The Woolinappers

By Cilly Aston
DEAR MISS ASTON.

Some two months ago, when you asked my opinion regarding the publication, in a collected form, of some short stories you had contributed to "The Spectator," I readily undertook to revise your proofs, and to write a short preface for the little volume. Unhappily I was prostrated by a severe illness immediately afterwards, from which I have not yet recovered, and am unable to carry out that critical examination which you desired. But a rather hurried reading of the papers left on my mind the impression that you had, to a certain extent, struck new ground in this department of Australian fiction.

It has been one of my pleasures to delve pretty freely in every phase of Australian literature, and I have more than once expressed pretty strongly my regret that the short story which has achieved popularity has generally been based on the "Bulletin" model. And that model is just the antithesis of what is wanted for the home circle. I need not specify particular
books or individual writers, but the editions that go off by their thousands—that have become practically typical Australian stories—are, as a rule, shaped on a low moral standard; the incidents arise out of the meanest motives; shameless dishonesty and mendacity are commended as "smartness"; and generally the seamy side of our colonial life is prominently displayed.

It is refreshing, after so much of this coarser aspect of our humanity to find a few simple episodes of life told without exaggeration, yet with a sufficiency of detail and a naturalness of motive to make them interesting. The sayings and doings of the Methodist contingent of the primitive hamlet of Woolinap may contain nothing but what comes before us all in following the conventional round of our existence. But it is pleasant to rest by the way and consider the applicability of some of the stories to ourselves, and how we should have acted under the given circumstances. A little mild introspection is better for our character than the increased pulse from a perusal of some daring piece of sensationalism, or some glaring prevarication of the possibilities.

Personally, I have a great liking for stories touching on variations in the current forms of religious belief. I do not mean theological discussions under the guise of fiction, such as "Robert Elsmere," or "John Ward, Preacher," but stories dealing with the characters of people that have been formed under some special scheme of faith. The best illustration I can
call to mind will be found in the charming short stories of Mary E. Wilkins, who maintains, throughout a very long series, an absolute distinctiveness and individuality in her puppets, while showing the underlying force of the old New England puritanism, stamping its imprint, not only on man, woman and child, but upon everything that goes to make up the world of action in which the scenes are set.

I believe there are phases of Methodism that specially lend themselves to an artistic framework for fiction, and I trust that you may be spared to work out some of its problems, as a creator of character, to your own satisfaction and that of your readers.

I trust that your little volume will meet with a generous reception, and may be only the prelude to several.

Yours faithfully,

HENRY GYLES TURNER.

St. Kilda, 18th November, 1905.
NOTE FROM THE AUTHORESS.

I desire to tender my thanks to The Spectator Publishing Company, for their kindness in allowing me to reprint these tales in book form; also to Mr. Nelson Rudduck and many others who have made this enterprise possible by ordering a number of copies beforehand. I am likewise deeply indebted to Mr. Henry Gyles Turner for the introductory letter which appears in this volume. The high esteem in which that gentleman’s literary insight is held makes an introduction from him invaluable to a comparatively obscure writer like myself, and I trust ever to produce work that shall not shame his kindness on this occasion.

This little volume is not an ambitious effort, but perhaps there may be some of my readers who will find an echo of old times in their hearts as they peruse the outpouring of mine, who will recall the pleasures, pains, squabbles and reconciliations of the days when they lived in a Woolinap. Everything here written has been conceived in a kindly spirit, and in that spirit I beg my readers to make the acquaintance of “The Woolinappers.”

TILLY ASTON.

6 WILLIAMS ROAD, MOONEE PONDS.
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CHAPTER I.—"Reforming the Church Music."

In the little town of Woolinap there were two churches—the Roman Catholic and the Methodist. They did not quite meet the requirements of the district, for Dave McAndrew wanted a Presbyterian Church, and drove fourteen miles each Sunday rather than patronise the Methodist, which was a mile from his door. Jack Dawson, again, was Anglican, and went nowhere, since he could not have a service according to the prayer-book; and Wilky Dane longed ardently for a Congregational establishment. His difficulty, however, was that he would have to build the edifice, pay the minister, lead the choir, and act as sole trustee; so his desire was not likely to become a reality.

So the Methodist chapel was left to serve the spiritual needs of the Protestants, and accomplished that work fairly well; and of course the Rev. Father O'Brien saw that it did not interfere with his flock. The little congregation consisted of a strange assortment as far as nationality and temperament are concerned; there was Joe Dunn, a fiery, quarrelsome, enthusiastic Irishman, who was often obliged to rely upon the tact of his wife to
get him out of his church scrapes; then came Jacob Trenewy, a Cornishman of the stiff-backed order, with a decided preference for revival services, and a keen sense of what is due to leading church officers. The next in importance and in character, a reflection of the other two, was Dick Hilton, or Yorky Dick, as he was called, a man who followed the exciting and useful occupation of horse-breaking for all the farmers round. The only other man worth mentioning was the jovial, soft-hearted store-keeper, Mr. Rigbert, who made it a rule never to dispute what the other three agreed to do. These four men practically ran the Methodist church in Woolinap, and woe betide the adventurous spirit that should dare to poke a nose in amongst their affairs.

Now, it happened that, after much consideration, and after a judicial weighing of the pros and cons, Wilky Dane had approached Mr. Trenewy with a view to joining the class meeting, of which the latter was leader. He, Wilky Dane, said that he was losing his pleasure in spiritual feasts through the lack of communion with fellow Christians, that the Methodists differed from the Independents more in matters of church government than in doctrine, that he had determined to take up Christian work, and that his first step was to unite himself with the one Christian body in the town. At that time Wilky had been in Woolinap only a few months, but was quite a settled man in his little tailor’s shop.

Jacob had said that he would be very glad to have such a fellow-worker in the Church, that the harvest was great and the reapers few; he had also named the hour of his class, and invited Wilky to attend. At the first meeting
of the class the leader announced that the Lord had put it into the heart of their brother to throw in his lot with God's people in this Zion, and that he knew they would all welcome the newcomer in the name of Christ. So Wilky Dane started his career in the cause of Methodism at Woolinap; and pray, good Methodist, take the hint! For, had any other denomination been first on the field, the Methodists might not have won this resourceful, steady-minded, industrious worker. Many a good Methodist has been gathered in in this way, and we trust that many more may be in the days that are still unwritten.

Mr. Dane was a very different type of man from his co-workers; he was an American, but had lost much of his Yankee assertiveness during his twenty years' residence in various parts of this State, but he was of a masterful temperament, not altogether overbearing, and one who had the ability to get his own way without hurting other people. He had, above all, that originality of mind which is required to maintain his ascendancy when he had got it. He had received a much better education than the four men described above, and, although God can use even babes for His glory, yet a Paul, learned in all the learning of his age, was the greatest power, after Christ, that Christendom has ever seen.

When the American had joined the Methodists, general delight had been the note; one dissenter had spoken, however, and she was Mrs. Trenewy. "Take my word, Jacob, there won't be much good come of it! That man will soon turn us all out, and take the managing of the
whole concern himself!" But Jacob didn't believe it, and said so; and his wife, being a true Paulian woman, held her peace, and croaked no more.

And Mr. Dane soon began to be useful; he joined the choir, of which Yorky Dick was conductor and sole tenor; he lent some new anthems, and persuaded Dick to try a few new hymns, in addition to the regular twenty-five, which constituted the repertoire of the choir. His next idea was to get a new organ; and certainly a new one was needed, for the little portable "Alexander," that had done duty for the last five years, was squeaky in the bellows, and croaky in the reeds. It was simply exhausting to play upon it; unless the bellows were worked rapidly the music came forth in gasps and grunts of a most diverting description; and Miss Sarah Trenewy, who officiated as honorary organist, would have found the treadmill an easy task, had she been so unfortunate as to be set to it.

The singing at the services was something like this; the tune is "Stella," and the words "Now I have Found," and please remember that the squeaks concur with the words, or rather syllables, excepting where there are two squeaks to a syllable that has to be sustained:

\[
\text{Now I have found the ground wherein—}
\]

\[\text{Squeak, squeak, squeak, squeak, squeak, squeak, squeak}
\]

and so on, and right through all the verses, and at the slowest rate possible.
Yorky Dick did not mind the rhythmic interruption of the singing, but Wilky Dane did, hence his proposition to get a new organ.

So the matter was broached to the two trustees, Dunn and Trenewy, and they declared that it couldn't be done. No money was available, the interest on building loan was nearly due, and, in short, there was to be no new organ! The old one had done so long; let it do a little longer! and so forth. But everybody knows in what light the non-musical portion of a church regards the demands of the other side.

The choir-master agreed with the trustees, while the choir took Mr. Dane's view; the American himself said very little, but had Mr. Trenewy seen his look when the decision of the trustees was communicated to him, he would have known that the Methodists were going to have a new organ, and that very soon.

On the following Sunday the harmonium behaved worse than ever; in addition to the squeak of the bellows and the bronchial croak in the reeds, one of the notes (the lower B flat), emitted a caw like a great grand-father crow, every time the treadle was worked; so there was now a rhythmic and discordant "Caw, caw," accompanying the "Squeak, squeak," as the song of praise proceeded. Sarah looked mightily worried as she battled away at her tread-mill, and her face grew hotter and redder every hymn. Outside the chapel after the service, Yorky Dick was greeted with the question, "What's up with the choir this morning? Some of 'em were off the track, weren't they?" "Very likely, when they never
come to practise!" There was a point in this remark, for Mrs. Lade was standing by, and she always absented herself from this interesting gathering. "Wasn't it the organ?" suggested another, "I was hearing that the choir want a new one!" "The choir is always wanting something," said Trenewy. "And sure, they're not likely to get it," added Joe Dunn; "and if it comes to a point, they could sing without an instrument, just as they did before organs were invented." Mr. Dane suggested that that was a very long time ago, since Jubal was the father of such as handle the harp and organ, and that this notable musician is mentioned early in the book of Genesis. The American could be sarcastic when he liked, and sarcasm was a weapon against which Joe Dunn had no chance whatever; he did not understand it, although he was an Irishman, and consequently a reputed wit.

Things went on in this fashion for a few weeks, and each Sunday the harmonium grew more intolerable to that section of the congregation that had made up its mind for a new one; then Wilky held a little party at his house, to which he invited the choir, but not its conductor, since Dick was on the trustee side; he also called in a few of the advanced thinkers of the general body, and in camera they discussed the situation. It was certain that the proper people, the stewards and the trustees, would not take the matter up; that unless someone else did so, the service must be marred for many a day to come by the groanings of the tortured harmonium; and finally, it was agreed that the choir should see to it themselves, and if necessary, raise the required money.
But how? That was the question! The giving capacity of most Methodist congregations is pretty well taxed, and the presenting of a fresh object for beneficence often withdraws from the sustenance of others; and this was as well known to Wilky as to the trustees themselves, therefore he offered another suggestion. "I vote for getting something out of the people who do not come to church, and I think I know how, too, if you will just leave it in my hands for a week or two! I suppose the trustees won't mind accepting the organ when we have got it? Just leave it to me for a week or two, and I'll see what can be done."

So it was agreed, and a fortnight later the town of Woolinap was placarded in every available quarter with this innocent announcement in red letters on a white ground:

"COME TO THE SHIRE HALL ON THURSDAY NIGHT,
TO HEAR TWO SWEET SINGERS SING THE OLD SONGS!
THE SINGERS ARE NAMELESS TILL THEY APPEAR.
IRISH SONGS A SPECIALITY!"

This placard was very vague, as it was intended to be, and naturally drew forth much comment. Everybody wondered who had put it up, and who the singers were; everybody wanted to know; everybody liked old songs; everybody thought he would go; and so it came about that the Shire Hall was crowded, inside and out-
side, more for curiosity than for a love of music and the old songs. The piano was open—a rumor said it had been tuned—and the audience waited impatiently to discover the identity of the performers; most suspected a trick. Then, at five minutes past eight, the door leading from the anteroom on to the stage opened, and no less a person than Wilky Dane appeared. A roar of derision and vexation arose from the hall, and a hiss came from the back seats. Wilky stepped forward, and was greeted with an apple thrown by a member of the audience. "Thanks," he said, coolly, as he caught it, and put it into his coat pocket; "and now, friends, you think yourselves sold, don't you? Well, I know you are not! But wait until I explain! It was I who put up those placards; it was I who booked this hall; I also got the piano tuned, and I am going to see that you get your money's worth. All of you know that I met some friends at the coach to-day. They are your entertainers, and my cousins, ladies and gentlemen, Miss Nelly Dane and Mr. Prescott Dane, both of whom are known and welcome with Melbourne audiences! I have no fear in leaving your pacification to them, and I trust you may enjoy the concert as well as I shall enjoy the takings."

The Methodists present thought that Wilky Dane had gone mad; but he hadn't. The singers kept the audience in a good humor for the next two hours, with song after song of the old school, reaching all hearts with the sweet, sweet memory-laden tunes, and bringing back the pure emotions of childhood and youth with the simple and tender words of the long ago.
There was no dissatisfaction when the programme ended: Wilky in particular was jubilant, for he had in his pocket fourteen pounds, and could hardly forbear from dancing his journey home along the street. “I have plundered the Philistines,” he cried: “I have extracted from the O’Dwyers and Malonesys, and all without their knowing it, a goodly number of shillings towards the Methodist Church organ!” “But,” protested his cousin Nelly, “Do you think you ought to have got the people there without telling them to what purpose the money should be put?” “I guess I do! They didn’t come to help me, or the Church; they came for curiosity and a concert, and they have gratified the one and enjoyed the other. Now we shall have the organ; only six pounds more to get, and that I can raise easily with the help of the choir!”

Next day Wilky went to see Yorky Dick. “What in the name of all that’s good were you up to last night?” said the choir-master. “Were you off your head, man?” “Not quite, but very nearly; I was doing a little organ-building, Dickie.” Dick looked incredulous. “I have got fourteen pounds towards it!” Dick looked more incredulous. Then Wilky showed him the money. “Fourteen pounds? Why, man, that is nearly enough to buy one! We could almost afford to have one with stops.” “Yes, Dick, and my cousin knows where we can get a good one for twenty pounds! Will you give us a hand to get the rest?” Mr. Hilton looked doubtful, but at last he said, “What about Dunn and Trenewy?” “Oh, they’ll be all right when we hand over the new instrument, bought and paid for!”
The choir was hilarious and the congregation glad, so the balance of the money was made up in no time. Jacob Trenewy alone objected, for he resented the irregular mode of procedure by which he had been overruled, he, the first trustee and steward, and class-leader; so he retired from his stewardship as a protest, and withdrew his daughter from her post as organist, which last was a great shame, now that she might have got a little pleasure out of her work. But time cures all such vexations, and after a period of sulks the Cornishman resumed his place as class-leader, at the entreaty of Wilky. It was not, however, till he acknowledged that the organ was "pretty fair," that Sarah realised that her father was bending to the inevitable.
CHAPTER II.

A Comet Appears.

Just about the time the new organ had been placed in the Wesleyan chapel at Woolinap, Mr. Rigbert found that his business was becoming too much for him to manage single-handed, and that he must get assistance from some quarter. Hitherto his wife had taken her place in the store on busy days, but now that her family numbered four, all restless, hungry and hearty, the poor woman declared that she could no longer cope with the work in both home and business. So a council was held by the couple, and it was agreed to engage a shop assistant. An advertisement was sent to "The Spectator," in which fair inducements were offered to any young grocer, but a Methodist preferred.

Mr. Rigbert was a jolly old soul, and for a whole week he plagued and pleased his girl acquaintances by telling them that he was bringing up from Melbourne a fine young man for one of them, and that next Sunday they must all put on their anniversary dresses, and look their very best. Of course, they did not take any notice of his teasing; nevertheless, these same young ladies looked slyly towards the storekeeper's pew when they came into service on the next Sunday morning.

Alice Hilton, daughter of Yorky Dick, was perhaps the prettiest girl among them, and she had soft yellow hair, pink cheeks, and roguish, blue eyes. Now, Alice sang in the choir, ably backed up, if not overwhelmed,
by the large and predominating voices of the Mesdames King and Lade; there were also in the choir several very young misses, but they must be regarded as too simple and innocent to have any interest in the advent of a fresh young man. None of the other young women were in the choir, and since Sarah Trenewy had resigned from the organ, Jack Rigbert, a boy of fifteen, had taken her place. So Alice had the best opportunity to see and be seen, from her place in the choir beside the little pulpit. She cast her eyes towards the Rigbert pew as soon as she was fairly seated, and there he was, a tall youth, in a neat townified suit, a glossed shirt front (glossed shirts were unknown in Woolinap), and the loveliest blue silk tie.

The young man had other advantages, too, in the shape of a fine, intellectual face and a set of well-formed features; the reader of character, however, would have noticed a cynical curve of the upper lip, and a rather disconcerting challenge in the eye.

He took note of everything and everybody in the church, and joined heartily in the singing; and Yorky Dick smiled pleasantly in anticipation of an addition to his faithful brigade.

And when the service was over, the people crowded round the stranger, and shook him warmly by the hand; only the girls stood off, giggling shyly. Then Mr. Rigbert turned, and saw pretty Alice standing by, and so sweet she looked that he at once drew her forward and introduced her. “Mr. Bridge, this is Miss Hilton, the daughter of our choirmaster, and one of our best lady
A COMET APPEARS.

singers! Of course, you will join the choir, and then you will soon get to know each other!” Mr. Bridge bowed, and Alice tried to do the same; but she was more accustomed to hand-shaking, and managed the bow rather awkwardly; still she had triumphed, and was the envy of all the girls, not one of whom had been presented to the newcomer.

That evening the young man was invited to take tea with the Hiltons, and the acquaintance between Alice and himself was considerably matured. He was pretty well cross-questioned by Dick as to what church work he had been doing, whether he was a local preacher or a Sunday-school teacher, or had he been in the choir; did he belong to a class, and so on; and Alice assisted her mother to get the tea in style, with the best china and Alice's own d'oyleys, at the same time making sheep's eyes at Mr. Bridge whenever a suitable opportunity offered itself.

After tea Mrs. Hilton sent her daughter off to the front room (otherwise the parlour) to have some singing, while she did the washing up; and there Mr. Bridge helped the family to sing hymns until it was time to go to church. And Alice walked to the sanctuary beside the new young man, and bore herself proudly beneath the quizzing of the other girls as they stood about the gate, waiting for the arrival of the minister, who was to take the service.

I am afraid that his sermon did Alice very little good, for she did not hear it. She was thinking of another matter altogether, and perhaps she may be excused when
it is remembered that she was but twenty, and the prettiest girl in Woolinap.

But the proceedings of that Sunday were repeated upon the next, and, in fact, upon every Sunday during the three months that followed; and young Jimmy Dunn began to look very unhappy indeed, because he had been for some time trying to bring his courage up to the point of walking home with Alice. He had even thought of joining the choir because she went to the Friday night practice; but without any voice, and without any ear to keep him from wandering into the deeps of bass when he should be upon the heights of the treble, he felt that this scheme might end in ignominy, and the scorn of her whom he wished to conciliate.

But Mr. Bridge stuck to his advantage, and regularly attended Alice home after choir practice. There was, however, one thing that displeased Alice, and that was the fact that her knight would never stay to a prayer-meeting. In the church at Woolinap, staying to a prayer-meeting was one of the signs of grace, and Yorky Dick did not much relish the idea of his girl keeping company with a young man who could not enjoy a good rowdy prayer-meeting. But just about that time another problem began to occupy the minds of all the Wesleyan community, and Dick let Alice's affairs slip behind him a little in order to try his skill in solving the other.

Five or six miles from Woolinap had sprung up another township, around some payable mines that had been discovered there some years before. This town had
a flourishing trade, a market and a bank, and, above all, a weekly paper. It was in connection with this paper that the annoyance of the Wesleyans had arisen.

There began to appear in its columns every week a short article under the heading, "Doings in Zion," in which every trifling detail of the chapel's inner conduct was held up to view, all the petty squabbles, all the small gossip, the advent of a top hat on the head of the young and aspiring school-master, and everything else upon which a sarcasm could be pasted, or a witticism hung. The author of these articles was clever, and generally amused all but those upon whom he was for the moment practising. It makes all the difference, though, if your own particular style of walk, dress, or speech, is cunningly analysed and aptly described, and it is almost certain that you will not like it quite so well as when it is someone else's.

So the annoyance went on, not without affording some delight to the juniors; but the older folk did not appreciate the compliments paid them, and were very busy trying to find out the culprit author. One week it would be an account of Dick's method of conducting the choir; another it would be a description of a very lively prayer-meeting, given from the standpoint of one who does not understand the spiritual significance of the religious emotions; again it would be a covert reference to some new courtship looming in the near future.

It must be one of their own people, for the contributor to the columns of "The Flag" knew altogether too much for an outsider.
The school-master was suspected, and taxed with the perpetration of the scourge; but he quickly pointed out how sharply he had been smitten himself, and that it was beyond reason for a man to hold himself up to ridicule. Then Wilky Dane was accused, but he denied all knowledge of the matter in such a fashion, and looked so formidable at the same time, that his accusers retired in confusion. All efforts to find the culprit proved equally abortive, and the cutting, probing and ridiculing went on in "The Flag."

That very week in which Wilky had been accused, the satirist politely narrated how a little accident had occurred to an unmentionable portion of a certain gentleman's costume, when the gentleman was getting out of his buggy at a certain church door, on the previous Sunday morning; and that, before the service could proceed, the gentleman had gone into retirement with a needle and thread. The writer sorrowfully pointed out that such an accident could not have occurred had those buttons been sewn on by a Methodist tailor, and with Methodist thread, and he further expressed a hope that the said gentleman preacher would in future drive out to W. and get his nether buttons put on by the "One Tailor" in the shire.

For six long months did the hearts of Yorky Dick and Joe Dunn burn under such inflictions; and then a report went round the town that Mr. Rigbert's assistant was going to leave. He had got a better situation in Melbourne, and although he had been very happy among his friends in the country, his advancement necessitated
his leaving Woolinap. So the church people gave him a send-off social, and expressed keen regret that circumstances were about to rob them of such a fine young man, and he bore it all complacently, and looked as much pleased with himself as sorry for leaving them.

With the best of good wishes, he departed by the coach next morning, and Alice Hilton nearly broke her little heart as she heard the rumble of the wheels die away in the distance.

That evening, however, there was another kind of excitement in the house of Yorky Dick. When the family was just finishing its late tea, there came a sharp rap at the kitchen door, followed immediately by the appearance of Wilky Dane's broad shoulders. "Dick, I say, here's a little bit of news for you! I got this letter at the post to-night. It's from that scamp Bridge!" Alice looked up with startled eyes, and asked, "What is it, father?" "Um! I see! So it was that young man, was it? The scamp, to be coming here, and holding up his elders and betters in a public paper to be the laughing-stock of a whole district!" "What is it, father?" Alice again pleaded. "Read that, my girl!"

It was a neat note from Mr. Bridge, stating that it might be interesting to Mr. Dane and his friends to learn that he had been the author of the articles so much discussed in Woolinap of late, and that he hoped they would all enjoy the discovery of his identity as much as he had enjoyed their bewilderment.

Alice dropped the letter, and ran to her bedroom, where she eased her indignant heart with a few more
tears; then she came out again and said, "Father, I must have had a share in that newspaper business, for he used to be always asking me questions, and I never supposed that he wanted to know for any other reason than kindly interest in our mutual friends! I'll never have anything to do with another boy from Melbourne!"

And she kept her word, for the following Sunday evening, when Jimmy Dunn said good-night to her, she put out her hand, and was so gracious, that he got courage to walk with her to her gate, and, having tasted bliss, he was not satisfied until he had secured for himself the full draught. By-and-bye the circuit funds were augmented by the amount of a marriage fee, and Yorky Dick was jubilant because his girl had chosen to have a steady young chap who wasn't ashamed to go to Sunday-school, nor to raise his voice in a prayer-meeting.

Mr. Bridge is now employed on one of our weekly papers, and if he shows as much ability in his work as he did when he parodied the Woolinap Methodists, he should be a valuable addition to the staff of that publication.
CHAPTER III.

"Render to Caesar."

When Mr. Trenewy had found himself obliged to resign from his post as steward because the rest of the people would no longer put up with a broken-down, squeaky harmonium, his place had, of course, to be filled. Mr. Wilky Dane was named for the honorable position, and with due modesty assumed his new duties. He first of all asked innumerable questions of Joe Dunn concerning the trust and other affairs; but he expressed no opinions, for Jacob was still a trustee, although he never appeared in that capacity just now. But it soon became apparent to the American that the finances of the church were in a bad way, and that unless something startling were done the cause of God in this particular place must always be dragged down by a debt that was too heavy for the people, and too large for their Christian credit. At last Wilky determined to offer his assistance to the remaining active trustee, and, going to Dunn's house one evening, he said, "Joe, my boy, don't you think that between us we could make a stir, and dispense with some of that debt? Here we are, paying away twelve pounds a year in interest alone, half of our Sunday morning collections! Then we have to meet our share of the circuit expenses, and our contributions to all the general funds as well; and we have nothing left to extend our work, or to do properly what we have already in hand. Now, I'm not a trustee, but since Jacob holds off, I know you
are practically left to fight the debt alone. Don't you think we could do something together?"

"What now, Wilky? Would you be holding another concert? I fear it wouldn't take so well as last time."

"Bah, no! A concert would only bring in enough to pay the interest for another year! I want to see the debt wiped out, so that we can start another."

"And what's your notion?" asked Joe doubtfully.

"Well," replied the other, "I think the people ought to be told exactly what the position is, first of all; hardly anybody but the stewards and trustees know that things are so bad! Then I could suggest ever so many ways of raising a little, and by degrees, say, by this time next year, we might be owing only one hundred pounds instead of two hundred; and that would mean that we pay only half the present interest."

"But," protested Joe, "they put us into office to manage these affairs for them, and I doubt whether they'd like us to throw them back upon their shoulders!"

"Tut, man, you are not going to make up the interest yourself, are you? Well, then, since you have no better plan, why not give mine a trial?"

So the usual thing happened; Wilky got his own way, and a special meeting of the congregation was called for the following Wednesday, to consider the serious financial position of the church.

There was a good deal of surmise as to what had happened to occasion such a meeting, and most thought that the bank had threatened to close upon them, and
that their pretty little chapel was about to be seized for debt. At this meeting, to which most of the families came or sent representatives, Joe informed the people that the interest would be due in a month; that they were five pounds short, and that it had been thought advisable to make a direct and special appeal. Then he called upon Mr. Dane to state the case more fully, and to offer a few hints as to the ways of raising the money. Wilky ought to have been a preacher, but he always declared that he had not been called to that work. On this occasion, however, he rose, with conviction in his heart and a determination to force it upon the hearts of others.

"My friends," he began, "it seems to me that as a church we should go further than meeting our interest annually; that plan suits the lender, but it is not so good for us, the borrowers! We should not be contented to go on year after year owing a man, or a bank either, a sum which is very nearly the full value of all we as a Christian community possess. The Holy Book says, 'Owe no man anything, but to love one another'; and it appears to me that when Paul wrote that he meant it to apply to churches as well as to individuals. While we have this debt dragging us down we shall not prosper; we shall never be able to build a Sunday-school; to start a library; to give our help and countenance to missions at home and abroad; while we keep this debt we are blunting our moral faculties by thinking it is all well while the interest is paid; we are bringing dishonor upon Christ, to whom we profess to offer nothing but reverence and loving
service. We can do no good while we owe this money, so let us set ourselves to the task of rendering to Cæsar what is Cæsar's; then we shall be better able to render to God what is His! Let us raise the money to pay off the bank, then we can use the interest for a better purpose, and hold up our heads among God's people! But I should not have said so much if I had felt it impossible to do more than talk. There are but few of you who can afford to give money right out, but you can offer some self-sacrifice and some labor. I will reveal to such of you as desire that this debt be paid my plans for getting at least some of the money. First, I'll ask my cousins to come up and give another concert, if you like; then two of the girls or ladies might undertake to call upon any members of the congregation who would promise to contribute a shilling or sixpence a week. There are some of us who could afford that much every week out of God's bounty to us! And some of you men who have carts, you could go out into the 'bush' and cut an occasional load of wood and bring it in, and sell it, for the good of the church; some of the women might do some sewing, or give the proceeds of their poultry yard! You laugh, do you? Well, if God thinks the sparrow worthy of His care, if Jesus thought the grass of the field worth using as a lesson text; if every trifling act we do is noted and counted to our credit or otherwise, we should not be above small means when we, as a church, wish to clear ourselves of a troublesome and not altogether creditable debt. Let every man, woman, and child do his or her best, and I believe that the smile of God will rest upon it, and that our effort will be blest."
There was a hum of voices and a rustle of clothes when Wilky finished; then presently he rose and said, "Who will give sixpence a week? Hands up!" Up went one hand, then another. "Come on, don't be bashful. Four, five, six, and I make seven! Any more?" Three more went up. That will bring in five shillings a week! Now then, who will bring me a load of wood, the price to go to the trust funds?" Young Jimmy Dunn cried, "I will!" And now promises of all kinds began to come in. "I will give our pet sheep, if the butcher will buy it!" (The sheep offered had taken to butting, so the donor was not absolutely disinterested in her offer.) "I'll give a pound of butter a week, whatever it brings!" "And I'll give a setting of Plymouth Rock eggs, if anyone will buy!" Wilky undertook to become general agent and salesman, and from that night, or rather the day which followed it, his back yard, and a tidy shed there, became the emporium for a miscellany of goods and living things. He devoted all his leisure to the task, and the people seconded him with all their might.

It seems almost incredible, but by the end of six months they had paid the interest, and had also discharged one hundred pounds off the principal. Wilky was careful not to let the enthusiasm flag. The ladies held sewing meetings, to which the mothers who were poor needlewomen brought their children's clothes to be made. Sarah Trenewy, who by this time had come back into the work, sold crocheted collars and hand-made lace, so by the gradual accumulation the savings had mounted up to one hundred pounds. The Woolinap Methodists
at that time were more like a small co-operative society than anything else in the world, for they bought and sold and bartered among themselves, all for the sake of the trust fund.

The other hundred was not so easy to raise, but at the end of eighteen months the church debt amounted to a mere twenty pounds. Then the great efforts were slackened, and Joe Dunn ceased to look worried.

The edifice around which so much devotion had centred was a neat weatherboard building in the gothic style, and having seating accommodation for more than required it generally. It was not the unsightly structure often seen in the little country towns, but a pleasant looking, well designed chapel, fronted by a pretty porch, and having a small vestry attached to the rear. It was painted a deep chocolate color, with a paler shade for the windows and doors, and the yard surrounding it was laid out with trees and shrubs. It had been erected about five years prior to the purchase of the new organ, and was therefore comparatively new when the people paid off the building debt. But just at that supreme hour a grievous calamity befell the little band of earnest workers, severely testing their faith and endurance.

One day that summer, after about thirty-six hours of the most unbearably sultry weather, a dark cloud appeared upon the horizon, and the inhabitants of those parts, looking away to the north-west, became aware that something was about to happen. It looked like a dust-storm, and Wilky Dane thought that whatever it was there would be plenty of wind with it; so he advised his
neighbors to take in all light chattels and to close up their houses, unless they wished to have their roofs blown off. Acting upon this opinion, he shut up his own establishment, back and front, and then sat down to watch.

Presently a roar as of many trains coming at express speed was heard in the direction of the cloud, and within a few minutes the cyclone leaped upon the town, howling and tearing round the houses, lifting from its place every movable object, hoisting up sheds by their roots (or foundations), and laying low trees that had weathered many a blustering wind of both winter and summer. The tumult was tremendous; every family looked after itself, for none could hear or see his neighbor. There was a rattling of iron roofs detached from their holdings, and a crashing of falling chimneys or outhouses; and these sounds, coupled with the roaring of the tempest, made a din which could alone be likened to the roar of battle.

It did not last for long—twenty minutes, perhaps—and then the wind dropped to a stiff breeze, and the folk sallied forth to see who was killed and who was not. Wilky Dane first came to the store, and there stood Mr. Rigbert, dismayed and helpless, viewing the wreck of his premises; for its roof, no paper-made affair, lay in a jumbled, dinged heap on the opposite side of the road. The American just stopped to offer a word of sympathy, then hurried on to see how his beloved chapel had fared.

Round the corner he darted, and there before his affectionate eyes lay the once admired house of prayer, turned over upon its side, and now little more than a
gap, ugly ruin. After all the struggle, all the work, all the economy, all the self-denial, to have the result knocked down in less than half an hour by a breath from Heaven! For a little while Wilky thought that God had not treated His children in Woolinap fairly; the grief was universal, for all had participated in the tremendous effort made to clear the church of debt, working together as one man. And now it was all thrown away! That was what the people felt, but they did not know everything, while God did.

The story of their devotion was told abroad when their calamity became known; how they had fought and thought to "Owe no man anything, but to love one another"; and this seemed a fitting opportunity to two rich and generous Methodists to "help the poor that are of the household of faith," and so "render to God the things that are God's." These men sent fifty pounds apiece to start a new building, or rather to re-erect the old one. The organ, although it got some damage, was soon repaired by the ingenious Wilky; and at the end of it all was a glorious re-opening, at which the songs of praise to God for His mercies, even though made manifest in the blight of a destroying gale, were triumphant and sincere.
CHAPTER IV.

The Penitent.

Netty Farne and Gilbert Smith were both in service at the farm of Mr. McAndrew. Netty was an orphan girl, without kindred of any kind as far as she knew; Gilbert had come from another district in search of work the previous Spring, had been taken on by Mr. McAndrew, and had made himself so useful that he had been retained, even when the milking and harvest seasons were over. Netty belonged to that class of girls who are too big to be natty, and too strong to be dainty; she was, however, a good servant, and there were few kitchens in the vicinity of Woolinap like unto hers, and few dairies sweeter than that in which she did the daily scouring. Netty and Gilbert shared the kitchen in the evenings, and it was only natural that an attachment exceeding that of friends should spring up between them. There was, however, a matter in the road that had not yet been adjusted, and it lay in the question whether or not Gilbert would go to Church. Netty belonged to the Methodists; Gilbert was not certain that he belonged to anything; Netty heard vague suggestions about the unsuitability of Gilbert's companions in the town, and Gilbert protested that they were all pleasant fellows; and so they stood related at the time when our story begins.

One morning a hawker called at the farm with his cart-load of drapery, and, although Mrs. McAndrew
did not generally buy from such traders, this time she was beguiled into purchasing some damaged calico said to have been in the wreck of something or other. As change she received a half-sovereign, and being called away at the moment she laid it upon the mantelpiece in the kitchen. Not until evening did she remember it again, and on returning found it gone. Netty was interrogated; she had not seen it; search was made, but the little gold coin had entirely disappeared. The whole household was worried and disturbed about it; Mrs. McAndrew had always found Netty honest, but now a doubt crossed her mind, and Netty, who was indeed honest, felt the indescribable blight of that doubt.

Gilbert was out that evening, and knew nothing of the search for the missing coin; and at breakfast next morning he noticed that his fellow-servant was very downcast. "What is it Net? What are you looking so glum about this morning?" "You know, Gilbert, there is a half-sovereign belonging to Mrs. Mc. lost, and I'm not quite sure that she doesn't think I have taken it." Gilbert looked rather uncomfortable, and shifted uneasily in his chair.

Netty looked up suddenly and saw his embarrassment; and her own face went ghastly white, then flushed a deep crimson. She arose from her seat and went around to her lover; she compelled him to look her in the eyes. "Oh, Gil, give it back at once, and I'll try to make them think it was found, that you did it for a joke!" "I can't; I haven't got it! I lost it
going across the paddocks to the town last night." There was a painful silence between them, then Netty returned to her seat with a burning spot upon each cheek, while Gilbert brought his breakfast to a premature conclusion, and made ready to go out. As he was leaving the kitchen he said, "Are you going to tell?" "No; I shall not tell! I must think!"

That afternoon Netty went to her mistress, and offered to repay the money from her future wages. "Indeed," exclaimed Mrs. McAndrew, "So it was you! Well, as far as repaying from your wages, you shall not have a chance! You can go this very night; I won't have a thief in my house! And before you go, I'll have a look through your box and see that you have nothing else of mine." The poor girl clasped her hands in agony of shame and horror, for she had not expected such sharp retribution; she had expected a lecture, a permanent breach of confidence between herself and her mistress, but had looked to have a chance to repent and repay. For a moment she wavered in her purpose, then her course was clear before her. "Very well! But where can I go? I have no home and no friends here who will take me in, and I have no money!" Mrs. McAndrew softened a little. "There are two weeks' wages due to you——" "Which will just pay the ten shillings due to you," interposed Netty in a quivering voice; "And you may stay till Saturday. After that you must go, or take the consequences of your wicked conduct!"

From the little bedroom which Netty occupied, there came the sound of cruel, bitter weeping; she had
lightly assumed the intolerable burden of another's wrong-doing, without fully counting the cost, and she now saw that it would take all her heroism to go through with it. When she at last grew calm enough to return to the kitchen, she got the tea ready in a quiet, mechanical way, and then put on her hat and jacket for walking. Gilbert had been sent to a distant farm with some cattle, and could not be home until to-morrow night, and she was glad that he was absent; she hardly knew what she could have said to him, had he been home for the evening meal, sitting at the same table with her. Having fulfilled her duties, Netty went to the dining-room hall to tell her mistress that she was going out; then she made her way across the paddocks towards the town, and along the gravelled road to that portion of the street where Mr. Dane's shop stood, its door still wide open. The tailor looked up as she nervously asked, "Is Mrs. Dane at home?" "Yes, Netty; anything wrong?" The girl nodded. "I would rather see Mrs. Dane, please!" "Go through," said Wilky, resuming his work; and he added to himself, "The poor girl looks ill, at any rate, and in that case the wife will be the best to hear her troubles!"

He listened to learn what had brought Netty to his wife; he had a fatherly interest in her, for she was a Sunday School scholar and a member of the church, and Wilky was very jealous for the honour of the church. All he could hear was the sound of sobbing, and his wife saying, "Poor girl!" Presently the door between the shop and the living room opened, and Mrs. Dane came to her husband and said very quietly, "Wilky,
she is in disgrace and I want you to be very kind and gentle with her! Will you, dear? It was just a moment of weakness, I know; but she has taken half-a-sovereign and cannot restore it!” There was a pause. “Well, mother?” said Wilky, expecting further elucidation. “She is willing to work and pay it back, but Mrs. McAndrew has sacked her, and she has nowhere to go! Come in, and speak to her yourself!”

She passed back into the room, and Wilky followed. “Wilky, dear, she has been ordered to leave the day after to-morrow, and she is a lonely, homeless girl! Couldn’t she come here till something else is arranged?” Netty shrank back beneath the eyes of Mr. Dane, covered her face with her hands, and wept afresh. “Why, my poor girl, however did you come to forget yourself so far?” Still Netty wept and writhed under his words, but the wife pleaded, “She is very sorry, Wilky! Just say she can come here for a week or two, till we see what else is to be done!” “Get along with you, Clara! You know as well as I do that she can come! You take the matter in hand, and I will stand by you in whatever you do!” At this Netty dropped on her knees before them, and the pair never forgot the beseeching look of shame and anguish that she sent up into their faces. Now, she had not positively said that she had stolen the money, but she had left it to be inferred by her agitated looks and words; and the most intolerable drop in her cup was that these two kindly, pitying hearts should believe her a thief. The Danes remembered that look afterwards when the whole story came out.
Wilky undertook to tell Jacob Trenewy of the affair, and did so that night; and Jacob, the class leader, recommended that the girl should attend the class as usual the following Wednesday; it would be a painful experience, but Wilky and his wife agreed with the Cornishman in thinking that it would strengthen the penitent in all future conflicts with evil, and be the most effective way of stifling malicious comment.

Of course the news of Netty's misdemeanor soon went round, and great surprise was expressed that Mrs. Dane should receive her after she had so disgraced herself; and the worst of it was, so the people said, that the thief was a church member. The grace of God claimed by such should be sufficient to preserve from stealing as well as other sins; but Wilky Dane remarked in answer to the critics, "The good overcoats I made for you are sufficient to keep out the rain; but if you leave them at home always, you'll be some day caught and get as wet as if you had no coat at all. We often leave the grace of God at home, or, more likely, at the chapel; and when we haven't got it with us, we can't expect it to keep us safe in temptation. I am afraid Netty left hers at chapel!"

Netty did not go to church that Sunday; she felt unfit to face the looks of curiosity, reproach and pity that would be cast at her; but she had consented to attend the class-meeting on the Wednesday. After that she would go right away to a place where she was not known, and try to make a fresh start. There were times when her conscience told her that she had not done well to shield Gilbert, but now it was too late to turn back. She
was deeply wounded, too, by the apparent callousness of her lover; he offered not even a silent sympathy, and when bidden to drive her and her box to Dane's, had not spoken a word upon the journey, nor raised his eyes even once to her white and sorrowful countenance.

Wednesday came, and Gilbert had not been near her; but Mr. Trenewy had, and he most laudably "rubbed in" the magnitude of her offence, and advised her that, until she acknowledged her sin before God's people, she could not take part with them in their acts of devotion. So her suffering grew more and more intense as the hour for the class-meeting approached. Mrs. Dane took the girl's hand in her arm, and walked with her into the chapel, amidst the hush of curious glances from the score who were present; they took their seats in the front row, and Sarah Trenewy, a girl of the kindest impulses, came and sat beside her disgraced companion.

Jacob conducted the meeting, and opened with a hymn and prayer; then he read Paul's tender comments on the erring Corinthian, who was not to be overcharged, lest he be "Swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." "And now, friends," said the leader, "we shall have a few experience testimonies!" There was a fidgety pause, and nobody offered to speak. "Come, Brothers and Sisters! Never be slow to tell what God has done for you." So Wilky rose, and returned thanks for the mercies of the past week, and was followed by one or two more, who recited glibly a stereotyped formula that has served for many a class-meeting since Methodism was inaugurated. In the next pause Jacob looked in Netty's direction, and said, "Our sister, I think, has had some
experience lately! Will she not relieve her own heart by asking counsel and prayer of God's people in her distress?"

The girl cowered before him, for the leader, although a man of unswerving rectitude, had not fully learned the law of Christ, which is love, mercy; he was more nearly related to the Mosaic dispensation, and it is good for the church that we have a few such men; they keep the balance from going down too far on the side of sentimental leniency, reminding us always that God is just as well as merciful.

Mrs. Dane whispered something to Netty, then taking her trembling hand, she rose with her before them all. The erring sister tried to speak, her face was white and quivering; for here, in the presence of God, and before her fellow Christians, she was going to lie—to lie wilfully, for the sake of one who, being unworthy of them, had possessed himself first of her love, and then of her reputation.

"Courage, sister!" said Jacob, with a softening mien; "God knows your struggle, but it will do you good to speak!" Netty clutched Mrs. Dane by the arm and whispered, "Tell them I ask God to forgive me for His dear Son's sake!" Amid the silence that followed these words, repeated aloud by Mrs. Dane, a footstep was heard at the back of the chapel, and the eyes that turned in that direction beheld Gilbert Smith coming up the aisle.

Netty did not raise her head, as she stood trembling and pale, before the table at which Jacob sat. Gilbert was also pale, but his head was erect and his step firm, as he approached the group in front of the little congregation. Those who saw him thus marvelled, for never before had he entered the Methodist chapel, and his usual
bearing was not half so manly as now. He came right up to the table before Netty seemed conscious of his presence; then she raised her head, uttered a cry, and fell upon her knees, with her arms on the seat under her face. "Mr. Trenewy," said Gilbert as soon as he could collect himself enough to speak, "I want to tell you, and all these people here, that Netty did not steal the money! I took it; and when I was coming down to the township to waste it in foolish pastimes, I lost it on the way. She found out that I had taken it, and I thought she would tell; but instead—Oh, Netty, Netty, forgive me!" He was now beside her on his knees, and above the girl's hysterical sobbing, and above the lad's broken entreaties, Jacob lifted up his voice, and said a little unsteadily, "You should ask God to forgive you first!" Then he added in broken tones, "My friends, let us pray!"

And so the class-meeting was turned into a prayer-meeting, and all hearts were raised to heaven for charity, for zeal, for holiness, for a loftier love of Christ, and of their fellows, and for healing balm upon the minds of the erring youth and devoted maiden before them. It was also a revival meeting, for then and there Gilbert saw, through the self-abnegation of a Christian, the eternal love of the Christ.

Mrs. Dane hurried the exhausted Netty home to bed, and Wilky took charge of Gilbert; and after due consideration it was thought best to get the young couple right away from the district.

Let every Methodist praise God for His saving and keeping grace, for Netty is now the life and soul of another Methodist church, and her husband, Gilbert, is her first lieutenant.
CHAPTER V.

A Sunday School Episode.

The district in which Woolinap was situated was a large one, speaking from a Methodist standpoint, and comprised about twenty-five preaching places. The head of the circuit, and the abiding place of its superintendent, was a large mining town, previously referred to in these chronicles as possessing a bank, a market, and a newspaper. This town, like the centre of our great solar system, had its more important planets, of which Woolinap was one, and these in their turn were centres of other smaller systems. Woolinap had its three satellites, Bulgong, Greenhills, and Spring Gully. Since the circuit was fortunate in the possession of a good staff of local preachers, the superintendent was able to afford each of these places a fortnightly service; and it happened that the Greenhills service always took place in the evening. Most of the people were satisfied with this arrangement, but Mrs. Rumby was not; she came regularly, and brought with her her two young hopefuls. But as a rule there were very few children at the chapel, and Mrs. Rumby did not approve of the condition of heathenism in which the youngsters were growing up. So she be-thought her of the time-honored plan of opening a Sunday-school. With Mrs. Rumby, to think of a plan was to act upon it; therefore she waited upon the two principal men of the congregation, themselves fathers, and asked them to inaugurate an afternoon session.
But these worthies, although quite approving the idea, did not feel equal to the task of superintending the thirty children who might be expected to attend, and Mrs. Rumby's scheme must have come to nought had she not determined to take the job in hand herself.

She was a widow, strong, not only in mind, but in body; she stood five feet eight inches in height; was large and muscular, and gave the casual observer the impression of being equal to anything. To her natural powers experience had added much. Her husband had died some ten years before, leaving her two sons to keep and a small unfriendly farm, and a horse and dray with which to keep them. Since that time Mrs. Rumby had done her own farming, and in the intervals of agriculture she had turned her horse and dray to account by carting wood to the mines, ten miles away. It was quite a common sight to see her driving through Woolinap with a load of firewood; her strong hands flourishing a substantial switch, and her great boots well exposed to view by her extremely short skirts. But the bad impression created by her rough exterior was at once dispelled when you looked into the brown and wrinkled face that sheltered beneath the green or lilac sunbonnet. There you saw the real Mrs. Rumby, the kindly, toil-worn woman, whose aspirations, although not above the clouds, were decidedly on the tops of the little hills. In life she had been chastised, but never yet defeated, and now that she had conceived the idea of having her own and her neighbors' children instructed in the truths of eternal life, it would be no small obstacle that would thwart her.
One day as Wilky sat in his shop, stitching away at a new coat for Joe Dunn, Mrs. Rumby and her dray stopped before his door, and the good woman dropped from her chariot, and entered the establishment. "Good-day, Wilky!" "Good-day, Mrs. Rumby! Fine weather isn't it?" "I ain't come to talk about the weather; that can take care of itself!" "Very likely," remarked the tailor, with a twinkle in his brown eye. "What have you come to talk about then?" "Fust and foremost, my Johnnie wants a new trouser, and here's his measure to make 'em by! And the next is that I'm going to start a Sunday-school at Greenhills, and I want your advice and approvin' countenance!" "M—m, indeed? Well, who is going to be superintendent?" "Meself," said the matter-of-fact lady. "And who will teach the children?" asked Wilky. "Meself," again she replied. "But how to begin, and what to say is just exactly what I don't know, so I've come to ask you!" Wilky looked doubtful. "About the teaching," he said. "Couldn't Dember help you?" "He don't seem to care for the job!" "Nor Johnson?" "Nor him neither! But, look here, Wilky, I can read my Bible, and I can sing a hymn in toone, and if I can't teach them youngsters a little more than they know now about the grace of God and the love of His Son, I ain't a fit person to be a Christian."

The American looked relieved, for she was on the right track, and surely there should be no Christian who cannot hold forth on those two glorious themes. So Mr. Dane espoused the cause of Mrs. Rumby's Sunday-school. "It's only three miles out to the chapel, Wilky! Could
you walk out for a Sunday or two, and give us a start, like, on the reg'lar lines?" "Yes, I think I could! Do you begin next Sunday?" "Yes." "Then I'll be out to give you a hand in keeping order."

Mrs. Rumby was just going out of the door, but she paused at this remark. "It ain't that I want you to keep order! I just fancy I can do that!" She looked admiringly at her own right arm. "No, I understand," said Wilky. "I meant that I should go out and set you right in the order of service, and that sort of thing, you know! I am not afraid to trust the discipline of the flock in your hands!"

So the brawny widow departed, and set about mustering her class.

When Wilky reached the Greenhills chapel about three o'clock on the following Sunday, Mrs. Rumby was waiting for him at the door. "I've got them together," she said, "And now I don't know how to put them in their classes. There's Jim Dember, and Liz Johnson, and my Tom, almost too big; and the little Mewtons, almost too small! But come in and see for yourself!"

Mr. Dane followed her up the aisle, and noted with satisfaction that she had the judgment to put boys on one side and girls on the other. Then he stepped up on the platform, and took a hymn-book from his pocket. Presently he said, "Let us open the school by singing a hymn! Hands up those who have got hymn-books!" Nobody had one; so Wilky said, "Hands up those who know "When He Cometh!" Nearly everybody knew it, and by reading over each verse the leader got the
children to sing that hymn, dear to all juniors, with great heartiness, if not with musical precision. "Let us pray!" said Wilky at the conclusion of the singing, and several knelt down, but not all. Mrs. Rumby now spoke for the first time. "All of yez kneel down! You, there, Bob Skilly, kneel down, or I'll come and make you!" Bob knelt down, but with that sharp command was planted in his mind the seeds of rebellion, and he forthwith determined to have a very good time out of the Sunday-school, and out of Mrs. Rumby too, before he had done with them.

The prayer ended, Wilky read a chapter from the Bible, and explained it very simply, while Mrs. Rumby kept her eye of terror upon the whole assemblage. "Now, boys and girls, as you will have only one teacher, I think you had all better gather up into these front seats, and we'll have a talk about the lesson!" He was obeyed, and soon the young people were hearing and answering questions, and appearing to enjoy it very much. By and bye they sang two other hymns, and were dismissed with the Benediction; but Wilky had a good deal to say to Mrs. Rumby. He advised that Lizzy Johnson be put in charge of the very small children; that the rest, boys and girls, be placed in one large class under her own control, until such time as another worker should be raised up to help her. He promised to write an appeal to the "Spectator," asking for old Bibles and hymn-books; and finally added that he would come out each Sunday for a month to see how things went.

On the following Sunday, the mode of procedure was very like the first, but at the third session the programme was varied a little.
First of all, there was an abundant supply of Bibles, and nearly enough hymn-books to go right round. There were none of them new, some in fact had leaves missing, but they served well the needs of Mrs. Rumby’s scholars, and the donors would have congratulated themselves had they heard Jim Dember shouting in a fine double forte, “Dare to be a Daniel,” and with his mouth open nearly wide enough to swallow one of Daniel’s lions.

But there was another diversion that day, which requires a more detailed consideration. Bob Skilly, as we said, had determined to have a good time, if possible, so before going into school he had held a council with several other boys, in which he confided to them his plan of attack on the lady superintendent. He had in his pockets a box of matches, likewise a string of tiny crackers; his intention was to wait until the whole company should kneel down for prayer, then, with every possible precaution, to light the string upon which the crackers were tied, and drop it over the next seat, where it would go off in a mimic feu-de-joie. “My! Won’t the girls squeal,” said Bob, with a relish. “And they’ll all hop up, and Mother Rumby’ll be as mad as anything!” “I don’t think you’d better do it,” said Johnnie Rumby; “if you’re caught——” “Pooh!” said Bob, “what can she do? She ain’t got a cane, nor nothing!” “No,” said Johnnie, “but——” “Are you going to tell?” said Bob Skilly, in a sudden fury. “No, I ain’t! But you’ll be sorry if she catches you, I can tell you; and I ought to know!”

After that Johnnie held his peace. He did know, and he also knew that to elude his mother’s sharp eyes
was well nigh impossible. Then, when the school assembled, Johnnie, having no desire to share in the glory of the exploit about to be accomplished, found a seat as far from Bob's as he could get, and awaited the issue with anxiety. The hymn was sung, and Wilky began his supplication for all sorts and conditions of men; then Mrs. Rumby perceived a slight disturbance in the vicinity of Bob Skilly, which caused her to be even more on the alert than usual.

She was praying, of course, but she was watching too, and soon she saw a brown hand lifted surreptitiously to the lower rail of the form back, and something fell softly to the floor two seats ahead of Bob. There was a hiss, and snap! snap! went the fireworks, starting the whole school into a hubbub, and effectually stopping the leader in his eloquent address to the Almighty.

"Bob Skilly," said Mrs. Rumby, "I saw you drop them crackers. Just you come outside along with me!" Bob did not particularly wish to go, but when the lady super. started to move, he was obliged to do the same, because her strong hand had him by the collar. This was intolerable ignominy to the boy, but Nemesis was unrelenting; and the bitter experience that followed was only tempered by the fact that it did not take place inside, and before the assembled school.

Meanwhile the assembled school could only guess at what was happening by the thwack, thwack, and the howl which accompanied it; and Wilky thought it advisable to smother even that source of intelligence by raising the chorus, "Oh, that will be joyful." The humorous application of the words to the present position struck
him before he had got through a line, but he kept it up until the conquering hero returned with her subdued and tearful captive. The tailor thought Mrs. Rumby's measure somewhat arbitrary, but he did not interfere. As a matter of fact, it was the first and last salutary lesson required by the boys of the Greenhills Sunday-school. And now, provided with books, a superintendent and a teacher, the little school was fairly started, and at the next quarterly meeting Wilky gave a glowing report of "The New Branch of Our Work" going on so well under "The Able Superintendence of Our Good Sister, Mrs. Rumby."
CHAPTER VI.

Ripened Fruits.

We crave the leniency of our readers for at this point suddenly taking them from Woolinap and its surroundings, and for unceremoniously bringing them down the tide of time over about ten years. But we desire just here to tell the story of Bob Skilly to its glorious end, and to the glory of Mrs. Rumby's little school. We cannot tell, when the seed is sown, where the plant will spring up and blossom; we have a reasonable hope that it will arise somewhere not far away, and God Himself has promised to look after the increase. And so it was with that earnest, unconventional woman, who bravely faced the difficulties of starting and carrying on the instruction in spiritual matters of the Greenhills children. At the time when Bob Skilly came to the hour of his triumph and martyrdom, Mrs. Rumby had retired to housekeeping, and the managerial seat in her affairs. Johnnie now drove the wood-dray, while her other son worked the farm.

But the cry of the people that sit in darkness had gone forth through the Church, and from some it had drawn money; from others their widow's mite of prayer; and from the depths of the soul of Robert Skilly it had drawn the full and complete offering of a life of devotion to Jesus, who came to save the whole world. The way had not been made easy for him; he had been obliged to toil and sweat in a foundry, while
he qualified for what he knew to be God's appointment for his future. In due time he was ready for the mission field—a fit soldier, moulded by study, by self-denial, and by ardor for service. And he had departed from his native Australia, borne upon the wings of the soft Southern breezes, and within the month was deposited by the schooner upon one of the smaller islands of the Pacific, alone save for God and His hosts, and the dusky savages, whose immortal part he hoped to be the means of saving.

It was a beautiful island on which he had been deputed to labor; tiny blue bays with yellow sand borders, and flanked or hemmed in by luxuriant tropical vegetation, were the chief features of his new country. A low range occupied its midlands, and from the summit to the base flourished rich forests and extravagant undergrowth.

With his zeal unabated by loneliness, he set about building himself a house, and rejoiced and praised God when he found that the people amongst whom he had cast his lot were disposed to be friendly. They brought him presents of fruit, and showed him where to get the best material for his building operations.

By slow degrees he acquired their language, and after a few months his work as a Christian teacher was actually begun. He could not live and labor quite alone, so he induced a lad out of his intended flock to act as his servant; and with this small household he lived on, planning, toiling, learning, until a year and a half had passed.
One evening, wearied by the heat and exertion of a long day's journey up into the hills, he sat before his house enjoying the fresh sea-breeze and the odors from tree and flower in the neighboring forest. The young missionary had set his dwelling at the top of a long slope that went down to the water's edge, and right below him lay one of those reef-locked bays, so still and blue through the hot, bright days, and so softly murmurous and gleaming in the moonlit nights. Every star could be seen reflected from the unruffled surface of the lagoon, and there was an expectant haze of light where the moon would rise in half an hour. Near the beach the water was dark with shadows of hill and tree, and nothing seemed to move but the tiny wavelets upon the sand. It was an hour of peace and remembrance to Robert Skilly, as he looked across the starlit sea; and he gave himself up to dreams of home. There was the farm-house at Greenhills, standing amongst the undulating paddocks, all green in winter and spring, and greyish white through summer and early autumn; and the father and sisters who lived there, praying for him, and longing for him, and consecrating him to the service of God. He smiled as he recalled the old Sunday-school, with Mrs. Rumby at its head, and almost wished that he could have the advice of that most practical woman at this very moment. There were especial difficulties confronting him just now; for, although their friendliness had not abated in any way, he had discovered that the people in the village had in hand some secret undertaking of which he was to
be kept in ignorance, and he shrewdly suspected that it was a warlike expedition against the tribe at the other end of the island. He could not force the people to abandon it; he could not persuade them out of it, being yet uncertain of their real intentions; so he had concluded that he must wait until God showed him his duty.

In the composure born of this determination he sat thus, gazing out upon the fast brightening sea, and indulging in sweet thoughts of home. By-and-by his attention was recalled by a shout that came from the village to his left. A vague fancy floated through his mind that the noise might be connected with the secret undertaking, and he wondered whether this were the time to discover what was afoot. But the idea passed on like a feather that is sailing with the wind, and with heart and voice he began to sing that magnificent missionary hymn, "Let there be Light," while his eyes watched the moon rising over the sea.

"Move on the water's face,  
Bearing the beams of grace;  
And in earth's darkest place  
Let there be light!"

"Teacher," came a whisper at his elbow, and turning sharply in the midst of his song he found his young manservant standing at his side. "What, boy?" he asked kindly, as he noticed that the dark face was distorted with pain; "what is it?" "I go to the village. I hear the wise man say that the great spirit will not prosper the warriors on this journey unless he has a
feast! He say one must die to make a feast. He cast lots, and it is my beautiful flower chosen, my bright shell upon the sands!" The lad broke into bitter weeping, and Robert touched his hand kindly. "Tell me more, boy! What journey?" "The warriors go to drive the men of the other tribe out of our plantation!" "When?" "When the sun comes out of the sea!" "And what did you say about a feast?" "They feast to-night! They are going to make feast with my desired maiden, for the lot fell to her!" "Do you mean," cried Robert "that they are going to kill the girl and—and—eat her?" The lad sobbed yet more bitterly, but could not answer. "Come with me to the village," said the missionary. "In God's name I will stop the loathsome rite, or die! O Father, Father, I thought they had forsaken at least that abomination! O God above, give me strength and wisdom to save her and them!"

He clenched his hands and stood for a moment in silent prayer, gathering confidence and composure for the ordeal before him. Then he went inside, wrote a few lines in his diary, and, taking with him a stout stick, used generally for the pacific purpose of hill-climbing, he started down the slope in the direction from whence came the sounds of hideous festival.

Down by the sea-shore, in an open space surrounded by the huts of the village, Robert found the whole tribe assembled. A great fire had been lighted, and was tinging everything in the vicinity with a fierce red glow; the men were rushing about the open ground in an irregular, furious dance, all equipped for war, and with faces dark and cruel, while the women contributed
to the din with yells and screams, as they darted out of the way of their demoniac lords. A few paces from the fire stood a small group, consisting of the wise man or priest of the tribe, the young and graceful girl who was beloved of the missionary's servant, and the father of the girl. The hands of the maiden were bound, and she cowered beneath the grip of her sire, who for the time was little better than a human tiger.

Robert saw and understood all, and, walking swiftly through the restless throng, he stood before the little group near the fire, and demanded what they did with a bound victim. A sullen silence fell upon the savages, the frantic dancers paused, and all gathered round to watch the issue. The girl, supposing that the missionary could deliver her, wrenched herself away from her father, and darted into the protecting arms of the white. "What does this mean, foolish people? Have I not told you that the great Spirit does not delight in blood, and that He commands you to live peaceably, and to keep your hearts pure? It is horrible, this feast! You cannot, you must not, go on with it!" The intended victim hung yet more closely about him, having slipped her tied hands over his head and around his neck; and thus he stood, with his arm about her, at bay before the wizard, the father, and the whole expectant tribe.

The maiden had not submitted tamely to her fate; all day she had eluded capture by creeping through the woods; but she had little chance of escape with the whole tribe of bloodhounds at her heels, and at nightfall she had been taken and brought back to her father,
to be handed over to the mercy of a hideous superstition. When the wise man beheld his prey so suddenly snatched back from him, the pent-up venom of the last eighteen months shot from his eyes; he turned to the tribesmen, and consigned them to all the powers of evil known to him; he threatened that none of them should return from the journey of the morrow, and that their village should be burned with fire. At his words there was a swaying of the crowds and a hushed pause; then suddenly a man leaped out from the ranks, lifted his heavy club, and brought it down upon the hapless head of Robert Skilly. So the festival went on, but with two victims instead of one, and the evil spirits had their will that night in one of the fairest islands of the South Seas.

About six weeks later a schooner called with letters and stores for the missionary, and to gather such articles of commerce as the natives could offer in exchange for others. They found no missionary; his house was a blackened ruin, and none could or would tell what had happened to him. Everything was done to discover the truth, but in vain; so the captain made his preparations for departure, supposing that the young Australian had acted without judgment, and had been murdered in consequence. The tide, however, was not favorable until midnight, so he lay to in the little bay that spread itself before the site of the mission house, and waited for the moon and high water. About ten in the evening, the night being dark and the sky overclouded, a canoe came silently under the bows of the vessel, and a lithe figure clambered up the side to the deck. It was the young
native who had been servant to the missionary, and he carried with him a bundle tied in an ordinary Turkish towel. This he presented to the officer on duty, and returned as silently as he had come. The man at once went to the cabin, where his captain sat reading and smoking, and together they untied the bundle, and found that it contained Robert Skilly's books. Among them was his Bible, also a short treatise on Maori and kindred tongues, and, best of all, the young man's diary, written neatly in a large exercise. They set the rest aside, and turned to the journal with sorrowing hearts, for they expected to find on these pages the record of the last days of another of God's army of martyrs. They hastily scanned the earlier pages, which told only of building and gardening, and of hopes that were destined never to be realised; then they came to the last entry and read:

September 11th, 18—nine p.m.—My servant has just come in to say that a cannibal feast is about to take place in the village. I go in God's name to stop this murder and abomination! Into His hands I commend myself, body, soul, and spirit! And in this hour of peril I send my love wafting home to dear ones! My eternal gratitude to my spiritual mother, Mrs. Rumby!

Boundless as ocean's tide,
Rolling in fullest pride,
Through the world far and wide,
Let there be light!
CHAPTER VII.

The Golden Wedding.

From the time and place of Robert Skilly's martyrdom we again return to Wooiinap, and to the winter after the cyclone that demolished the Wesleyan chapel. It was July, an Australian July, with tenderly green paddocks, and trees that had half a mind to put out flower buds; in fact, the almonds had done so, and were preparing to burst into their fragrant pink and white. But the wind that blew from the north was cutting, and the wind that blew from the south was stinging, and all the other winds were bitterly searching; those who had plenty of food, fire and clothing had reason to thank God, and those who lacked them had need of the bounties of their more fortunate fellows. In Wooiinap there were not many needy people, excepting those whose business in life was to be poor, or those whom the devil of drink had enslaved; so it happened that the Lady Bountiful and the Lord Generosities had little scope for the exercise of alms-giving.

In the Wesleyan regular congregation there was but one very poor person, Mrs. Thomas Jones; and the prevalent idea was that she was too proud to accept relief. She was an old Welsh body, and her husband an old radical of a Welshman; they had no children, and in their lonely old age were obliged to fight a more strenuous battle for life than is usual.
Thomas Jones had bought a small farm in the vicinity of Woolinap, and might in the days of his vigor have done well; but the racecourse and the bar-room had more attractions than the plough, and his wife was not hardy enough to manage the farm on her own account; so things went to pieces, leaving them heavily mortgaged, and able to do little more than keep the interest paid. The struggle had sobered up Thomas, but it had also hardened him, and he was now, at the age of seventy-four, the most notorious cynic in the district. How Rachel had kept her faith and sweetness through her various trials was a mystery to all but the pure in heart, of whom she was one; and every Sunday her wrinkled, but beautiful, face shone from the corner of Trenewy's pew, a beacon for the preacher, and a soft radiance for many another in the congregation.

But Sarah Trenewy had made a discovery or two, concerning her aged protege, for between the young woman and the old there existed a strong affinity. Sarah was a soft-eyed, sweet-faced girl, whose mission in life appeared to be the lightening of other folks' burdens; it was she who very nearly always patched up her father's squabbles, and she was first to turn up at the bedside of a sick mother who was worrying herself to death about the washing, the milking, or the baby. Towards Mrs. Jones she assumed a maternal demeanor, but in reality she sat at the old woman's feet, learning through her clear soul the love and power of Jesus; and Paul was never more apt a pupil
of Gamaliel than Sarah Trenewy of the little Welsh Christian.

But to return to those discoveries: The first was that the Jones couple had started the winter with absolutely no means, and that want stared them in the face; the next was that both the old people were pitifully short of warm clothing; a third revealed that their wood-heap was showing its foundations, and that they had neither money nor strength to renew it; and, lastly, Sarah found out that at the end of July the old people would have been married fifty years. This last discovery at once suggested to Sarah a solution of many troubles, and she spent a day or two in earnest thought. The first step as the outcome of her thinking was to call on Wilky Dane, and after that all her plans went smoothly. On the following Sunday she walked part of the way home with Mrs. Jones, and questioned her as to the exact date of her wedding day. "We were married on the twenty-sixth of July," replied the unsuspecting Rachel, with the semblance of a sigh, "at Cardiff, fifty years ago!" "Well, dear," said the maternal Sarah, "that will be a Saturday this year; and as we don't get a golden wedding in Woolinap every day, the choir would like to do honor to the occasion. You won't mind them going up about eight o'clock, will you? But mind, you are not to make any preparation, excepting a big boiler of hot water for coffee. I'll be with them to do the work, and we are taking a big wedding cake, and the rest! We want to have some fun, and you and your husband must join us. You'll let us, dear, won't you?"
"I will gladly do it; but Thomas may not be so pleased. But you needn't mind if he says something tart. It is just his little way, you know."

A fortnight later, on the day that saw the Jones jubilee of wedded life, the old woman said to her partner, "Thomas, some of the young people are coming up to-night, and I have promised to have some hot water ready for their coffee. Will you cut me some extra wood and help me tidy up the place a bit?"

"What are they coming for? We are too old for parties, woman!" "I didn't ask them, Thomas; they are coming on their own accord, because they have heard that—that it is our golden wedding day!" A queer expression passed over the face of the man, and he stood for a moment, wistfully gazing at the wrinkled face that bent over the fire. "I had forgot it," he said at last; "but we'll have the water ready. And, oh, Rachel, I never thought to bring you to such poverty!"

There was a quiver in his usually gruff voice, and a tear lurking in his eye. "If we wanted to offer them meat and drink we couldn't do it, and this our golden wedding!" "Don't mind it, Thomas! Sarah tells me they are bringing a wedding cake and some coffee, and only want the use of our kitchen and the company of ourselves; and so long as you don't go back to the old ways, I'll never grumble about being poor! Go now, and chop me a bit of wood, and the Lord will send some more when that is gone."

With a sorrowful face Thomas Jones took up his axe. His wife's reminder of their long life together,
and her fortitude under its heaped-up ills, had touched him in a place far deeper than his cynicism and rail-
lery against all men's pretensions; but his wife had always said that he never criticised her piety, and her fellow Christians knew that he could not, because of its perfect purity and high-souled sincerity. It was about eleven o'clock when he came out to the spot where their last half dozen logs lay, and he was smiting away at one knotty old soldier from among them, when he heard a rattle of wheels beyond his dwelling.

In those little country places a cart cannot go by without the inhabitants of the wayside houses inspect-
ing it from the windows or yard; so Mr. Jones rested his axe upon the ground and looked towards the road. A dray had stopped before the gate, and a man was busy negotiating the complications of a remarkable latch improvised out of a length of fencing-wire. The aged wood-chopper walked towards the man, and presently recognised him to be young Jimmy Dunn. "What do you want there, young fellow?" "Oh, good-
day, Mr. Jones! I want to bring this cart in." He had managed the latch, and setting back the gate, he brought the cart safely into the yard with many "woo's," and "gee-up's." "What are you going to do?" asked Thomas in perplexity. "Ah, well," said Jim, in an off-hand manner, "Sarah Trenewy and the Missus are coming up to-night for a coffee supper, and they want to make it hot for you two old folks; and I put on a log or two extra on my own account, just as a wedding present, you see. Show me where to put it, and you might lend us the axe, and I'll chop up a bit to do
the girls to-night. Suppose this weather makes the rheumatics talk a bit?"

Mrs. Jones had come out, too, and her speaking eyes uttered speechless thanks, as the tall, strong young fellow pitched the logs from his dray, and chopped up a goodly pile for present use. Thomas was silent; he only nodded a farewell when Jimmy departed; in silence he ate his midday meal, and did the little bit of clearing-up which filled his Saturday afternoon; and when he came in to his tea he was still thoughtful and uncommunicative. "They'll be here about eight, Thomas. Will you brush yourself up a bit?" And the old man obeyed without a protest.

By and by the sound of merry voices came from the road, and in a few minutes the choir trooped into the big barn-like kitchen, where Thomas had piled on the firing, and where his wife had hung up the largest boiler upon the hooks that swung from a bar up the chimney. There was Sarah, and Jimmy Dunn and Mrs. Jimmy, who, it will be remembered, was the prettiest girl in Woolinap; and Mrs. Jimmy's father, Dick Hilton, and Wilky Dane, and all the choir behind them. Two or three carried substantial parcels, while the general body of juniors was responsible for the safe conduct of a heavily laden clothes basket.

"A good wedding night to you both," said Wilky, as he shook hands; "God's blessing, and good luck to you. We intend to have a jolly time together this evening. And first we should like to offer you both a little wedding present, since there is no couple in this district married so long as you. It is from all of us,
and others who could not come to-night. Of course, on such an occasion we should have brought golden gifts; but we thought that such things would not be appreciated by you, so you won’t mind accepting something which we thought of much more use, will you? Jim, where are those parcels? One for you, Mrs. Jones, and this for you, Sir!”

The old people were too surprised to attempt the untying of strings, so Alice and Sarah took charge of that task, and soon displayed a new dress for one, and an overcoat for the other. Rachel at once began to shed grateful tears, but Wilky interrupted, “Now, you girls, just see that your present is a good fit, while we see to the coat! Would you mind, Mr. Jones, if we have the pleasure of putting it on you for the first time?”

Thomas nodded his head and stood up, and Jim and Wilky helped him into the coat, which all pronounced to be first-class. Meanwhile, Alice, who made the blouse and skirt, had escorted her victim into the bed-room, from whence she presently brought her, arrayed in warm black merino, to be admired and to admire her husband. How the tongues wagged. Jimmy cracked jokes, and everybody else laughed, and some of the youngsters were shifting back the table to make room for some games. “But however did you get my measure so near?” said Rachel, beginning to recover from her astonishment. “It was that wicked Sarah,” said Mrs. Dunn; “that wicked girl sat behind you in church, and slyly took certain measurements with her handkerchief. I hope you will read her
a sermon on such a wicked proceeding. And, really, I believe she got the waist length by hugging you; and the sleeves I had to guess, and you’ll need to shorten them a little, you know.” Young Mrs. Dunn was prettier than ever, and Jim was immensely proud of her that night. When she had given a twitch to the collar, a tweak to the cuffs, her husband whispered something to her, and she disappeared at once into the bed-room with a third parcel. This contained a good rug, and having spread it on the bed, she left it there, to give Mr. and Mrs. Jones a fresh surprise when they should retire for the night.

And now the fun began; they played “poisoned handkerchief” and “geography,” and made enough noise to bewilder a dozen old Welshmen like Thomas. Then Yorky Dick proposed that while Jim and Sarah got the supper ready they should have some music. Alice pretended to be desperately jealous of Sarah, but her fury did not prevent her joining in the choruses, as the company sang many of the oldest hymns and psalms. The grand finale to the concert was a solo from Thomas, who was prevailed upon to sing “The Ash Grove” in his native Welsh, and laughed at himself because he could not recall a second verse. After that the supper was ready, and the party proceeded to lighten the clothes basket by consuming a portion of the good things it had contained, and the golden bride, laughing and almost blushing, was called upon to cut the great iced cake which Mrs. Dane had made for the occasion. They drank the health of the bride and bridegroom in coffee, and insisted upon a speech
from Thomas; and at last Wilky announced that it was half-past ten; that the cups had better be packed up, so the choir sang the evening hymn and made its way homeward, happy to have made others happy.

In the old farm-house there was a sound of weeping, and it came from Thomas, who knelt like a child, with his head in Rachel's lap, and confessed to her that he was a mean man to enjoy the bounties which God had sent them, on account of her great goodness; that he did not deserve anything but her reproaches and God's wrath, and that he would—he would begin anew, even at this late hour of his life. And the aged lovers sealed the vow with a kiss, and sat hand in hand until the fire burnt low, and until the echoes of the young voices rang in their hearts like a sweet and distant memory.

What joy a few kind people may bestow, when they unite to do it! The misfortune lies in the fact that the one leading mind is not on hand to suggest it.
CHAPTER VIII.

“The Blue Ribboners.”

About the time when Mr. and Mrs. Jones had their golden wedding celebrated by their Methodist friends, Wilky Dane was one day at work in his shop, when the most notorious of the Woolinap disreputables rolled in through the door, and started a conversation.

“Could you lend me a sixpence, Wilky?” “I’m afraid I can’t, my friend! It would not be good for you or my sixpence!” “Why can’t you lend me something? I’m an honest man, and a customer of yours, ain’t I?” The tailor smiled as he looked at the object before him, and thought that his clothes were little credit to anybody. The unfortunate man wore a dingy brown coat, and very ill-fitting moleskins, while one of his large, outstanding ears carried the full weight of a battered and greasy top-hat. “Perhaps you were a customer of mine, but I have forgotten when. However, that wouldn’t make any difference, and I have no sixpence to lend you!” “But why not?” persisted the inebriate; “I belong to the Wesleyan Church, and we’re all brothers there, ain’t we?” “Yes, John; all men are brothers; and it is on that account that I can’t let you have the sixpence!” “Lend us threepence, then!” “No, not threepence either! Judging
by your appearance, and the smell you brought in with you, a good number of threepence have already gone down your throat to-day! If you like, I'll ask Mrs. Dane to get you a good meal, and some coffee to sober you up a bit!” “Thanks, old chap, I'm not hungry! But won't you lend us a penny?” “No, not a cent!” “Well will you buy some fruit if I bring it up?” Where he intended to get the fruit Wilky did not know, for the poor fellow was now long past growing any. “No, I won't! Look here, John, you are pretty well drunk now. Go home to your hut and have a sleep, and this evening I'll call round and see you!” The old man stood irresolute for a minute; then he said, “All right, old man! But there's no offence, is there? You'll shake hands, won't you?” Wilky humored him in this, and during the five minutes required for the ceremony he quietly edged the drunken man towards the door.

By-and-by the besotted creature rolled off down the street to seek a field more fertile than the heart of the American, and the tailor was able to resume his work again. As he stitched, his thoughts ran upon many things suggested by the visitor just successfully steered off the premises. In Woolinap there were several such men, who lived precariously, drank every penny they could earn or "cadge," and both amused and disgusted the more respectable inhabitants of the place. They had all come to Woolinap in the early days; some as shepherds on the surrounding stations, others being stranded there on their way to the more bustling mining centres. Wilky wondered what they had been as
young men, and what homes they had left behind them in old England or Ireland; there was not a Scot among the Woolinap disreputables. John Walker, his late visitor, was an Englishman, as he always boasted when he was half drunk, and in the company of his quarrelsome friend O'Malley, who would straightway describe Englishmen with some unsavory adjectives, fall upon the hapless John with his fists, and end up with a night in the lock-up, and a sentence of three days for breach of the peace.

But unlike his nationality, John Walker's religious convictions were very easily altered to suit his company. That very morning he had asked Mr. Donovan for sixpence on the ground that they were both good Catholics, just as Wilky had been invited to lend the same amount because they were brother Methodists.

The tailor pondered long upon these hard cases, as he had often done before, and longed, oh! so ardently, to deliver them from the bondage in which they were languishing, even unto death; and then a vision of the future days came up before him, when there would be other John Walkers evolved by the present drinking customs, out of, perhaps, some of the very youths who lived about him, and sat in the forms at the chapel each Sunday; and perhaps some of the Woolinap mothers would be mourning by-and-bye over heartless prodigals who had slipped away to the West, never to come home again, just as these forlorn and bestial old men had disappeared forever from the home circle in the old lands. The picture conjured up by imagination was so horrible that the tailor resolved
there and then to do something to prevent its realisation.

At class the following evening he broached the question to Yorky Dick, and to his surprise found him unsympathetic. "I'm not a drinking man, as you know, Wilky; but I'm not a-going to sign any pledge, nor ask other people to do so! Pledges are for them as can't keep sober without them!" Wilky agreed, but pointed out Paul's attitude in the matter. "But take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak! Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

But Dick didn't see it in that light, and wouldn't come into line with Wilky's proposal. He mentioned, however, that Alice and Jim were Rechabites, or something of the sort, and would very likely help.

Wilky then interviewed Mr. Trenewy, and was glad to find him ready to further his project; also, Joe Dunn and his family were favorable; so all three met one evening at the tailor's house to consider what could be done to promote the cause of temperance in Woolinap.

Joe proposed that they should get a celebrated temperance orator from Melbourne, and have him lecture in all the little townships round about; but Wilky objected on the score of the expense, and, besides, he wanted something permanent, or at any rate, something that would last for a few months, if not longer.
Jacob thought that a branch of the “Sons of Temperance” might answer; but when Sarah suggested, “And Daughters, too,” he withdrew, declaring that lodges were not for women, not if he could help it.

“Look here,” said Jimmy Dunn; “don’t you think we could have regular blue-ribbon meetings in the chapel once a week? I vote for Saturday nights; and we could have some singing and a temperance address. Sarah would do the playing, and my missus would sing sometimes, and we would get singers from other places, too, and speakers! and every meeting we could invite the people to sign the pledge. The entertainment would bring them there, and some of the young fellows who don’t come to Church would lend a hand, I know! And we could have a collection once a quarter, to pay for lighting.” “And on that night you would not have many there,” said Wilky, slyly. They all laughed; but it was Jim’s proposition, in a modified form, which was ultimately adopted. It was decided to hold the blue-ribbon meetings fortnightly, and to begin at once.

The first three meetings were a grand success, if large audiences, energetic addresses, and very passable singing make a successful temperance meeting; also a goodly number of the young people took the pledge, and donned the outward token of a loop of blue ribbon. But after that the interest began to flag, and the recitations perpetrated upon the Woolinap public by youthful aspirants were a pain to be forgotten quickly. For nine months the meetings were kept going, then shortness of entertainers and of audience caused them
to be abandoned. But the originators had one splendid result of their loving labors, which is worth recording more fully than the thirty or so pledges signed by those who had never known the power of drink. It happened at the fourth meeting, and was due, humanly speaking, to Sarah's gentle tact and Christian kindness. There was in the neighborhood a poor soul, a lonely, childless woman, who was known as Mrs. Polkett, but whose husband was altogether an imaginary person. She was a good worker when sober, but sobriety was not one of her shining virtues. She was Cornish, and (as Jacob said), not much credit to her country. When angry or intoxicated, her voice grew shriller and her accent broader, until she could be heard the length of the street by the lads who delighted to plague her. She was absolutely an outcast in Woolinap society of every degree excepting that of John Walker and company, while even the children made her a butt for their pranks, just to witness her violent explosions of temper. She was considered a thoroughly hard case, and the idea of reforming "Old Mother Polkett" never entered the mind of anybody. She came sometimes to the blue-ribbon meetings, and on that fourth night she was sitting well forward, apparently enjoying the singing and recitations.

Sarah, from her place on the organ stool, could watch the old woman, and now and then she fancied that in the degraded face there lurked tokens of softer feelings, reawakened by the music from the dormant memories of better days. The young woman felt a
THE BLUE RIBBONERS

great pity arise within her, and a few kindly tears blurred the staves from which she was playing.

As Mrs. Polkett was passing out through the door a little later, Sarah of the soft eyes and pleasant voice saluted her. “Good-night, Mrs. Polkett! How did you like the meeting?” “Fine, Sarah, my girl!” “May I walk with you to the bridge?” The old woman stopped, and looked earnestly at the speaker. “Do 'e want to come?” “Yes, I do! I want to ask you to sign the pledge, and come to chapel sometimes, and be what God meant you to be—a good, hard-working, respectable woman.”

They went along the dark lane that led to the bridge, and Mrs. Polkett remained silent for a time. “Do 'e really feel so kindly to a poor thing like me, Sarah?” “Indeed I do! I know you ought to be something quite different; so do try, dear!” Miss Trenewy was not eloquent with her tongue, but her hands, her eyes, her whole personality, were eloquent with sympathy, and the outcast felt it, and wept—wept in pity for her own low condition, and for joy awakened by the unpatronising kindness of one of the true servants of the lowly-minded Jesus. “Oh, child, I be very bad, and you be too—too kind to me; but I'll try to mend, Sarah; I'll try! Tell Wilky Dane to have a pledge ready in the morning.” “Won't it be better to-night?” suggested Sarah. “And it's very cold! Come home with me, and mother will give us some hot coffee!” she had her way, and that night Wilky had a pledge that he considered worth all the
labor of the temperance meetings; and Sarah waited upon her mother's charwoman at supper.

Now, sceptics and cynics, and all other unbelievers, do not sneer; for this pledge was kept, and the last I heard of Mrs. Polkett was that she had paid a man to paint and repair her house, and had made a garden for flowers and vegetables both at the back and front. Mrs. Polkett also became a good Methodist; she was particularly fond of a prayer-meeting, and when she led the company in prayer, the lads on the opposite side of the road declared that they could hear her thumping the form, and shouting, "Oh, Loard, do 'e save the drinkers! Convince them of sin, O Loard, for, behold, the day of wra-ath is at hand!"

This catch of Sarah's inspired Wilky with the determination to have one of his own; and John Walker was the fish he desired to take. Every possible device was used to bring him in, and Wilky succeeded so far as to get him to the blue-ribbon meeting one Saturday evening; but John disturbed the others present by walking up to the front several times, and demanding the honor of a friendly grip from the chairman; and when Wilky protested, the irrepressible John blustered "I'm a temperance man, ain't I? I've got as much right here as any of you!" and it took Jimmy Dunn and two other young fellows to convince him that in this case might was right.

For many months Wilky persevered in his endeavours to save the old man; and then, one day, in the beginning of May, the local policeman called upon
Wilky to tell him that old Walker was very ill in the hospital, and had asked to see him in preference to the parson. "Been lying out in the rain all night, and got some lung trouble! I found him groaning under the bridge, and thought he was drunk, but when I got him to the lock-up my missus said he was ill! So I run him off to the doctor, and he says he's pretty well cooked!" Poor old man! Poor wasted life! Just then Jacob was driving by with his fruit wagon, and Wilky asked for a lift to the neighboring town, near which the district hospital had been built. There he found John sick unto death, and for three days ministered to the comfort of his body and soul; but the tailor always said with sorrow that old Walker had beaten him, and that the case was one of his greatest disappointments.

In spite of its brevity, this temperance campaign did much good; Mrs. Polkett was its crowning glory, and the fine band of blue-ribbon boys and girls gave equal satisfaction; but the workers most rejoiced in the comments of the local publican, who described them as fools and hypocrites combined, for the Devil is hard hit when he takes to bad language.
CHAPTER IX.

The Student.

While Woolinap was being teetotalised by the blue-ribboners, other matters were afoot which concern some of our Methodist friends in that little town. First of all Yorky Dick had been initiated into the honorable estate of a grandsire, and showed as little sense over Baby Alice as if he had been her father instead of her grandfather. Of course, there was a Christening, and the usual fuss, and Sarah embroidered a beautiful robe for the occasion in those wonderful stitches so dear to our grandmothers. But there was something of more importance still to Sarah, and we must leave the tempting theme of “Baby” to narrate this other tale.

In December of that year, the superintendent of the circuit, the Rev. Charles Demeron, had a very serious illness, and was advised by his doctor to take a three months' holiday from his pastoral work, if not from his preaching too. He therefore appealed to the Conference to send him help in the shape of another minister, or else a student or home missionary. Conference had not another minister to spare, so it responded with a student, Mr. Blumine, who had done a good deal of work in country districts before. He was a young fellow of considerable promise, talented, of
good appearance, and charming manners, altogether a most desirable assistant in such a large and influential circuit. He was to board at the parsonage in the mining town, but his duties took him into all the other towns and townships that were included in the pastorate; and of course Woolinap was duly honored. It was also natural that the standing invitation of the Trenewys should be extended to the newcomer as to the regular minister; so it happened that Mr. Blumine was often at the "Orchard House" for dinner and tea, not to mention the intermediate repasts thought necessary by the hearty country people. From the first he showed a decided preference for the sweet and kindly Sarah; his face would soften and his eyes brighten whenever she spoke to him, and now and then he would beg her to accompany him on his little journeys out into the country that she might show him the way, play the organ for a service, or comfort a sick one to whom he was of little use. In fact, very few weeks had passed before Woolinap had eyes and ears, and, most particularly tongues, and it was soon settled that Sarah Trenewy was spoony on the young parson, and he upon her. Nobody asked her how matters stood, but the cute ones could see it all—how she gallyvanted about the country with him, and how her mother ought to know better than to let her; how she had brightened up in looks and dress, almost as vain as Alice Dunn; how she blushed, and smiled, even in church, when the student appeared there to preach—in short, she was making herself mighty cheap. Now, we regret to have to own that she was somewhat indiscreet; she certainly
went half way to meet the attentions of Mr. Blumine, for never before had she been thrown into such close contact with a fascinating, accomplished young man, and she never imagined that his behaviour did not mean what she and others took it for, nor that she herself was an unlikely person for him to fancy. The two had much in common, and also contrasts sufficiently marked to make them a suitable pair. Even Mrs. Trenewy thought her daughter honorably courted, and had anybody suggested that it was otherwise she would have pointed to Mr. Blumine's sacred calling, and told the rest of the world to mind its own business.

It was all very sweet and very entrancing to Sarah; and so the three months went by, and yet another six weeks, ere the regular minister was able to resume his work.

And now the week came when Mr. Blumine was to go to another part of the colony, and Sarah was low-spirited and wistful. He had not spoken, and she began to doubt whether he would speak. There are not many young men who realize the awkwardness of a girl's position, when she is being courted, and before she has been asked the very important question; sometimes one is tempted to wish for the good old times in such case, when the suitor made his intentions known first, and then set to courting the maid; but that course would not be non-committal enough for these cautious days.

On the Friday before his last Sunday, Mr. Blumine came in the circuit buggy, and asked Sarah to take a drive with him. Her mother helped her into her jacket and hat, and soon the buggy was running
smoothly along the road that led to Bulgong, six miles away. The girl looked up at her companion, and saw that his face was unusually grave. "Sarah," he said at last, bringing the horse to a walk, "I have to go away on Monday!" "Yes, I know!" "And I wanted to say a particular goodbye to you, and to ask you for advice!" "Yes?" she said, with drooping eyes; "what is it?" "I—I find it hard to tell you, but I fear—I have not been behaving quite properly to you, and I don't know exactly what to do!" Sarah was silent for a few minutes, then she fixed her beautiful, candid eyes upon his glowing face, and said, "I think you should speak right out; is there any reason why you should not have behaved to me as you have?" "Yes!" The brown hands of the girl clutched each other beneath the rug, and she waited until she could trust her voice to obey her without quivering. "Go on with your story," she said at last. "I am involved with another lady! I have not given her any promise, but she had good reason to suppose that I meant more than friendship, and now I don't know what to do between you." There was another long pause, during which Sarah kept her face turned away. "Oh, do forgive me, Sarah, do; and remember that whatever I am obliged to do, I like you best." "Oh, indeed," said Sarah, bitterly, and it was the first time the young man had heard a harsh expression from her lips; "in your next place of labor you will probably find another girl who will be as easily taken in as I was!" "Oh, don't, don't, Sarah!" She had hurt him sorely, and without thinking, and immediately her kind heart relented; she felt very indig-
nant, however, and her indignation helped her to main­
tain her maidenly pride in the presence of the one who
had struck such a blow at her self-respect. So she
composed herself, and faced him once more. "Mr.
Blumine, you have indeed behaved badly to me, but
worse to yourself; for you have forgotten what should
be the rule of your life, to do to others only what you
would have them do to you. If you meant to mislead
me, your conduct is unpardonable; but I think now
you just drifted with circumstances, and I fear I helped
you along! And let the memory of it go away be­
hind us! I shall not revive it. You said you wanted
my advice. Then do your duty, and keep the unspoken
promise you made first. Perhaps I was too easily flat­
tered, and too ready to encourage you; but you ought
to have told me of the other—lady!" Sarah fought
down the tears of shame and vexation, and continued,
"I was very silly, I fear; and you were weak; but it
is not too late to make amends to the other one." The
fiery glow had left the cheek of the young man, and he
sat wistful and pensive. "I suppose you are right,
as usual; but I incline to other counsel! I will do as
you bid, if you will say a word of forgiveness to me!"
"You must do what is right, whether I say it or not;
but I will forgive you, only remember, never to mis­
lead anyone else. And now we shall not speak of it
again."

Mr. Blumine felt somewhat chagrined at this curt
and peremptory dismissal of the whole matter; he had
seen a new aspect in Miss Trenewy's character, and re-
cognised it as a touch of paternal obstinacy. By-and-bye he bent down to get a look at her face, and found it pale and agitated; he was human enough to enjoy a conquest, but somehow his humane and better self spoiled the pleasure of this one. He was very sorry to have hurt her, and was slowly discovering that she had the power to hurt him too, if she persisted in her determination to put an end to their intercourse.

On coming to the circuit he had taken her for nothing but a simple country girl, eager to win the favor of his august self, that she might flaunt it before her mates; but he had found out his mistake, as by degrees she had laid open to his view the sweetness of her spirit and the high-souled intelligence that regulated most of her actions; he had learned to appreciate her nobility and Christian graces, her power to turn circumstance to good account, and her fine capability for adapting herself to all sorts and conditions of men, save the worst sort. Then, as his stay drew near to a close, he found the idea of leaving her most distasteful, the thought of never coming back to her unbearable, and above all, the remorse at having left her in ignorance of his true position a veritable scourge to him. And now that he had made his revelation, she was only angry, not grieved; and it didn't matter to her if he never entered her presence again; he had hoped that she would bid him release himself from the other tie, and make a more definite one with her, but Sarah's counsel had been sharp and to the point, leaving him with no alternative but to return to Ellen. Sarah's position was equally painful; she had allowed herself to
dwell upon his many little attentions, and to weave a tender chain for her own heart; but she now owned that all she had won was a life-long lesson in self-respect, and the implanting of a resolve never again to be so foolish.

For the rest of the drive there was silence, save when he asked her to accept a new Bible as a parting gift; this she refused, and he must perforce put it back in his pocket.

"Are you cold, my dear?" said her mother, as Sarah entered the house. "No, mother." "Aren't you well, then?" "Yes, mother; let me take off my hat, please!" She hurried away to her room, the mother following with anxious, expectant face. "What is the matter, my pet?" she said again, as Sarah seated herself upon the bed. "Oh, mother, I am ready to die with shame. I let him take me in so very, very easily! He's engaged to somebody else! But, oh, mother dear! don't let people think we didn't know!" Sarah broke down at last, and cried bitterly; her mother hugged and kissed and petted without avail for a long time, intermingling such strong denunciations as "the mean fellow!" "the smooth-faced hypocrite!!" "No, my pet, I'll say you knew all the time!" By the time Mrs. Trenewy came to this announcement, her daughter was beginning to recover herself, and her true soul saw clearly the falsehood of such a course. "No, mother, we must have no lying! We'll tell nothing if we can, but if we must tell, it shall be nothing but the truth!"

Sarah did not go to church on Sunday morning, for she could not bear to meet Mr. Blumine before them
all. When the student came into the pulpit, he looked sad and ill, and preached the worst sermon they had heard from him since his coming five months before. He had hoped, and yet feared, to see Sarah there, and understood only too well why she was absent. He said goodbye to everybody, and drove away amid the God Speeds of the whole congregation, and so this bright and shining star disappeared from the firmament of Woolinap Methodism.

Perhaps the most curious to know how matters stood between the student and Sarah was Alice Dunn, the proud and pretty mother of a pretty baby girl. It is wonderful how keen upon such topics are young married ladies, as though they would have every single girl in the same happy bondage as themselves. At any rate, Alice, longing for news, waylaid her friend during the following week, and commenced a display of her inquisitorial powers. "I suppose," she began, "it's all right between you and Mr. Blumine?" Sarah winced, and to gain time answered, "In what way?" "Well, I never! He has asked you to marry him some day, hasn't he, Innocent?" "No," said Sarah, "he has not! In fact, Alice, he is engaged to somebody else. I did not know until last week, and I was very angry that he did not tell me before; but it's all right now I know all about it!" "The beast!" said Mrs. Dunn, in a perfect fury, for she was recalling a similar experience of her own a few years before; "and he led you on like that!" "And the worst of it is that I was willing to be led on. But please don't say any more to me about it, Alice;
and if anybody else asks you, just tell them what I have told you.”

Alice did so, and more; and if it were true that the left ear burns when a person is being unfavorably discussed, Mr. Blumine’s must have been utterly consumed during the ensuing fortnight.

Pride helped Sarah to recover from her disappointment quickly, and soon she was filling her old place, looking after the poor and sick, and cheering everybody with her gentle ministrations. Thus a year went by, and a month or two besides, and it was the anniversary of the Woolinap church, and everybody looking forward to a great treat, because the Rev. David Aylworth was coming round from Sandhurst to conduct the festive services.

On the day preceding anniversary Sunday, however, Jacob came in to tea with the intelligence that the Rev. David was too ill to keep his appointment, and that he had sent a substitute. “By the way, Sallie, it’s that old flame of yours, young Blumine.” Sarah colored deeply, and said, “Oh!” “I was talking to him just now, and he says he is coming up this evening!” “Is he?” said Mrs. Trenewy rather tartly; “then we don’t particularly want him!” The mother had not forgotten the slight put upon her daughter, and meant what she said; but she could hardly meet the young minister at the door with a similar announcement, so preparations for his reception were made. Those made by Sarah were of a rather peculiar nature. She set out cake and scones, and put the supper things upon the tray; then she went to her room and donned her hat
and jacket. "Mother," she said, "I am going up to spend the evening with Alice and Baby, and I shall not be back until late!" Mrs. Trenewy hardly knew what to think, and for once in her life she noticed that Sarah's eye was not soft, and that her mien was as haughty as was compatible with such a small person. So off went the daughter to visit Mrs. Jimmy Dunn, while Mr. Blumine was forced to pass a dreary evening in one-sided arguments with the father upon every imaginable topic, from politics to spiritualism. At last, at about ten o'clock, he mustered up courage to enquire after Miss Trenewy, and on learning where she was, offered to go and fetch her home. "I think," said Mrs. Trenewy, a little abashed, "that Sarah would not care for it!" "Very likely," said Mr. Blumine; "but I have something to tell her! And when she has heard me, I'll leave her if she wishes."

He was clasping and unclasping his hands nervously, so Mrs. Trenewy yielded; but she followed him to the door and whispered, "She went out on purpose to avoid you, and I think you had best let her be!" Mr. Blumine caught her hand, and whispered his reply, "I love her, and now I am free—honorably free. I will do anything to atone, but I must see her and tell her!"

But he was not destined to tell her that night; for when Sarah found that her quondam sweetheart had come to escort her home, she secretly arranged that Alice should go too, "just for a little walk." When she heard from her mother, however, what had been whispered at the door, she consented to stay at home for the Sunday tea, at which her father had invited the
young man to join them. Well, the end of it was the same old story; the other lady had found a more congenial partner in the young doctor of her town, and had accordingly jilted Mr. Blumine; and he, as is the way with men, put his own case so well that Sarah could not help forgiving him, as is the way with women. He was to be ordained at the next Conference, and soon after that they would be married.

Alice was not enthusiastic about the matter at first, but Sarah soon converted her. Nevertheless, Mrs. Dunn always declared that that young man was the luckiest fellow in the world to get such a sweet, clever, good, suitable girl to help him in his ministerial work.
CHAPTER X.

The Balgong Tea Meeting.

The little church at Bulgong, one of the satellites of Woolinap, was on the main road between the two places, and nestled in a clump of trees, from whence its white-painted weatherboard wall shone coolly in the summer days. The edifice was not devoted entirely to the service of religion, for it was town hall, school and general rendezvous for all sorts and conditions of Bulgong society.

On a certain beautiful Tuesday afternoon early in October, there was some stir in the vicinity of this combined chapel and school, and the cause of it was a tea-meeting, for which vast (speaking in Bulgong terms) preparations had been made. There were to be four tables, provided by the following parties, one by Mrs. Jonathan Dembler, sister-in-law of her who was very conspicuous in the Greenhills church work; one by Mrs. Jenkins, the champion bread-maker among the farmers' wives around; a third was to be overseen by the Misses Barry; and the other was under the control of the bachelors of the locality, or their deputies. There had been much warm discussion as to whether the ladies and gentlemen concerned should go in for a uniform style
of providing; but Mrs. Dember had carried the day, and each provider was to please him or her self.

It was about half-past four in the afternoon when buggies began to arrive at the chapel, bringing whole families, from the baby to grandma; and very gay they looked, with every girl in her best Sunday frock, and the children flourishing great bundles of sweet wattle-blossom gathered from the roadside as they came. Everybody was talkative; fathers yarnded about cattle and crops, mothers exhibited rosy, good-natured babies, daughters discussed—well, we shall not say what; Bill and Dick, Joe and Jack, leaned against the fence, talking “horse” and “dog,” or casting sly glances at the girls who gathered in a bright group not far away.

Inside the church, the ladies in charge of the tables scurried round, and banged things about in such a way as to excite considerable curiosity. Then another trap would arrive, and there would be fresh greetings to offer. “Hullo, Tom! How are yer?” would be the cry on all sides; or, perhaps, it would be George or Harry; and everywhere was the same hearty, jovial welcome, until presently Bill, Dick and company would casually saunter to the group of girls, and begin to make sheep’s eyes at some particular one of them. “Oh, Dick,” Janie would say, “you’ve been leaning up against a white wall! Come here and let me brush you!” Thereupon would ensue a series of gentle flicks, interspersed with “Oh, don’t be frightened of hurting me, Ja’! I’ll stand to be groomed! Why don’t you brush harder? Ho, ho, ho! Why, I can’t even feel her doing it!” And Janie would pretend to give him a tremendous slap
on the back, and then run away giggling, with Dick close behind her. A group of still younger people were occupied in a very different fashion. One boy, about eleven years of age, was cautiously making his way towards the door of the building, while his companions waited and peeped round the corner. This young gentleman, being the most renowned for skill and daring, had been commissioned by the rest to effect a strategic entrance into the chapel, to take a survey of the tables, and to hasten back with a report as to which was most liberally furnished with goodies; the intention of the main body was to rush the best table at tea-time, before it could be taken up by the adult company.

Willy Whyte, the spy sent forth, quietly approached the door; it was ajar, and he peered through the crack. "Oh!" he mentally ejaculated, and his eyes grew large with anticipation; for there, right in his view, was Mrs. Dember's table, profusely spread with dishes of tarts and cheese-cakes, and jam sandwiches iced with pink and white sugar, and a piled-up bowl of big reddish oranges. Willy was so absorbed in the vision of delight that caution forsook him, and, pushing open the door, he stepped in to admire the wonder at closer quarters. "Out you go!" said Mrs. Jenkins, turning him round sharply by the collar; and out he went, without getting even a glimpse of the remaining tables. He was a little hurt at this summary treatment, but he had seen one table, and had something to report. "There was lovely things," he said, "on the table just inside the door!" "Sandwiches?" in-
quired one little girl. "Yes, ham ones!" The ham was a flight of Willy's imagination, for he could not have seen it, even had he seen the sandwiches themselves; but that was a trivial matter, and the party unanimously decided to take that table by storm, as soon as tea was announced.

In this they were disappointed, however; that table was Mrs. Dember's, and Mrs. Dember had taken infinite pains to create a sensation, and was not going to have it wasted on children; so when the door was opened, and Mr. Jenkins stood taking the money, and saying cheerily to everybody who passed in, "How are yer?" Mrs. Dember was at his elbow, to turn the juvenile torrent in the direction of the Misses Barry, who had provided a substantial fare of pastry, sandwiches, and good home-made cake, better suited to the appetite of Willy Whyte and his hungry contingent. The bachelors' table was appropriately decorated with broken mugs, pannikins, and tea billies; its flowers crouched down in lipless jugs and aged jam jars; but for all that the fare was of the best.

The wonder of the room was, however, Mrs. Jenkins' table. She had also aimed at a sensation, and beyond a doubt hit it. She had provided herself with plenty of good cakes and tarts, but right down the middle of the table was an array of plates, heaped up with crisp, dripping Spring salads—lettuce, radishes and onions—from which arose cool and refreshing odors; salt and vinegar had not been forgotten, and with the aid of Mrs. Jenkins' own best bread and butter, he or
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she who could not make a hearty tea should do without.

Thither came most of the lads and girls, giggling tremendously at the novel tea-meeting fare, while Mrs. Jenkins beamed upon them all from behind the cups, and declared that if they all ate onions it wouldn't matter how close together they got together afterwards. More giggling followed, and when the grace had been sung to "Beulah Land," Dick offered Janie one of the fragrant bulbs, and said, "Come on, I like onions! You have one, and it won't matter then!"

And now there was a comparative quiet for ten minutes; a subdued munching came from Mrs. Jenkins' table; a genteel tinkle of spoons on china from Mrs. Dember's; but by-and-bye the hum of talk arose again. "Now, then, you people who are finished," said Mr. Dember, "there'll have to be another sitting! Make haste out, as soon as you can, or we shall be late starting the concert!" Most of the young folks trooped out, and, as it was quite early, and the glow of the sunset still in the west, some games were organised; the Jolly Miller's Wheel went round with a good deal of noise, "Nuts in May" were gathered in spite of their pulling back and shrieking, and a game of "Rounders" called forth some fine displays of agility on the part of the young ladies, and some very excellent play-acting on the part of the other sex. One or two couples did not join in this fun, but strolled off to find some unusually fine wattle-blossom that grew down the road behind the chapel; and there the effect of mutual onion eating was to be seen, for Janie was sitting with a great
heap of fluffy wattle-blosson (the good old sort with great yellow balls upon it), and Dick, who had been needed to reach it from the lofty branches, was sitting on a log beside her, with his arm about her waist. It was really very reprehensible conduct, I know; but they didn't know, and when it is remembered that they got back in time for the concert, perhaps their conduct may be excused a little; and, after all, it may have been something to do with Mrs. Jenkins' onions.

When Dick and Janie reached the chapel again, a great commotion was going on. Half a dozen men were puffing under the weight of Mrs. Dember's organ, which had been lent for the occasion because it was so much better than the one belonging to the chapel; by-and-bye it was safely landed in the corner by the pulpit. Forms were being dragged into place, and Jacob Trenewy, the chairman, was fixing up his spectacles, preparatory to the deciphering of a hieroglyphic programme. The people had paid one and sixpence each for their tea, and now Mr. Jenkins was turning them all out again, that he might levy another sixpence per head for the concert.

It would be ill-natured to say that the concert was dear at the price, but to strangers it would have been, unless they happened to possess a keen sense of humor. Every performer was a friend of at least half the audience, and love makes us deaf as well as blind, sometimes.

The concert started with a hymn and prayer; then came the statement of the secretary and treasurer combined, during the reading of which the back forms grew restive, and whistled "Get your hair cut"; but at last
the programme was fairly begun, and every item was encored. Miss Elsie Barry, a fine buxom country girl, sang in the tiniest of voices, "The Song that Reached My Heart"; little Mary Dember recited "Five Little Pussy-cats," and had to be prompted "eleven times." Mr. Wallis, a man of unusual height, and the possessor of a gruff bass voice, made the very lamps tremble with his vigorous rendering of "Sing Me to Sleep" (first appearance of this song in the district, and great applause at its conclusion). But we cannot enumerate the whole of the items, and we have no need, since the local paper (that in which the scurrilous hits of Mr. Bridge were printed) always attends to such matters. The audience was kept engaged, however, until after ten o'clock; and to fill up the half-hour before the moon would rise, the Mesdames Dember and Jenkins served coffee and cake at sixpence per head, thus disposing of the leavings to the profit of the church.

The company at last dispersed, after the lusty singing of the doxology. Mrs. Dember was quite satisfied with the impression made upon her neighbours by her splendid table; the Misses Barry, sensible staid girls, had enjoyed looking after the youngsters; the deputies at the bachelors' table had likewise had a good time; but Mrs. Jenkins had a grievance, and she announced it to her husband at breakfast the following morning. "Look here, Ned, I don't believe any of 'em had a better time than my table; but—and I'm ashamed to say it of him—old Trenewy never paid anything for his tea, nor the concert! And him got the big orchard, and lots of money, too!" Ned shifted upon his chair. "I
think you'd better keep that to yourself, old girl! He
didn't pay; neither did you.” “Well, I never! After
me giving a whole table, to say I didn't pay! It's just
like you!” “All right,” said Ned, with a twinkle in
his eyes, “Jacob is square too. When I went to pay
him for the oranges, he said, 'That's my donation, Mr.
Jenkins,' and Sarah sent this as hers,' and he pops five
shillings into my hand; so just mind what you get say­
ing about Jacob's tea, and his paying for it!” Mrs.
Jenkins did mind, and soon all Bulgong knew what a
handsome gift it had received from the Woolinap or­
chardist.

The days of tea-meetings are over in Melbourne,
but if you should long for one of the dear old-fashioned
gatherings, just contrive to take a trip to Bulgong in
the Spring, or to any such by-way place at anniversary
time, and you will be sure to have one.
CHAPTER XI.

Shadows.

In the little world of Woolinap, as in every other small community, there were times of shadow as well as of shine. The affairs of such a place could not be expected to go on without some gaps occurring in the ranks; and during the Summer prior to Sarah Trenewy's marriage, there were several breaches.

The town of Woolinap lay nestled in a green valley, through which the Black Creek swept in Winter, or babbled over its gravel in the Summer. It was a pleasant spot in which to live, with its trees along the creek, and its low, billowy hills in the distance on every side; but a few of the "Croakers," as Joe Dunn called them, were forever declaring the place unhealthy. Until the present summer, however, there had been no serious grounds for such an assertion; but now the scourge of typhoid fever fell upon the people, and almost every second house had its case, either slight or serious.

Some of our Methodist friends were smitten; Jack Rigbert, now a young fellow of twenty, was being nursed at home by his mother; Joe Dunn's youngest girl lay in the hospital, seriously ill, and Mrs. Dane was confined to her bed with a mild attack. The case which excited the most sympathy, however, was young Mrs. Dunn.
One day Jimmy had appeared at his father-in-law's, and had suggested that Mrs. Hilton should run down, and see what she thought of Alice. "I've brought the nipper away, so that she may have it quiet, and Sarah has offered to take care of the child for to-day, if you will go to Alice!" Mrs. Hilton was not long in reaching the home of her daughter; and such a neat, pretty little home it was, all embellished with tasteful trifles such as a girl like Alice would fancy. But the mistress of this establishment was much more seriously ill than her husband had supposed; the rounded rose of her cheek was aflame, and her beautiful blue eyes glittered with fever fires. "Oh, mother, I think I am very bad! And what will become of Baby if I am to be ill long?" "Baby will be cared for, my pet! Jim and father and Sarah will see to that, and I'll see to you! Let me shake up your pillow a bit, and bring you a cup of tea! There now; you'll soon be quite well again."

But in spite of the cheerful prediction, Alice grew worse, and during the afternoon Jim was despatched to the mining town, five miles away, to bring the doctor at once. From that hour Mrs. Hilton established herself at her daughter's; Alice first moaned and moaned with the pain in her head, then became delirious and raved incessantly about the baby, Jim, Sarah—everything and everybody that had come within touch of her for years past. She told her mother over and over again how she had been deceived by that newspaper man at Rigbert's, and how she would never, never have anything to do with a Melbourne boy again; she went over the events of the day when the cyclone blew down the chapel,
and how Mr. Blumine had treated poor Sarah shamefully; and then she would moan again, "Oh, mother, it's my head, my head!" It was wearying work for the mother to watch her, and since the seizure of Alice, a younger child, Laura, had been taken with fever, but fortunately in a mild form. Laura was now tossing in the next bed to Annie Dunn's, in a ward of the neighboring hospital.

If ever there were two forlorn men in this world, those two were the husband and the father of Alice Dunn. Jim went about his work with a woe-begone face, calling in at the house a dozen times a day, as he passed with his dray; he bought three loads of tan, and spread it on the road before his door, that the rumble of wheels might not disturb his wife in her drowsy half-consciousness; he absolutely pestered his mother-in-law, to tell him what he could do or get next for Alice, and was miserable because he could neither do nor get anything.

Yorky Dick relieved his feelings by taking charge of the little Alice, now a beautiful and interesting child of two. He tried hard to be cheerful; he would come into Wilky Dane's shop with a hearty "Good-day!" and then his face would fall as inquiries were made after his two sick children. It was about a fortnight after the sickening of Mrs. Dunn, when he appeared there one afternoon with the little girl upon his shoulder. He looked very sad as he seated himself, and set the baby upon his knees. "Well, Dick, how is the patient this afternoon? Has the doctor been yet?" "Yes, the doctor was there at noon, and she's not too well—not at all well!
The truth is, Wilky, he says she won’t get over it, most likely!” Dick’s voice broke, and to hide the tears that filled his eyes, he leant over the baby’s yellow curls. “Oh, Wilky, man! I can’t abide the thought of losing her! What are me and the wife to do without her, and Jim, and the little one here? Oh Wilky, Wilky, if the Lord were but here to bid the fever go, as He did for Peter’s mother-in-law!” The poor fellow sobbed as though his heart would break; and the tailor stitched away in silence, finding himself powerless to aid his friend in such an overwhelming hour. At length, however, he put down his work and came across to the grief-stricken man; he put one hand upon the bowed shoulder, and the other upon the child’s beautiful head. “Dick, old man, she’s not gone yet! Cheer up! It is not well for God’s own people to spend their tears over troubles that may never come! Cheer up, old friend!” “I’ll try, Wilky; but why should it be God’s will for her to go, a young happy woman, so needed by us all?”

Wilky stood silent for a time; this was a problem he had faced for himself years before when a beloved sister had been taken from her week-old baby and her affectionate husband; yes, he had settled it for himself, but would Dick understand? It was not that he could lessen the grief of parting with Alice, but that God should will such absolutely cruel separations he was not willing to believe. After a few moments’ consideration, he took the little Alice, and sat down beside her grandfather.

“Dick, I don’t think it is the will of God that your dear girl or any other young person, should die; we
ought not to leave this life until our course is fully run.
I don't believe that these things, these calamities, are
any more God's doings than the coming of sin into the
world! Mind you, He sees that all things work together
for good to them that love Him, but he never willed that
evil should be a part of all things, and He only makes
the best of it, now it is here. But we must put up with
sin, and with death too, until the Lord Christ cleanse all
things! Don't lay cruelty like that at God's door,
Dick. You remember, perhaps, that a few years back
my sister died, and I was fiercely angry with the great
Father, until I thought it all over carefully; I began to
remember how many thousands of people used to die of
small-pox and how few even catch that sickness now!
Was it God's will that they died? Not a bit of it, Dick;
it was man's want of skill, and any amount of the people
who go away young in these times, die for the same
reason. And men are learning, and through them
God is fighting man's great enemy, untimely Death!
Have you ever thought that none of the people who were
miraculously brought back to life by Christ and His
disciples were old? It was a little boy who was recalled
to life by the Prophet, too! Ah, no; we mustn't accuse
God of what is caused by our own ignorance, and since we
know so very little, we can't ask Him to save us in spite
of ourselves can we? Supposing you either threw your­
self down a well, or carelessly fell into it, you wouldn't
expect God to preserve you from hurt by a miracle, or
give you a set of cat's claws by which you could climb
out! I don't find it easy to make myself clear, but do
you see Dick? This fever in the town is due to some-
body's carelessness or ignorance about sanitary laws, and I am not prepared to sentimentalise about 'the will of God,' when I know perfectly well that the proper name for the trouble is plain, short 'Dirt!' " "Yes," said Dick, now somewhat calmer, "I see your drift; but it won't make it any easier to part with her!" "No, friend; but if to the bitterness of that parting you were to add resentment against the most tender Father, you would have indeed a black time before you." "Ah, well," said Mr. Hilton, with a deep sigh, "I'll just take a walk up to the house, and see how she is now!" and that was Dick's little journey about once in every hour.

The church people did what they could to relieve and comfort the distressed family; one would bring a dainty for the nurse, or mutton tea for the invalid; another would take a turn in the sick-room, or undertake the charge of the weekly washing; flowers, fruit and kind messages of every description reached the sick one, but she was delirious most of the time, and such attentions comforted her kindred more than herself. At the weekly class-meeting Jacob prayed that God would spare the young wife and mother, or comfort her passing moments with His own gracious presence. Mrs. Polkett wept as she cried aloud to Heaven for mercy, but still Alice sank lower and lower, towards the verge of that stream we call death, and which is but the door of the kingdom immortal. At last, one afternoon, after the sufferer had been dozing quietly for an hour or so, Mrs. Hilton found her with wide, intelligent eyes, and with the fires of fever almost burnt out.
“Mother, dear mother,” whispered she, and then paused. “I want Jim, and Baby, and Father!” “Yes, Pet! Are you feeling better?” Alice did not answer, but her face grew wistful. “Bring them,” she whispered; so Mrs. Hilton went to the kitchen where her husband sat with the baby, and bade him call Jim from the stable, and come to the bedroom quickly. “Give me the child!” and she took little Alice from his hands. Her heart was ready to burst, but she stifled back her sobs, and stood with the little one in her arms, beside the bed of the dying girl. Alice was sinking fast, the mother could see it; she sat the child on the bed, where the blue eyes, so soon to close upon this life, could rest upon the baby face. “You will be her mother?” Alice whispered again. “Yes, love,” was all the mother could say; then Alice closed her eyes, and waited for the coming of Jim. In a minute his step was heard in the passage, and he came and knelt by the bed, crying, “Alice, my darling, my darling!” Alice opened her eyes and gave him a look of unutterable love. “Jim, come to me in heaven by-and-bye, and I’ll tell the Lord Christ about Baby, too! Tell dear old Sarah I’m not afraid to go!” There was a long pause, broken only by a laugh from the baby, who evidently supposed the whole sorrowful scene enacted for her express amusement. Alice lay quite still, and Dick thought she was gone; but she roused herself again to whisper, “My own dear, good Jim!”

For a long time the watchers remained in the same position; so awe-inspiring is the moment when the human spirit gets a fuller revelation of its Maker, that they
almost feared to draw breath. Then Baby Alice suddenly perceived that all was not well, and said in the plaintive little lisp she had learned from her grandfather during the last three weeks, "Poor Mumma tho thick!" and the fountains of woe were opened, and they wept together in the presence of the dead.

Not a heart in Woolinap but throbbed in sympathy with the bereaved ones; all that men and women could do was done; they brought what flowers they could muster at such a hot season of the year, and filled the white hands with the sweets they had loved to cull in life. The face was wasted, but still sweet and fair; the yellow hair, cut short for the sake of the living head, now clustered in tiny curls above the pure brow, softening the rigid lines of mortality. So sweet and fair was the face that Mrs. Rigbert, after looking upon it, feared not to bring her little daughter into the mysterious presence. "How lovely," she thought, "must be the spirit, when the empty casket that held it is left so fair!"

All the people in the district attended the last ceremony, and it was a sorrowful hour; the young wife and mother had seen but twenty-three summers, and to be smitten in her youth, to have but tasted the joys of earth, was to most of her friends the saddest part of it.

On her way home from the grave, little Ivy Rigbert said, "Mother, if Jesus had been here, He would have said, 'Wake up, little maid,' and she would have opened her eyes! But He wasn't here, and I wish He had been!" The mother looked into the child's pale and wistful face, and thought, "Ah yes, and He may be here
soon!" but she said aloud, "My darling, He did come, and He said it to Mrs. Dunn, and her spirit heard Him, and awoke and went to be with Him forever, where He is!" Ivy looked up with the light of understanding in her grey eyes. "Will He say, 'Wake up, little maid' to me too, like He did to Jairus's daughter?" "Yes, some day," said the mother; and Ivy was satisfied. The loving command of the Lord did come to this little maid a few months later, and everybody said, "God is indeed good!" for Ivy was delicate, and always a sufferer. And so the shadows came and went, and the days of sunshine too, all working together in their turn for the good of them that love God.
CHAPTER XII.

Changes.

It must have been about seven years after the great cyclone—if my dates are not correct will the Woolinapers kindly excuse me—when signs of considerable changes began to show in the Methodist horizon. Of course, changes had been occurring all along, one by one, but so rarely as to cause a nine days’ wonder, and then to fall into the great pit of things forgotten. Mr. Rigbert now required two assistants in his shop, as well as his son Jack, and was said to be doing a flourishing business with the country people, who found the large mining town too far removed for ordinary shopping; the beautiful, blue-eyed Alice Dunn had died, and (must I say it?) Jim had his best eye upon a successor to his heart and home. Sarah was now Mrs. Blumine, and living only fifty miles away from her old home and friends, in another country circuit, where her husband was stationed for the next two years. Wilky had succeeded in carrying out some of his large schemes, but not all; for instance, he had not yet secured the erection of a Sunday-school, and each Sunday the children still gathered in the chapel itself. Nevertheless, Mr. Dane continued to insinuate his opinions into Yorky Dick and Mr. Rigbert; and in spite of Jacob’s persistent opposition, the time was not far distant when Wilky should get his way.

My readers must also learn that a railway now ran through Woolinap, that the Presbyterians had a church in the town, and that the whole neighborhood was pervaded with an air of serene prosperity.
The large mining town five miles away was also thriving, and was still the head of the circuit; but it was one of Wilky's ambitions to have a minister at Woolinap, if not the superintendent himself.

One day a young fellow named Gibbs came into the tailor's shop, and said, "You are one of the managers of the Wesleyan chapel, aren't you?" "Yes, Mr. Gibbs, I am one of the stewards. Can I do anything for you?"

"I think so; I should like to have a talk with you about a speculation that myself and another chap are wanting to make. You see, my mate is an old digger, and knows a good deal more about the mining business than these School-of-Mines fellows, I can tell you! Well, he always said there was gold about Woolinap, and as we were both out of work, he proposed to do some prospecting in that timbered paddock just behind the chapel grounds. We've had splendid prospects, good enough to follow up, but the lead runs into the chapel ground and could be worked better from there! Now, Dane, we are willing to do the fair thing to the chapel crowd, but we want leave to open up workings in their paddock. What do you say to a royalty, or something of the kind?" "Well," said Wilky, "I can't say anything. It is the trustees who have control of such matters; Dunn and Trenewy are your men." "Um!" said the young man thoughtfully, "Dunn is a blab, and the other a mule! Couldn't you help us at all?" "I'll think it over," said Wilky. "Come round this evening," and with that assurance Mr. Gibbs was obliged to be satisfied for the present.

Wilky did think it over. Hitherto, no gold, except that which could be washed out of the surface dirt, had
been discovered in the neighborhood of Woolinap, and he wondered how much warrant the prospectors had for their hopes. He foresaw great things to follow the advent of gold mining; first, an increased population; next, a crowded chapel; and above all, should the chapel paddock turn out as rich as supposed, there should be money enough to build a Sunday-school, and to pay the stipend of a second minister in the circuit, for at least a time. Wilky was so absorbed in these reflections that he did not notice his wife when she called him to dinner, and before tea-time he had it all worked out, so that when Mr. Gibbs dropped in during the evening, he was informed that if he and his partner really wished to mine in the chapel paddock, and would give satisfactory proofs, both of their honorable intentions and of their grounds for such expectations, then he, Wilky Dane, would do his best to get them leave to begin work. Mr. Gibbs promised to give the proofs asked for, and offered, as a token of good faith, to take Wilky in as a shareholder; but this offer the American declined; he thought it savored of bribery, and his high sense of honor forbade him doing anything that might have even the appearance of evil, remembering, as he did, that he had the Lord's good name to care for as well as his own.

He used all his blandishments, however, upon the two trustees, and soon had them persuaded into countenancing the enterprise of Gibbs and Company; by the united admonitions of Jacob and Wilky, Joe Dunn was won to silence, until there should be some reason for believing that the Wesleyans had a valuable property.
Well, Gibbs and partner soon had a shaft down, and, to the joy of all, found their hopes more than realised. Great excitement prevailed when the truth was made public; some of the Wesleyan congregation thought that the church itself ought to work the mine; some feared that the discoverers would cheat the trustees; and Jacob and Joe were at a loss to know how they should deal with the whole affair. Wilky alone was cool; he examined every step carefully, and spent some time each day about the mine itself. It soon became evident to him and to the prospectors that this was no two men's concern; so a lawyer was called in, an agreement drawn up, and the mine floated into shares, the proper proportion of which belonged to Joe and Jacob, as trustees of the chapel.

The undertaking prospered and developed quickly; ugly mounds of earth thrown up began to approach the very walls of the sanctuary, and the "Bang! bang!" of the "knocker" intruded itself on the week-night meetings: even Mrs. Polkett was disturbed, as she lifted up her voice in energetic appeals to the Almighty; but the gold fever had taken hold of them all, and beauty, reverence, peace, must all fly before the potent malady. Yet, something must be done; it was an unseemly sight to see long, spidery poppet-heads uplifting themselves above the white roof of the little Gothic prayer-house; wreaths of black smoke from the toiling, snorting engine curled round the belfry (excuse the term, but what else shall I call the queer structure which bore aloft the noisiest member of the Methodist cause in Wooliap?). Everywhere it was dirt, dirt, dirt! Puff, snort, hiss! Clank and stamp! Shiver and grind! And all this right at the
very door of the chapel. Not even Sunday was free from the turmoil, for water had appeared in the mine, and pumps must be kept going, weekdays and Sundays, from midnight to midnight.

Besides these inconveniences, there was another. The discovery of gold, not only in the chapel paddock, but in other places round about, had brought a large addition to the population of quite a different character from the old inhabitants of Woolinap. Some of the newcomers were Methodists; for miners are often Cornish, and Cornishmen are often Methodists. The consequence was that the little chapel was now overcrowded; on Sunday evenings, when the air was oppressive out of doors, it was well nigh intolerable in the chapel, with its small windows and great, flaring kerosene lamps. So Wilky's hour had come; the chapel was too small for the congregation; the trustees had a large credit balance at the bank, and a prospect of more to come from the mine; there was also a fine piece of land for sale, two streets away, just large enough to accommodate a new church, the old one beside it, to be used as a Sunday-school, and in the far corner, a neat little parsonage.

With all these facts before him, Wilky bestirred himself among the people, and it was not long before he had created a settled conviction in their minds that the chapel must be moved. The new land was therefore purchased, a great "jinker" was brought up to the chapel, and the building lifted on to it bodily. Talk about excitement! Every boy in Woolinap came to superintend the operation. How many men were required has not been recorded, but it took twenty bul-
locks to draw the "jinker" out of the chapel paddock and up the road to an open space, where there was room enough to turn the corner with a great sweep. It took nearly the whole day to accomplish the short journey; before the chapel, still upon its wobbly "jinker," was hauled into the new paddock, where foundation blocks had been prepared to receive it.

The building was ready for service within the month, and there the people met for worship until the new church should be finished.

On a certain Sunday, about nine months later, a fine congregation gathered in the new building to celebrate its opening. This edifice was much more pretentious than the old wooden chapel. It was constructed of bright new bricks, showing up against their redness the white lines of the mortar that held them together; white were the doors and window frames, and the roof was covered with slates—absolutely the first used in Woolinap. The trustees were brimming over with pride concerning this ornamental addition to the town, and early that morning, as upon many other mornings, you might have seen Joe Dunn taking a leisurely survey of the church from every standpoint excepting the clouds. How Wilky admired it, too! And even Jacob was quite enthusiastic!

Mr. Blumine, a wiser and a better man for his unpleasant experience, and for the lapse of time and the difficulties overcome, was to preach the opening services; and Sarah was with him, still soft-eyed and gentle, and wearing an added charm of thoughtful contentment, never visible to Woolinap before. Of the doings of that
opening Sunday, we need not say more; but there was a great team meeting on the following Tuesday, a "catered-for" tea, and, to the disgust of some of the older members of the church, three of the tables were under the care of three mesdames who had come with the influx of miners, "Just as if we couldn't manage the tea without them," said Mrs. Dunn, "and that Mrs. Hughes is a regular boss!"

There was one cloud, however, that passed over the Woolinap Wesleyans at this time; Mr. Dane, having bought some shares in the "Chapel Mine" when it was put into the open market, now found himself with a convenient little sum in hand; and, as his wife's sister lived in Ballarat, and as that lady very much longed to be near her sister, Wilky had decided to invest his capital in a large business, and to leave Woolinap for good. It was a great blow to Jacob, who, although he often squabbled with the tailor, had learned to prize his many gifts and virtues. Such a worker is always missed when he leaves a place, but we should remember that God's vineyard needs toilers wherever the vines are planted, and that which was lost by Woolinap was gained by another section of the great divine garden. He left the church in Woolinap growing and prospering, and with him we must also leave, for these are "Tales From the By-Ways of Methodism," and after the discovery of gold in Woolinap, the man who would dare to call the town a by-way would be brave indeed. Yet, God-speed to all our by-way churches, sowing the seed in every corner of this land, and toiling for that day when the Lord shall gather His great harvest home.