed One, and there could be no care about his keeping that which was committed to him.

The prosecution refused to act, and the affair wound up with the presentation in the Conference, by the bishop to the two, of an elegant silver table-set, in token of the esteem of their brethren. The Lord always cares for the reputation that is left utterly with him; but he will not allow any meddling with it by our puny carefulness.

A marvel was wrought in those days, though the like has become common to those who work in missions. When Mr. Willing was a lad, tobacco had been laid in his mouth for toothache. He despised the weed, yet he loved its soothing

effect on his troublesome nerves. He used it seldom, and so neatly that it was impossible to detect its odor about him; yet he knew that he was not free from a habit that he condemned; and that knowledge hurt his conscience. One day he was trying to cudgel his tired brain into sermon-making, and thinking how his racked nerves would be quieted by a bit of tobacco, when he remembered that God could take away the craving with a touch. Dropping on his knees, he uttered a prayer, and the work was done. From that moment he never had a wish for the noxious weed.

VIII.

THE WOMAN QUESTION.

W. C. WILLING had no small part in launching the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in the West, where it has flourished most. The day he went to Poplar Grove circuit, and the two made up their minds to stop their ado about the presiding eldership, he met Mr. and Mrs. Parker, of India. They came to Rockford with him, and he brought them home to luncheon. Mrs. Parker talked about a Society that the women of Boston

were about forming for the evangelization of heathen women. The lonesome little woman with whom she was talking, volunteered to help a little. She would go around the District and organize the women into Auxiliaries while their husbands were in Quarterly Conference in another room. It would give her an excuse to go occasionally with her beloved.

Mrs. Parker quietly went her way; but she wrote in a few days that the Society was formed; and that same little woman was one of its three Corresponding Secretaries. She was expected to organize all the territory between the State of Ohio and the Pacific Ocean. That bit of news was preposterous and appalling; but he, her Great Heart, saw what it meant for the world's salvation. It would be expensive, breaking up the home even more than the presiding eldership had done. She was most emphatically a home-keeper; but she would have to be away days and nights, weeks and months. She was abnormally timid, dreading strangers, in terror of crowds. This work would shorten her days. O, he made a costly sacrifice when he pushed her out to that service! Giving up her literary work, and paying her own traveling expenses, were too cheap a part of the outlay to be thought much about. A great

conviction had taken possession of his large, silent soul. When he had to answer her question, "Shall I go this once more?" as he had to do month after month, he always said: "Yes, for Christ's sake." He was coining his heart's blood for the salvation of the heathen.

Years after, when the burden of her secretaryship had grown quite intolerable, and they were discussing the propriety of her giving it up, he went away for prayer about it. When he came back he said: "God has shown me the condition of heathen women, and their power as mothers, in such a light that I think you ought to thank him on your knees that he has let you have a part in this work. You had better carry the load a while longer. It counts more than anything else on the salvation of the world."

That was the first phase of woman's work that he touched directly, and he took hold of it with strength.

Before that, he had exhausted every appeal to get the little conservative at his side to do some sort of public work. In their hours of beautiful talk—and no matter what crush of care they might be in, they always took plenty of time to talk about books, philanthropy, and the Lord's great love—he had tried to make her see

what a high-souled woman might do to lift up the motherhood of the race, which would mean the uplifting of all. She had said, when too closely crowded: "The Lord Jesus knows that I would do anything for him; but he has not given me one qualification for such work as you want me to do." A Radical of the Radicals, he let the logic of events do for her what argument had failed to accomplish. He believed in the complete equality of the sexes. He regarded the subjection of women as the cause of much masculine selfishness and feminine weakness. He looked upon the Scripture enjoining that women be kept in a subordinate position, as of local application, and that subjection as under a time-limit, like slavery, wine-drinking, and kindred wrongs, permitted on account of the hardness of men's hearts. Women not suffered to teach! Then turn them out of the public school, the Sabbath-school, and the care of their own children; for they do the greater part of the world's best teaching. They be silent in the Churches, of which they are two-thirds of the membership and three-quarters of the congregation! Then put them out of the choirs, and, in common fairness, relieve them of the drudgery of money-raising. Usurp authority over men?

That is usually done through men's bad passions. If men behave so that they can be revered, they may be sure that due reverence will be theirs. Inferior in position and fact? It ruins a weak man to put him in such a relation to a strong woman, and it makes the woman a hypocrite. It vitiates her reasoning by making her say that black is white, when she knows better. She has to live an untruth; and O, the pity of it! she bequeaths the untruth to her children.

Women unable to manage their own benevolences? "Give them a chance," he would say, "and you will see what they can do. The woman who trains a family of children as they ought to be trained, could rule a nation."

Equal to a share in Church government? Miriam was associated with her brothers in forming the great antitypal Church. He loved to speak of Deborah, Huldah, Mary, Priscilla, and the rest; and of the first Christian Council, in which the men and women elected an apostle.

When he was presiding elder of Joliet District, the Joliet Quarterly Conference recommended his wife to the District Conference for a local preacher's license. He examined her with the other candidates, and when he asked her if she believed herself called of God to preach the gospel, her

"Yes" brought gladness into his strong, steady, gracious eyes.

While he was on Chicago District, he put her in charge of one of his mission Churches. Women rallied to her help, and became her most efficient class-leaders and stewards. It was the delight of his soul to see that mission outstrip the others in numbers and spirituality. He was the legal pastor, but all the work was done by the other one.

His law study, of which he was always fond, gave him a keen relish for hunting a principle through a forest of fallacies. He knew politics thoroughly. "Talk about women being unfit for self-government, while foreigners, bigots, demagogues, scoundrels, are heading the ship toward the rocks! The ballot in the hands of that half of the people who live nearest God will be the saving of the country."

The New York victory over Tammany rejoiced him greatly; but what delighted him most was the part that women took in the fray. "But," he said, "how much more dignified it would have been if they had gone to the polls, as if they had a right to govern themselves!"

He believed that the Pentecost was an earnest of woman's enfranchisement, making pos-

sible the better conditions by which she could be saved from the subjection of the "dolorous, accursed centuries."

IX.

BUSINESS.

WHILE he was on Joliet District he saw the embarrassments that come to women when they are suddenly obliged to take charge of affairs of which they have no knowledge. He insisted that his wife should learn "business," so that, if he were suddenly called away, she would know how to take care of what was left. She demurred, on account of the complicated character of the study. "My dear, that is only a bugaboo to scare you women out. A woman's brain is as good as a man's any day; and, from her domestic training, better at details. So, remember, after this, you and I are partners, with equal rights and ownership, only the junior must do the work of the concern. If I go first, it will be hard enough for you, without your having to learn, under difficulties, how to manage what you have to live on."

The two were together at a great Methodist Convention in Bloomington. The four Conferences in Illinois had a general rally, reading papers, and discussing church interests. "Woman's Work" was the subject of a paper to be read by one of the Chicago preachers. He was a fine platform speaker, but quite conservative; so, much prayer was made, lest he should hinder the work of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society.

The first evening of the Convention, Mr. Willing was asked by his wife if the Doctor was there with his paper.

"No; and he is n't coming."

"Who is going to take his place?"

"I think you are."

"Indeed, I'll do no such thing! You brethren have had months in which to prepare your papers, and now you want a scared little woman to go before that great audience, on a question that vitally concerns our work, and upon a half-day's notice. That is n't fair play. There's too much at stake, and I'm not going to do it."

"You can do it, with God's help," he said; "and I believe that he requires it of you. If the one woman, in whom I believe above all others, refuses to trust God to carry her through,

when there is such a chance as this to help on her work, I will have to withdraw my confidence in the ability of women."

Every word weighed a pound, and she gasped out: "I'll do it, if I die trying!"

She did the best she could; and, with God's blessing, she spoke under such a cyclonic unction as seldom sweeps over an audience, feeling the while, that she had the least possible to do with the enthusiasm.

When Mrs. Willing was elected Professor of English Language and Literature in the university at Bloomington, she held back, because it would put seventy miles between her work and his. He decided that it was on the Divine plan; so she accepted the position. A few months later, he was elected to the chair of History and Civil Polity in the Law College of the same institution. He carried well both his Conference work and professorship, with seventy miles between District and College.

While they were in Bloomington the Woman's Temperance Crusade struck the city.

"The ladies want you to come to a temperance-meeting," he said, when he came in, one evening.

"I can't go. I wish I could; but it is ab-

surd to think of it. A woman who has to get her dressmaking done by photo, and her shoes fitted by telegram, can't take another bit of work. I am sorry," she added, with a nervous laugh that tried to get the better of her tears; "but you know I have to look after all the English of this College, and I can't do another thing."

"I know," he said, in his gentle, kind way; "I don't see how you can carry another ounce; but this is a grand work of God. I don't believe I'd decide just yet. God can make time for a thing when he wants it done. I'd wait a little."

She waited, and went to the meeting, and into the work, and God did make time; for she held a daily temperance-meeting for weeks, and finally the women carried Bloomington for "No License"—the largest town in the United States captured by the Crusade. The State Union was organized, and the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union; and back of her part of it all, was the patient courage of one who, for love of Christ, was pushing his very heart's heart out into the battle.

The Chautauqua Assembly grounds were opened the summer after the Crusade winter. The "junior" of this pair of Bloomington Pro-

fessors chanced to be invited to make one of the dedicatory addresses, and to speak on "Woman and Temperance."

"Preposterous!" she said. "I'll write at once, and tell them that I can't go. I'm not equal to such work."

"Wait, dear; do n't be in haste. When God wants one to do a thing, he gives strength, you know."

She waited, and went, and he went with her, and the talking was done. The point that comes back most clearly after twenty years, was his prayer when she spoke on "Woman and Temperance." When he came to pray for the poor little speaker, who was kneeling at his side, scared half out of her wits, he said: "Lord, she is thine, not ours. We push out to thee thine own. Do as thou wilt, only use heart and brain, soul and strength, for the coming of thy kingdom." There might have been but one in that great audience who understood the tremendous sacrifice, the boundless self-giving of which that prayer was the exponent. His keen insight saw that it involved the continued breaking up of home-life, which few loved as he did, separate service, the wear and tear of public duty, and its dangers; but the surrender was made for Christ's

sake. He used to say, with a pathetic, Lincoln-like laugh: "We men are a selfish lot. Every one of us will avail himself of the help in evangelistic or temperance work that some other man's wife can give; but it is quite another thing when it comes to having our own comfort interfered with. We may say the Lord's Prayer till we are black in the face; but until we are ready to sacrifice our own heart's joy for His work, the Kingdom will not come. We hang back, like great babies, and make it wretchedly hard for the women who are called to public service. Everybody pities me because you leave me alone so much. I don't know whether they think I'm too delicate, or that I can't be trusted to stay alone. If I were a bishop, or a brakeman on a freight-train, or anybody between the two, I might leave you months at a time, and nobody would make a fuss about it."

X.

CONVICTIONS OF DUTY.

DR. WILLING left Joliet District under a "conviction" that drew him to a small church in Chicago. The salary was about one-third of

what they were receiving. The expense of living was greatly increased. The teaching would have to be given up, and of that he was very fond. He had learned to settle every question of duty by direct reference to the Divine will, listening, as the Friends say, for the "Inner Voice." So they waited in prayer till it was clear to him that Langley Avenue was the place where God would have them go. To Langley Avenue they went, and two good years did they have there.

The second summer they bought a cottage at Lake Bluff, the first "home of their own." A tiny shell of a house, fit only for hot weather; but it was always brimful of happiness. Dr. Willing's fine, artistic taste never wearied of the sweep of lake in storm or calm, the moonlight in the ravine, the four great oaks near the door, the night-fires he delighted to kindle, and the clear, bright stars blinking down through the trees. Heaven only can give better days than were those in the little, pink-and-blue cottage. Evangelists, ministers, missionaries scattered over the wide world, will recall the big, kind brother who gave them hearty welcome there, and helped them be merry to their heart's content while they rested from hard study and work.

After Langley Avenue came Chicago District. He was led of the Lord to make deep spiritual preparation for that work. Two or three weeks before Conference, a couple of ladies, since widely known as evangelists, spent some time with Dr. and Mrs. Willing. Every morning, after family worship, the Doctor would say: "Now get your Bibles. I'm forward for prayers." It would be nearly noon before the study and prayer were ended.

The stanchness of his submission is seldom equaled, even among the best people. His favorite hymn was a key to his character:

"I worship thee, sweet will of God,
And all thy ways adore;
And every day I live, I learn
To love thee more and more.

Thou wast the end, the blessed rule
Of our Savior's toils and tears;
Thou wast the passion of his heart,
Those three and thirty years.

And thou hast breathed into my soul
A special love of thee;
A love to lose my will in His,
And by that loss be free."

With him there was no slurring things over, hoping that God would not be too particular about trifles. In an unmailed letter, already

quoted, were these words, his last message: "Be right with God at any cost. Everything is cheap in contrast with God's indorsement." Days of close heart-searching and prayer were frequent during the later years of his life. While he was on Chicago District he had a "shut-in" fortnight, which the three who studied with him can never forget. Circumstances kept them from their work, and they made the most of the time. Every morning after breakfast they came together in his room, and studied the Word of God all day, stopping only for their meals. Their theme was the Person and Power of the Holy Spirit. He was loaded to the guards with work, keeping his private secretary and a half-dozen others busy most of the time; yet he felt the need of calling a halt now and then, and getting down to the first principles of faith in God, and so renewing his spiritual strength. It may be well for those who would have his power in prayer, his sterling integrity, his magnificent meekness, to know by what means he was so ennobled and perfected.

When a candidacy for General Conference was named to him, he said, Yes, he would like to be associated with the representative men of the Church, and have a vote on certain ques-

tions in which he was deeply interested. He had been presiding elder on four of the six districts of the Conference, and many of the preachers were his warm personal friends; but a word of Paul stood in his way: "In honor preferring one another." When his brethren discussed the matter, he repeated his text to those who understood him best. He did not go to General Conference; but he had what was infinitely better than an archiepiscopate without it: he had a Christly soul.

Before he was appointed to Chicago District he said: "It is a grand chance to do good. Perhaps some one else would do the work better than I. I am sure that if God wants me on the District, I shall go on; if he does not, I shall stay off. All I want is his dear will." Probably no man was ever more used of God for work in that energetic young Chicago than was he.

XI.

CITY MISSIONS.

ON Chicago District, Dr. Willing set himself at turning the wealth of the rich on the poverty of the poor. He found men of large means

who were glad to give liberally to evangelize the masses, if they could be sure that their funds were economically and wisely administered. He found the City Mission society crippled by debt. He took its secretaryship, paid off its liabilities, and set it at work. They bought a house, and he took a number of theological students to do missionary work. It saved time for him to hear their reports, and tell them what to do, while they were at the table.

One of the young men would canvass a needy district, and find a room for a Sabbath-school. Then two or three others would open the school. Presently there would be preaching Sunday evenings, and soon a mission church would be under way. He opened place after place in that way, and some of them are among the best churches in that city to-day.

He continued the City Mission work two years after he left the District. Toward the end of that time his health gave out, and he had to spend the summer in Great Britain and in New England. At length the Lord restored him to his usual strength, and at the Fall Conference he was appointed to Halsted Street church, Chicago.

While, there he formed the first Bohemian

Methodist church in the world, leaving it at the end of a year with a hundred members.

During those years a moderate competence had been given; but it was all swept away in an hour, leaving debts from which, with their slow means of acquiring property, they could not hope ever to be free. With his horror of debt, that was a great disaster. It was not easy to see why it had been permitted. He had always been a large giver. No one could accuse him of covetousness. The matter became clear at length, and the lesson was learned. Then the pieces of property, that had changed hands more than once in that yeasty Chicago market, all came back, as if the Lord would say: "I want you to see that this is all my work, and for your good."

It is not easy to say just what the lesson was; but it seemed to the two about like this: It is not enough to hold consecrated property subject to God's order; it must not be depended upon in the least; the Lord alone is the portion of those who are made kings and priests unto him.

Dr. Willing's health was poor, and he believed that his days were numbered. So he would say: "There will be a little left to take care of the other one when I am gone." He could not quite see that he must leave her in the

hands of God, depending on him to care for her as certainly with the little means as if there were none at all. It is a fine point to draw; but when one had walked with God as many years as he had, his lessons could not be of the coarse, external order, such as are given to immature Christians. Preachers must prepare their sermons as if they had to do it all, and trust as if they had done nothing. More easily said than done. Charles Wesley put it into one of his hymns:

"And when my all of strength shall fail,
I shall with the God-man prevail."

Dr. Willing had tried his best, with his own legal knowledge and that of others, to save a little from the wreck; but in vain. Nothing avails against God's discipline. The only way out, as in the Rockford trial, was to let the Comforter come and teach the lesson.

After that, the property question was settled, and a limit fixed, beyond which they could not go in ownership. They might save enough to give them a plain, simple living when they were too old to earn; but every dollar beyond that must go at once into the Lord's work.

After the Halsted Street pastorate were two

good, fruitful years on Freeport District. There was much culture of the missionary and revival spirit among the people, and a decided advance in spirituality. With all the hard work, he gave much time to good reading and close study. With his love of books, and his keen observation of the currents of thought, it was impossible for him to fossilize. He did a great deal of study, even in the last year of his life. He seldom preached a sermon, no matter how familiar he was with it, without rewriting it two or three times. With all the terrible suffering of the last four years, he did the best study, and the clearest, strongest thinking of his life.

XII.

IN NEW YORK.

DR. WILLING'S interest in the neglected masses in Chicago, and his success there, led him to consider the call that came to spend his remaining years working for the poor in New York City. He saw the power of the metropolis over the politics, the finance, the morals of the Nation. The "down-down" Churches were dying out, as he believed, for lack of the aggressive godliness

that first planted them. He longed to seize the falling colors, and plant them on a bulwark that faithful hearts would raise against intemperance, Romanism, and worldiness. He did not care for the honors that go with "good appointments." He could live simply, and with no salary except what God was pleased to send. He had learned something about trusting under difficult circumstances. The Lord might use him to help solve the hard problem.

It required a sacrifice, the costliness of which only his itinerant brethren could appreciate, to leave his family, friends, and the comrades to whom he was bound by a thousand ties. Life must be begun anew. O, it was a brave faith, and it was a hero who dared attempt such a work for the Lord's poor! It took much prayer to bring him where he could hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord, so as to be sure that he made no mistake.

"Yes," he said at last, "we are to go; but I must have a transfer, and work in the regular lines."

"You can't get a transfer to that Conference. It would not admit even a younger man, unless he were a star preacher; and not then, unless some strong Church demanded his transfer."

Nevertheless he was transferred, and stationed as assistant pastor at Jane Street church, New York.

For a year and a half he worked there with marked success, though his health was seriously impaired by *la grippe*. That fearful disease was carrying off its thousands. At last it assailed his other self. She spoke at a missionary meeting in the afternoon, and before midnight she seemed to be nearing the far shore of the unknown sea. Several times during the night she aroused herself from the stupor, and asked why he was sitting up. Was he ill? Had he any trouble? After she was quite out of danger, he said: "Now I will tell you what I was doing when I sat up so late those nights. I was wrestling with the Lord for your life. I knew that your only chance was in God. He gave you back to me."

The next year he was appointed to Twenty-fourth Street church. He began his work full of hope and faith; but the deadly sewer-gas met him at the parsonage door, and his health gave way immediately. He made the bravest fight for life and usefulness that ever a man did; but the poison was too much for even his courage and will. Weeks of unutterable suffering fol-

lowed. Neuralgias, rheumatisms—pain, pain, pain, constant, severe, excruciating—filled his days and nights; and yet his soul was set upon the prosperity of the work given him to do. He had never failed. He would succeed now in spite of the tortures, the difficulties, the obstacles, innumerable and immeasurable. God alone knows the good wrought by his patient, persistent self-giving.

He arose from two weeks in bed with inflammatory rheumatism, and went to his Conference. He was urged to take a year off and get well. They could summer in the Catskill cottage, and winter in Italy; and he could come home the next year, well and strong, ready for the best work of his life. His mind was at its best. His habits of study were never better. His Christian experience was growing daily more clear and beautiful. He was worth too much to the cause of Christ to kill himself by working under such disabilities. No; he believed that the Lord's hand pointed toward the little mountain parish, and he would go if he died on the way.

“His stay in the country would be only temporary,” he said, cheerfully. “We'll keep our home in the city, and I'll come as often as I can. Perhaps the Lord will help you open a mission;

so that, if I am not able to take work next Conference, we can fall back on that.”

No pastor could have worked more faithfully than he did in that last parish. His health improved. His soul was full of the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Having left his library in the city, his main study was the Bible. He had little fancy for doctrines or prophecies. He cared most to learn about Christian privilege. His knowledge of the rich, beautiful things of Scripture was wonderful. The Lord's gentleness made him great. His kindness of speech about those who misunderstood him was marvelous. He seemed, like Moses, to have the majesty of meekness that belongs to one who dares to talk face to face with God.

Few young, healthy men could report as many pastoral visits as he made, going to see people who said that a minister had never called on them before. He seemed to be just reaching his prime of power.

His last day in the body was spent in a neighboring village, defending a brother minister. After three hours of severe suffering his heart gave way, and in an instant he was present with the Lord. Funeral services were held in his own church, and in his city home, and his

remains were laid away in Greenwood Cemetery.

So lived, so loved, so triumphed through faith in our Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit, one of the noblest men whose lip ever touched the silver trumpet of the temple service. For him the apostle's words were made good: "To live is Christ; to die is gain."

XIII.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

WILLIAM C. WILLING, D. D., was born in Mayville, Chautauqua County, New York, August 30, 1829. He had a common-school education. In 1852 he began the study of law. A few years later he completed the course, and took the degree of LL. B. in the Illinois Wesleyan University. In the spring of 1853 he decided to enter the Methodist ministry. In the autumn of that year he joined Genesee Conference. Soon after he was married to Miss Jennie Fowler, daughter of Horatio and Harriet Fowler, of Newark, Ill.

He was stationed at Centreville, Spencerport, Scottsville, Warsaw, and Olean; after which he was transferred to Rock River Conference. His

charges were Mendota, Princeton, Freeport, Aurora, Rockford District, Joliet District, Langley Avenue, Chicago, Chicago District, Chicago City Missions, Halsted Street church, Chicago, and Freeport District.

In 1889 he was transferred to the New York Conference, and served a year and a half as associate pastor of Jane Street church, New York, and three years as pastor of Twenty-fourth Street church, New York; after which he was appointed to Griffin's Corners. His long and grandly useful life here was closed by his removal to the Church Triumphant, December 11, 1894, in Margaretville, New York.

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